

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson One)

Introduction

Ever since the mid 80s and the book entitled *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Occur in 1988*, there has been an increased interest in prophecies about the end of the world. Movies, books, sermons, talk shows and now people on the street are wondering if we are rapidly approaching **The End**. *Left Behind*, one of the best selling book series of the past three years and a top-grossing movie, follows the events of Revelation from the rapture to the end of the age. Even without focusing on the Bible and especially the book of Revelation, non-theological scholars like Richard Swinson in his book, *Hurting Toward Oblivion*, are beginning to see that things happening in the world seem to be approaching a climax. This study will help you understand the sequence of events foretold in the book of the Revelation and will help you place current events, like the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, United Nations peace keeping forces, the movement of the European countries to a common currency called the Euro, and others in perspective.

Background Material

Although unique in the New Testament, Revelation is representative of the commonest type of literature written between the Old Testament and the New Testament writings. It is also called the Apocalypse, which is derived from the Greek, *Apokalupsis*, and means an uncovering, an unveiling, or a disclosure (like a sculptor or painter unveiling his work). It describes a type of Jewish writing that forecast (disclosed) the ultimate destiny of the world and was marked by pseudonymity (crediting a more prominent person with writing it), symbolic imagery, and the expectation of an imminent cosmic cataclysm in which God destroys the ruling powers of evil and raises the righteous to life in a messianic kingdom. (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary)

The Jews looked forward to a king from David's line (the Messiah) that would unite the Israelite nation and lead them to greatness, but their history seemed to be against this hope. After Solomon's death, the nation split into two parts under Rehoboam and Jeroboam. The northern kingdom, with its capital at Samaria, was conquered by the Assyrians in 722 BC and is now generally referred to as the ten lost tribes. The southern kingdom, with its capital at Jerusalem, was overrun by the Babylonians beginning with the first captivity in 605 BC and ending with the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. From that time forward, they were a subject state of the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and then the Romans. In order to adjust to the facts of history while maintaining the conviction of "chosen"-ness, the Jews divided all of time into two ages: the present age, which is wholly bad and beyond redemption, and the age to come, which would be wholly good with peace and prosperity and in which God's chosen people would receive their rightful place. The two ages would be separated by the Day of the Lord – a time of terror, destruction, and judgment which would be the birth pangs of the new age. (Barclay, pp2-3) Apocalyptic literature deals mainly with end time events, was written during times of persecution, abounds with visions, and has a style that is generally figurative and symbolic. Other books of the Bible besides Revelation that are apocalyptic are Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah. (Jensen, p 9)

Revelation is the climax of the truths found in all other passages of Scripture. As Genesis shows us the beginning of time, Revelation reveals to us the end of time. The following examples show how Revelation completes the circle of Biblical truths.

Genesis shows man's beginning in a beautiful paradise.
Revelation shows the wonderful paradise to come.

Genesis shows how man lost his chance to eat of the tree of life.
Revelation shows man will yet eat of that tree.

Genesis tells of man's first rebellion against God.
Revelation promises an end to man's rebellion against God.

Genesis reveals the tragic sorrow that resulted from sin.
Revelation promises, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Genesis records the first death.
Revelation promises that "there shall be no more death."

Genesis shows the beginning of the curse.
Revelation shows the curse lifted.

Genesis introduces the Devil (Satan) for the first time as the tempter of men.
Revelation shows the final doom of Satan.

Genesis promises that Satan's head would be bruised.
Revelation shows him bruised and defeated. (LaHaye, p 2)

There are no direct quotations of the Old Testament in Revelation but of its 404 verses, 265 contain lines which embrace approximately 550 Old Testament references. Here are a few examples.

| OT | Revelation | OT | Revelation |
|----------|---|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Jer 51 | Ch 18 (Babylon) | Dan 7:13; Zec 12:10,12 | 1:7 |
| Dan 7, 8 | Ch 13 (2 beasts) | Dan 7:9, 13; 10:5 | 1:14 |
| Zec 4 | Ch 11 (olive trees and candlesticks) | Dan 10:6; Eze 1:24 Isa 11:4; 49:2 | 1:15 1:16 |
| Dan 12:7 | 12:14 (time periods) | Isa 44:6; 48:12 | 1:17 |
| Ex 19:6 | 1:6 | Isa 38:10 | 1:18 |

In three passages of the New Testament, the Gospel writers recorded Jesus' prediction of the end time and his second coming. (Matt 24:1 - 25:46; Mark 13:1-37; Luke 21:5-36) (Jensen, p 10)

The generally accepted author of the book of the Revelation is the Apostle John. The date of its writing is thought to be 95 to 96 AD, near the end of the reign of the emperor Domitian.

Interpretative Views

In interpreting Revelation, there are four major views – symbolic, preterist, historical, and futurist. The symbolic view holds that all of Revelation should be considered as figurative with no prophecy of real, historical events. The first and last chapters of Revelation argue against this view. The preterist view holds that all of Revelation except the last two chapters were fulfilled in the first century. It requires much in the way of mental gymnastics to associate much of Revelation with events of the first century (such as the Antichrist being the Roman emperor Nero or Domitian). The word "preterist" is based on a Latin word "praeteritus," meaning "gone by", i.e., Past. The historical view holds that Revelation 4-18 describe major events in the history of the Church and only chapters 19-22 foretell events after Christ's return. This view requires a massive juggling of historical events and tends to distort what would seem to be the plain meaning of the verses. The futurist view holds that most of Revelation (chaps 4-22) is prophetic of events that are yet to happen – "the end times." (Jensen pp 18-20; LaHaye, p 4)

Revelation 20:1-6 gives rise to three viewpoints concerning the "thousand years" or millennium. Amillennialism holds that there will not be a literal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years but that the reign is a spiritual one in heaven and is going on at the present time. Postmillennialism holds that Christ will return at the end of the millennium which will not necessarily be a literal thousand years but a period of

blessedness, prosperity and well-being for God's kingdom. The apparent intense activity of Satan throughout the world today contradicts this viewpoint. Premillennialism holds that Christ will return before the millennium to rule for a literal thousand years and that Satan will be bound and unable to work his ways during this time. (Jensen, p 20)

In interpreting the coming of Jesus to snatch up or rapture his church, there are four major views – pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, pre-wrath, and post-tribulation. The post-tribulation view holds that Jesus will not return for the believers until he actually returns to earth at the end of the seven-year tribulation. The mid-tribulation view holds that he returns for believers at the mid-point of the tribulation or 3 ½ year after it begins with the revealing of the Antichrist. The pre-wrath view holds that Jesus returns for believers after the first 3 ½ years of the tribulation but before the last seven bowls judgments (a period of wrath) begin. The pre-tribulation view holds that Jesus returns for believers before the beginning of the seven-year tribulation and that supernatural event helps bring about the beginning of the tribulation.

Interpretative Guidelines

When interpreting Scripture, there are some guidelines we should follow.

1. When the plain sense of a passage makes common sense, then don't seek any other sense. Take every word at its literal, ordinary meaning unless the surrounding verses taken in context or fundamental truths indicate otherwise.
2. Avoid the extremes when interpreting a symbol. Don't force detailed meanings to every part of a symbol and don't view symbols only as generalities.
3. Let the language and historical setting of when a book was written throw light on the author's choice of words and symbols. We wouldn't expect John to use the phrase "atomic fallout" even if that is what he is trying to describe.
4. View the meaning of a verse in relation to other verses immediately around it and the meaning of parallel passages.
5. Don't force a particular structure such as chronological, topical or a combination of those on a book but look for the structure the writer gave it and let it stand.
6. Remember that in prophetic sections every event may not be foretold. In giving the prophecy, God has determined what is most important to be told. (Jensen, pp16-17)

Historical Setting of Revelation

| | | | | | |
|--|-----|--|--|--|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">John banished to Patmos</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Opposition against Christians increasing</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Destruction of Jerusalem</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Burning of Rome</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Founding of churches around Ephesus</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Overseas mission of Paul begins</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Evangelization Of Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria (Acts 1 – 12)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jesus' Ministry</p> <p style="text-align: center;">+</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jesus amazes the Temple scribes</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Jesus' Birth</p> | 96 | | | Revelation John's Epistles John's Gospel | <p style="text-align: center;">John's new residence and ministry in Asia Minor</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(exact date of John's move not known)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John is a leader in the Jerusalem church</p> |
| | 81 | Domitian | | | |
| | 79 | Titus | | | |
| | 70 | Vespasian | | | |
| | 69 | Galba, Otho, & Vitellius | | | |
| | 64 | Nero | All NT books except John's written here. | | |
| | 56 | | | | |
| | 54 | | | | |
| | 52 | | | | |
| | 47 | Claudius | | | |
| | 41 | Caligula | | | |
| | 37 | | | | |
| | 33 | | | | |
| | 30 | Tiberius | | | |
| | 14 | | | | |
| | 9 | Octavian (called Augustus after 37 BC) | | | |
| | - 4 | | | | |
| New Testament Events | AD | Roman Emperors | NT Writings | John's Ministry | |

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson two)

Introduction

Most people write letters by starting with a greeting (Dear ____), then writing what they want to tell the person(s), and finally signing their name. Military letters and some business letters follow a different pattern. They begin with who it's from, a brief statement of what the subject is, and then to whom the letter is written. This is basically the way Greeks wrote letters and is the pattern for the letters of the New Testament. Although Revelation is not technically a letter, it basically follows a similar pattern. It starts with a brief description of the subject, who the letter is from, and then to whom the letter is addressed.

Study (Ch 1)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|--|
| 1-3 | These verses tell us that the subject is a revelation or unveiling to the followers of Christ of things that are soon to happen. Soon does not necessarily mean according to our time scale for <i>with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day</i> (2 Peter 3:8). We also find here that this revelation was given to a servant of God by an angel and that the servant is testifying (being a witness) to what he saw and heard. Here are the first three of seven blessings found throughout Revelation. Blessed is he who read – hears – and keeps the words of this prophecy. |
| 4a | This is the address of the letter telling first who it is from and to whom it is being sent. It is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia. |
| 4-5 | This is the salutation or greeting of the letter. Grace is the Greek method of greeting and peace is the Hebrew form. John provides a witness to us here that grace and peace come from God the Father – who is, was, and is to come; God the Spirit – seven spirits before his throne; and God the Son – Jesus Christ. This is the Trinity. The number seven is used many times in Revelation to show perfection or completeness. The Jews spoke about seven angels whom they called the seven first white one (we call them archangels) that stand and enter before the glory or presence of the Lord. Their names are often given as: Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Rafael, Raguel, Saiguel, and Jeremiel. They were supposed to be in charge of the elements of the world – fire, air, and water – and were the guardian angels of the nations. They were the most intimate servants of God. Although some people think that they are the seven Spirits mentions, that cannot be because angels are created beings and not to be equated with the Father and Son. (Barclay p 31) The term “seven spirits” also does not mean seven “Holy Spirits” but the seven (complete) ministries of <u>the</u> Holy Spirit. The sevenfold work of the Holy Spirit is revealed in Isaiah 11:2 where he is called: the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. Here we also have the first of many descriptions of Jesus found throughout Revelation. In this first description, John says he is: the faithful witness (<i>Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.</i> John 14:9); the firstborn from the dead (the first ever to be resurrected in a glorified body); and the ruler of the kings of the earth (although he allows men freedom of choice and action, he is still in charge and has kept any ruler from ever controlling the entire world). |
| 5-8 | John praises Jesus for his present work – loving us; washing away our sins with his blood; and making us a kingdom of priests to serve God. Then he confesses that Jesus is coming to earth again and that at that time everyone, even those who pierced him, will see him and mourn. |

Finally, John closes the introduction with a quote from God about being the first, the last, and eternal.

9-11 Now John tells by what authority and how he came to write this letter to these specific churches. He starts not by calling attention to his apostleship but emphasizing his being one of them – a brother and companion in the suffering (persecution) they were facing. He tells where he was and why he was there when the revelation occurred – imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos for proclaiming the word of God and the truth Jesus revealed. Patmos is a tiny island about 5 miles wide by 10 miles long in the Mediterranean Sea located just off the mainland of Asia from the town of Miletus (just south of Ephesus). It is a place that the Roman government used to banish or exile people displeasing to the governor of Asia. John tells us that on the Lord’s Day he was under the leadership of the Holy Spirit when he heard a voice like a trumpet that told him to write what he sees and send it to seven specific churches. One interpretation of the phrase “the Lord’s Day” is that John means he was taken across the centuries by the Holy Spirit to the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord refers to “an extended period of time in which Christ first deals in judgment on the earth and then sovereignly rules over it. It is used to cover the time of the Tribulation on through the Kingdom Age with the consummation of all things in the new heaven and the new earth.” (Epp p 48) Another interpretation is that the phrase refers to the Christian practice of gathering for worship on the first day of the week, the day of Jesus’ resurrection. The practice of calling it the Lord’s Day apparently came about as a counter to the Roman practice of calling the first day of each month the Emperor’s Day. In keeping with our interpretive guidelines, I would have to disregard the first interpretation because it forces us to equate the Lord’s Day with the Day of the Lord. The seven churches listed were real, historical churches on a circular Roman postal route. The selection of just seven churches seems to indicate that although the message was for them, it was also for the whole church (that includes us). The one giving the message had a voice like a trumpet, which means it was loud, clear, and commanded authority. We see from the rest of this chapter that the individual speaking is Jesus.

12-20 This is the beginning of John’s vision. It is also the start of the symbolism of Revelation and the place where most people feel lost, get disinterested, and stop reading. But this first symbolism is interpreted for us in verse twenty so there should be no reason to get confused by the symbology until after we have heard the messages for the seven churches. The seven lampstands represent the seven churches which are a light unto the world. According to Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:14, the Church and everyone in it is to be the light of the world; to show the world the way to God. Just as a lampstand does not originate light but gets its light from the oil or electricity in it, we are but a vessel through which the light of Christ can shine to illuminate the darkness of the world. The one “like a son of man” is Jesus and the description is very much like the one in Daniel 10:5. He is dressed in a robe down to his feet with a golden sash around his chest. The long robe was what priests wore when ministering in the Temple Holy Place. In those days, common people wore short, loose-fitting tunics and only people in authority wore sashes around the chest. The white head and hair are like Daniel’s description of God as the “Ancient of Days” in Daniel 7:9-13 and is symbolic not only of Jesus’ deity and eternal existence but also of his purity and sinlessness. His eyes like blazing fire represent fierceness and penetrating judgment. The feet like bronze glowing in a furnace indicate strength (bronze) and pure judgment (glowing in a furnace). A voice like the sound of rushing waters commands attention. When he speaks, no other voice can be heard. In verse twenty, Jesus tells us the seven stars which he holds in his right hand are the messengers of the seven churches. Some scholars interpret these messengers to be angels and other see them as the spiritual leader or pastor of each church. Starting in chapter two, we find the messages Jesus wanted written to the seven churches. Each of these messages is addressed to the messenger of a particular church. It seems unlikely that Jesus would tell John to write the messages to the churches if he meant them for the guardian angels. Therefore, I hold with the view that the spiritual leader or pastor of each church is held in the

right hand of Jesus (protected and blessed in their work). A sharp, double-edged sword coming out of his mouth represents the judging power of the word of God. *The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joint and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.* (Hebrews 4:12) The shining of his face with the brilliance of the sun is Christ's glory shining through, just like when he was on the Mount of Transfiguration as described in Matthew 17:2. We are given here a picture of the risen Christ in all of his glory and might standing among his people (the Church), knowing their every thought and need, and holding their messengers safe and secure in his right hand. It is descriptive not only of Christ but his relationship to his Church. Although John was friend enough of Jesus to lay his head on Jesus' breast in the upper room, here, because of the glory of the risen Christ, John falls at his feet in adoration; afraid to look fully upon his glory. Jesus says that, because of who he is and what he has done, John should not be afraid but write what he has seen, what is now, and what will take place. Because of this statement in verse nineteen, our interpretive guidelines would indicate that what John has written about Jesus, the seven lampstands, and the seven stars is 'what he has seen.' Thus, what he is to write to the seven churches would be 'what is.' And everything he writes after those letters would be 'what is to come.' This interpretation would be in agreement with the futurist view previously discussed. After explaining the meaning of the seven lampstands and seven stars, Jesus proceeds to give John the message for each church.

The next page contains an outline of Revelation based on the interpretation of "what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later."

Summary

Revelation is written in symbolic language and in a style that is strange to us but was familiar to the Christians of the First Century. It centers upon the work of Jesus and unveils the purposes of God in history and beyond.

Question for thought

If you were put on trial for being a Christian as many of the First Century believers were, would there be enough evidence to convict you?

Assignment

Read chapters 2 and 3 and complete the attached table.

Compare the Seven Churches

| To | From | Commendation | Condemnation | Admonishment | Promise |
|-------------------|------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------|
| Ephesus | | | | | |
| Smyrna | | | | | |
| Pergamum | | | | | |
| Thyatira | | | | | |
| Sardis | | | | | |
| Phila- delphia | | | | | |
| Laodicea | | | | | |

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson three)

Introduction

Have you ever been away from your family or a close friend for a long period of time when you couldn't call on the phone? If so, then you probably know how important a letter can be. Today, many people send e-mails rather than letters written on paper, but the importance of communicating with a person is still the same. In the First Century, letters were the most important means of long distance communications. What better means could God have used than a letter to get a message to the entire Church throughout all time?

Study (Ch 2)

These letters were written to churches that existed in the First Century and contain messages that were helpful not only to them but are of value to all churches and individuals throughout history. The complete picture shows us the conditions that existed in that day. With the best of 20/20 hindsight, it has been noted by many scholars that the history of the spiritual condition of the Church has progressively followed the pattern of these seven letters. It has also been noted that if a photograph of the spiritual condition of a specific church could be taken, members would be found in each of the states indicated in the letters. So each of us should look at these letters to see if one of them is addressed specifically to us. And one of them will also be addressed to Roanoke Baptist as a whole.

A quick glance at the letters reveals a pattern common to them all. First the address tells to which church/church age the message is intended and gives a partial description of the qualities/attributes of the message sender. Then if there is anything commendable about that church/church age, it is stated followed by any condemnation for it. The condemnation is followed by an admonishment of what to change and then a promise of reward for those who make the change. In today's terminology, this might be called a "State of the Kingdom" message that is designed to tell us what is wrong and how to correct it.

Verse

Discussion

1 TO: The messenger of the church in Ephesus. In John's time, Ephesus was the greatest harbor in Asia with all the roads of the surrounding valley converging upon it. Since it was a great seaport and trade center, roads from far-away places also converged there. This made Ephesus one of the wealthiest and greatest cities of Asia. It was the center for the worship of Artemis (Diana) whose image was one of the most sacred in the ancient world. Her temple was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Due to its importance as a trade center, Ephesus was also a center for pagan superstitions. Today there is little remaining of Ephesus except its ruins although it was less than six miles from the sea. The once great harbor is now a marsh dense with reeds because of silt that was deposited by rivers converging and flowing into the seaport. According to Acts 19 and 20:31, Paul founded the church in Ephesus and for three years labored there (early to mid-fifties of the First Century). In addition, Paul wrote one of his letters to this church and tradition maintains the Gospel and letters of John were written there. Legend has it that John brought Jesus' mother to Ephesus and that she was buried there. John would have done this because while Jesus hung on the cross he had given John the place of responsibility as the oldest son to care for Mary.

FROM: Christ, who guards and protects the messengers of the Church and who walks among his Church and knows everything that happens.

- 2-3 **COMMENDED:** for accurately testing those calling themselves apostles and for enduring hardships in his name. Jesus warned us to watch for false prophets and recognize them by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-20). In 1 John, we find a test by which to examine men and their teachings: *Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God.*
- 6 Here the Ephesian church is also commended for hating the works of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans are only named here and nothing is told about them until in a later letter to the church at Pergamum where they are associated with the practice of eating things offered to idols like the followers of Balaam in the Old Testament. The majority of early church historians associate them with the followers of Nicolaus, the proselyte of Antioch and one of seven men commonly called deacons (Acts 6:5). The thought is that Nicolaus went wrong and became a heretic, living a life of unrestrained indulgence. But one early historian, Clement of Alexandria, acquits Nicolaus of all blame saying that his followers perverted what he said into meaning that the flesh can be used as shamelessly as a man wishes. A suggestion of the Nicolaitans would be that there is no reason why a Christian should not come to terms with the world. They did not wish to be different from the world. This type of thinking, if it had caught on in the Church, would have meant the world would change Christianity instead of Christianity changing the world.
- 4 **COMDEMNED:** for losing the freshness and enthusiasm of their first love for Christ. It might be that their zeal in insuring that prophets spoke the truth (heresy hunting) had killed their love for all Christians. This probably divided the church into little groups each with their own special “thing” on which to check each prophet and thus caused the whole church to lose its close fellowship.
- 5 **ADMONISHED:** to remember the closeness and love they first had; to repent (admit the fault was theirs and feel worry for failing); and finally to do what they had first done (go back to the love and closeness they first had among themselves for all Christians) – return to a vital life with Christ.
- 7 **PROMISED:** that to those people who are willing to listen to what the Holy Spirit says and to overcome their shortcomings, Jesus will give the privilege of eating from the tree of life in the paradise of God. The victors will live eternally with Jesus and God in the New Jerusalem.

Questions for Thought

1. What does it mean that Christ “walks among the seven lampstands” and “holds the seven stars in his right hand”?
2. Was it appropriate for the church at Ephesus to test men who claimed to be apostles? Why or why not?
3. What was the basic fault of the Ephesian church?
4. Do you think that attention to correct doctrine necessarily works against maintaining a warm, personal relationship with God?
5. How can memory help to regain a previous level of spiritual life?
6. What would happen to the Ephesian congregation if it failed to repent? What does that mean?
7. In what way, if any, does your present love for God differ from your initial relationship with him? What group will have the right to “eat from the tree of life”?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson four)

Study (Ch 2 – Smyrna)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|-------------------|
|--------------|-------------------|

| | |
|---|---|
| 8 | <p><u>TO:</u> The messenger of the church in Smyrna. Smyrna was a beautiful seaport that was founded as a Greek colony around 1000 BC. It was destroyed about 600 BC and rebuilt around 200 BC. It was a loyal ally of Rome long before Rome was the undisputed power of the world. It had a host of temples (Zeus, Apollo, Aphrodite and other gods) that displayed magnificent architecture. It was also a city where culture and learning flourished. Jews, there, were especially numerous, influential, and hostile toward the Christians.</p> |
|---|---|

FROM: Christ, who is the first and last (eternal) and who passed through death to live again (the all-powerful victor).

| | |
|------|---|
| 9-10 | <p><u>COMMENDED:</u> for suffering afflictions, poverty and the slander of the Jews. Their poverty was the result of two things: 1. Most of them belonged to the lower classes of society, and 2. At times heathen mobs would attack and wreck their homes and ruin the things in them.</p> |
|------|---|

Slanders regularly spread against Christians were:

1. On the basis of the words of the Lord's Supper – this is my body and this is my blood – the story went about that the Christians were cannibals.
2. Because the Christians called their common meal the Agape, the Love Feast, it was said that their gatherings were orgies of lust.
3. Because Christianity did, in fact, often split families, when some members became followers of Jesus and some did not, the Christians were accused of “tampering with family relationships.”
4. The heathen accused the Christians of atheism because they could not understand a worship which had no images of the gods such as they themselves had.
5. The Christians were accused of being politically disloyal because they would not say, “Caesar is Lord.”
6. The Christians were accused of being incendiaries because they foretold the end of the world in flames. (Barclay pp 80-81)

CONDEMNED: None at all!

ADMONISHED: not to be afraid of the persecution and imprisonment they will suffer for a time but to be faithful, even to death as Christ was. During the second and third centuries, it has been estimated that as many as five million Christians were killed because of their testimony for Christ. During this persecution, the Church reached its greatest numbers in proportion to the world population. Persecuting the Church causes it to grow and thrive. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, was martyred on Saturday, February 23, 155 AD. At the time of the public games when the city was crowded and the crowds were excited, a shout suddenly went up “‘Away with the atheists; let Polycarp be searched for.’ No doubt Polycarp could have escaped; but he had already had a dream vision in which he saw the pillow under his head burning with fire and he had awakened to tell his disciples: ‘I must be burnt alive.’ His whereabouts was betrayed by a slave who collapsed under torture. They came to arrest him. He ordered that they should be given a meal and provided with all they wished, while he asked for himself the privilege of one last hour in prayer. Not even the police captain wished to see Polycarp die. On the brief journey

to the city, he pled with the old man: ‘What harm is it to say, “Caesar is Lord” and to offer sacrifice and be saved?’ But Polycarp was adamant that for him only Jesus Christ was Lord. When he entered the arena there came a voice from heaven saying: ‘Be strong, Polycarp, and play the man.’ The proconsul gave him the choice of cursing the name of Christ and making sacrifice to Caesar or death. ‘Eighty and six years have I served him,’ said Polycarp, ‘and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King who saved me?’ The proconsul threatened him with burning, and Polycarp replied: ‘You threaten me with fire that burns for a time, and is quickly quenched, for you do not know the fire which awaits the wicked in the judgment to come and in everlasting punishment. Why are you waiting? Come do what you will.’ So the crowds came flocking with faggots from the workshops and from the baths, and the Jews, even although they were breaking the Sabbath law by carrying such burdens, were foremost in bringing wood for the fire. They were going to bind him to the stake. ‘Leave me as I am,’ he said, ‘for he who gives me power to endure the fire, will grant me to remain in the flames unmoved even without the security you will give by the nails.’ So they left him loosely bound in the flames, and Polycarp prayed his great prayer:

O Lord God Almighty, Father of thy beloved and blessed Child, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received full knowledge of thee, God of angels and powers, and of all creation, and of the whole family of the righteous, who live before thee, I bless them that thou granted unto me this day and hour, that I may share, among the number of the martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and body in the immortality of the Holy Spirit. And may I today be received among them before thee, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as thou, the God without falsehood and of truth, has prepared beforehand and shown forth and fulfilled. For this reason I also praise thee for all things. I bless thee, I glorify thee through the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Child, through whom be glory to thee with him and the Holy Spirit, both now and for the ages that are to come. Amen.

So much is plain fact, but then the story drifts into legend, for it goes on to tell that the flames made a kind of tent around Polycarp and left him untouched. At length the executioner stabbed him to death to achieve what the flames could not do. And when he did this there came out a dove, and much blood, so that the fire was quenched, and all the crowd marveled that there was such a difference between the unbelievers and the elect.” (Barclay pp 76-77)

11 PROMISED that overcomers will not be hurt by the second death but will receive the crown of life.

Questions for Thought

1. In what way were the Christians at Smyrna rich?
2. What does it take to be a “real Jew”? (See Romans 2:28-29)
3. What should be the Christian attitude toward suffering for Christ?
4. What is required for receiving the crown of life?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson five)

Study (Ch 2 - Pergamum)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|-------------------|
|--------------|-------------------|

| | |
|----|--|
| 12 | <p><u>TO</u>: the messenger of the church in Pergamum. Pergamum was not built along any great road like Ephesus and Smyrna but was built on a tall, conical hill. From the top of the hill the Mediterranean Sea could be seen fifteen miles away. It was a center of culture surpassing both Ephesus and Smyrna and was one of the great religious centers. It had two particularly famous shrines. One was a temple of the god Asclepius. He was supposed to be the god of healing and his temples were the closest things to hospitals in the ancient world. The commonest title for him was Asclepius the Savior and his emblem was the same as it is for doctors today – a serpent. The other shrine was an altar to Zeus located about eight hundred feet up the side of Pergamum’s conical hill. It was forty feet high, stood on a projecting ledge of rock, looked like a great throne on the hillside, and all day was surrounded by the smoke of sacrifices offered to Zeus. Because it was the administrative center of Asia, Pergamum was also the center of Caesar worship for the province.</p> |
|----|--|

FROM: he who has the sharp, double-edged sword. Roman governors were divided into two classes – those who had the right of the sword and those who didn’t. Those with the right of the sword had the power of life and death. The proconsul (governor) who had his headquarters at Pergamum had the right of the sword and could at any moment use it against any Christian. Here Jesus reminds them and us that he holds the ultimate power over life and death.

| | |
|----|--|
| 13 | <p><u>COMMENDED</u>: for remaining true to Christ and not renouncing his name even in the face of death for being a witness. With a concentration of pagan religions in the city, it is easy to see why Christ said Satan lived and had his throne there. It also makes their commendation all the more significant since they didn’t try to escape from their situation but continued to remain true to Christ in the midst of it. The lesson for us is that no matter how un-Christian the situation is in which we live or work, we should be a witness for Christ.</p> |
|----|--|

| | |
|-------|--|
| 14-15 | <p><u>CONDEMNED</u>: for allowing false teachings and wrong practices in the church. Although the church at Ephesus had rejected the heresy of the Nicolaitans, the Pergamum church allowed that paganism to become an accepted part of them. This was the beginning of the mystery and ritualism of some current denominations. “The following is a partial list of unscriptural changes introduced during this (church) age:</p> |
|-------|--|

| <u>AD</u> | <u>Change</u> |
|-----------|--|
| 300 | Prayers for the dead |
| 300 | Making the sign of the cross |
| 375 | Worship of saints and angels |
| 394 | Mass first instituted |
| 431 | Worship of Mary begun |
| 500 | Priests began dressing differently than laymen |
| 526 | Extreme unction |
| 593 | Doctrine of purgatory introduced |
| 600 | Worship services conducted in Latin |
| 600 | Prayers directed to Mary |

From AD 312 on, the Church became more Roman and less Christian in its practices. The Roman Catholic Church of today is hard put to trace its ancestry to a time before AD 312. Until that time the Church was an independent collection of local churches, working together whenever possible but not dominated by a central authority. The name Pergamum literally means 'marriage' or 'elevation'. As the Church became married to governmental authority and elevated to a place of acceptance, it declined in spiritual blessing and power." (LaHaye p 37)

16 ADMONISHED: to repent (change their ways) or else they shall be judged by the Word of God.

17 PROMISED: to the overcomer, some hidden manna (spiritual food) and a white stone with a new name on it known only to God and that individual (eternal purity and righteousness).

Questions for Thought

1. What do you imagine would take place if all Christians in America were called upon to renounce their faith or suffer the consequences? Do you think this could happen within our lifetime?
2. How does Christ deal with the church that tolerates doctrinal error and immoral conduct?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson six)

Study (Ch 2 - Thyatira)

Verse

Discussion

18 **TO:** the messenger of the church in Thyatira. Less is known about Thyatira than any of the other seven cities primarily due to the fact that ancient writers rarely mentioned it and because a modern Turkish city (Akhisar) sits atop the ruins so no extensive archaeology can be performed. Although not much is known about it, it was not unimportant. It was a center of early Christianity. It had been a military headquarters during its Greek period (200 – 400 BC) during which it was named “Thyatira” which means “garrison of Thya.” During the reign of Rome, it continued to be a military headquarters because it was situated on the main road between Sardis and Pergamum. It was also a commercial center with many trade guilds for bronze workers, textile workers, coppersmiths, tanners, bakers, and potters. Lydia of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods mentioned in Acts 16:14 may have been a member of the textile workers guild. An inscription on a marble slab at Philippi says that Thyatira was honored among the purple dyers. Thyrian purple was a “colorfast, deep crimson color obtained by boiling fabrics in a special mixture of a particular type of shellfish and several chemicals.” The ground on which the city was built was only slightly elevated from the surrounding plain so it had no acropolis “high city” in which most cities had their temple and public buildings. But it did have people who worshipped the many Graeco-Roman gods. Little is known of the origins of Christianity at Thyatira. Perhaps Lydia and those with her who believed and were baptized took the knowledge and teaching of Paul about Jesus back to their community. By the time John wrote this letter to them, they had obviously established a certain amount of formal organization. (McKinney p 68-71) Refusing to join a trade guild meant giving up all prospect of commercial existence. The guilds held common meals, often in a temple, which began and ended with a sacrifice to the god or gods who were seen as protecting or guiding that guild. The meat served at the meal was what had been sacrificed to the idol of that god. The meals were also times of drunken revelry and orgies.

FROM: the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze. “Eyes like blazing fire” speaks of a penetrating gaze that sees what is believed to be hidden. “Feet of burnished bronze” speaks of judgment. So this is a description of one who has to ability to look with piercing judgment upon the Church.

19 **COMMENDED:** for good works, love & faith, service & perseverance, and for doing more good works than they had at first.

20-23 **CONDEMNED:** for allowing false teaching by a woman who called herself a prophet to lead believers astray. She is called Jezebel because, like Jezebel, she was introducing false teachings into God’s community (See 1 Kings 16:31ff). Specifically, this woman was encouraging believers to worship idols, eat food sacrificed to idols, and be sexually immoral. She probably didn’t want to do away with the Church but only wanted the Church to compromise its standards. She wanted the Church to adopt the world’s standards in the interest of business and commercial prosperity. She probably maintained that there was no need for people to cut themselves off from society or abstain from the guilds just because of eating meat sacrificed to idols and drunken revelry. Surely the Holy Spirit would just keep them from any harm. Obviously, she had considerable influence in the church at Thyatira. “Continuing where the Church at Pergamum left off, the following changes and doctrines that have their source in paganism were

added to the Church during this period:

| <u>AD</u> | <u>Change</u> |
|-----------|--|
| 607 | Boniface III made first Pope |
| 709 | Kissing the Pope's foot |
| 786 | Worshiping of images and relics |
| 850 | Use of "holy water" begun |
| 995 | Canonization of dead saints |
| 998 | Fasting on Fridays and during Lent |
| 1079 | Celibacy of the priesthood |
| 1090 | Prayer beads |
| 1184 | The Inquisition |
| 1190 | Sale of Indulgences |
| 1215 | Transubstantiation |
| 1220 | Adoration of the wafer (Host) |
| 1229 | Bible forbidden to laymen |
| 1414 | Cup forbidden to people during communion |
| 1439 | Doctrine of purgatory decreed |
| 1439 | Doctrine of seven sacraments affirmed |
| 1508 | The Ave Maria approved |
| 1545 | Tradition granted equal authority with Bible |
| 1546 | Apocryphal books included in the Bible |
| 1854 | Immaculate conception of Mary |
| 1870 | Infallibility of Pope proclaimed |
| 1930 | Public schools condemned |
| 1950 | Assumption of the Virgin Mary |
| 1965 | Mary proclaimed Mother of the Church (LaHaye p 44) |

Jesus says that those who lead people astray with false teachings, or "deeper truths" as some may call them, will enter into intense suffering and those who follow those teachers will die spiritually as well as enter into intense suffering. Since Jesus knows the innermost secrets of our hearts, we will be judged by what we really believe not by what we proclaim to believe. A crowded church which is overflowing with people, energy, programs, meetings, and good works is not necessarily a real church. The people may come for entertainment rather than instruction and to be soothed rather than confronted with the fact of sin and the offer of salvation. A church like that might be better called a club than a church.

24-25 ADMONISHED: to hold tightly to what you have until Christ returns. Refuse to compromise Christ's ways to win something from the world.

18 PROMISED: to the overcomers, who obey Jesus to the very end, will be given the authority to rule over nations. This is an authority that is given to believers during the Millennium. Overcomers also receive the assurance that Jesus will dwell with them (Jesus calls himself the bright morning star in Rev 22:16).

Questions for Thought

1. How could the followers of the Thyatiran Jezebel escape judgment?
2. Which of the first four churches would you rather join?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson seven)

Study (Ch 3 - Sardis)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|--|
| 1 | <p>TO: the messenger of the church in Sardis. Seven hundred years before John's writing, Sardis had been one of the greatest cities of the world. Croesus, the last king of Lydia (560-546 BC), ruled his empire from here in oriental splendor. He had a gold smelting operation and was said to have minted the first coins. "Sardis stood in the midst of the plain of the valley of the River Hermus. To the north of that plain rose the long ridge of Mount Tmolus; from that ridge a series of hills went out like spurs, each forming a narrow plateau. On one of these spurs, fifteen hundred feet up, stood the original Sardis. Clearly such a position made it almost impregnable. The sides of the ridge were smoothly precipitous; and only where the spur met the ridge of Mount Tmolus was there any possible approach into Sardis and even that was hard and steep. It has been said that Sardis stood like some gigantic watch-tower guarding the Hermus Valley. The time came when the narrow space on the top of the plateau was too small for the expanding city; and Sardis grew around the foot of the spur on which the citadel stood. The name Sardis (Sardeis in Greek) is really a plural noun, for there were two towns, one on the plateau and one in the valley beneath." (Barclay p 113) "Sardis means 'escaping ones' or those who 'come out'." (LaHaye p 50) The wealth of Sardis was legendary but, because of its magnificence and luxury, softness and deterioration set in. Twice it was captured because the people thought their citadel was impregnable and thus did not post a guard on watch. After Cyrus the Persian conquered the city in 546 BC, he made it the western capital of his kingdom. Alexander the Great captured the city in 334 BC as part of his conquering of the Persian kingdom from Cyrus. When Alexander died and his kingdom was divided among his four generals, Sardis was controlled by the Seleucids until the Romans conquered the area. In 71 AD, Sardis was destroyed by an earthquake and rebuilt by a donation from Rome because it was a Roman possession but the rebuilt city lacked the spirit and vitality it once had.</p> <p>FROM: him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. The seven spirits of God is a reference to the Holy Spirit which Jesus also calls the Spirit of Truth (John 14:16-17; John 15:26). Since Jesus holds the truth and the messengers of the Church in his hand that means he controls the truth and who receives it and that he controls the messengers of the Church.</p> |
| 1, 4 | <p>COMMENDED: some people feel the Sardians are commended for their works and reputation as an active (alive) church while others think that because of the way the sentence ends, the entire statement is part of the condemnation. I feel they are commended for what they once had because some individuals are definitely commended in verse 4 for remaining faithful.</p> |
| 20-23 | <p>CONDEMNED: for not really being active like their reputation but dead. "This name (Sardis), together with our Lord's condemnation of the church, provides a perfect description of the Reformation churches (1520 to Tribulation). The Protestant Reformation was the result of the continued emphasis by the Roman church on pagan doctrines rather than adherence to scriptural principles. The basic emphasis of the Reformation churches originally was Martin Luther's watchword, taken from Scripture, 'The just shall live by faith.' They had recoiled from trying to make salvation the result of works and sparked a resurgence of interest in studying the Scriptures. The tragedy of the Reformation churches that earned for them the condemnation by the Lord of being 'dead' was two-fold.</p> |

1. They became state churches. Luther, for example, sought the approval of the political leaders, and eventually the Lutheran Church became the state church of Germany, as did others throughout Europe. The danger of this is that the church then includes the entire population, thus eliminating the need for personal acceptance of Jesus Christ and an emphasis on the individual's relationship to God.

2. The Reformation churches did not sufficiently change many customs and teachings of the Roman church. Infant baptism was continued, in spite of the fact that there is no scriptural verification for it. Sprinkling was also continued, and ritualism, including some elements of the sacraments was perpetuated. Ritual and formality, characteristic of pagan forms of worship, are not conducive to genuine worship, for they appeal to the sensuous nature of man. The Bible teaches that God must be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). Ritual that comes from paganism cannot be of the Holy Spirit and does not convey truth. The main purpose of a church is the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This should be done in song and word. If people leave a church with the mysterious feeling of 'worship' but have not been brought face to face with Jesus Christ in a personal way, they have been worshiping in a dead church." (LaHaye p 50)

The Greek word for a church (a local body of believers) is *ekklesia* meaning they are called out from the world. The Holy Spirit is the life-blood of any local body of believers empowering them for their work and leading them into truth. Any church that no longer allows the Holy Spirit to lead them into truth will also not be empowered by the Spirit. Thus that church is dead and their works will not be perfect in God's sight.

2-4 ADMONISHED: to wake up (be watchful) and remember what they received and heard, to obey, and to repent of their ways. They are told that, if they are not watchful of what they do, they will be surprised by Jesus when he returns like a thief in the night. "Because the Reformation churches have not heeded our Lord's warning, it is obvious that they are going to be taken unawares when our Lord comes. One of the many evidences of this prophetic ignorance on the part of the Reformation churches is that they are leaders in the World Council of Churches' ecumenical program, which purposes to unite all Protestants, all Catholics, and eventually all religions. If they just understood the prophetic Word of God, they would realize that they are aiding and abetting the Antichrist's program, for that combined church will be his church during the first three-and-a-half years of the Tribulation (Rev 17)." (LaHaye p 52)

5-6 PROMISED: that overcomers, like the faithful will be dressed in white (found pure) and will never have their name erased from the book of life but have it acknowledged by Jesus before God and his angels. "In the ancient world a king kept a register of his citizens. When a man committed a crime against the state, or when he died, his name was erased from that register." (Barclay p 123) "It is possible to have one's name blotted out of that book for three reasons: (1) for sinning against God (Ex 32:33); (2) for not being an overcomer, which is synonymous with being born again or putting one's trust in Christ Jesus. (1 John 5:1-4); (3) for taking away from the words of the prophecy of Revelation 22:19" (LaHaye p 53)

Questions for Thought

1. How can a church have a reputation for being alive and yet be dead?
2. What is implied by Christ's assertion that he will "come like a thief"?
3. What is the book of life?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson eight)

Study (Ch 3 - Philadelphia)

Verse

Discussion

7

TO: the messenger of the church in Philadelphia. The youngest of the seven cities, Philadelphia was founded between 159 to 138 BC by colonists from Pergamum. It was named after Attalus II Philadelphus who built it. It was located on the lower slopes of Mount Tmolus, about 28 miles SW of Sardis and 105 miles W of Smyrna (Izmir). “It stood upon a terrace 650 ft. above the sea. Behind it are the volcanic cliffs to which the Turks have given the name of Devitt, or “inkwells”; on the other side of the city the land is exceedingly fertile, and there was produced a wine of whose excellence the celebrated Roman poet Virgil wrote. ... another name of the city was Decapolis, because it was considered as one of the ten cities of the plain. A third name which it bore during the 1st century AD was Neo-kaisaria; it appears upon the coins struck during that period. During the reign of Vespasian, it was called Flavia. Its modern name, *Αλα-σηηριρ*, is considered by some to be a corruption of the Turkish words *Αλλαη-σηηριρ*, “the city of God,” but more likely it is a name given it from the reddish color of the soil. In addition to all of these names it sometimes bore the title of “Little Athens” because of the magnificence of the temples and other public buildings which adorned it. Philadelphia quickly became an important and wealthy trade center, for as the coast cities declined, it grew in power, and retained its importance even until late Byzantine times.” (International Standard Bible Dictionary article by E.J. Banks) The city was situated in the province of Lydia where bordered two other regions of Asia Minor — Mysia and Phrygia. The city was founded as a mission to peacefully spread the Greek culture and language. The settlers did their job so well that by 19 AD, the Lydians had all but forgotten their own language and considered themselves Greeks. The earthquake that destroyed Sardis in 17 AD caused daily tremors in Philadelphia for years so that the people waited subconsciously for the tremors and would flee for their lives to open spaces. “As in most Asia Minor cities, many Jews lived there, and they possessed a synagogue. During the reign of Tiberius the city was destroyed by an earthquake, yet it was quickly rebuilt.” (International Standard Bible Dictionary article by E.J. Banks) “When the Turks and Mohammedanism flooded across Asia Minor and every other town had fallen, Philadelphia stood erect. For centuries it was a free Greek Christian city amidst a pagan people. It was the last bastion of Asian Christianity.” (Barclay pp 126-127) “Twice, in 1306 and 1324, it was besieged by the Seljuk Turks, but it retained its independence until after 1390, when it was captured by the combined forces of the Turks and Byzantines.” (International Standard Bible Dictionary article by E.J. Banks)

The name Philadelphia literally means “brotherly love.” The believers in Philadelphia describe the church age that started in 1750 and will continue to the Tribulation. It represents the evangelical, fundamental, Bible-believing church. Where the Reformation church age was cold because of trying to make Christianity a state church, the Philadelphia church age is marked by vitality and life. In this age God works through revivals such as in Europe, the British Isles and America and through the modern missionary movement to bring people to himself. God placed a burden for lost people on the hearts of people like William Carey, Adoniram Judson, David Livingstone, Jonathan Goforth and others. Consequently they went to live in foreign lands such as Africa, China, Japan, Korea, India, and South America so that they could tell the people about Jesus in their own culture.

FROM: the one who is holy and true, who holds the key of David, and who opens doors no one

can shut and shuts doors no one can open. Two of these four descriptions of Jesus are the same as found in Chapter One — he is holy, separated from the world, and true, ultimate reality. For the last two descriptions, the key of David and the opening and shutting doors, there is a parallel in Isaiah 22:22. God told Isaiah to foretell that he would remove Shebna as palace administrator and replace him with Eliakim, to whom he would give the key of David and authority to open and shut doors that no one else could change. The key of David seems to be a reference to the authority to rule over God's kingdom. This key belongs to Jesus' since he is of the lineage of David and thus has authority to rule over David's kingdom. The opening and shutting of doors speaks to the power Jesus has to open up opportunities for his followers to minister to people and to share the message of God's love and Jesus' work to people.

8-10 COMMENDED: for their works, even though they were small in strength. They also kept Jesus' word (commandments) and did not deny his name. That Jesus has set before them an open door that no one can shut indicates they will always have the opportunity to share about Jesus throughout the Church age. This is what Paul was talking about to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 16:9. That they are small in strength indicates true believers will always be a minority. Jesus said that the gate or door into the kingdom is narrow and that not many will find or enter it. (Matt 7:13-14; Luke 13:24-30) That they have kept Jesus' word indicates their obedience. People in the other churches have believed Jesus' word but they are condemned for not being obedient to it. That they have not denied Jesus' name indicates they have been faithful in telling people about him. Satan always tries to counter Jesus' work so it is interesting that this church age has seen the greatest increase in false Messiahs and false religions.

There is an interesting thing about the letter to this church. It contains a promise to them that is not just to overcomers. Jesus says that he will make those liars who say they are Jews acknowledge them and he will keep them from the time of great testing of those who are on the earth. Those who claim to be Jews but are not are really followers of Satan. That is what Jesus indicated in John 8:42-47. So believers who strive obey Jesus' word are promised that one day the religious impostors and false teachers will be forced to acknowledge Jesus' love for his true followers. Jesus says that because they have patiently endured as they had been commanded, he would keep them from the time of great testing that will happen to those on Earth. Since the Philadelphia church represents the true followers of Jesus, this appears to be a clear statement that the Church will not remain on the world for the Tribulation that is described in Revelation 6-18.

CONDEMNED: for nothing. Since this church represents the believers who seek God's will, listen to his voice, and follow what he commands them to do, there is nothing for which to condemn them. That doesn't mean they never fail to be obedient but that they quickly recognize their disobedience, repent of it, seek God's forgiveness, and attempt to continue on in the right path. All believers throughout the world who do this are part of the Philadelphia church no matter what local congregation they belong to.

11 ADMONISHED: to hold on to what they have (enduring faith) so no one will take their crown (symbol of power and authority that the Church will wear for eternity in the kingdom).

12-13 PROMISED: that overcomers will have a permanent place in the sanctuary of God and will not have to leave. Jesus will write on each overcomer the name of God (the name the Hebrews would never say but only write as YHWH and some have translated as Jehovah), the name of God's city (the new Jerusalem), and Jesus' own new name (which no one will know until that time). This assures the believer that he will have access to God's presence, the right to abide in God's city, and the privilege of having an intimate relationship with the object of his affection, Jesus.

Questions for Thought

1. Since Jesus told Peter that he would give him the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:17-19) does that mean the Church now holds the key of David?
2. What is the open door that is set before the Church?
3. Since the Church (obedient followers of Jesus) will not have to go through the time of great testing (Tribulation described in Rev 6-18), who will be left behind at the Rapture (the time the Church is removed from the world)?
4. What does it mean to be inscribed with, or have written upon you, the name of God?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson nine)

Study (Ch 3 - Laodicea)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|-------------------|
|--------------|-------------------|

| | |
|----|--|
| 14 | <p>TO: the messenger of the church in Laodicea. “Laodicea was founded by Antiochus II (261-246 BC) of Syria, who named it for his wife Laodike, and who populated it with Syrians and with Jews who were transplanted from Babylonia to the cities of Phrygia and Lydia. Though Laodicea stood on the great highway at the junction of several important routes, it was a place of little consequence until the Roman province of Asia was formed in 190 BC. It then suddenly became a great and wealthy center of industry, famous especially for the fine black wool of its sheep and for the Phrygian powder for the eyes, which was manufactured there. In the vicinity was the temple of Men Karou and a renowned school of medicine. In the year 60 AD, the city was almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake, but so wealthy were its citizens that they rejected the proffered aid of Rome, and quickly rebuilt it at their own expense. It was a city of great wealth, with extensive banking operations. Little is known of the early history of Christianity there; Timothy, Mark and Epaphras (Col 1:7) seem to have been the first to introduce it. However, Laodicea was early the chief bishopric of Phrygia, and about 166 AD Sagaris, its bishop, was martyred. In 1071 the city was taken by the Seljuks; in 1119 it was recovered to the Christians by John Comnenus, and in the 13th century it fell finally into the hands of the Turks. The ruins, now called <i>Eski Hissar</i>, or old castle, lie near the modern <i>Gonjelli</i> on the railroad, and they have long served as a quarry to the builders of the neighboring town of <i>Denizli</i>. Among them nothing from before the Roman period has appeared. One of the two Roman theaters is remarkably well preserved, and there may still be seen the stadium, a colonnade, the aqueduct which brought the water across the valley to the city by an inverted siphon of stone pipes, a large necropolis, and the ruins of three early Christian churches.” (International Standard Bible Dictionary article by E.J. Banks)</p> |
|----|--|

Laodicea was located about 90 miles inland from Ephesus and about 12 miles from Colossae. From Paul's letter to the Colossians, it appears that he never visited Laodicea himself but probably heard from Epaphras about the false doctrines that were being followed there. That is probably the reason he requested his letter to the Colossians be sent to Laodicea for them to read (Col 4:15-16). It appears that Paul also wrote a letter to the Laodiceans but that it was not preserved. Perhaps they disliked what he said so much that they destroyed it to keep other people from hearing what he had written to them. The believers in Laodicea must have been wealthy because among the present day ruins there are the remains of three churches dating back to the early days of Christianity. But in spite of their wealth, there is no evidence that they spread the Gospel message to other parts of the region.

There was a large Jewish population in Laodicea. The number must have been around 7500 based on the record of the amount of temple tax they paid. That indicates the total population of Laodicea must have been very large and that it was a major metropolis of the area.

FROM: the Amen (the one whose words are truth), the faithful and true witness (the one who knows the Father and makes him known to people), and the ruler of God's creation (the one who has been given dominion over the entire universe). Amen is a Hebrew word that means “true” and carries a note of finality to it. It is the word with which Jesus often began a statement of

great importance (example John 1:51) by saying it twice. The double amen phrase is often translated “verily, verily” or “I tell you the truth.” This is a picture of the ultimate, truthful authority to which all creation must answer.

COMMENDED: for nothing. There were not doing one thing for which Jesus could commend them.

15-17 CONDEMNED: for indifference (lukewarm – neither hot or cold). Being lukewarm is a very self-deceiving state in which a person partially follows the commands of God. They think it is good form to be a Christian so they profess to believe, have been baptized, and become members of a local congregation. Some may even perform Christian service as a duty but they have never accepted the Lordship of Jesus over their lives. The problem is that they don’t even recognize their condition. This type of “Christian” is so repulsive to Jesus that he says he will soon eject them from their perceived position in the Church. As a church age, the Laodiceans are descriptive of the time since the ecumenical movement began. The ecumenical movement seeks to get religious groups to work closely together and accept each other in spite of their differences. They try to do this not only between Baptists and Methodists and other Christian denominations, but also between Baptist and Mormons and Buddhists and other cults. The Laodiceans are the apostate church.

18-20 ADMONISHED: to buy riches, righteousness, and spiritual understanding. In other words, repent and turn to Jesus. To the individuals and church of this age, Jesus says that He stands at the door of their hearts and knocks. If anyone will respond to his knock and ask him to come in, Jesus says he will not only come in but stay. Even though the spiritual condition of this church age is repulsive to Jesus, he promises individuals that if they accept him as Lord and Master, he will accept them.

21-22 PROMISED: the overcomers will have the right to share Jesus’ throne. This means they will rule and reign with Jesus in his coming kingdom.

Questions for Thought

1. What does Jesus mean when he calls the Laodicean church lukewarm?
2. What is Jesus’ response to their lukewarm condition? Is this still his response?
3. Why are love and discipline not contradictory?
4. Which of the seven churches best describes yours?
5. Which church best describes your spiritual condition?

Summary of the church ages as outlined by LaHaye

Ephesus – the apostolic church – AD 30 – 100
Smyrna – the persecuted church – AD 100 – 312
Pergamum – the indulged church – AD 312 – 606
Thyatira – the pagan church – AD 606 – tribulation
Sardis – the dead church – AD 1520 – tribulation
Philadelphia – the Church Christ loves – AD 1750 – rapture
Laodicea – the lukewarm (apostate) church – AD 1900 – tribulation

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson ten)

Study (Ch 4 – The Throne Room)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
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| 1 | <p>At this point the vision changes from earth and the Isle of Patmos to heaven and the Throne Room of God. It is also at this point that there begins to be big differences in interpretations. To see how we should interpret this change of setting, let's go back to Rev. 1:19 where Jesus instructs John to write "what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later." The phrase, "what you have seen," refers to John's vision of Jesus in chapter one. The phrase, "what is now," refers to the condition of the seven churches and the seven conditions of the Church Age as shown in chapters two and three. That leaves us with the phrase, "what will take place later." So it must refer to future events after the Church Age which are then described in chapters four through twenty-two.</p> |
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A door into heaven is opened and Jesus (the voice John had first heard speaking to him like a trumpet) tells John to come up here and he will be shown what must take place after this (after the Church Age). This phrase has given rise to one of four views about when the rapture of believers will occur. This view is that the Church will be raptured before the Tribulation begins and thus is called the Pre-Tribulation view. Another view is that the rapture will occur at the mid-point of the Tribulation. Thus it is called the Mid-Tribulation view. The third view is that the rapture will occur just before the pouring out of the seven bowl judgments and is called the Pre-Wrath view. The fourth view is that the Church will not be raptured until Jesus comes back to earth (the second advent) at the end of the Tribulation and therefore is called the Post-Tribulation view.

The "rapture" or sudden snatching out of this world of the believers is taught by Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonian believers. In 1 Thess 4:13-18 Paul is writing about the coming of the Lord and what will happen to believers who have already died (fallen asleep). He says that "according to Jesus' own word, ... we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep." Then he says that "the Lord, himself, will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first." This doesn't say that Jesus will actually set foot on earth at this time but only that he will come from heaven and with the voice of authority will command the dead to rise up from their graves much like he did when commanding Lazarus to come forth from his grave. Then he teaches that after the dead have been raised from the dead that, "we who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air." Here, Paul is specific in saying that Jesus is not on the earth but in the air when the command is given and believers, dead and alive, join him. Paul also says that the believers who are alive will be "caught up." The Greek word which is translated "caught up" is from the verb, *harpazo*, which means "to snatch or take away something." The Latin word for this is *raptus* from which we get the word rapture. The picture that Paul paints of the Lord calling his followers to join him is similar to the picture John paints of his being called to join Jesus in heaven for the rest of the vision. If this were the only reason for believing in a Pre-Tribulation rapture, it would rest on rather shaky ground. But consider these other reasons why John's ascent into heaven is the appropriate placing of the rapture.

1. The location of this event is right for the rapture. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with the seven successive periods of church history. Chapters 4 and 5 present a vision in heaven, and chapter 6 introduces the Tribulation period. John, one of the first true members of the Church of

Jesus Christ, is a fitting symbol of the Church being taken out of the world just before the Tribulation begins as our Lord promised: “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.” (Rev 3:10 – The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia)

2. The absence of any mention of the Church indicates that it is not on the earth during the Tribulation. There are sixteen references to the Church in the first three chapters of Revelation, whereas chapters 6 through 18, which cover the Tribulation, do not mention the Church once. The natural conclusion drawn from this is that the Church will be absent during the events of the Tribulation.
3. The extensive use of Old Testament language and symbols in chapters 4 to 18 is an indication of Israel, not the Church. This is understandable since the church age is the time of the Gentiles, whereas the Tribulation is the time of Jacob’s trouble or the seventieth week of Daniel, determined by God for his dealing with Israel. Some of these symbols are the tabernacle, the Ark of the Covenant, the altar, elders, censers, cherubim, seals, trumpets, and plagues. (LaHaye, p 75-76)

None of these reasons taken alone is sufficient to say that Rev 4:1-2 is an indication of the rapture of the Church. But when you consider them all together, it appears logical that the timing of the rapture would be just at the end of the Church age.

Romans 5:9 says, “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him!” There is no reason to think this wrath is just eternal judgment for not accepting Jesus as God and his death as payment for sin. This must also apply to the wrath of God poured out upon the people of the world during the Tribulation. We will see that the seal and trumpet judgments are as much the wrath of God as the bowl judgments. In Genesis 19:22, God’s angels could not begin destroying Sodom until Lot was safely removed. In the same way, the Church must be removed before any of God’s wrath is visited upon the earth. Since the Church must be removed before any of the wrath of God, that means only the Pre-Tribulation view is an acceptable interpretation of all that the Bible teaches. Rev 4:1-2 is the best timing since the vision John is given of the throne room of heaven flows immediately into the revealing of the Lamb and the scroll which has the seals that are the beginning of the Tribulation.

- 2 John is then immediately taken by the power of the Holy Spirit to the throne room of heaven where the first thing he sees is the throne with someone sitting on it.
- 3 John describes the one he sees on the throne in terms of two precious stones (gems) – jasper, carnelian (sardian), and emerald. This jasper is not the opaque stone that we know but is clear as crystal, like diamond, according to Rev 21:11. The clear jasper represents the glory of God. The sardian stone (which was said to be found mainly around Sardis) was blood red and often called a ruby. The blood red sardian represents God’s avenging wrath. The emerald colored rainbow that circled the throne represents the eternal covenant of God’s mercy just like the rainbow represents his covenant never to destroy the earth again by a flood of water like the flood of Noah. Jasper, ruby, and emerald were three of the twelve stones in the High Priest’s ephod representing the twelve tribes of Israel (Ex 28:17). They are also part of the foundation stones of the Holy City (Rev 21:19)
- 4 Surrounding the throne are the thrones of twenty-four elders dressed in white with crowns of gold. One of the most controversial questions concerning this vision of the throne room is the identity of these elders. Some Bible scholars believe them to be men (the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles). Other scholars believe them to be angels. Other scholars believe they symbolically represent the twenty-four courses of priests that served in the temple as described in

1 Chronicles 24:7-19. Still other scholars believe they symbolically represent the saved people from all ages. Since the apostle John is viewing this, it seems unlikely that they are the patriarchs and apostles. The idea that they are even men at all probably comes from an improper translation of Rev 5:8-12 in the King James Version. The phrases translated “redeemed us” and “made us” have since been corrected to read “redeemed men” and “made them.” The term “elder” means leader and is actually a title of rank.

The following are reasons why the “elders” should be viewed as angels and not men.

1. The 24 thrones are around God’s throne – not part of it. According to Rev 3:21, overcomers will sit with Jesus on his throne just like Jesus sits with his Father on the Father’s throne.
2. In Matt 19:28, Jesus told his disciples that at the renewal of all things when he sat on his throne they would sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. When will this occur? According to Rev 20:4 it happens during the Millennial (1000 year) reign of Jesus.
3. Jesus will sit on his throne of glory when he comes in his glory with all the holy angels. (Matt 19:28) Currently he sits with his Father and not on his own throne. He will sit on his own throne during his 1000 year reign. (Rev 20:6)
4. Angels may also be dressed in white linen and girded with a golden sash like Jesus. (Rev 15:6; Matt 28:2-3; Acts 1:9-11)
5. The crowns of gold on the elders’ heads is not described as one of the crowns that are given to believers. The five crowns spoken of as rewards for believers are: the incorruptible crown or victor’s crown (1 Cor 9:25), the crown of rejoicing or soul winner’s crown (1 Thess 2:19-20), the crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), the crown of glory or crown for service (1 Pet 5:2-4), and the crown of life or martyr’s crown (Rev 2:10 and James 1:12). According to Rev 11:14-18 believers are to be rewarded between the 2nd and 3rd woes of the Tribulation so this would be when they receive these crowns.
6. Paul gave a charge to Timothy (1 Tim 5:21) “in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels.”

So, to keep from forcing a symbol on something that doesn’t require it, we can easily accept that these “elders” are angels in God’s service and see that they are leaders of a vast group of angels in God’s service whose function is the administration of his universe.

- 5 The flashes of lightning, rumblings, and thunder coming from the throne are used several places in the Bible to indicate the presence of God and his judgment. The seven lamps before the throne that are the seven spirits of God is the presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 6 What looked like a sea of crystal clear glass before the throne may be the waters above the firmament that form the floor of heaven which God has set the beams of his chambers upon (Psalm 148:4, Psalm 104:3). Another idea for its meaning (by LaHaye) is that it parallels an extra-biblical writing that tells about a sea of glass supposedly in Solomon’s Temple which represented the Word of God. Whether it one of these two meanings or something else, the sea of crystal clear glass surely indicates dazzling purity and an immense distance.
- 6-8 These four living creatures are thought by some Bible scholars to be cherubim (Psalm 80:1; 2 Kings 19:15; Ezekiel 1:5-28) while others believe them to be seraphim (Isaiah 6:1-3). Some scholars give special symbolism to the features of these living creatures. Irenaeus (an early Church writer), about 170 A.D. held them to represent four aspects of the work of Jesus which are also represented by the four gospel accounts. “The lion symbolizes the powerful and effective working of the Son of God, his leadership and his royal power. The ox signifies the priestly side of his work, for it is the animal of sacrifice. The man symbolizes his incarnation. The eagle represents the gift of the Holy Spirit, hovering with his wings over the Church.” (Barclay, p160)

There have been a variety of different schemes for identifying each of these aspects to the four gospels with that of Augustine becoming the most widely accepted.

“Matthew is best represented by the lion, because in it Jesus is depicted as the Lion of Judah, the One in whom all the expectations of the prophets came true. Mark is best represented by the man, because it is the nearest approach to a factual report of the human life of Jesus. Luke is best represented by the ox, because it depicts Jesus as the sacrifice for all classes and conditions of men and women everywhere. John is best represented by the eagle, because of all birds it flies the highest and is said to be the only living creature which can look straight into the sun; and John of all the gospels reaches the highest heights of thought.” (Barclay, p 161)

9-11 When the creatures give glory, honor and thanks to God, the twenty-four elders fall down worshipping God and declaring him worthy to receive glory, honor, and power because he created all things.

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson eleven)

Study (Ch 5 – The Throne Room Continued)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
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| 1 | <p>This verse begins with either “and” or “then” depending on the translation. The Greek word John writes to being this thought is <i>kai</i> and the first, primary meaning of this word is “and.” The second meaning of the word is “likewise.” The purpose of the word is to connect what comes after it to what was presented before. So after John has seen God sitting on his throne in heaven and attempted to describe him, his attention is focused on a scroll or book in the right hand of God. The Greek word is <i>biblion</i> from which we get our word, Bible. As we think of a “book,” it consists of pages which may have writing on both sides and are bound together on one edge. The common book of the First Century was long length of material made from the fibers of reeds or other organic material or from the skins of animals. The cheaper and most common was made from organic material. The fibers for the back of the material were laid vertically and overlapping one another. The fibers for the front were laid horizontally over the back fibers and also were overlapped. Then the fibers were pounded until they were formed into a paper-like substance. Then the material was rolled up from both ends on wooden or metal rods. A writer would begin at one end of the length of material and generally only write on the front side because it was easier to write on fibers running horizontally. If an author reached the end of the material and still had more to write, he would then write on the back side even though it was more difficult to do. These books or scrolls were generally tied with a cloth or string-like material after being rolled up so that they would be compact and not unroll unless someone was going to read them. Scrolls containing important information like military orders, government documents, and legal documents (like a will) had wax melted on the knot of the string to show that it had not been opened. If the scroll contained the message of a king or other official, that official’s signet ring was pressed into the warm wax. Only someone who had the authority to break the official’s seal would dare open the scroll because if he didn’t have authority, it meant death. The outside of the scroll might even state who had authority to open the scroll and the conditions under which it might be opened. This was generally the case for a legal document transferring property to someone after an individual’s death (like a will in our day).</p> |
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The scroll that John sees has three characteristics. 1. It is in God’s right hand which indicates that only one having the proper authority could have access to it. 2. The fact that John could see writing on the outside of the scroll indicates that the author had so much to write that he had to write not only on the inside but also on the outside. 3. It was sealed with seven seals. A Roman will was attested to by seven witnesses and each one put his signet ring on a separate knot to show he had witnessed the writing in the scroll. After a person died, his will could not be opened until all seven witnesses or their legal representatives were present. This description indicates that the scroll is God’s will or his final settlement of the affairs of the universe. It is sealed for extreme secrecy. It could be the same scroll that Daniel was told seal up until the time of the end. (Daniel 12:4)

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| 2 - 4 | <p>Then John hears a challenging question from a mighty angel. The angel asks who is worthy (or has the authority) to break the seals and open the scroll. Anyone who wanted to open the scroll would first need the authority to take it from the right hand of God. The angel found no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth (in Hades) who could open the scroll or even look inside it. John is saddened to tears by no one being worthy to open the scroll because it appears that God’s promise to show what will take place later (Rev 1:19) appears to be thwarted.</p> |
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- 5 One of the “elders” that John saw earlier tells him not to weep and directs his attention to the fact that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, who is also called the root of David, has accomplished the mission or work given to him and has the authority to take and open the scroll by breaking the seven seals. In Genesis 49, when Jacob is blessing his sons before his death, he blesses his son, Judah, by comparing him to a lion. By the time of the silence between the last book (writings) of the OT and the birth of Jesus, the phrase “the Lion of Judah” came to be a title for the Messiah. In Isaiah 11, the prophet describes an individual who will come from the lineage of David (the Root of Jesse) and will reclaim for the second time the remnant of the nation of Israel and assemble them from the four quarters of the earth where they have been scattered.
- 6 John then sees a Lamb which looked like it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne which John had described as God’s. When describing Jesus to the people around him the day after baptizing him, John calls Jesus “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) The Lamb has seven horns and seven eyes (or the seven-fold spirit of God – the Holy spirit). The seven horns indicate complete power (omnipotence) and the seven eyes indicate that he sees everything (omniscience). Both of these are characteristics of God. So John is plainly saying that the individual he sees is not God, the Father, but God, the Son, who died as a sacrifice for the sins of the human race.
- 7 The Lamb is able to take the scroll from the hand of God indicating that his sacrificial work has made him worthy (given him the authority) to break the seals of the scroll and reveal what is written on it about the time of the end.
- 8 When the Lamb takes the scroll from God’s hand, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fall down before the Lamb in worship. John also notices that the elders and the four living creatures each have a harp and are holding golden bowls full of incense. He understands from Ex 30:1-10, 34-38; Lev 10:1-2 that incense was part of the worship of God and from Psalm 141:2 that the incense represented not only the sweet smell of the life of people devoted to God but also the prayers of those people. The first two of the Ten Commandments are to have no other gods and to worship no other gods. Only the God who created the universe is worthy of being worshipped so the worship of the four living creatures around God’s throne and that of the twenty-four elders is an indication that they recognize the Lamb is God. This is meant to clearly indicate to everyone that the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, and the Lamb looking like it had been slain are Jesus.
- 9-10 As the elders and living creatures fall down in worship of the Lamb they sing a song that is new in heaven. It is new because it won’t be sung until the Lamb actually takes the scroll describing the end time from the hand of God. The song is also new because it is a departure from what John had seen as continuously being sung around the throne just previously by the four living creatures and the elders. The song describes that the Lamb is worthy to take and open the scroll because he died and used his own blood to purchase people from every tribe and language for God and has made them a kingdom of priests to serve God and reign on earth. So part of the writing that is visible on the outside of the scroll must be the requirements describing who is authorized to open the scroll. And the Lamb, Jesus the Messiah, is recognized as having fulfilled the requirements by his life and death. The fact that the four living creatures who definitely are not humans are also singing the song with the elders indicates that the elders are not humans either and that the KJV translation having the elders say “you purchased us” and “you made us” is an improper translation.
- 11-12 Then John saw that there were so many angels surrounding the throne, creatures, and elders that they he was not able to count them (“thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand”). These angels join in singing that the Lamb, who was slain, is worthy to be

worshipped. Notice that the Lamb is worthy to receive seven things: power, wealth, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and praise.

13-14 Then John hears every creature in the universe (in heaven, on earth, under the earth, on the sea and in the sea) singing. The song all of the creatures of the universe sing is worship of the Lamb. When the creatures finish their song, the four living creatures around the throne say “Amen” (which means “so be it.”) and then the elders fall down in worship again.

Questions for thought

1. What does the scroll that the Lamb take from God contain?
2. What do the titles “the Lion of the Tribe of Judah” and “the Root of David” signify?
3. What do the horns and eyes of the Lamb signify?
4. Why is the Lamb worthy to open the scroll?
5. What indication is there that God hears the prayers of believers?
6. What indication is there that God and the Lamb are honored equally?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twelve)

Study (Daniel 9 – Daniel’s Seventy Weeks)

In order to understand the significance of the events that begin with the opening of the first of the seven seals and the place those events have in God’s plan for restoring humanity to its rightful relationship with himself and for putting an end to the rebellion Satan led among the angels, it is necessary to go back to the book of Daniel and study at what God told him.

In the first year of Darius, who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom (539 - 538 B.C.), Daniel prays to God for an understanding of Jeremiah’s prophecy that the destruction of Jerusalem would last seventy years. Gabriel again comes to Daniel and gives him the following interpretation. He says that seventy ‘sevens’ (or weeks) are decreed for Daniel’s people and the holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. Then he says that from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One comes will be seven ‘sevens’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ He says that the Jerusalem will be rebuilt but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. Then the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. Then he says the end will come like a flood – that war will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. That ruler will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven’ but in the middle of that ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing of the temple until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.

Verse

Discussion

- 1 – 3 The first year of Darius, who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom was 539 – 538 BC. At this time, Daniel had been studying the writings of the prophet Jeremiah and understood (from Jeremiah 25:11 and 29:10) that the desolation of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Hebrew people in Babylon would last 70 years. The fall and capture of Jerusalem occurred in 605 BC and Daniel was taken captive at this time. So Daniel had experienced 67 years of the captivity and since he would have been around 15 when taken captive, he must have been about 82 years old. That is considered to be a fairly old age today but in Daniel’s day it would have been considered ancient because most people didn’t live anywhere that long. Daniel was known as a righteous follower of God (remember the story of Daniel in the lion’s den) so he decided to plead with God for the restoration of Jerusalem and the Hebrew people.
- 4 – 19 This Daniel’s prayer. He confessed that God had always dealt righteously with the Hebrew people even though they had repeatedly disobeyed him. He affirmed that God had been right to bring about the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity of the Hebrew people (that would also include Daniel’s captivity). He acknowledges that the people still are not righteous in their actions, but he pleads with God, in keeping with all his righteous acts and because of his great mercy, to turn his anger from Jerusalem and his desolate sanctuary (the Temple), and to restore his people to the city. He asks God to end the captivity and destruction of Jerusalem, not because the people are righteous but so that God’s name will be honored as he fulfills his promises.
- 20 – 27 While Daniel is still confessing the sin of his people and the righteousness of God, the angel Gabriel (whom Daniel had seen in an earlier vision) appears to him. Gabriel says that as soon as Daniel had begun to pray God sent him with an answer so that Daniel would have insight and understanding. Then he gives him God’s message. God says that seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for Daniel’s people (the Hebrews) and Jerusalem for the purpose of accomplishing six things...

1. to finish transgression (to shut up or arrest all transgression)
2. to put an end to sin (to put an end to all disobedience of God)
3. to atone for wickedness (the payment has been made by Jesus' death on the cross but for it to be completed it must be accepted/recognized by the person for whom the payment is made)
4. to bring in everlasting righteousness (to begin the kingdom of everlasting righteousness where Jesus is actually ruling on earth over an earthly kingdom)
5. to seal up vision and prophecy (to fulfill all that God has been promised in visions and prophecies)
6. to anoint the most holy (an openly, formal installation of Jesus as King of the earth)

Then Daniel is told that from the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, will be seven 'sevens' and sixty-two 'sevens.'

To understand what Daniel is being told, it is important to know what is meant by the Hebrew word that is translated 'sevens' in the NIV and 'weeks' in many other versions. The word "actually means a unit of seven rather than seven days and only the context reveals how much time is involved." (LaHaye p 91) We will shortly see from a review of history that the 'sevens' are actually years so that the seventy 'sevens' would be 70 units of 7 years which equals 490 years. And it is in a total of 490 years that God says he will accomplish the above six things.

In 539 – 538 BC, Cyrus issued the decree for the rebuilding of the Temple, but he said nothing about rebuilding the city (2 Chr 36:22-23; Ezra 1). The rebuilding of the Temple was begun by Zerubbabel but soon stopped because of reports to the king by people of the surrounding area. Those people didn't want the Temple rebuilt without their being a part of it so they accused the returned captives of rebuilding the city and therefore being a threat to the king (Ezra 4). In 519 BC, Darius issued a decree that Cyrus' decree should be completed. Again nothing was said about rebuilding the city. So, the people continued rebuilding the Temple and in the sixth year of his reign (516 BC), the temple was completed (Ezra 5:1 – 6:15). In 458 BC, Artaxerxes issued a decree allowing any Israelites in the kingdom to return to Jerusalem for the purpose of reestablishing the Temple worship and teaching of the Law so the people would follow God (Ezra 7). Again, this decree said nothing about rebuilding the city. Finally, in 445 BC, Artaxerxes issues a decree that Nehemiah should go to Jerusalem and see to the rebuilding of the walls of the city. This decree fits the one God told Daniel would begin the 70 'sevens.' And under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah (Neh 1-8), it took the Hebrew people forty-nine years to complete the rebuilding of the city walls (396 BC). This equals the first seven 'sevens' that God said it would be from the issuing of the decree to the rebuilding of the city. God told Daniel the city would be rebuilt, but in times of trouble (Dan 9:25) and Neh 1-8 shows that was exactly what happened.

Then God told Daniel that after sixty-two more 'sevens' (434 years), the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. Jesus was anointed by God at his baptism to be the One who would save his people from sin (Matt 1:21; 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 1:31-33; 3:21-22; John 1:29-36). In 32 AD, Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44) and was cut off by dying on a cross to save people from the penalty of sin (disobedience of God). This was the fulfillment of the message to Daniel.

The end of the 69th 'seven' was Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday before his death on the cross. "Sir Robert Anderson, a highly respected English lawyer and former head of Scotland Yard, figured it out. He multiplied 483 years times the Jewish prophetic year of 360 days per year and found that 483 Jewish years equals 173,880 days. Then he took the date of the

decree (March 14, 445 BC) and calculated the number of days to the Triumphal Entry (April 6, 32 AD), taking into account leap year and the fact that there was only one year between 1 BC and 1 AD (no year numbered 0), and the total was 173,880 days.” (Duck p 252)

Then God told Daniel that the people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The Romans, who ruled the land of Israel at that time and for some time to come, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD (done by the Roman General Titus). Again, this fulfilled the message of God to Daniel. Note that God told Daniel there will be a ruler to come.

Then God told Daniel that the end will come like a flood: war will continue until the end and desolations have been decreed. God indicates that an individual will make a covenant for one ‘seven’ but will break it by putting an end to sacrifice and placing abominations in the temple until the end that is decreed for him occurs. This is yet to happen. This ‘seven’ is the last of the 70 ‘sevens’ that God foretold to Daniel and the end of it will accomplish the six things previously listed.

When God said that “he will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven,’ the ‘he’ refers to the ruler that will come who will be from the people who destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple (the Romans.) This means the ruler who makes the covenant will come from among the nations that made up the Roman Empire during Jesus’ time. In the middle of the last ‘seven’ (3 ½ years), he (the ruler to come) will put an end to sacrifice and offering. This refers to the sacrifices and offerings that the priests made in the Temple. This indicates that by the time of the making of the covenant or immediately after it, regular sacrifices and offerings will once again be made. Then God said that “the one who causes desolation will place abominations on a wing of the temple.” This indicates that by the beginning of the last ‘seven’ or during the beginning of it a temple will be rebuilt so that sacrifices and offerings can once again be done. After 3 ½ years this ruler will stop the sacrifices and offerings and place abominations on a wing (part) of the temple. That condition will continue until the end that is decreed comes upon him (the last 3 ½ years).

The fact that none of the things that God told Daniel would happen in the last ‘seven’ has occurred means that there is a gap between the 69th and 70th of the ‘sevens.’ The fact that there would be a gap is evident from the four things God said would happen after the 69th ‘seven.’ 1. The Anointed One would be cut off (Jesus’ death in 33 AD). 2. Jerusalem would be destroyed (70 AD). 3. The Temple would be destroyed (70 AD). 4. Jerusalem and the Temple would be desolate until the time of the end (beginning of the 70th ‘seven’).

From the fall of Jerusalem in 605 BC until Jesus returns at the end of the 70th ‘seven’ is called the time of the Gentiles because non-Israelite people will be in total or partial control of Jerusalem during that time. The following is the progression of gentiles who have had at least partial control of Jerusalem since its fall in 605 BC: Babylon (605 – 539 BC), Medes and Persians (539 – 331 BC), Greece (331 – 63 BC), Rome (63 BC – 500 AD), Byzantine (500 – 638 AD), Moslems (638 – 1099 AD), Crusaders (1099 – 1244 AD), Mamluk (1244 – 1517 AD), Turks (1517 – 1917 AD), British (1917 – 1948 AD), Palestine (1948 – beginning of final ‘seven’), finally the ruler to come from the nations of the old Roman empire (beginning to end of the final ‘seven’).

From the time of the sending of the Holy Spirit to indwelt followers of the Anointed One (Pentecost) until indwelt believers are raptured from the earth before the beginning of the final ‘seven,’ is called the Church Age. It is the time when the Church has the command to be a light to the world to help people see and follow Jesus as the Messiah. It is a time when the Holy Spirit restrains Satan from having complete control over the earth because of the presence of indwelt followers and their actions which are salt to preserve the earth for being spoiled by Satan’s activity. When the indwelt followers are removed from the earth then Satan will be free to try to

assume control of the earth and everything in and on it. This will be the time of the final 'seven.'

How close could we be to the beginning of the final 'seven?' "Despite the fact that the Jews do not have a temple today, many religious Jewish organizations have been making preparations for this future Temple. One group has prepared a model and blueprints. Another group, using the instructions found in the Bible, is fashioning the precise instruments that will be needed for Temple rituals. Still another has been training Levitical priests. While the Temple is not yet in place, there are many groups ready to pounce on the opportunity the moment it arises." (Duck p257, stating what Peter and Paul Lalonde said in their book, *301 Startling Proofs*) In July 1997, "Yasser Arafat [PLO leader] announced he was terminating the U.S. role in the peace process. The Israeli Middle East *Globes* quoted him saying: 'The Americans now have no standing. In fact, they have no position on the peace process, and what is going on now is a conspiracy against the peace process. Israel must understand that our position is that Jerusalem is the capital of the Palestinian people, and will remain forever an Arab capital, Islamic and Christian.' Notice no mention of it being a 'shared' capital with the Jews." (Duck p 257) Senior British officials ... set Europe and Israel on a collision course when they said London will exert intense pressure on Israel to be more forthcoming in the peace process after Britain assumes the presidency of the European Union on January 1 [1998]. They signaled that, despite Israeli objections, Europe now intends to translate its formidable economic power into political clout and become a major player in the peace process." (Duck pp 257 – 8) The recent increase in Palestinian terrorist activity in Israel sets the stage for someone to broker a peace treaty between Israel and Muslim peoples. If the person brokering the treaty is from one of the nations that made up the Roman Empire, then that treaty could be the beginning of the final 'seven.' Before this happens the rapture of Jesus' followers must occur so the restrainer is removed.

Questions for thought

1. What are the seventy 'sevens' that are decreed for Daniel's people?
2. What will be accomplished by the end of the seventy 'sevens'?
3. Why is there a gap between the 69th and 70th 'sevens'?
4. What is the "time of the Gentiles?"
5. What event marked the end of the 69th 'seven'?
6. What event marks the beginning of the 70th 'seven'?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson thirteen)

Study (Ezekiel 38 - 39 – Gog)

Before looking at the beginning of Daniel's 70th week, we need to look at God's prophecy against Gog that he gave to Ezekiel while he was in captivity in Babylon.

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|---|
| 38:1 – 3 | The prophecy is against Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal according to the NIV. According to other translations Gog is the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. The Hebrew word <i>Rosh</i> means "head of, or first, or primary." That's why the NIV says "chief" prince. "In the records of Tiglath-pileser I (c. 1110 B.C.) and Shalmaneser III (806 – 825 B.C.) the land of Musku (Meshech) is mentioned as situated in the mountains on the northern boundary of Assyria and bordering on Tabal, biblical Tubal, in the west. The Moschoi and Tibarenoi are referred to by Herodotus as living in the mountains SE of the Black Sea" (Unger pp 837 – 8) The northern boundary of Assyria is the modern day border of Turkey and Iraq. The mountains SE of the Black Sea are part of modern day Turkey. |
| 4 – 6 | God says he will bring out the whole army of Meshech and Tubal along with the armies of Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, and beth ("house of") Togarmah. Persia is modern day Iran. Cush is part of modern day Ethiopia. Put is part of modern day Libya. Gomer is part of modern day Turkey. And Togarmah is on the border of modern day Turkey and Iraq. |
| 7 - 9 | God says that in future years they will invade a land that has recovered from war and whose people were gathered from many lands to the mountains of Israel which had long been desolate. "Desolate" is a reference to the land God promised to the descendants of Jacob not being in their possession. From the time that Jerusalem was captured and Judah taken into captivity in Babylon, the land was considered desolate because it was not under the control of the Israelite people even though some of them were living there. In 1948 the British government gave control of most of the modern day nation of Israel to descendants of the Jewish people. This was the reestablishment of a nation of Israel and their control of the mountains of the ancient Israel. Since 1948, Jews have been returning to the ancient Israel lands from all parts of the world. |
| 10 – 13 | This indicates that the invaders will consider the land of Israel a peaceful and unsuspecting people because they live in cities without walls, gates and bars. The invaders will plan to plunder and loot the land because the people gathered there from the nations are rich in livestock and goods. |
| 14 – 16 | Here we learn that the invaders will come from their place in the far north when God's people, Israel, are living in safety. Gog and many nations with them will come against Israel like a cloud that covers the land. God says he will cause this to happen so that the nations, the people of the world, will know him when he shows himself holy through the Israelite people. |
| 17 – 23 | When Gog attacks the land of Israel, God will cause a great earthquake in the land and all people, animals, and fish of the sea will tremble. God will fight for his people by causing Gog's armies to fight against each other. God will also execute his judgment against Gog and the nations with him through plague, bloodshed, torrents of rain and hailstones and burning sulfur. Through this God will show himself as Lord. |

- 39:1 – 8 God restates that he will bring Gog against Israel and then will fight for his people and cause Gog's armies to fall and become for all kinds of flesh-eating birds and wild animals. He says he will bring fire on Magog and all those who live in what they think is safety in the coastlands so that people will know he is Lord. God promises that what he has said will surely take place.
- 9 – 10 God says that for seven years the people of Israel will not use wood for fuel because they will gather the weapons from the slain armies and burn them. He also says that they will loot the armies who sought to loot them. In the Old Testament, God allowed his people on certain occasions to take anything of value that a defeated army had in their possession.
- 11 – 16 The dead bodies of Gog's defeated armies will be buried in a valley to the east of Jerusalem toward the Dead Sea. The valley will be known as Hamon or Hamonah (which means horde) Gog because all Gog's hordes will be buried there. For seven months the Israelites will be burying the dead invaders in order to cleanse the land. And after the seven months they will still be marking individual human bones they happen to find until the regularly employed grave diggers are able to bury them so the land will be cleansed.
- 17 – 20 Here, God again says that the birds and wild animals will feast on the dead bodies of the invaders. God says it will be like a sacrifice prepared for them and that they will eat their fill and drink until they are drunk on the blood of the invaders.
- 21 – 24 God says that through this he will display his glory among the nations (non-Jewish people) and that the house of Israel will know that he is God. All the nations will know that the people of Israel were exiled because of their unfaithfulness.
- 25 – 29 So that this will happen, God says that he will bring Jacob (Israel) back from captivity, have compassion on all the people of Israel, and be zealous for his holy name. When he has gathered them from amongst the nations, he will show himself holy through his dealings with the people. He says that he will no longer hide his face from the Israelite people because he will pour his spirit out upon them.

The names *Gog*, *Meshech*, and *Tubal* are the names of nations in Ezekiel's day. He used those names to describe the lands from which the future invaders would come – modern Turkey and southern Russia, the nations surrounding the Black and Caspian Seas. Ezekiel describes the invasion in terms of horses and swords because those were the weapons of his time.

Where to place this invasion during the end time events is difficult. The following have been suggested.

1. At the end of the Tribulation. Problem: There is not much similarity between the description of this invasion and the battles described at the end of the Tribulation in Revelation 19 and Zechariah 14:1-4.
2. At the beginning of the Millennium. Problem: Who would be present to lead the armies since the beast and the false prophet have been judged and cast into the lake of fire and Satan has been bound in the pit for a thousand years, the Millennium, (Rev 19:20; 10:1-3)? Also, unbelievers will have been judged and their weapons destroyed according to Micah 4:1-4.
3. At the end of the Millennium. Problem: There are numerous discrepancies between Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 20. Also, why would they bury the dead when the resurrection of the unsaved takes place at the end of the Millennium (Rev 20:11-15)?
4. Just prior to the middle of the Tribulation. Problem: Just after the mid-point of the Tribulation the nation is supernaturally allowed to escape into the wilderness and be protected from Anti-Christ for the remaining half

(3½ years) of the Tribulation (Rev 12). The people will not be living in the land to collect up the dead and bury them nor to collect the weapons of war and burn them for fuel.

5. Before the rapture of the Church. Problem: 38:8 depicts the people as living in peace, in a land that has recovered from war, a people having been brought out from the nations and now living in safety. That hardly describes the present-day nation of Israel. And Luke 21:24 indicates Israel would not enjoy peace during the times of the Gentiles (the Church age). Perhaps there is something that resembles peace which will come to the land of Israel before the rapture of the Church and make it seem like the people are living in safety. This could be a semblance of peace brokered by the United States. The nations of the world might allow this to happen for a while and be what leads to the invasion. If this is the case then the latest time for the invasion would have to be seven years before the mid-point of the Tribulation when the people escape from the land in the wilderness. But that would seem to give us a 3½ year warning before the rapture occurs and most scholars believe that 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 5:3 indicates the rapture will come on an unsuspecting people like a thief in the night so that not even believers will know when it is to occur. But since the beginning of the Church age, believers have been expecting the rapture and Paul tells the Thessalonians that the rapture should not surprise them like a thief. So, perhaps the unsuspecting ones who will be surprised like by a thief in the night are those who refuse to look at the signs and refuse to listen to those who try to warn them of the impending disaster.

Questions for thought

1. Where do the armies come from that will invade Israel?
2. Will the Israeli people fight the invaders?
3. What will happen to the invading armies?
4. What will the Israeli people do for seven years ?
5. How long will it take the Israeli people to bury the dead invaders?
6. What is the purpose of this invasion?
7. When is the most likely time for this invasion to occur?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson fourteen)

Study (Revelation 6)

Up to this point in our study we have seen that God revealed to John what the state of certain churches were in John's time and that they display the state of the Church throughout its history. Then God revealed what currently happens in heaven as angelic beings worship and praise him. Then God revealed that Jesus, as the perfect sacrificial lamb was worthy to take control of the scroll on which he had written his final judgment of what would happen to this universe he had created and which had fallen due to Satan's rebellion and temptation of Adam and Eve.

We discovered that God had revealed to Daniel that from the time that a decree had been issued for the rebuilding of Jerusalem until it was rebuilt would be 49 years and that there would be trouble during that whole time. God then revealed to Daniel that after that 49 years there would be another 434 years until the Messiah, the Anointed One – Jesus, would enter Jerusalem and then be cut off from everything. History attests to the fact that these two things happened exactly as God said they would. Then God revealed to Daniel that there would be seven final years which would begin when the ruler of the people who would destroy Jerusalem and the Temple makes a covenant for seven years. God revealed that the ruler would break the covenant at the middle of that seven years, end sacrifice and offering, and place abominations in the Temple. History reveals that from the time of Jesus' death until Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed in 70 AD by the Romans that no seven-year covenant was made and broken after 3 ½ years with the stopping of sacrifice and offering and the placing of abominations in the Temple. Therefore the Temple has to be rebuilt so sacrifices and offerings can be done again and then stopped at the middle of a seven-year covenant made by a ruler who is from the Roman empire.

We discovered that God had revealed to Ezekiel that there would be a coalition of armies led by a ruler from the far north of Jerusalem which will invade with the thought of plundering the people living in safety. During that invasion, God will fight for the Israelite people causing the invaders to shoot each other. He will also cause a great earthquake in the land. He will bring plague, bloodshed, rain, hailstones, and burning sulfur on the invaders. After God defeats the invaders, it will take the people of Israel seven months to bury the bodies of all the dead invaders in a valley to the east of Jerusalem toward the Dead Sea. God also revealed that the people of Israel would use the weapons of the invaders for fuel for seven years. This indicates that Israel will somehow have some kind of peace that leaves them feeling safe and then be invaded. This should occur before the beginning of the last seven years that was revealed to Daniel and maybe as early as 3 ½ years before.

Now beginning in chapter 6, God reveals what will happen during the last seven years as the Lamb (Jesus) begins opening the seals of the scroll.

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|-------------------|
|--------------|-------------------|

| | |
|-------|---|
| 1 – 8 | These verses describe what is known as the four horsemen of the apocalypse. John watches the Lamb break open the first seal and hears one of the four living creatures surrounding God's throne say "come" in a commanding voice that sounded like thunder. In response to the command, John sees a white horse with a rider appear. The rider holds a bow and is given a crown. Then the horse and rider go out as a conqueror headed for a conquest. When the second seal is broken and the second of the living creatures commands "come," a rider on a fiery red horse comes out. This rider is given a large sword and the power to take peace from the earth and make men slay each other. As the third seal is broken and the third of the living creatures says "come," a rider on a black horse comes out. The rider is holding scales, probably like the statue of lady justice holds. Then a voice that sounded like it came from among the four living creatures announces an exchange rate between basic food and wages and says not to damage oil and wine. |
|-------|---|

When the fourth seal is broken and the fourth living creature commands “come,” a pale colored horse appears with a rider whose name is Death. The horse and rider are closely followed by Hades. The rider on the pale horse is given the power over a fourth of the earth to kill using sword, famine, plague, and by wild beasts.

Since the fourth rider is named “Death,” these riders should not be equated with specific people but with world conditions. The first rider and horse depict a peaceful condition (color white) that is achieved (crown) by aggressive warfare or diplomacy (bow but no arrow). This is what the ruler who will come from Roman kingdom ancestry (that is seen by Daniel) will accomplish that enables him to make a seven-year covenant of peace between Israel and the world. This horse and rider is the end of the first sign of the end of the age and his return that Jesus gave to his disciples in Matthew 24. Matthew 24:5 “For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many.” In the last century there have been numerous people claiming to be the Christ. Most of them have occurred during the last decade. Some are still living.

The second rider and horse depict war because of the fiery red color, large sword, taking peace from the world, and making men slay each other. Apparently some of the nations are not satisfied with the diplomatic peace and covenant with Israel established by the first rider. So they revolt and cause war. This rider and horse is the end of the second of Jesus’ signs: “You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matt 24:6-7).

The third rider and horse depict famine because of the measuring scales, and announcement about what a day’s wages would purchase. Unsettled economic conditions, inflation, and famine are a direct result of war. A denarius, or penny, was the wage for a day’s work in the First Century times. A quart of wheat is below the daily subsistence level for a person. Barley is not considered as good as wheat and something poorer people would buy to try and stay alive. The fact that the oil and wine (foods of the rich) are not hurt indicates that rich people will not be affected by the famine like poorer people. This has been demonstrated time and again throughout history. This is part of the third sign of the end of the age that Jesus gave: “There will be famines and earthquakes in various places” (Matt 24:7).

The fourth rider and horse depict the death of those who die because of the war, the famine that follows, plagues that results from the dead bodies of people and animals left lying around, and because of wild animals seeking food. This is a result of the third sign Jesus gave in Matthew 24:7. Jesus also says in Matthew 24:8 that these are just the beginning of what will happen to bring in the age of righteousness that begins with his second coming (advent) to earth.

9-11 When the fifth seal is broken, John sees the souls of those who had been slain because they were followers of Jesus and openly encouraged people to follow him. These souls are under the heavenly altar and cry out to God to find out how long it will be until he judges the people of the earth and avenges their murders. They are given a white robe and told to wait a little longer until the number of those who are to be killed like them is completed. This is a depiction of the persecution of people during the tribulation who decide to believe Jesus is God and to follow him even though they are killed for doing that. “Under the altar” indicates they sacrificed themselves to tell people about Jesus. Their cry to God is for him to uphold his honor by taking care of them. Their white robes indicate God will take care of them and avenge their deaths. The fact that they have to wait indicates people will continue to believe and be killed for that belief throughout the seven-year time of tribulation. In Matthew 24:9 Jesus said that his followers would be persecuted and put to death because they would be hated by all nations because the nations hate him

As John watches the Lamb break the sixth seal, he sees a great earthquake that causes the sun to be blackened out and the moon appear to be red. Along with that, stars will fall to earth causing the sky to appear to be receding like rolling up a scroll. All of this display of power will cause people from the mighty leaders to the lowest of slaves and free men to try and hide in caves and anywhere they might find protection from the wrath of God. Instead of turning to God and asking for forgiveness, they will be so scared that they invite mountains and rock to fall on them so they will die and not have to face the Lamb. This seal is a depiction of heavenly disturbances that show God's displeasure with the way people have been disobeying him and trying to be god in place of him. The falling stars may be meteors which partially burn up as they fall through the atmosphere. They would cause loud explosions, fire, and smoke that would make the sky seem to be rolling up. Their impact on the earth would cause great tremors and throw dust into the sky. The dust would be so thick near the impact that the sun would be obscured like during an eclipse. Farther from the impact, a thinner amount of dust would make the moon to appear red. People will not be able to find any place to hide from these events.

Jesus says this is part of the great day of the wrath of God and of the Lamb (himself). This is a direct contradiction of the pre-wrath rapture view which says the bowl (vial) judgments that occur during the last half of the tribulation are the wrath from which the Church will be saved. Remember that Jesus told the church in Philadelphia (true followers) that he would keep them "from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth" (Rev 3:10). Paul wrote the Romans (5:9), "Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him (Jesus)!" In teaching the Thessalonian followers about the rapture, Paul writes (1 Th 5:9), "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." This is "the day of the Lord" or "the great day of the Lord" spoken of in Old Testament days by prophets such as Zephaniah. (See Zeph 1:2 – 2:3) When describing this day, Zephaniah urges a people to seek the Lord and his righteousness before that day so that perhaps God will shelter them from his wrath (2:3).

Questions for thought

1. What do each of the four horsemen of the apocalypse represent?
2. Will there be followers of Jesus during the tribulation – the 70th week of Daniel's vision?
If there are followers of Jesus during the tribulation, does that mean the Church is present?
3. What is the indication that all of the tribulation is considered the day of the Lord's wrath?
4. Would the beginning of the tribulation, the day of the Lord's wrath, appear to earth's inhabitants to be a dreadful time or a time of peace? Why?
5. What will be the sign to people that everything that is happening is God's doing?
6. Will people repent of their disobedience of God and ask him for forgiveness?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson fifteen)

Study (Revelation 7)

Chapter seven is a break in the time sequence of the opening of the seals so God could show John an overview of how people will be saved during the tribulation. The overview gives a warning of destruction, an assurance of deliverance, and a promise of peace and joy.

Verse

Discussion

1 – 3

These verses show angels in their service to God controlling the forces of nature. People in ancient days considered winds from the N, S, E, & W to be favorable while winds from the corners (NW, NE, SE, & SW) were bad. There is nothing here to suggest that their belief is true. The “four corners of the earth” is also used in ancient writings like we would use N, S, E, & W to indicate the entire world. Here, we see that angels controlling the forces of nature will be causing destruction during the tribulation. But the angels are told to wait until another angel has completed putting a seal on the foreheads of some people who are to be the servants of God. The angel with the seal comes from the East which could be interpreted as a reference to the place of Jesus’ birth. If so, then this angel is most likely the Archangel Michael who is seen in other places of Scripture as God’s special messenger to the Israeli people. The fact that he carries the seal of the living God is an encouragement because, unlike an idol, the living God gives life. In Rev 14:1 we find that the seal on their foreheads is the name of the Lamb (Jesus) and the name of his Father. (I suspect this is the name given to Moses which was never pronounced – the tetragrammon YHWH.)

4 – 8

Then John hears the number of the people who were sealed for special service to God – 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. Then John tells us that it is 12,000 from each tribe and names the tribes. Their sealing indicates that they are protected by and have the authority and power of God.

Who are these 144,000? Some scholars want to make them symbolic of something instead of an actual number from distinct tribes of Israel. They claim that since ten of the twelve tribes are lost, having intermarried with other people and “lost” their identity, that this can’t be taken literally. Some say that the nation of Israel lost its privilege and promise to the Church because they rejected the Messiah when he came the first time. Thus they think this is a reference to the Church. But this can’t be the case since, as we have seen, the Church has been promised that they will not go through the tribulation and will have been raptured before this time. There is no reason not to accept this as a literal number of people and from literal tribes. The ten “lost” tribes are only lost to human understanding. God knows exactly who is descended from each of those tribes and where they are living throughout the world. For some reason, God leaves out the tribe of Dan and replaces them with the tribe of Manasseh. This may have something to do with what Jacob said about his sons in Genesis 49. He says “Dan will provide justice for his people as one of the tribes of Israel.” (Gen 49:16) Then he goes on to say, “Dan will be a serpent by the roadside, a viper along the path, that bites the horse’s heels so that its rider tumbles backward.” (Gen 49:17) An early Church writer, Hippolytus (ca. 165 AD), had this to say about Dan. “As the Christ was born from the tribe of Judah, so will the Antichrist be born from the tribe of Dan.” (*Concerning Antichrist 14*)

Then Jacob pauses in speaking about his sons to say, “I look for your deliverance, O Lord.” (Gen 49:18) The nation of Israel has not been removed from its position as the chosen people of God and they did not lose their promises because they rejected the Messiah. God had already told

Daniel about the future of the Israeli people and this is the 70th “week” when he will bring them back to himself. So it should be expected that he would use people from each of the tribes to spread his message during this last “week.”

What will the sealed servants do? We are not told explicitly what the service of the 144,000 Jews is to be. But since this entire chapter is about those who believe and trust that Jesus is the Messiah during the tribulation, we can confidently understand that they are end-times witnesses to the truth about Jesus since the Church has been removed. Remember Joel’s prophecy that Peter referred to when believers were empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost,

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls. (Joel 2:28-32)

The Pentecost empowering of Jesus’ followers was not the complete fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy because the sun was not turned to darkness and the moon to blood. This does happen during the beginning of the tribulation so the 144,000 appear to be the final fulfillment of this prophecy. So the 144,000 servants will be especially empowered to share about Jesus and reap a tremendous harvest of souls during the tribulation. Consider the results of Peter and the 120 disciples at Pentecost who were especially empowered by God. Consider the results of Paul who was especially empowered by God. Then consider having 144,000 Pauls scattered throughout the entire world supernaturally protected and especially empowered to tell people about Jesus.

9 - 12

Then John looks and sees a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before God’s throne and the Lamb, wearing white robes, holding palm branches, and crying in a loud voice that salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb. This is the result of 144,000 empowered witnesses telling the world about Jesus. There will be people who become followers of Jesus from every people group on the earth. No one will miss the opportunity to hear about Jesus and decide whether to accept or reject him.

The angels, elders, and the four living creatures all fall down before God’s throne in worship and praise because of this multitude that has been saved from eternal separation from God. All of heaven rejoices in praise to God when just one person accepts Jesus and begins to follow him. For such a great multitude, the rejoicing must almost be deafening to hear.

13 – 17

One of the elders asks John who the great multitude are and where they came from. John’s answer would imply that he doesn’t really know. So the elder tells him that they have come out of the great tribulation and that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. The clear meaning of this is that the great multitude of new followers of Jesus comes from the witness of the 144,000 during the tribulation. These are not the martyrs of the tribulation but the ones who believe and live through the entire seven-year period. We will discuss them in more detail when we get to the period of the millennium. They are promised four things for their overcoming to the end of the tribulation. 1. They will serve God in his temple day and night (continuously). 2. God will protect them (place his tent over them so that they will not hunger, thirst, or feel discomfort). 3. The Lamb (Jesus) will be their shepherd and lead them to springs of living water. 4. Every tear will be wiped from their eyes by God (in Rev 21:4 this is promised to

every believer). Some people believe this means there will be no tears in heaven. Note that this is not what is said, only that God will wipe away every tear. This indicates caring concern.

This is the Tribulation Soul Harvest Equation.

Rapture effects + 144,000 Holy Spirit empowered witnesses + Chaotic conditions + world's largest population = more people beginning to follow Jesus than throughout all of the Church Age

The rapture will shock the world's population and prove the truthfulness of what God has said in the Bible. The chaotic conditions that arise from all of the tribulation events (seals, trumpets, and vials) will shake man's false sense of security and that he has control of what happens to himself. The 144,000 Holy Spirit empowered witnesses will provide access to every person on the earth, no matter how remote is their living condition, to hear about Jesus in their native language and have the opportunity to decide to follow or not. The fact that there are more people living on earth today than the total of all the people who have lived on earth in its history, means that more people can and will decide to follow Jesus than combined from all the Church Age.

Questions for thought:

1. What do the four angels holding back the winds from the four corners of the earth represent?
2. What is the seal that the angel brings to seal the 144,000?
3. What is the effect on the 144,000 of being sealed?
4. Are the 144,000 literal Jews from the tribes or representative of the Church? Explain your answer.
5. Who are the great multitude and where do they come from?
6. What rewards are the great multitude promised?
7. What is the Tribulation Soul Harvest Equation?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson sixteen)

Study (Revelation 8)

After a break to show how people will be saved during the tribulation, the time sequence continues with the opening of the seventh seal.

Verse

Discussion

1 - 5 When the Lamb opens the seventh seal, there is silence in heaven for about half an hour. What is coming must be so severe that it interrupts the four living creatures praising God with their “Holy, Holy, Holy” statement and the 24 elders stop bowing in worship and giving praise to God on the throne. This indicates the severity of the situation that has been brought about by man’s disobedience of God (sinfulness) and the severity of the measures he must use to try and get some people to accept him and turn to him for salvation.

Seven angels are given seven trumpets. According to Luke 1:19, the angel Gabriel says he stands in the presence of God and takes messages from him to people. Based on this, some scholars think these angels are the seven archangels of ancient Jewish thought: Gabriel, Michael, Uriel, Raphael, Paguel, Sariel, and Remiel. The trumpet is a symbol of God’s authority and intervention and used to announce coming events. (See Ex 19:16, 19; Isaiah 27:13; Joel 2:1; Zeph 1:14-16; Zech 9:14.) Also remember that Joshua was told to blow seven trumpets in his marches around Jericho (Josh 6:2-5). These trumpets announce judgments upon the earth. Note that they come out of the last seal and are more severe than the seals. During these judgments, the 144,000 empowered witnesses, each like a zealous Paul, go about telling the people of earth about Jesus and that following him is the only way to be saved from the final judgment.

But before even one angel is allowed to blow his trumpet, an angel with a golden censer is given much incense to offer along with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which stands before God’s throne. The golden altar of incense which stood in the Tabernacle and then in the Temple before the Most Holy Place was a representation of this altar. In the Tabernacle and the Temple, incense was burned before the first and last sacrifice offered during a day. The smoke of the burning incense represented the prayers of God’s people. Here, the prayers of the tribulation saints (those who accept Jesus and follow him during the tribulation) are seen being offered to God on the original altar of incense before his throne. After the prayers have gone up to God, the angel takes fire from the altar, puts it in his censer, and hurls it to earth causing thunder, rumblings, lightning, and an earthquake. These announce the imminent beginning of the trumpet judgments.

6 – 12

The seven angels then begin to blow their trumpets, one at a time. The first trumpet causes hail and fire mixed with blood to rain down upon the earth. This is similar to what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah but as a world-wide event. The result is that $\frac{1}{3}$ of the earth’s trees and all of the earth’s grasses (this would include all grains such as wheat, rice, oats, etc.) are burned up. This is a judgment on the earth’s vegetation. Many people worship nature so this is God’s way of declaring that he is greater than their god and that he won’t allow his creation to be worshipped in place of him.

The blowing of the second trumpet causes something like a huge, fiery mountain to be thrown into the sea. The result is that $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sea becomes blood, $\frac{1}{3}$ of the sea creatures die, and $\frac{1}{3}$ of the ships on the sea are destroyed. Some people want to interpret this as being an atomic bomb or a

meteor or even a volcanic eruption under the ocean. An atomic bomb blast might cause the deaths of the sea creatures and a tsunami (big wave) that would destroy the ships but it couldn't turn water into blood. A volcanic eruption might cause the same results as an atomic bomb blast but it wouldn't fit the description of falling into the sea. A meteor falling through the atmosphere would look like a fiery mountain and could cause the deaths of the sea creatures and destruction of the ships but wouldn't cause the water to turn to blood. This part of what happens with the trumpet blast has to be a supernatural event just like the water turning to blood during the Egyptian plagues. In many places in Scripture, when a sea is mentioned, it is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea. But in this case, there is nothing to suggest that. In fact, if it were to fall in the Mediterranean Sea it probably would not cause the amount of destruction mentioned. This is a judgment on the earth's water and the people who trust it. Many nations depend upon sea creatures for their basic diet so they will be hard hit by this. The destruction of 1/3 of the ships with their cargoes will bring the world's commerce almost to a halt. Some of those ships will likely be military and therefore will cause havoc with the navies of many nations.

The blowing of the third trumpet causes a great star, blazing like a torch to fall from the sky and make 1/3 of the freshwater supply bitter. Where the second trumpet was a judgment on the salt waters, this is a judgment on the fresh waters. As when the sixth seal was opened and the stars in the sky fell to earth, this is most likely not really a star but a meteorite falling to earth. The fact that it makes fresh water bitter may indicate that the meteor disintegrates into a dust which settles onto everything and is washed by rain into the fresh water sources. "Wormwood," the name of the star, means "bitter" and was the name of an ancient bitter substance. We aren't told a specific number but a lot of people will die because they drink the bitter water.

The blowing of the fourth trumpet makes 1/3 of the sun, 1/3 of the moon, and 1/3 of the stars turn dark. As a result, 1/3 of the day and 1/3 of the night is without light. This is a judgment on the amount of light. Less light from the sun means colder temperatures and less growing capability for plants. More darkness means people will have to burn more fuels to create light so they can work. One suggestion for how this could happen is that the length of a day is shortened from 24 to 16 hours by an increased speed of rotation of the earth.

- 13 After seeing the results of blowing the fourth trumpet, John watches as a messenger flying in midair cries out three woes to the earth's inhabitants because of the last three trumpets about to be blown. Whether the messenger is an angel (as some translations put it) or an eagle (as other translations put it) is not definite. The Greek word used is *aggelou* which just means messenger and can be used of human, angelic, or other messengers. The message is a solemn warning about the severity of the last three trumpet blasts. This time period could be described as "Hell let loose on earth."

Questions for thought:

1. What is the significance of there being silence in heaven?
2. What is the significance of the angel with the golden censer and with the prayers of the saints?
3. What is the significance of the trumpets coming out of the seventh seal?
4. What parts of nature do the first four trumpet judgments affect?
5. What is the purpose of the message after the fourth trumpet?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson seventeen)

Study (Revelation 9)

After the heavenly messenger finishes announcing woe to the inhabitants of the earth because of the trumpet blasts of the last three angels, John begins to reveal what the last three angels' blasts will bring.

Verse

Discussion

1 - 12

When the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, John sees a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. This is not really a physical star because it is referred to as "he" and is given a key to open the door to a bottomless pit (abyss). Some people want to say this is just symbolic. But according to Jude 6, God bound up the angels who fell from their high position in heaven because they followed Satan in his rebellion and has kept them bound in darkness waiting for the judgments he would give out during his Great Day. 2 Peter 2:4 says God put the fallen angels in gloomy dungeons to await judgment. This "star" is an angel whom God entrusts with the key to the pit where the fallen angels are kept. In Rev 20:1 we find this angel coming out of heaven with the key and locking up Satan in the pit for a thousand years, the Millennium. So these are not locusts but fallen angels (demons) whom God sends an angel to release from the pit where he has kept them locked up.

When the angel opens the pit, smoke rises from it like from a gigantic furnace. As a consequence, the sky and sun are darkened. And out of the smoke comes a hoard of locusts which have been given the power to sting like scorpions. They have been instructed by God that they are not to harm the earth's grass, plants, or trees (any vegetation). They are only allowed to sting people who don't have the seal of God on their foreheads. Their sting won't kill a person but it will torture them and make them suffer for five months. The agony people will suffer is like the sting of a normal scorpion but nothing will be able to ease or cure it. The people who are stung will suffer so much that they will seek to kill themselves but they will not be able to end the suffering by death.

The people that will not suffer stings from these locusts have the seal of God on their foreheads. We have previously seen that 144,000 Jews will receive a special seal on their foreheads signifying the power and protection they will have from God. Does this mean that only the 144,000 will be protected from these stings? It doesn't seem likely that only the 144,000 Jews would be protected. It is more likely that every person who believes in and trusts Jesus during the Tribulation will receive some kind of mark on their foreheads that will distinguish them as believers and prevent the locusts from stinging them.

The appearance of the locusts is not like normal locusts. They will look like horses prepared for battle. That may indicate the look of armor plating, especially since we are told they have breastplates that look like iron. On their heads are something that looks like a crown of gold. Their heads will have long, flowing hair like that of a woman. Their faces will look human but they will have teeth that look like the fangs of a lion but their torture doesn't come from biting people. It comes from the sting of their tails that must inject a form of venom which causes torture for five months. They also have wings which make such a loud noise when they are flapped that it sounds like the thundering of many horses and chariots going into battle. The leader of these locusts is named Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek. Both Abaddon and Apollyon mean "destroyer." He is called an angel so this is a reference to Satan.

When the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, John hears a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar in front of God's throne. The voice tells the angel to release the four angels bound at the Euphrates River who have been kept there awaiting this specific time. Since the angels have been bound up, it means that they are part of Satan's fallen angels.

According to Genesis 15:18, the Euphrates is the eastern boundary of the land that God gave to Abraham and his descendants – **To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates.** Israel has never had possession of all of this land, but, because it was promised to her, it will one day be part of her inheritance (probably during the Millennium).

The four angels who are released are allowed to kill $\frac{1}{3}$ of the earth's population and they do this through the use of an army of 200 million troops. Since the number of troops is not given in symbolic language (70 times 7 or something like that which would just indicate a large number), we must conclude that it represents the size of the army. China has boasted for years that it has an army of this size and China lies just a short distance to the east of the Euphrates River, so consequently some people think this is an invading Chinese army.

The army is described as men with breast plates (armor) that were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow like sulfur, riding on horses that had heads which looked like lions and tails which looked like the heads of snakes. The horses breathed three plagues – fire, smoke, and sulfur – from their mouths and inflicted injury through their tails. Sulfur is another way of saying brimstone as in the Gen 19:24 destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Some people think these "horses" are John's description of some of our modern-day weapons (like tanks). Other people think this is a demonic army. There is no internal evidence from the text to lead us specifically to one interpretation over the other.

If the population was 5 billion at the beginning of the Tribulation and the fourth horseman killed $\frac{1}{4}$ of that (1.25 billion) and now these angels kill another $\frac{1}{3}$ ($3.75 \text{ billion} \div 3 = 1.25 \text{ billion}$), that equals $\frac{1}{2}$ of the population ($1.25 \text{ billion} + 1.25 \text{ billion} = 2.5 \text{ billion}$) killed by these two judgments alone.

The part of the population that is not killed by this army is still not convinced to repent of their disobedience of God and turn to him through Jesus. Instead, they keep worshipping demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood. Man has a God-designed, natural desire to commune with the Creator. Satan knows this and provides idols to tempt people from doing that. Or else he gets them to think that they are gods and therefore don't need to commune with anyone but themselves. The people also continue other activities which God has forbidden. They continue murdering other people (life is considered cheap when it is just a product of evolution and not created by God). They continue practicing magic arts or sorcery such as astrology, channeling, divination, crystal ball gazing, tarot card reading, and all sorts of witchcraft including the use of mind-altering drugs. They continue to be involved in all forms of sexual immorality such as homosexuality, lesbianism, pedophilia, and adultery (sex outside of marriage). And they continue to steal from people. Although each judgment is more severe than the previous, many people do not turn in repentance to God but harden their hearts against him just as Pharaoh did during the plagues in Egypt.

Questions for thought:

1. What is the star that falls from the sky and opens the abyss?
2. What are the locusts that plague people for five months?
3. Is the army of 200 million symbolic or literal, demonic or human?
4. How much of the population entering the Tribulation remains after the sixth trumpet?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson eighteen)

Study (Revelation 10 and 11)

Here we have another break in the sequence of action – an interlude to show us something that Jesus wants us to understand.

Verse Discussion

10:1 - 4 After describing what happens when the sixth angel sounds his trumpet, John sees another angel come down from heaven. This angel is robed in a cloud with a rainbow above his head. The cloud speaks of mystery and the rainbow reminds us of God's promise to never destroy the earth again by a flood. The angel's face is like the sun and his legs like fiery pillars. A shining face reminds us of Moses' face after being in the presence of God and thus tells us this angel comes from being in God's presence. Legs that look like fiery pillars speak of strength. In his hand is an open scroll. Some people might think this is a description of Christ, but that can't be because in verse 6 this angel swears an oath by him who lives forever and who created the heavens and earth. So this is just another angel serving God.

The angel comes to rest on the earth with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. This indicates his power and authority over both of these. The angel gives a loud shout that sounds like the roar of a lion and immediately seven thunders speak. The speaking of the thunders is not just a metaphor for a rumbling sound. It is actual language that is spoken, heard, and understood by John. He prepares to write down what has been said but a voice from heaven says to seal up what was said and not to write it down. Thus we don't know what was said nor how it fits with the rest of the revelation. But it is obvious that God wanted John to hear and understand something that he didn't want John to reveal to anyone else.

5 – 7 Then the angel raises his right hand to heaven and swears by the one who lives forever and who created the heavens and earth and all that is within them that there will be no more delay. He says that in the days when the seventh angel sounds his trumpet the mystery of God which he announced to the prophets will be accomplished.

What is this mystery? Daniel 2:1ff talks about the mystery of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream about a statue with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of mixed iron and clay. The understanding of this mystery was revealed to Daniel and explained to the king as future kingdoms which would rule the world. Paul in writing to the Romans (11:25ff), to the Ephesians (1:9ff; 3:3ff; 5:32), and to the Colossians (1:25ff; 2:2) describes the mystery of God's will – that Israel has experienced a partial hardening for a time to allow Gentiles to respond to Jesus and become part of his kingdom along with the Israelite people who at the "right" time will be turned away from godlessness and be saved. So the sounding of the last trumpet will speedily bring about the conclusion of God's plan for restoring people to a right relationship with himself.

8 – 11 Then the voice from heaven which commanded him to seal up what the seven thunders had said told John to go and take the scroll from the hand of the angel standing with one foot on the sea and one foot on the land. John goes to the angel and politely asks him for the scroll. But the angel tells him to take it and eat it. Then he tells John that even though it tastes sweet as honey in his mouth, it will make his stomach sour. John takes the scroll, eats it, and finds it sweet in his mouth but turns his stomach sour. Then John is told that he must prophesy again about many

peoples, nations, languages, and kings.

Although we don't know for certain what the little scroll contains, it would seem to be related to the mystery of God, the completion of which will be delayed no longer. The sweetness of it is that Jesus will be returning very soon after this to set up his kingdom. The sourness of it is that many people will still die have rejected Jesus before the kingdom is established. John still has much to write as prophecy about what is going to happen to many peoples, nations, languages, and kings before he is finished writing this revelation.

11:1-3

John is now given a reed like a measuring rod and told to measure the temple of God and count to worshippers there. But he is told to exclude the outer court because it has been given to the Gentiles and they will trample on the holy city for 42 months.

Temple history past to present.

David desired to build the temple but was not allowed because his hands were too bloody. In spite of this, he raised much of the money and material that went into building it and drew up the plans for how it was to be built. His son, Solomon, actually built the temple. (1 Chron 28 – 29)

The temple was built in Jerusalem, on Mount Zion, because God chose that site. (Ps 78:65-72; 87:1-3; 132:13-15)

After Solomon built the temple, God's shekinah glory filled it and the temple became the symbol of God's presence with Israel. (1 Kings 8:10; 2 Chron 5:13)

The temple was burned by Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC. (2 Kings 25:8-9; 2 Chron 36:19; Jer 52:13)

In 538 BC King Cyrus decreed that the descendants of the Jewish people who had been taken captive could return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple. (2 Chron 36:23) This temple was completed in 520 BC but the shekinah glory of God never filled this temple. (Ezra 6:14)

The temple was desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC when he set up a pagan altar in the temple. Judas Maccabaeus cleansed the temple in 165 BC and restarted temple worship.

In 20 BC Herod the Great had the temple taken down and he began rebuilding it in 19 BC. The main structure was completed by 9 BC but construction continued until 64 AD. Jesus predicted that this temple would be destroyed. (Matt 24:2) And in 70 AD, the Jews burned the temple to keep it from falling into the hands of the Roman general Titus.

In 691 AD Muslims built a shrine (the Dome of the Rock) on the temple mount that still stands today.

Temple future.

According to Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:1-4; and Dan 9:27; 11:31; & 12:11, the sacrifices of a temple will be stopped and the temple desecrated at the mid-point of the Tribulation. For this to happen, another temple must be built on the temple mount. For the sacrifices to be restarted, there must be temple furniture (altars for incense burning and sacrifices, a basin for washing, a table for showbread, and a lampstand); qualified, purified priests; a high priest; and a red heifer for the purification rites. All of these things have been gathered and only await the Jews having control of the temple mount so they can begin building a temple. The building of this temple will be

another rejection of Jesus as Messiah.

At the time John is writing this revelation, the temple had been destroyed for about 29 years. Thus, John's measuring of the temple may be an indication that although another temple will be built, it will not measure up to God's standard and will not be acceptable to God. This is true because once Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to dwell within believers, their bodies became the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19) and there was no longer a need for a physical temple in Jerusalem. The outer court is not to be measured because it was given to the Gentiles – that was as far as they could go in approaching God at the physical temple. The Gentiles trampling on the holy city (Jerusalem) for 42 months, which is 3 ½ years, is a reference to the last half of the Tribulation because during the first half the Jews will have a peace covenant with the world and will restart the temple services.

3 – 6

Who are the two super witnesses who have the power to confirm their message by causing no rain to fall, turning water into blood, striking the earth with plagues, and protecting themselves with fire from their mouths? People who want to make symbols of everything in Revelation view them as the Law and the Prophets, the Law and the Gospel, or the Old Testament and the New Testament. But there is no reason from any passage referring to the two witnesses not to believe they are real people. Those who believe they are real people suggest they are:

Enoch and Elijah – because neither of them died on earth (Gen 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11)

Elijah and John the Baptist – because John was the forerunner of Christ's first coming and Elijah is supposed to “come before the day of the Lord” (Mal 4:5)

Moses and Elijah – because they were the two who appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30-31)

Apostle John and Nathaniel – because Jesus told Peter “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?” (John 21:22) and Nathaniel was told he would “see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” (John 1:51)

Although it is not necessary to identify who the witnesses are, I believe that Moses and Elijah are the best candidates because they represent the Law and the Prophets and because they appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus.

The witnesses are also identified as the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. This is a reference to the vision given to Zechariah in which he was told they are the two anointed to serve the Lord of the earth. (Zech 4:14)

7 - 14

How long do they witness and when? Using the prophetic month of 30 days, their witness of 1260 days is equal to 42 months or 3 ½ years. But is this during the first or last half or something in between? Jesus said that immediately after the abomination that causes desolation is seen in the holy place, there would be a time of great distress unequalled from the beginning of the world and then the Son of Man (Jesus, himself) would be seen coming on the clouds (like he ascended) and he would gather his elect from the four winds and from one end of heaven to the other. This is an indication of going directly from the end of the Tribulation into the millennial reign of Christ. After the witnesses have prophesied for 3 ½ years they are killed and left in the streets of Jerusalem for 3 ½ days while people gloat about their deaths and send gifts to one another. Then they are taken up into heaven an earthquake collapses a tenth of the city and the third woe is announced as coming. So their witness must be during the first half of the Tribulation.

The power of the witnesses is supernatural, indicating they are speaking with the authority of God. Their power is just like Moses when confronting Pharaoh (Ex 7 – 11) and like Elijah when causing the rain to stop and start by his prayers (1 Kings 17:1) and calling down fire on Mount

Carmel to consume the wet sacrifice and prove the falseness of Baal (1 Kings 18:36-38).

The witnesses dressing in sackcloth represents distress and mourning for the condition of people who have not accepted Jesus as Lord and decided to follow him. Their primary mission is to get the attention of people and turn them to Christ. Their purpose is not judgment.

Their death is only allowed after their witness is complete. This probably occurs shortly after the abomination that causes desolation of the temple – so shortly after the mid-point of the Tribulation. The abomination is that the Antichrist sets himself up in the temple, proclaiming himself to be God. (2 Thess 2:4) The purpose of their death is to provide a further witness to God's power and control when he raises them back to life after their bodies have begun openly to decay in the street. Their resurrection is just like when God breathed life into Adam. And the loud voice from heaven telling them to "Come up here" is just like what happen to John on the Isle of Patmos which began this revelation. All of this declares God's power and control from the beginning of creation to its end.

The great city where they witness and are killed is obviously Jerusalem because it is said to be where their Lord was crucified. It is also figuratively called Sodom and Egypt. Sodom is a representation of immorality and Egypt is a representation of materialism. So this is a recognition that God's holy city is no longer considered holy.

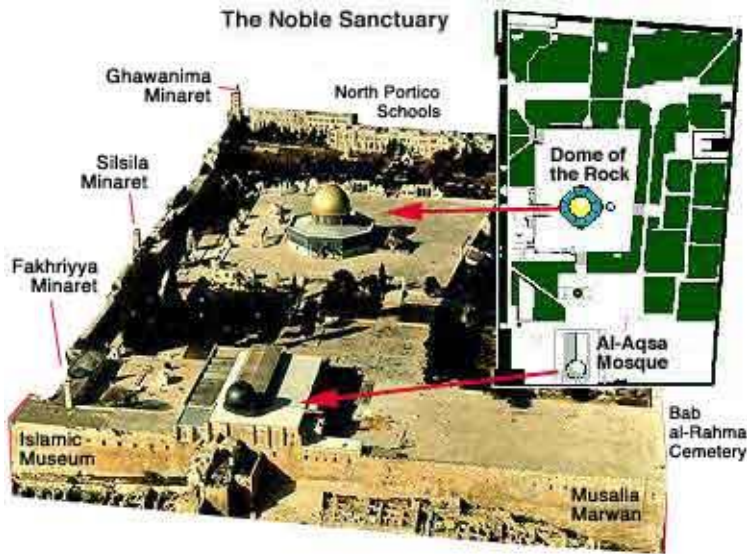
The 3 ½ days that the witnesses lie dead in the street for everyone from around the world to see has been referred by some people as "The Devil's Christmas" because people rejoice, make merry and send gifts to one another. Satan intends this time to show people that he is more powerful than God and so his followers rejoice. But God ends their time of joy by resurrection the witnesses, taking them up to heaven while people watch, and sending an earthquake to show his displeasure with the actions of the people – killing his witnesses, rejoicing in evil, and continuing to reject Jesus. As a result of the earthquake, a tenth of the city of Jerusalem collapses and seven thousand people are killed. The people who survive the earthquake are frightened and give glory to the God of heaven. Does this mean those people repented and became followers of Jesus? Some scholars (Barclay and LaHaye) say "yes" because that is the only way to give glory to God. Other scholars (Mounce and Epp) say "no" because acknowledging God's superior power and might over nature doesn't imply personal trust or a redemptive relationship. I agree with the latter because James says "even the demons believe that [there is one God] and shudder (James 2:19).

After the events of the mid-tribulation (desecration of the temple, death and resurrection of the two witnesses, and the earthquake), John announces that the second woe has passed and the third woe (the sounding of the seventh trumpet) is about to come.

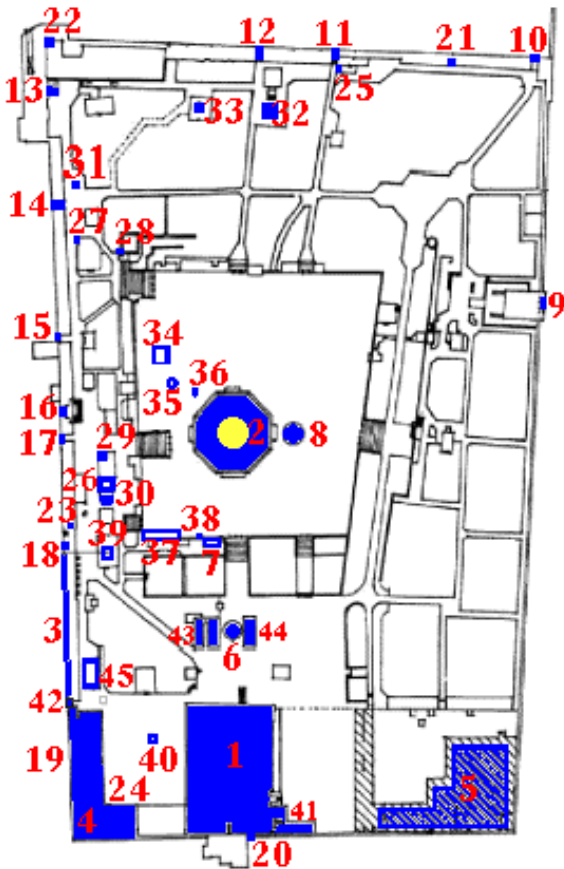
Questions for thought:

1. What is the little scroll in the angel's hand?
2. What is the mystery of God that will be accomplished during the sounding of the seventh trumpet?
3. Who are the two witnesses? Explain your choice.
4. When do the witnesses do their prophesying? First half, second half, or combination?
5. What powers do the witnesses have and why?
6. Why are the witnesses' bodies allowed to stay in the street for 3 ½ days?
7. Why is Jerusalem called Sodom and Egypt?
8. How does God show his power and displeasure?

The Temple Mount Today showing the Dome of the Rock



Al-Aqsa Mosque Locations Map



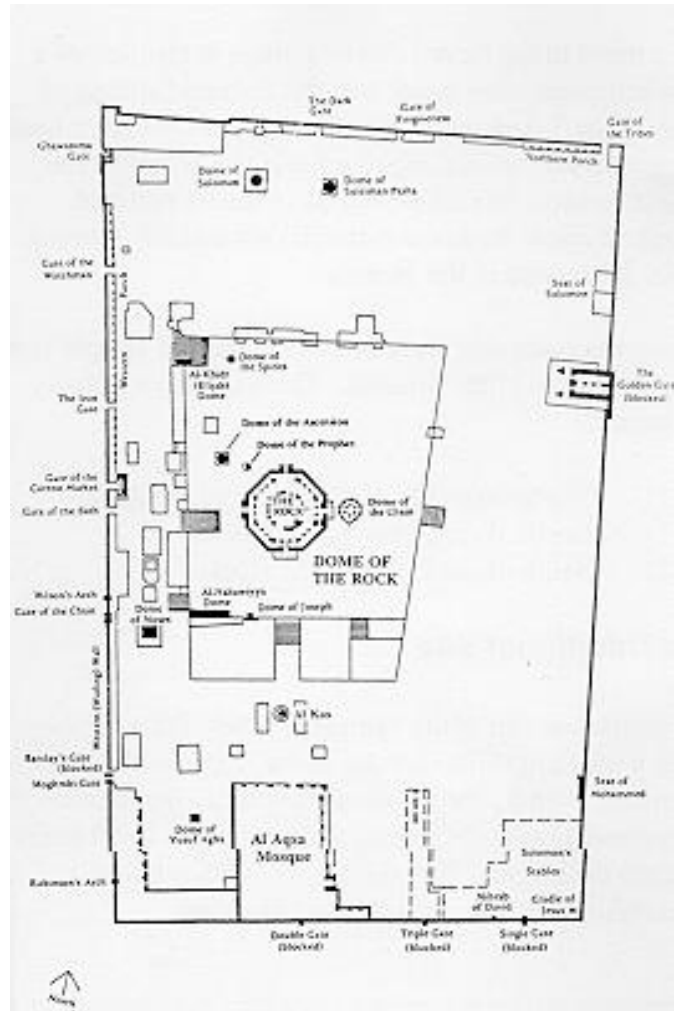
| | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| 1 | Al-Aqsa Mosque | 2 | Dome of the Rock Mosque |
| 3 | Al-Boraq Wall | 4 | Islamic Museum |
| 5 | Musalla Marwan | 6 | Ablution |
| 7 | Dome of Burhan Al-Deen | 8 | Dome of Chain |
| 9 | Golden Gate | 10 | Al-Asbat Gate |
| 11 | Remission Gate | 12 | Al-Atem Gate |
| 13 | Bani Ghanim Gate | 14 | Al-Nazer Gate |
| 15 | Iron Gate | 16 | Cotton Merchant Gate |
| 17 | Abdultion Gate | 18 | Chain Gate |
| 19 | Magariba Gate | 20 | Al-Thulathe Gate |
| 21 | Al-Asbat Minaret | 22 | Bani Ghanim Minaret |
| 23 | Chain Minaret | 24 | Magariba Minaret |
| 25 | Remission Gate Fountain | 26 | Anqai Pool |
| 27 | Al-Bedari Water Fountain | 28 | Shalan Water Fountain |
| 29 | Qatibai Water Fountain | 39 | Qasim Basha Water Fountain |
| 31 | Al-Bosari Water Fountain | 32 | Dome of Al-Ashaq |
| 33 | Dome of Soliman | 34 | Dome of Shaik Al-Khaleli |
| 35 | Dome of Mirai | 36 | Dome of Prophet |
| 37 | Dome of Nahawiah | 38 | Dome of Yousef |
| 39 | Dome of Mosa | 40 | Dome of Yousef Agha |
| 41 | Omar Mosque | 42 | Al-Boraq Mosque |
| 43 | Motawade stone bench | 44 | Ablution stone bench |
| 45 | Al-Boraq Mosque stone bench | | |

The Temple Mount



Three possible temple sites.

- Northern (A)
- Central (B)
- Southern (C)



Temple Mount Map



Southern Temple Site
 (behind trees between dome and Mosque)
 Western wall in foreground

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson nineteen)

Study (Revelation 11 and 12)

Now we begin the sounding of the seventh trumpet – the third of the three woes.

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|--|
| 11:15 - 19 | <p>When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, loud voices in heaven cry out a message that the time of the end has arrived. The loud voices are probably an angelic chorus announcing that this is the beginning of the end. Their announcement is the central truth of Revelation: “The kingdom of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.” That this is a chorus of angels and not humans comes from their saying “our Lord and his Christ” instead of “our Lord and our Christ.” “The kingdom of the world” of which they speak is this world which Satan has been allowed to dominate at least since the temptation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Jesus calls Satan the prince of this world.” (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) The Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of demons, and Jesus acknowledges that they are referring to Satan. (Matt 12:24-28) Paul refers to Satan as the ruler of the kingdoms of the air (Eph 2:1-2) and says our battle is against rulers, authorities and powers of this dark world and against spiritual forces of evil in heaven. (Eph 6:12) All of these recognize that Satan has temporary control of much of what happens on and around the earth at this present time.</p> |

The heavenly chorus says that Satan’s kingdom has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ (Savior). That Savior (Messiah) is the one promised, after the Fall in the Garden of Eden, whose heel would be bruised by the serpent (Satan) – which is a reference to Jesus’ death on the cross – and who would crush Satan’s head (end his rule). (Gen 3:15b) Although Jesus won’t begin his reign on earth until after the Tribulation, in heaven’s view it is already a reality. This was also true when the revelation was given to John on the Isle of Patmos. When heavenly beings see God will do something at a later time, they act like it has already happened because they know for a certainty that it will.

Then the 24 Elders (angels) fall on their faces in thankful worship because the time has come for Jesus to begin his reign and because the time for judging the wicked and rewarding the righteous has come. Again, although this will not have actually begun with the sounding of the seventh trumpet, they act as if it has because of the assurance that it will. Their statement shows the final earthly events before Jesus returns and begins his reign. “The nations were angry” shows the rebelliousness of the people against God during the final years, months, and days of the Tribulation. Satan, and thus the Antichrist, know that Jesus’ return and their time of reign is almost over, so they lead people to rebel against God. (Also see Psalm 2) “Your wrath has come” shows that God is ready to judge men’s disobedience. “Judging the dead” and “rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who revere your name” shows what will happen to the Old Testament people and Tribulation Saints who have trusted God and followed him. (See Psalm 50:1-6) The Church saints were resurrected before the Tribulation and are being prepared to come back with Jesus as his bride at the end of the Tribulation, so that only leaves the Old Testament followers and the people who put their trust in Jesus during the Tribulation to receive their rewards (and assignments for ruling with Jesus during the Millennium). For this to happen, there would have to be a resurrection of those people at the end of the Tribulation. “Destroying those who destroy the earth” shows the destruction of the reign of the Antichrist (beast) and the False Prophet (see Rev 13 and 19:19-20) by their being thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Then God's heavenly temple is opened to reveal the ark of the covenant. Some people may think this is the ark that Moses had constructed and that somehow God translated it into heaven just before the temple was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. But Hebrews 8:1-5 tells us that the earthly sanctuary and everything that Moses had constructed for it (including the ark of the covenant) was just a copy of the real sanctuary and the things in it. So what is revealed is the real ark of the covenant, the symbol of the special relationship God has with the Hebrew people and all people who believe in and obey him. This is a reminder to Israel and those who trust Jesus that God keeps his promises and their redemption is not only guaranteed but close at hand. Everyone enters into the covenant with God by the sacrifice of blood. For Old Testament people, the sacrifice was the blood of an unblemished lamb. It was temporary and had to be repeated at least every year. For the New Testament people, the sacrifice was the blood of the Lamb of God (Jesus) who was unblemished by any sin. It was permanent because there is only one Son to sacrifice so it covers all the people after him and ended the temporary sacrifices of animals. And with the appearance of the ark come signs (lightning, rumblings, thunder, and earthquake, and a great hailstorm) which point to God's impending judgment.

12:1 – 7

John says that a great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven. The fact that it is a sign indicates that this is symbolic – not literal. John sees a sun clothed woman with the moon under her feet and a crown made of twelve stars on her head. She is pregnant and cries out with birth pains. Then another sign appears – a red dragon having ten horns and seven heads, each with a crown. The dragon has swept a third of the stars out of the sky down to earth. He stands before the woman ready to eat the child to whom she is about to give birth. The woman gives birth to a male child who will rule over all nations but, before the child can be eaten, he is snatched up by God to his throne. The woman flees into the desert to a place God has prepared for her to be taken care of for 1,260 days.

Since this is symbolic, of whom or what is the woman a symbol? Some say she represents the Virgin Mary and use this to teach that Mary did not die but was taken bodily into heaven. But this can't be symbolic of Mary, Jesus' mother, because the 1,260 days (using the prophetic year of 360 days) is 3 ½ years and this together with the dragon's attempt to eat her offspring must represent persecution during the last half of the tribulation. People who believe the Church will still be on earth during the tribulation see her as representing the Church being protected by God during the last half of the tribulation. But the Church is never spoken of in Scripture as a woman giving birth but only as a bride awaiting the arrival of her bridegroom – Jesus. There are also some other ideas like that of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science. She sees the woman as representing herself, the man child as representing Christian Science, and the dragon as representing the mortal mind.

Any interpretation of these symbols should be in keeping with the rest of God's Word. In Isaiah 54 God is talking about Israel and calls her his barren wife whom he had rejected for a little while but will have compassion on and restore her to her rightful place. Micah 4:6-10 says that Israel will be like a woman in labor and will have to go into the open field of Babylon where the Lord will rescue and redeem her. In Genesis 37:9-10, Joseph, the son of Jacob who was renamed Israel by God, tells of his dream about the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowing down before him. His father (Israel) recognized that the dream was about him, his wife and other eleven sons (the total nation of Israel at that time). These verses, taken with this passage in Revelation, indicate that the woman is the nation Israel who will flee, at the mid-point of the tribulation, into the desert area which was at one time a part of the Babylonian kingdom and be protected there for the last 3 ½ years of the tribulation.

Who is the man child? Micah 5:1-5 says that out of Bethlehem, from the clan of Judah, will come

one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from ancient times. This is obviously a reference to Jesus. The passage also says that Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites. Israel was effectively abandoned, or removed from her special relationship with God, through the time that Jesus was born and until the fullness of the Gentiles has arrived. Jesus, when talking about the last days (Luke 21:24) says that “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Paul taught the Roman believers (Rom 11:25) that “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.” So this is not symbolic of something that only happens during the tribulation. In Psalm 2:7-9 God says that his Son will rule over the nations with an iron scepter. Thus the man child is Jesus, whose lineage is from Israel, and being snatched up to God’s throne speaks of his ascension.

Who is the red dragon? Verse 9 identifies him as “that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan.” But does his description have any meaning? His seven crowned heads may refer to the seven stages of the Roman Empire which is the embodiment of evil government. The sixth stage exists today in any dictatorial government. The seventh stage would be Antichrist’s rule over a revived Roman Empire. Some people think the seven heads represent the complete wisdom of Satan or the complete dominion of the world, i.e. the seven continents: North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Antarctic. Some people think the ten horns represent the ten-member European Common Market, but this is not likely since in the last decade they have added new members and now have more than ten. It is more likely that the ten horns refer to the ten kings of a ten-member federation that will help the Antichrist rule the world during the tribulation.

The sweeping of 1/3 of the stars from heaven is a reference to Satan’s original rebellion against God and leading 1/3 of the angel with him as described in Isaiah 14:12-15. After Jesus’ birth and until his death, resurrection, and ascension, Satan was always around, trying to keep Jesus from completing his work on the cross – thus he was trying to eat the man child.

12:7 – 9 The war in heaven between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels refers to the struggle that has been going on between the heavenly angels and fallen angels since Satan started his rebellion. We get a small glimpse of it in Daniel 10:12 – 13 and 10:20 – 21 where Michael has to help an angel with an answer to Daniel’s prayer overcome opposition by fallen angels who are supporting evil empires. Paul tells us in Ephesians 6:11 – 12 that our struggle is against evil spiritual forces in heavenly realms – i.e. fallen angels. Daniel 12:1 tells us that in the last days there will be an especially stronger battle between Michael’s forces and Satan’s forces. At that time, Satan and his forces lose their privilege of having any access to heaven as Satan is shown to have in Job 1:6 – 12 and 2:1 – 7. Satan is no longer given access to God’s throne to accuse those who follow God as shown in Zechariah 3:1.

12:10 – 17 John hears a loud voice in heaven say that Satan has been cast out of heaven and down to earth. This is a rejoicing for heaven but a woe to earth because Satan is filled with fury because he knows his time is short. The voice also indicates that our brethren who had been accused by Satan overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. This indicates the saving of the Tribulation Saints not by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit but by their continued trust in and witness for Jesus, even to the point of death.

After being cast out of heaven, the dragon tries to pursue the woman. But the woman is given the two wings of a great eagle so she can escape into the place prepared for her in the desert and there be out of the serpent’s reach for a time, times and half a time (3 1/2 years) – the last half of the tribulation. This indicates that Satan is cast out of heaven at the mid-point of the tribulation

to spend the last half of it on earth. That is why it is a woe to earth.

Some people think the two wings of a great eagle indicate that America (represented by a great eagle) will provide air transportation for the nation of Israel to flee from her homeland into the desert (probably to the area of the rock fortress of Petra). When the serpent tries to keep the woman from escaping by spewing a river of water from his mouth, God miraculously intervenes by having the earth swallow up the water. This is probably not an actual flood of water but an indication of a “flood” of people pursuing the escapees. The pursuers are stopped by an earthquake which opens up great fissures in the earth into which the pursuers fall.

The dragon then goes off to make war against the rest of the woman’s offspring, who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. This would refer to the Tribulation Saints who will face the most severe persecution by Antichrist’s followers during the last half of the tribulation.

Questions for thought:

1. What is the central truth of Revelation?
2. Who does the woman represent?
3. Who does the man-child represent?
4. Who does the dragon represent?
5. When is Satan cast out of heaven?
6. To where does the woman escape from the dragon?
7. What might the two wings of a great eagle represent?
8. With whom does the dragon make war when he can’t get to the woman?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty)

Study (Revelation 13)

We continue from the previous symbolic images with the dragon standing on the shore of the sea. So this is a continuation of symbolism and should not be taken literally.

Verse

Discussion

1 - 8 With the dragon standing on the shore of the sea, a beast comes out of the sea and receives power, a throne, and authority from the dragon. The whole world is astonished and follows the beast and they not only worship the dragon but also the beast. The beast utters proud words and blasphemies and exercises his authority for 42 months (3 ½ years). He also is given the power to make war against the saints and conquer them. He also is given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. And all the inhabitants of the earth whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life worship the beast.

What do we learn from the description of the beast that comes out of the sea? The "sea" that the dragon stands upon and from which the beast comes probably references the Mediterranean Sea and is used to represent the Gentile nations of the Mediterranean area. So the dragon has power over the nations and gives that power to the beast he raises up out of the nations. The image of ten horns corresponds to Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the statue with ten toes made of iron mixed with clay (Dan 2), and to Daniel's vision of the fourth beast who had ten horns (Dan 7). In both of those, the "ten" refers to the ten kings who rule ten nations that give their power to the Antichrist during the tribulation. So this indicates the beast is the Antichrist and that he comes from the Gentile nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea.

The seven heads, each with a blasphemous name, are not identified until Rev 17:9-14. In that passage, the seven heads are equated with the seven hills on which the woman of that image sits, and then says they are seven kings of whom five have fallen, one is, and one is yet to come. The seven hills refer to the seven hills upon which the city of Rome sits and the seven kings refer to the Caesar's of the Roman Empire. At the time of the revelation being given to John, five Caesars had already ruled and died, Domitian currently was ruling, and the one to come references the Antichrist who will rule over a revived Roman Empire.

The description of the beast resembling a leopard, but with feet like a bear and mouth like a lion is a reference back to Daniel's four beasts that represented four future kingdoms. In Daniel 7, the four beasts are a lion representing the Babylonian Empire, a bear representing the Medo-Persian Empire, a leopard representing the Grecian Empire, and a nondescript beast with ten horns representing the Roman Empire. In John's time, the Roman Empire was in control and, even though it fell as a major power, its influence has continued throughout the western world. So, in this description of the beast, Daniel's four beasts are represented in reverse order beginning with the nondescript beast having ten horns.

From this passage in Revelation and Daniel's writing, we surmise the nationality of the beast (the Antichrist). Here, the beast comes from the "sea" which equals the Mediterranean area. In Daniel 8:8 – 9, the little horn that is the Antichrist is from the four Grecian horns. That indicates he is part Greek. In Daniel 9:26, the prince who is the Antichrist is of the people that shall come and destroy the temple – the Romans. That indicates he is part Roman. Daniel 11:36 – 37 says the Antichrist regards not the people of the God of his fathers. That indicates he is part Jewish,

but he probably keeps that part of his ancestry a secret.

We are told that one of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound but had been healed. What is the significance of the wound and healing? As a result, people see the miraculous nature of the event and thus that the dragon is powerful. Therefore with that power given to the beast, people see that it is difficult if not futile to attempt to stand up against him. So they worship the beast and the dragon. What this indicates is that the Antichrist receives a fatal wound at the midpoint of the tribulation. This is the same time that Satan loses his battle in heaven and is cast down to the earth. What likely happens is that Satan inhabits Antichrist's body and thus he appears to be resurrected. This is Satan's attempt to appear to duplicate Jesus' resurrection. Satan has to inhabit Antichrist's body because he doesn't have the power to give life like God does. Another result is that the beast appears to be given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies against God and heaven. That also gives the beast power over all of the world because Satan has temporarily been given authority to rule the air [universe] (see Eph 6:12).

The beast exercises his authority for 42 months (3 ½ years) – the last half of the tribulation – and makes war against the saints. Remember that when the dragon was unable to overtake the woman (Israel) as she fled into the desert, he went off to make war against the rest of her offspring (Rev 12:15 – 17). What does it mean that the beast is able to conquer the saints? We know that the believing Israelites who flee into the wilderness are protected during the last half of the tribulation so it can't mean that the Antichrist actually gets rid of all believers. So it must mean that he is able to overpower them as a group – not individually. We are also told that all the people of the earth whose names have not been written in the Lamb's book of life will worship the beast. That means there will be other people whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life who will not worship the beast. That makes it evident that the beast doesn't get rid of all the believers during the last half of the tribulation. There will be believers who are still alive at the end of the tribulation. And they will go into the millennium under the reign of Jesus.

9 – 10 In these two verses Jesus gives hope to the tribulation saints. We know it is addressed to the saints because he says “he who has an ear, let him hear” and this was the same phrase he used when addressing the saints in the seven churches (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). And he also ends by saying this will require patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints. What will require patient endurance is that many of the tribulation saints will be put into captivity and possibly killed during the last half of the tribulation. This also agrees with the opening of the fifth seal (Rev 6:9-11) when souls under the altar asked how long until the Lord judges the inhabitants of the earth and avenge their death. And they are told to wait until the number of their fellow servants who are to be killed has been completed. Although this seems unjust and senseless, what we and they must understand is that continuing to live our life is not as important as witnessing for Jesus and leading others to follow him so they will live with him for all of eternity.

11 – 18 This passage tells us about another beast which comes out of the earth. He exercises authority on behalf of the first beast and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast. He also has the power to perform miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven and giving apparent life to an image of the first beast. He forces people to receive a mark which identifies them with the first beast. People will need this mark to buy or sell anything. Something about the mark is the name of the first beast or the number of his name.

Where the first beast came out of the “sea” representing the Gentile nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea, this beast comes out of the earth. This may represent that he is not of mixed nationality and not Gentile but an apostate Jew. He may set himself up as the long-awaited Jewish Messiah and aid the World Council of Churches in merging various religious systems into

a one-world religion. At the mid-point, his apostate beliefs and practices apparently will be revealed as he sets up an image of the first beast (Antichrist) in the temple, animates it, and forces everyone to worship the image. Therefore, this beast is a false prophet – speaking for and leading people to worship the Antichrist indwelt by Satan.

The horns like a lamb means he will appear to be meek. But the speaking like a dragon means he will be just as evil and anti-God as Satan and will speak the words of Satan whenever he speaks just like the Holy Spirit only speaks the words of God. The false prophet's apparent source of authority is the Antichrist and his purpose is to work among people for the worship of the Antichrist just as the Holy Spirit's work among people is for the worship of Jesus as the Messiah. The great and miraculous signs the false prophet does may be what convinces some Jews and seemingly "Christian" people that he is the Messiah and it may be what enables the Jews to rebuild the temple and re-institute the sacrificial system.

The image of the Antichrist which the false prophet animates and causes people to worship or be killed is set up in the Holy of Holies in the reconstructed temple at the mid-point of the tribulation. This is what is prophesied in 2 Thes 2:4 and is the abomination that causes desolation prophesied in Dan 9:27 and Dan 12:11.

Forcing people to take a mark that somehow represent the Antichrist is an economic pressure to get people to worship Satan through the worship of Antichrist. Satan wants worship! That is what caused his disobedience and led a third of the angels to rebel against God. It is what led to Adam's and Eve's fall in the Garden of Eden. It was the basis of his temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. And it is what leads people today to reject God and try to be their own god.

The mark of Antichrist is somehow the name of Antichrist or the number of his name. Because Jesus said "If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man's number. His number is 666," many people have developed schemes to identify the Antichrist beast. Some of these schemes have been a simple identifying someone as doing evil things, but some have been elaborate and even suspect of relying on false or misleading information.

Believers in John's day (without trying to calculate the number) thought it somehow represented Nero and then Domitian. Some have thought it somehow represented Adolf Hitler (again without calculating the number). Some thought it was President Reagan because he had three names, each with six letters (Ronald Wilson Reagan = 6 6 6). Others have used the alphabet, assigning each letter a multiple of six (A=6, B=12, C=18, ... Z=156) and then determining the number of an individual's name. If that number equals 666, then the person is perhaps the Antichrist. (Example: Kissinger is $66+114+114+54+84+42+30+108=666$)

Until 1980, people didn't understand how the mark could be part of a person's hand or forehead or how it could identify people so they thought it must be symbolic of allegiance to Antichrist. But Mary Stewart Relfe, in her book *When Your Money Fails*, reports that Lowell R. Brisben, a banking official, was on a discussion show of an independent TV station in May 1980 and told about a machine that eliminated the need for credit cards. He said it would identify a person's "secret number" as it electronically scanned a person's right hand. Since that time, there have been many reports of machines that would be able to scan something, probably an electronic chip, implanted under an animal's skin – even a person's.

Another scheme for identifying how the number could be 666 and identify every person comes from the international banking community. Early in 1980, in Brussels, Belgium (the headquarters of the European Economy), there was a huge computer that was used to accommodate the electronic transfer of international funds. It occupied three floors of a thirteen

floor building, and its chief computer analyst was overseeing a program to assign everyone in the world an 18 digit number. The computer was nicknamed “the beast.” And so many people, looking at much of Revelation as symbolic, thought this was the first beast. Unfortunately, another larger computer being built in Luxembourg was scheduled to take over the electronic funds transfers in late 1980. The eighteen digit number they were trying to implement would work as follows. There would be a three digit international code (IC), a three digit national code (NC), a three digit telephone code (TC), and a nine digit personal code (SSN). [Obviously since it uses a telephone code and SSN, the scheme was “cooked up” by US interests.] With the international code being 666, the US national code being 110, and my telephone prefix being 816, a personal code would be:

(666 110) (816 455) (488 955)

Note that not only is the international code 666 but the whole number is three sets of six numbers or 6 6 6. Thus everybody’s number would be 666 but yet be unique to identify them individually.

It was reported by Relfe (p 56 of *When Your Money Fails*) that IRS refund checks scheduled for use in 1984 were used by accident in 1980 in California. On the back of those checks were printed these instructions: Do not cash this check unless the recipient has a number on either his right hand or on his forehead. She says that in July and Aug of 1980, scores of Social Security checks were sent to people with the same cashing instructions. She doesn’t say that the Social Security Administration admitted any mistake, but she says the IRS admitted their mistake by saying “These government checks requiring a mark in a person’s right hand or forehead are not to be put into use until 1984.” Obviously, some authors in the mid 80s thought our government was ready to implement the Antichrist’s system at any time and they relied upon highly suspect information to base their conclusions.

Indeed, the mark of the beast could be something like a computer identification number encoded into an electronic chip placed under the skin. But it could also be a holographic image or something else using any of the many new technologies that are constantly being developed. The mark will probably not be understood until during the tribulation when it is being forced upon people. But the identifying of how the number represents the Antichrist and identifies people is not as important as identifying the dragon, the first beast, and the second beast. After studying chapters 12 and 13, we can say that they represent the Unholy Trinity. The dragon is the anti-God. The first beast is the anti-Christ. And the second beast is the anti-Spirit.

Questions for thought:

1. What is the “sea” upon which the dragon stands?
2. What does it mean that the first beast came out of the “sea”?
3. What is the identity of the first beast?
4. What significance is there that one of the first beast’s seven heads seems to have a fatal wound?
5. What is the significance of the second beast coming out of the earth?
6. What is the purpose of the second beast?
7. What is the significance of the mark of the beast?
8. What is the meaning of the statement to the saints in verse 10?

| | | | | | |
|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|
| A=6 | F=36 | K=66 | P=96 | U=126 | Z=156 |
| B=12 | G=42 | L=72 | Q=102 | V=132 | |
| C=18 | H=48 | M=78 | R=108 | W=138 | |
| D=24 | I=54 | N=84 | S=114 | X=144 | |
| E=30 | J=60 | O=90 | T=120 | Y=150 | |

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty-one)

Study (Revelation 14)

Now we change from the previous symbolic images to other events that John sees.

Verse

Discussion

1 – 5

After the symbolism of the dragon and beasts, John sees the Lamb standing on Mt. Zion along with the 144,000 (Rev 7) who had been sealed on their foreheads with the name of the Lamb and the name of his Father. Is this pointing to the end of the tribulation when Jesus comes to earth the second time or is this indicating something else? Jerusalem, the city which David captured in 2 Sam 5:6-7, was called the fortress of Zion because it was built on Mt. Zion. But we are told in the letter to the Hebrews (12:22) that people are coming not to a mountain that can be touched (referring to Mt Sinai) to be a part of a new kingdom, but to Mt. Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem. So it appears there might be a heavenly Mt. Zion as well as an earthly one. If that is the case, then this could be an indication of something happening in heaven.

After seeing the Lamb and the 144,000 John hears a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing water or the loud peal of thunder. That indicates the sound was loud and authoritative. John also says the sound was like harpists playing their harps. That indicates it was a melodious sound. Then John says “they” sang a new song before God’s throne and before the living creatures and the elders. It was a song that only the 144,000 could learn. The “they” could mean it is angels singing the song and teaching it to the 144,000. But it could also mean that Jesus taught the song to the 144,000 and since only they could learn it, the 144,000 is the “they” who are singing the song. This is an indication that what John was seeing is not representing the end of the tribulation but an event in heaven that occurred toward the beginning of the tribulation – the sealing of the 144,000 for their special work.

Now we learn some more about the 144,000. They did not defile themselves with women because they kept themselves pure. Although some translations don’t say it directly, the Greek manuscripts say they were virgins. “They follow the Lamb wherever he goes” indicates their devotion to Jesus and following his will – not that they are following him around the earth. That they “were” offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb indicates that they are the first of the believers from the tribulation. The close walk of these individuals with Jesus allows them to be blameless because he gives them the strength to avoid the temptations of mankind that lead people to lie and disobey God.

6 – 13

Then John sees a succession of three angels flying in midair, each with a message for the earth. The first angel proclaims the gospel to every nation, tribe, language, and people. This is an indication that every person on earth, no matter how secluded from civilization they are, will hear the gospel (good news) about Jesus and have the opportunity to accept and follow him. The angel encourages everyone to fear God, give him glory and worship him. And he tells them that the hour (time) of judgment has come (arrived). This is a depiction of the work of the 144,000.

The second angel announces that Babylon the Great has fallen. The angel cries “fallen” two times indicating that there are two Babylons that will fall. One is the religious – materialistic system and the other is the literal city.

The city of Babylon was first built by Nimrod, the son of Cush and the grandson of Ham. He

was a mighty warrior and also built the cities of Erech, Akkad, and Calneh in Shinar, and the cities of Nineveh, Rehoboth, Ir, Calah, and Resen in the land of Assyria. (Gen 10:8-10) Somewhere near Babylon is where Nimrod's descendants were building the Tower of Babel, attempting to make a name for themselves by attaining heaven through their own efforts (Gen 11:1-9). This is the foundation of the religions that developed in this area. Everyone at the time of the Tower of Babel construction had the same language so the spreading of ideas and commerce among peoples was easily accomplished. The city of Babylon became the wealthiest of the cities in the area because it was the center of commerce, the center of religion, and the capital city of the kingdom. It was to Babylon that the bronze and silver from the temple in Jerusalem were taken when Nebuchadnezzar had his army destroy the temple and city (2 Kings 25:8-15). The destruction of Babylon was prophesied by Isaiah (13:1-22; 14:22-23; 47:1-15) and Jeremiah (25:12-14; 50:1 – 51:58). They specifically say that Babylon will be completely desolate, overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah, and not inhabited through all generations. Babylon fell to Cyrus the Persian on Oct 12, 539 BC as recorded in Daniel 5. It was plundered of its wealth and its temple destroyed. After Alexander the Greek conquered the Persian Empire, he thought about rebuilding the temple and city but didn't because of the excessive cost. From the time that Alexander's generals divided up his kingdom after his death, Babylon decayed rapidly and became a desert area. In its entire history, Babylon was never destroyed by God like he destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. That means the city must be rebuilt and rise to enough prominence that it will deserve destruction like Sodom and Gomorrah. For years, Saddam Hussein was slowly rebuilding Babylon in an attempt to make it into a prominent city again. The adulteries of Babylon are her materialism and self-promoting religion which have been exported throughout the world. This would depict the falling of the city of Babylon and the religion of Babylon at the mid-point of the tribulation.

The third angel announces that if anyone worships the beast and receives his mark on the forehead or on the hand he will also receive God's wrath (like the unholy trinity) and will be tormented forever with burning sulfur. It will take patient endurance on the part of the tribulation saints (believers) to remain faithful to Jesus and refuse to follow Babylon's ways. This is obviously referring to the last half of the tribulation. John hears a voice from heaven say that those who die in the Lord (believing and trusting Jesus) will be blessed because they will rest from their labors (not have to endure any more of the tribulation) and their deeds will follow them (those people who will decide to follow Jesus rather than take the mark of the beast).

14 – 20

Then John sees a white cloud with "one like a son of man" who has a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then an angel comes out of the heavenly temple and calls to the one on the cloud and tells him to take his sickle and reap because the harvest of the earth is ripe. So the one on the cloud swings his sickle and the earth is harvested. Another angel comes out of the temple with a sharp sickle and the angel in charge of the fire on the altar comes and tells that angel to gather the clusters of grapes from the earth's vine because its grapes are ripe. That angel swings his sickle gathering the grapes and throws them into the great winepress of God's wrath. They are trampled in the winepress outside of the city causing blood to flow out of the press as high as the horses' bridles for 1600 stadia (~180 miles).

Some people believe that since the individual on the cloud is described as "one like a son of man" it is an indication this is Jesus. To see if we want to agree with that and to understand what is being shown to John, we must look at Jesus' parable of the weeds and the parable of the net found in Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43 and 13:47-50.

The parable of the weeds and its explanation describe Jesus as the owner of the field (the world) sowing good seed (the sons of the kingdom – those who believe and follow him). The weeds that his servants (angels) find growing among the wheat are the sons of the evil one (Satan). The

servants are told not to try to pull out the weeds or they will destroy some of the wheat at the same time. They are told to let them grow up together until harvest time (the end of the age) and then he will tell the harvesters (angels) to first collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned and then gather the wheat into his barn. Jesus says that the Son of Man (himself) will send out his angels to weed everything out of his kingdom that causes sin and all who do evil and “throw them into the fiery furnace where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” In the parable of the net, after the catch has been pulled in, the fishermen collect the good fish in baskets and throw the bad away. Jesus explains that “This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Some people believe that these two parables both show the judgment of righteous and unrighteous (believers and unbelievers, or followers and rejecters). And many believe this is the same separation as that of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 and that this is the great white throne judgment of Revelation 20:11-15. Others believe that since the bad is harvested first in the parable of the weeds and the good are harvested first in the parable of the net, it indicates there are at least two times of separating the righteous and unrighteous. Following the logic of more than one harvest, the rapture could be seen as a partial harvest, the transition from the tribulation to the millennium could be seen as another partial harvest, and the end of the millennium could be seen as the final harvest. This would see the rapture as the harvest of the good first (a partial judgment), the end of the tribulation as the harvest of the bad first (another partial judgment), and the end of the millennium as the great white throne separation and final judgment. Note that in both of the parables it is angels who do the separating – not Jesus or God, and in the great white throne judgment it is Jesus who does the separating and it is done in heaven. This tells us that the “one like a son of man” is not Jesus but an angel. Since the grapes that are gathered are put in a winepress of God’s wrath outside of the city and out of it flows blood, it is an indication of a harvest on earth – not in heaven – so this is not the great white throne judgment. Since the harvest by the second angel is subjected to the great winepress of God’s wrath and the second half of the tribulation is greatest of God’s tribulation wrath, this indicates what John is seeing is the rapture and tribulation.

Since we are told that what comes out of the winepress is blood and that it rises as high as the horses’ bridles (5 foot) for 1600 stadia (~180 miles), this is an indication of a big battle outside the city of Jerusalem. We will find in Revelation 19 that when Jesus actually returns to Jerusalem the beast and the false prophet will lead an army against him. The result is that the beast and false prophet are cast into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, all of the army are killed and their bodies eaten by birds.

Questions for thought:

1. Who are the 144,000 depicted here?
2. Are the 144,000 married, single, widowed, or a mixture?
3. Are they being depicted at the beginning or end of the tribulation?
4. What do each of the three angels flying in midair depict?
5. Who are the saints that are blessed if they die and what period of time does the statement depict?
6. Who is the “one like a son of man”?
7. What harvest is depicted?
8. What does the blood out of the winepress depict?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty-two)

Study (Revelation 15 & 16)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|---|
| 15:1 | Now that John has been shown more about the 144,000, their work, the fall of two Babylons, what will happen to those who take the Mark of the Beast and those who don't, and the harvest of the earth, he is shown a great and marvelous sign – seven angels with the seven last plagues. We are told that they are the last plagues because with them God's wrath will be completed. Just because the seven angels with their plagues are called a "sign" is not a reason to say they are symbolic instead of literal. They are a sign because they show the end of God's wrath is near, the end of the tribulation is near, the end of Satan's control of the earth is near, and the beginning of Jesus' kingdom on earth is near. That is what makes this sign marvelous. |
| 2 – 4 | Then John notices what looks like a sea of glass mixed with fire. This would be the same sea of glass John saw in Rev 4:6 that is before the throne of God. Standing around the sea are those who have been victorious over the beast, his image, and the number of his name. Since they are described as victorious over "the beast, his image, and the number of his name" it means these are tribulation saints – those of the last half of the tribulation (not the first half) who die for the testimony of following Jesus instead of the beast. They are holding harps and sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses refers us back to Exodus 15:1-18 which is the song Moses sang after God had led the captives through the Red Sea and out of the control of Pharaoh. It is a song of God's victory over the enemy of his people. This song is the same. But this song is also the "song of the Lamb." We don't know of any song that Jesus sang so that phrase must mean it is a song "about" the Lamb rather than "by" the Lamb. |
| 5 – 8 | Then John sees the heavenly temple open and out of the temple comes the seven angels with the seven plagues. One of the four living creatures around the throne of God gives each of the angels a golden bowl filled with the wrath of God. And at that time the temple is filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power and it remains there so that no one can enter the temple until the seven plagues are completed. That means God is in his heavenly temple during that time. |
| 16:1 – 2 | Then John hears a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels to go and pour God's wrath on the earth. Since the temple is filled with God's presence, that means it is God who is telling the angels to pour out his wrath on the earth. When the first angel pours out his bowl the people who have taken the mark of the beast and who have worshiped the beast's image develop ugly and painful sores on their bodies. Since the image of the beast is not set up and people made to worship it until the mid-point of the tribulation, that definitely places the outpouring of the bowls of wrath in the second half of the tribulation. This is similar to the 6 th plague that God brought upon the land of Egypt (Ex 9:8-12). |
| 3 – 7 | The second angel pours out his bowl on the sea (salt water) and it turns into blood and kills every living thing in it. This is similar to the first plague on Egypt except it is only on salt water. The third angel pours out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water (fresh water) and they turn into blood. It is not specifically stated but would be reasonable that every living thing in them are also killed. This would be like the second plague on Egypt (Ex 7:14-21). After these two bowl judgments there are no more marine creatures (unless perhaps the water in aquariums and fish tanks is not affected). Then the angel who is in charge of (has authority over) the waters declares |

that God's turning the waters of the earth into blood is just because the people have shed the blood of the (tribulation) saints and so it is right that they should have blood to drink. As believers are exempt in the first bowl judgment (just as God's people were exempt during the plagues on Egypt), it is reasonable to presume that the tribulation believers are exempted from all of the bowl judgments. When John says he heard the altar respond, it is probable that it is the martyred tribulation saints previously seen under the altar (Rev 6:9-11) that are agreeing God's judgment is just.

- 8 – 9 When the fourth angel pours out his bowl, the sun is given the power to scorch people with fire. This is similar to a sunburn but probably more intense. This plague has no equivalent in the plagues on Egypt. Instead of repenting and glorifying God, people curse his name. That probably doesn't mean they recognize or accept that God is causing these plagues. It is probably just the way they react and speak about bad things that happen to them – cursing God – even if they don't believe God exists.
- 10 – 11 The bowl judgment of the fifth angel is like the 9th plague on Egypt – darkness. The darkness is specifically on the throne of the beast (rebuilt Babylon or the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem where the image of the beast has been erected). But it is also on his kingdom. Since Satan's kingdom is the earth and he is indwelling the beast at this time, that means the whole earth is plunged into darkness. This agrees with these prophecies: “Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light” (Amos 5:18). “The great day of the Lord is near ... That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness” (Zeph 1:14-15). “See, the day of the Lord is coming ... The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light” (Isaiah 13:9-10). “But in those days, following that distress, ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light’” (Mark 13:24-25). It is likely that the darkness eases the intense heat of the previous bowl but it brings its own pain. Total darkness, like that found in a cave, added to the previous bowl judgments will bring people to the point of gnawing agony. But still people will refuse to repent and acknowledge God.
- 12 – 16 When the sixth angel pours out his bowl judgment, the Euphrates River is dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East to cross. John sees three evil spirits which look like frogs come out of the mouths of the dragon, beast, and false prophet. These evil spirits perform miraculous signs and go out to gather the kings of the world to do battle against God at a place called Armageddon – literally the valley of Megiddo. Jesus tells John that he is coming like a thief in the night, just like Paul told the Thessalonian believers (1 Thes 5:1). Jesus also says that those who are watchful and prepared (awake and keeps clothes with him) for his coming will be blessed.
- 17 – 21 The seventh angel pours his bowl out upon the air and a loud voice comes from the throne in the heavenly temple. Remember that God's presence is filling the temple so that no one else can enter until after the bowl judgments are completed. That means it is God who says, “It is done!” Jesus made a similar statement just before he gave his last breath on the cross. Jesus said, “It is finished!” In the Greek, both of these statements are one word each. Jesus' statement from the cross is “Tetelestai!” It comes from the verb “teleo” which means “to end” (ie. complete, conclude, or finish) something. Thus he was saying his work was ended, completed, concluded, or finished. From the heavenly temple, God says “Gegonen!” This comes from the verb “ginomai” which means “to cause (something) to be.” So God is saying that with this bowl judgment he is causing the tribulation (the day of the Lord) to be at its end or conclusion. So the lightning, rumblings, thunder, severe earthquake, and hailstones all combined are the final bowl judgment. The earthquake is so severe that it splits the city of Babylon into three parts (indicates craters or gaps between the parts); it levels mountains (indicates tectonic plates opening up gaps

that allow whole mountains to drop inward toward the center of the earth); and it causes islands to disappear (indicates the same tectonic plate action under the oceans which allows underwater mountains which we see as islands to drop inward). At the same time, hailstones of about 100 pounds each fall on people. Even a glancing blow from hail that large would cause severe injury to a person, even the severing of a limb or instant death. That reminds us that Jesus said, "It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matt 5:29). But rather than recognize God and repent of their disobedience of him, people will still curse him.

For believers, it appears that the bowl judgments do not affect them. But at the same time, Satan, through the beast and false prophet will be persecuting and killing large numbers of believers.

Questions for thought:

1. Who are the people standing around the sea of glass with harps and singing?
2. What does the song they sing represent?
3. Where is the presence of God while his final wrath is being poured out upon the earth?
4. How many of the bowl judgments affect the tribulation believers?
5. What happens to believers during the bowl judgments?
6. What do the three evil spirits that look like frogs do?
7. Where are the kings of the world going to assemble?
8. When does the great city of Babylon fall?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty-three)

Study (Revelation 17)

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
|--------------|---|
| 1 - 7 | After the seven angels who had the bowls of God's wrath had poured them upon the earth, one of the angels tells John to come with him to see the punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters. The angel says that the kings of the earth committed adultery with her and that the people of earth were drunk with the wine of her adulteries. Then the angel carries John away in the Spirit into a desert where he sees a woman sitting on a scarlet beast. The beast was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. The woman is dressed in purple and scarlet and glittered because of the gold, pearls, and precious stones on her clothes. In her hand the woman held a cup filled with abominable things and the filth from her adulteries. And she had the following title written on her forehead: Mystery Babylon the Great the Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the Earth. John can see that the woman is drunk from drinking the blood of the saints who have given testimony about Jesus. John says that he was astonished by the sight of the woman so the angel says he will explain the mystery of what John sees. It is obvious that this vision is symbolic and not literal because a literal woman could not commit adultery with all the kings of the earth and become drunk on the blood of saints. So we must discover what is being symbolized by what John is being shown. |
| 8 | The angel says the beast once was, now is not, and will come up out of the abyss and go to his destruction while the people of earth whose names are not written in the book of life will be astonished when they see the beast. Two questions arise: who is the beast and why will the people be astonished to see him? The beast was described as having seven heads and ten horns. This description is the same as the description of the Antichrist in Rev 13:1. But, in addition to this, the beast once was (lived), now is not (had received a fatal wound so although he seems alive it is because he is inhabited by Satan), and will come up from the abyss to go to his destruction (final judgment). So not only is the description the same but the events of what happen to the Antichrist is the same. The people whose names are not written in the book of life are those who rejected the Lord and followed the Antichrist during the tribulation. They will be astonished when they discover that the one whom they followed and thought was resurrected was not resurrected but his soul was confined to the abyss awaiting the final judgment. |
| 9 – 11 | The angel says that understanding the next part of the image will take a mind with wisdom. He explains that the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. But they are also seven kings of which five have fallen, one is, and one has not yet come. Also, when the last king comes he will remain for a little while. Then the angel says the beast who was and now is not will be an eighth king and that he belongs to the seven. He also will go to his destruction. John would have recognized that as of his time five kings of the Roman Empire had died and one king was ruling. The seventh king will be the Antichrist as we looked at in a previous lesson. The eighth king is the indwelt body of the Antichrist so, in reality, he is Satan. So the beast upon whom the woman sits is the Antichrist so the seven heads which are seven hills upon which she sits would be the seven hills upon which the city of Rome is built. |
| 12 – 14 | The angel says the ten horns are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom but will receive authority along with the beast (Antichrist). This indicates Antichrist will divide the world into ten districts or "empires" and install ten individuals as "kings" to rule over the districts. The kings have one purpose and that is to give their authority (allegiance) to the Antichrist so he can |

rule the earth. The angel says the ten kings will make war against the Lamb (Jesus) but that the Lamb will overcome them because he is the Lord of lords and King of kings (his authority over all creation). We will discover in Rev 19 that when Jesus returns to earth the thigh of his robe will have the name King of kings and Lord of lords written on it. The angel says that with the Lord will be his called, chosen, and faithful followers. This would be the saints of the Church age.

15 – 18

Now the angel explains what John sees about the woman. He says that the woman is a great city that rules over the kings of the earth. This combined with her being called “Babylon the Great” has led some people to believe that the city is the rebuilt Babylon from which the Antichrist rules the world. But this can’t be the meaning because the angel says “kings” – not “ten kings” which indicates that the woman has ruled over the world for much longer than just the tribulation.

He says that the waters upon which she sits are peoples, multitudes, nations, and languages. This, along with the “kings” statement, obviously indicates that she rules over all of humanity. That she is a prostitute with whom the kings of the earth committed adultery and by whom the people of earth have become drunk, along with the name written on her forehead, indicates it is the mystery religion which had its origin in ancient Babylon and which is still strong today – idolatry. That religion includes every way of living that worships something other than the Creator of the universe and in any other way than what he has said was acceptable. Materialism and humanism are two of the best known and longest followed forms of that religion. Throughout history, the kings of the world have bowed down in worship of her. The people of the world have sought after and enjoyed all of the pleasures that the religion has provided no matter how immoral, ungodly, corrupt, or abominable those pleasures might have been. That is why the people are said to be drunk on her adulteries.

So the woman is representative of all the religious systems of the world with their mysteries which lure people into following them; the gold, jewels and lavish excesses of their leaders; and their sensuous practices which lead people into activities condemned by God and which enslave the people in guilt and self-abuse in an attempt to cleanse that guilt. During the tribulation all of the forms of that religion will be integrated into a “one-world” religion which the Antichrist will use to further his control over people. But religion is very powerful because it tells people what they should believe and how they should act. That eventually becomes a threat to Antichrist’s rule and thus is hated by him (the beast) and his sub-rulers (the ten kings). The rulers of nations throughout history have hated the power that religion has. And that comes to a climax at the midpoint of the tribulation when Satan himself indwells the Antichrist and demands that everyone follow him, not the leader of a world religion. At that point, the kings of the world, following Antichrist’s direction, throw off the rule of the one-world religion. They strip the one-world religion of its power which leaves her naked. They take all of the riches and possessions of the one-world religion which is indicated by her flesh being eaten. That she is “burned with fire” may indicate that the places of worship are burned so that they cannot be used and only the Antichrist can be worshiped.

Note that the angel says “God has put into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until God’s words are fulfilled.” This means the ten kings will be doing God’s work of ridding the world of the abomination of false religions and they won’t even recognize that they are doing his will.

Questions for thought:

1. What does the woman represent and where do we see her today?
2. What is the ultimate fate of the woman and when will it occur?

The Current Identity of Babylon the Harlot

A careful examination of this passage of Scripture should make it easy for us to identify the current harlot of Babylon and predict with some degree of accuracy what we can expect on the religious horizon. To do so, however, we must develop a basic understanding of the biblical meaning of Babylon. This word occurs 290 times in the Bible. The greatest book ever written on this subject is the masterpiece, *The Two Babylons*, by Rev. Alexander Hislop, published in 1858. This book, containing quotations from 275 authors and to my knowledge never refuted, best describes the origin of religion in Babylon and its present-day function. Two more recent authors who quote heavily from this book are likewise presented at length because they have so clearly and simply summarized the heart of his work and provided, in few words, the best description of these ancient events that I have found. Dr. Harry Ironside, in his commentary on Revelation, has written:

The woman is a religious system, who dominates the civil power, at least for a time. The name upon her forehead should easily enable us to identify her. But in order to do that we will do well to go back to our Old Testament and see what is there revealed concerning literal Babylon, for the one will surely throw light upon the other ...

... we learn that the founder of Bab-el, or Babylon, was Nimrod, of whose unholy achievements we read in the 10th chapter of Genesis. He was the arch-apostate of the patriarchal age ... he persuaded his associates and followers to join together in "building a city and a tower which should reach unto heaven." Not ... a tower by which they might climb up into the skies ... but a tower of renown ... to be recognized as a temple or rallying center for those who did not walk in obedience to the word of the Lord ... they called their city and tower Bab-El, gate of God; but it was soon changed by divine judgment into Babel, Confusion. It bore the stamp of unreality from the first, for we are told "they had brick for stone, and slime had they for mortar." An imitation of that which is real and true has ever since characterized Babylon, in all ages.

Nimrod, or Nimroud-bar-Cush ... was a grandson of Ham, the unworthy son of Noah ... Noah had brought through the flood, the revelation of the true God ... Ham on the other hand seems to have been all too readily affected by the apostasy that brought the flood, for he shows no evidence or self-judgment ... His name ... means "swarthy," "darkened," or, more literally, "the sunburnt." And the name indicates the state of the man's soul ... darkened by light from heaven ...

Ham begat a son named Cush, "the black one," and he became the father of Nimrod, the apostate leader of his generation.

Ancient lore now comes to our assistance, and tells us that the wife of Nimrod-bar-Cush was the infamous Semiramis the First. She is reputed to have been the foundress of the Babylonian mysteries and the first high-priestess of idolatry. Thus Babylon became the fountain-head of idolatry, and the mother of every heathen and pagan system in the world. The mystery-religion that was there originated spread in various forms throughout the whole earth ... and is with us today ... and shall have its fullest development when the Holy Spirit has departed and the Babylon of the Apocalypse holds sway.

Building on the primeval promise of the woman's Seed who was to come, Semiramis bore a son whom she declared was miraculously conceived! And when she presented him to the people, he was hailed as the promised deliverer. This was Tammuz, whose worship Ezekiel protested against in the days of the captivity. Thus was introduced the mystery of the mother and the child, a form of idolatry that is older than any other known to man. The rites of this worship were secret. Only the initiated were permitted to know its mysteries. It was Satan's effort to delude mankind with an imitation so like the truth of God in the fullness of time (Harry A. Ironside, *Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, 12th ed., Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1942, pp 287-291)

Dr. Clarence Larkin, in his book *Dispensational Truth*, includes these interesting details:

Babel, or Babylon, was built by Nimrod. Gen 10:8-10. It was the seat of the first great Apostasy. Here the "Babylonian Cult" was invented, a system of claiming to possess the highest wisdom and to

reveal the divinest secrets. Before a member could be initiated he had to “confess” to the Priest. The Priest then had him in his power. This is the secret of the power of the Priests of the Roman Catholic Church today.

Once admitted into this order, men were no longer Babylonians, Assyrians, or Egyptians, but members of a Mystical Brotherhood over whom was placed a Pontiff or “High Priest,” whose word was law. The city of Babylon continued to be the seat of Satan until the fall of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires, when he shifted his Capital to Pergamos in Asia Minor, where it was in John’s day. Rev 2:12, 13.

When Attalus, the Pontiff and King of Pergamos, died in B.C. 133, he bequeathed the Headship of the “Babylonian Priesthood” to Rome. When the Etruscans came to Italy from Lydia (the region of Pergamos), they brought with them the Babylonian religion and rites. They set up this Pontiff as their civil ruler. Julius Caesar was made Pontiff of the Etruscan Order in B.C. 74. In B.C. 63 he was made “Supreme Pontiff” of the “Babylonian Order,” thus becoming heir to the rights and titles of Attalus, Pontiff of Pergamos, who had made Rome his heir by will. Thus the first Roman Emperor became the Head of the “Babylonian Priesthood,” and Rome the successor of Babylon. The Emperors of Rome continued to exercise the office of “Supreme Pontiff” until A.D. 376, when Emperor Gratian, for Christian reasons, refused it. The Bishop of the Church at Rome, Damasus, was elected to the position, through the influence of the monks of Mt. Carmel, a college of Babylonian religion originally founded by the priests of Jezebel. So in A.D. 378 the Head of the “Babylonian Order” became the Ruler of the “Roman Church.” Thus Satan united Rome and Babylon in one religious system.

Soon after Damasus was made “Supreme Pontiff” the “rites” of Babylon began to come to the front. The worship of the Virgin Mary was set up in A.D. 381. All the outstanding festivals of the Roman Catholic Church are of Babylonian origin. Easter is not a Christian name. It means “Ishtar,” one of the titles of the Babylonian Queen of Heaven, whose worship by the Children of Israel was such an abomination in the sight of God. The decree for the observance of Easter and Lent was given in A.D. 519. The “Rosary” is of Pagan origin. There is no warrant in the Word of God for the use of the “Sign of the cross.” It had its origin in the mystic “Tau” of the Chaldeans and Egyptians. It came from the letter “T,” the initial [of the] name ... “Tammuz,” and was used in the “Babylonian Mysteries” for the same magic purposes as the Romish Church now employs it. Celibacy, the Tonsure [shaving of all or part of the head as a rite of admission into the clerical state], and the Order of Monks and Nuns, have no warrant or authority from Scripture. The Nuns are nothing more than an imitation of the “Vestal Virgins” of Pagan Rome. (Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth*, Philadelphia: Rev. Clarence Larkin Estate, 1920, p 140.)

After reading the above quotations, you may be inclined to think me anti-Catholic, but that isn’t exactly true; I am anti-false religion. For example, I am opposed to any religious system which has enough of the truth to deceive the faithful and enough of the false to damn its followers. A false religion is worse than no religion at all.

My father was born and raised a Roman Catholic, but until he was twenty-eight years of age he never found peace in his heart before God. No one had ever explained to him that salvation was a “finished work,” that is could be received freely by faith. Fortunately, six years before his death he heard the Gospel in its simplicity and received Christ by faith. Failing to bring him to God, his church had clouded the way of truth with all her Babylonian pagan innovations brought up through the centuries.

Actually, Rome is more dangerous than no religion because she substitutes religion for truth. Man would be better off with his God-given desire for truth unfulfilled than he might seek after Him. Rome’s false religion too often gives man a false security that keeps him from seeking salvation freely by faith. Rome is also dangerous because some of her doctrines are pseudo-Christian. For example, she believes properly about the personal deity of Christ but errs in adding Babylonian mysticism in many forms and salvation by works.

The Pre-Christian Practices of the Roman Catholic Church

One need only turn back to chapters 5 and 6 [our lessons 5 and 6] to examine the changes made in Christianity by the Roman Catholic church. Some of these changes were referred to by the aforementioned

authors. When the bishop of Rome became dominant over other church bishops, gradually “Mary-olatry” and other Babylonian practices were brought into the church. These practices had one thing in common: they existed before Christ and were not taught by Him. For example, prayers for the dead, not instituted until A.D. 300, are nowhere taught in the Scriptures but are a regular part of the ancestor worship of the Chinese, who practiced it *hundreds of years before Christ*. In addition, the worship of Mary and Christ as a baby was conceived in the same form with other names by most of the major religions of the world hundreds of years before Christ. Easter and Lent observances with forty days’ fasting were practiced for the benefit of Tammuz five hundred years before Christ. To prove that Tammuz was worshiped before Christ, just turn to Ezekiel 8:7-14. The worship of Tammuz was so extensive by that time that even the women of Israel were seen “weeping for Tammuz.” The title “Queen of Heaven” given to Mary is certainly not Christian. In fact, good Roman Catholics should be horrified to find that the term is found in the Old Testament. Jeremiah 44:17 points out that it was used to describe the mother of Tammuz, the mother goddess of Babylon, over *five hundred years before Christ*. The practice of establishing a celibate priesthood and having nuns is not of Christian origin. Nothing in the Bible reaches this. Indeed, 1 Timothy 3:1-3 forbids it. Hundreds of years before Christ it was incorporated by the Buddhists and Hindus, who practice it to this day. Where do they get it? From Babylonian mysticism, the “mother of harlots.” The sign of the cross used on the end of a pole is likewise not of Christian derivation. It was used in the worship of Tammuz five hundred years before Christ. We have already seen that confession, not taught in the Scripture, was practiced in Babylon, and we could go on to include prayer beads, purgatory, and many other pre-Christian practices of the church of Rome. Thinking people can scarcely deny the fact that Rome today is a form of Babylonian mysticism.

Rome Is Not the Only Form of Babylonian Religion

It was my privilege a few years ago to make a trip around the world. My wife and I visited some fifty temples and religious shrines of the major religions of the world. We were appalled to find the strange chords of similarity in all these forms of religion. Mystery, darkness, incense burning, superstition, ignorance, immorality, priesthood, nuns, sprinkling, idolatry, and many other Babylonian customs appeared repeatedly. I can only conclude that Rome is not the only form of Babylonian mysticism, but merely the one that has infiltrated Christianity. And she may be the one leading all forms of religions at the end time.

Ecumenical Church Unity — a Plan of the Devil

We are living in a day of ecumenical propaganda calling upon the churches of the world to amalgamate. Church unity is moving at a breathtaking pace. Twelve years ago I preached a sermon in our church entitled “The Ecumenical Church — A Sign of Our Lord’s Return.” During that message I stated that the day would come when Roman Catholicism and liberal Protestantism would begin moving together and make overtures to unite. That statement struck many in the church like a bombshell. I was accused of being radical and extreme. When I make that statement now, I find overwhelming agreement. The newspapers are filled with accounts of such strange things as Catholic and Protestant churches working together with the Jews on a common translation of the Scriptures, a Baptist minister participating with a Catholic priest in a marriage ceremony, and just recently a Catholic priest participating in the ordination of a Baptist minister, after which he is quoted as saying, “It was a rich and meaningful experience.” As we approach the end of the age, we can expect to see liberal Protestantism, in the form of the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, being swallowed up by the church of Rome.

This unity movement should not, however, be limited to apostate Christianity. We can expect to see it move toward amalgamating all the religions of the world under Rome’s headship because our text states that the religious system at the end time will be a one-world religion: “Where the harlot sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues” (v 15). This can only mean a one-world religious system.

Finally, it need only be pointed out that the Inquisition found the church of Rome persecuting “heretics” (Christians — “saints, martyrs of Jesus”) to the death.

Rome's Persecution of Christians

Protestant ecumenicists should keep in mind that Rome has a long history of persecuting Christians. Verse 6 says that the woman is "drunken with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Whenever in control of a country, Rome has not hesitated to put to death all who opposed her. Rome's frantic opposition to the Reformation (caused by her pagan indulgences and corruption of the true (faith) is a good example. Some passages from *Halley's Bible Handbook* will illustrate her historic brutality.

THE INQUISITION

The Inquisition, called the "HOLY OFFICE," was instituted by Innocent III, and perfected under the second following Pope, Gregory IX. It was the Church Court for the detection and punishment of heretics. Under it every one was required to inform against heretics. Anyone suspected was liable to Torture, without knowing the name of his accuser. The proceedings were secret. The Inquisitor pronounced sentence, and the victim was turned over to the civil authorities to be imprisoned for life or to be burned. The victim's property was confiscated and divided between the Church and the State. In the period immediately following Innocent III the Inquisition did its most deadly work in Southern France (see under Albigenses), but claimed vast multitudes of victims in Spain, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. Later on the Inquisition was the main agency in the Papacy's effort to crush the Reformation. It is stated that in the 30 years between 1540 and 1570 no fewer than 900,000 Protestants were put to death, in the Pope's war for the extermination of the Waldenses. Think of monks and priests directing, with heartless cruelty and inhuman brutality, the work of Torturing and Burning alive innocent men and women; and doing it in the Name of Christ, by the direct order of the "Vicar of Christ." The INQUISITION is the MOST INFAMOUS THING in history. It was devised by the Popes, and used by them for 500 years to maintain their power. For its record none of the subsequent line of "Holy" and "Infallible" Popes have ever apologized

ROME'S OPPOSITION TO THE REFORMATION

In the Netherlands the Reformation was received early; Lutheranism, and then Calvinism; and Anabaptists were already numerous. Between 1513 and 1531 there were issued 25 different translations of the Bible in Dutch, Flemish and French. The Netherlands were a part of the dominion of Charles V. In 1522 he established the Inquisition, and ordered all Lutheran writings to be burned. In 1525 prohibited religious meetings in which the Bible would be read. 1546 prohibited the printing or possession of the Bible, either vulgate or translation. 1535 decreed "death by fire" for Anabaptists. Phillip II (1566-98), successor to Charles V, reissued the edicts of his father, and with Jesuit help carried on the persecution with still greater fury. By one sentence of the Inquisition the whole population was condemned to death, and under Charles V and Phillip II more than 100,000 were massacred with unbelievable brutality. Some were chained to a stake near the fire and slowly roasted to death; some were thrown into dungeons, scourged, tortured on the rack, before being burned. Women were buried alive, pressed into coffins too small, trampled down with the feet of the executioner. Those that tried to flee to other countries were intercepted by soldiers and massacred. After years of nonresistance, under unheard of cruelty, the Protestants of Netherlands united under the leadership of William of Orange, and in 1572 began the great revolt; and after incredible suffering in 1609, won their independence; Holland, on the North became Protestant; Belgium, on the South Roman Catholic. Holland was the first country to adopt public schools supported by taxation, and to legalize principles of religious toleration and freedom of the press.

In France. By 1520 Luther's teachings had penetrated France. Calvin's soon followed. By 1559 there were about 400,000 Protestants. They were called "Huguenots." Their earnest piety and pure lives were in striking contrast to the scandalous lives of the Roman clergy. In 1557 Pope Pius urged their extermination. The king issued a decree for their massacre, and ordered all loyal subjects to help in hunting them out. The Jesuits went thru France persuading the faithful to bear arms for their destruction. Thus hunted by Papal agents, as in the days of Diocletian, they met secretly, often in cellars, at midnight.

St. Bartholomew's Massacre. Catherine de Medici, mother of the King – an ardent Romanist and willing tool of the Pope, gave the order, and on the night of August 24, 1572, 70,000 Huguenots, including most of their leaders, were Massacred. There was great rejoicing in Rome. The Pope and his College of Cardinals went, in solemn procession, to the Church of San Marco, and ordered the Te Deum to be sung in thanksgiving. The Pope struck a medal in commemoration of the Massacre; and sent a Cardinal to Paris to bear the King and Queen-Mother the Congratulations of the Pope and Cardinals. “France was within a hair-breath of actually becoming Protestant; but France massacred Protestantism on the night of St. Bartholomew, 1572. 1792 there came to France a ‘Protest’ of another kind.” (Thomas Carlyle.)

The Huguenot Wars. Following St. Bartholomew's Massacre the Huguenots united and armed for resistance; till finally, in 1598, by the Edict of Nantes, they were granted the right of freedom of conscience and worship. But in the meantime some 200,000 had perished as martyrs. Pope Clement VIII called the Toleration Edict of Nantes a “cursed thing”; and, after years of underground work by the Jesuits, the Edict was Revoked, 1685; and 500,000 Huguenots fled to Protestant Countries.

In Bohemia, by 1600, in a population of 4,000,000, 80 percent were Protestant. When the Hapsburgs and Jesuits had done their work, 800,000 were left, all Catholics.

In Spain. The Reformation never made much headway, because the Inquisition was already there. Every effort for freedom or independent thinking was crushed with a ruthless hand. Torquemada (1420-98), a Dominican monk, arch-inquisitor, in 18 years burned 10,200 and condemned to perpetual imprisonment 97,000. Victims were usually burned alive in the public square; made the occasion of religious festivities. From 1481 to 1808 there were at least 100,000 martyrs and 1,500,000 banished. “In the 16th and 17th centuries the Inquisition extinguished the literary life of Spain, and put the nation almost outside the circle of European civilization.” When the Reformation began Spain was the Most Powerful country in the world. Its present negligible standing among the nations shows what the Papacy can do for a country. (Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24th ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965, pp 291, 292.)

The above quotations indicate that Rome has never been noted for her toleration. To my knowledge, she has never publicly acknowledged her sin of putting these Protestants to death. Calling us “separated brethren” is just an accommodation used today to gain acceptance by Protestants. When she is established in power, you can expect additional outbreaks of the Inquisition. Look at Catholic-dominated countries today, Colombia and Spain, where Protestants are treated as heretics, their churches burned, and their religious freedom denied.

In India we find that Hinduism is so parallel to the practices of Romanism that many of the Hindus can become Roman Catholics and need not give up Hinduism. Since the religions of the world all have idolatry in common, it would be a simple thing for them to amalgamate on a common basis. What do they care whether they are worshiping Semiramis and Tammuz or Mary and Jesus, just so they have an idol before which to bow down.

The color scheme of this one-world religion as defined in verse 4 is most revealing: “And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color.” If you are familiar with pictures of the Vatican Council as published in national magazines, you will have observed that the bishops and cardinals wore purple and scarlet robes. You will also see that the Pope and other church leaders are “bedecked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in [their] hand full of abominations and filthiness of [their] fornication.” The abominations and fornication is idolatry and worship of gods other than Jesus Christ. In Rome we saw all manner of idols in the very headquarters of the Roman Church. More costly surroundings can scarcely be found than in the Vatican.

Carmel, Mount, short mountain ridge in northwestern Israel. A peak (546 m/1791 ft) of the ridge is also called Mount Carmel. Mount Carmel is famous for its connections with biblical characters and events. The ridge is 21 km (13 mi) long and 5 to 13 km (3 to 8 mi) wide; it extends in a northwesterly direction from the Plain of Esdraelon (also known as Jezreel) to the Mediterranean Sea, at the port city of Haifa, which is spread out on its northern slopes. There, the ridge ends in a promontory that marks the southern limit of the Bay of Haifa. The highest point of the ridge is about 549 m (about 1800 ft) above sea level.

From early times Mount Carmel was deemed a holy place, containing an altar for Jehovah long before the contest for allegiance of the children of Israel was fought out here between the Hebrew prophet Elijah and the prophets of the divinity Baal (as cited in the Bible: see 1 Kings 18). Mount Carmel also is celebrated in the Bible for its natural beauty (see Song 7:5; Isaiah 35:2). According to religious tradition, God demonstrated his favor to the Israelites by bestowing upon them a place of such loveliness (see Jeremiah 50:19; Micah 7:14). The devastation of Mount Carmel is, therefore, considered a sign of God's decided displeasure (see Isaiah 33:9; Jeremiah 4:26; Amos 1:2; Nahum 1:4).

In postbiblical times Carmel continued to be a holy site for many religions. In AD 1150 the Carmelite religious order was founded on Mount Carmel. The monastery, rebuilt in 1828, overlooks Haifa Bay. The world headquarters of the Bahai faith is also on Mount Carmel.¹

Carmelites, popular name for members of the Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a Roman Catholic religious order founded as a community of hermits in Palestine during the 12th century by the French hermit St. Berthold. The original rule, written for them in 1209 by the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, Albert of Vercelli, was severe, prescribing poverty, abstinence from meat, and solitude. It was approved in 1226 by Pope Honorius III.

After the Crusades, the 13th-century Englishman St. Simon Stock reorganized the Carmelites as mendicant friars. Under him, a change of rule was made to facilitate a more active apostolate. Offshoot communities quickly sprang up in Cyprus, Messina, Marseille, and parts of England, where they were known as White Friars. During the 16th century two independent branches of the order were created: the Calced Carmelites, who were permitted to wear shoes and followed the mitigated rule of St. Simon Stock; and the Discalced Carmelites, who went without shoes as a sign of austerity and followed the reforms of the Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross. This reform endeavored to restore the spirit of the original rule of Albert of Vercelli. The main purpose of the order is contemplation, missionary work, and theology.

Among the several orders of Carmelite nuns, the best known is the Order of Discalced Carmelites, founded during the 16th century by the Spanish mystic St. Teresa of Ávila. The life of a Carmelite nun is completely contemplative, consisting of prayer, penance, hard work, and silence. The nuns are strictly enclosed, or cloistered; they never eat meat, and from the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14) until Easter, no milk, cheese, or eggs are allowed on Fridays and during Lent, except for the sick. The order has produced some of the greatest Roman Catholic mystics.²

¹"Carmel, Mount," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

²"Carmelites," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

Bahai (Persian, “of glory”), religious faith founded in the late 19th century as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Mirza Ali Muhammad of Shiraz, known as the Bab. The founder of Bahai was Mirza Hoseyn Ali Nuri, born in Persia and later known as Bahauallah (Arabic, “the Splendor of God”). He became a follower of the Bab, and in 1850, upon the martyrdom of the Bab, became the leader of one of the Babi factions. The Persian government, which had been persistently persecuting the Babists, in 1852 carried out a general massacre in which an estimated 20,000 died. Bahauallah, his family, and some of his followers were spared, but Bahauallah was imprisoned and tortured and then exiled to Baghdad, then under Turkish control. A political prisoner for the rest of his life, Bahauallah was sent by the Turkish government, together with his family and followers, on successive rigorous marches from Baghdad to Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) to Adrianople (now Edirne) and finally to a penal colony in Acre, Palestine (modern-day ‘Akko, Israel), where he remained until his death.

Upon establishing the Babi faith in 1844, the Bab had foretold that in 19 years a divine figure would appear, “him whom God should manifest.” In 1863, in Baghdad, Bahauallah proclaimed himself to be that manifestation. His followers, called Bahais, believe that he was the latest in a series of divine manifestations that includes Zoroaster, the Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad and that he brought a new revelation to the world.

Bahauallah had sought above all to establish a universal religion; his teachings urging moral and social improvement were spread mainly by his eldest son, Abbas, later called Abdul-Baha (Arabic, “the Servant of the Glory”). Like his father, he was a political prisoner for years. In 1908, when parts of the Ottoman Empire were overthrown, he was freed; he subsequently traveled to Europe and North America to introduce his father's teachings. He summarized the Bahai faith in a set of principles that included among its concrete social aims the abolition of racial and religious prejudice, equality of the sexes, an international auxiliary language, universal education, a universal faith founded on the assumption of the essential identity of the great religions, and a universal representative government. The writings of the Bab, Bahauallah, and Abd ul-Baha constitute the sacred literature of Bahai, which has no other form of institutional authority; neither a priesthood nor a body of ritual is recognized. In his will, Abd ul-Baha named his eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, as guardian of the faith.

Although Bahai developed in Persia, by 1920 it had its greatest following in the United States. Under the direction (1921-57) of Shoghi Effendi, the U.S. Bahais developed an administrative system with headquarters in Wilmette, Illinois. Wherever nine or more Bahais reside, a “spiritual assembly” may be formed; more than 1700 assemblies have been organized in the U.S. Delegates are sent from the local assemblies to an annual convention at the national headquarters, at which a National Spiritual Assembly is elected. Of an estimated 5.3 million Bahais worldwide as the 1990's began, about 110,000 lived in the U.S. The Islamic fundamentalist government of Iran has persecuted Bahais in that country since coming to power in 1979.

Bahai has adherents in more than 300 countries and dependencies, and Bahai literature has been translated into more than 350 languages. Bahai world headquarters is in Israel, on the slopes of Mount Carmel overlooking Haifa and ‘Akko; there, a shrine of the Bab, an archives building, and an administrative center have been constructed.³

³"Bahai," *Microsoft® Encarta® 97 Encyclopedia*. © 1993-1996 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty-four)

Study (Revelation 18)

This entire chapter is a further explanation of the fall of Babylon which occurred when the seventh bowl was poured out in Rev 16:18-21.

Verse Discussion

1 - 3 John sees an angel with such great authority that his splendor illuminates the earth. This probably indicates that he is one of the archangels. With his mighty voice the angel shouts "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!" This is what the second of the three angels in Rev 14:8 said. So this is what that angel was announcing. That Babylon has become a home for demons and every evil spirit shows its moral depravity. That it has become a place for unclean and detestable birds indicates it is a real place and not just symbolic of something. The nations having drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries recalls the angel's announcement in Rev 14:8 and it coincides with the woman on the beast from whom the inhabitants of the earth had become drunk on the wine of her adulteries (Rev 17:2). The kings of the earth committing adultery with her recalls the woman on the beast (Rev 17:2) and the world's merchants having grown rich on her luxuries recalls the woman being clothed in purple and scarlet and glittering with gold, precious stone, and pearls. So this is an obvious connection with what the angel said in Rev 14:8 and the woman on the beast of Chapter 17. Not only is this a physical city but it is a representation of the religious-political-commercial system which has been opposed to God since the days when Babylon was founded shortly after the flood.

Reasons the city of Babylon will be rebuilt: The prophecies of Isaiah 13 – 14 and Jeremiah 50 – 51 have yet to be fulfilled completely. Part of those chapters were fulfilled with the capture and overthrow of ancient Babylon by Cyrus in Oct of 539 BC. But all of the prophecies were not fulfilled at that time. Therefore they must still be fulfilled during the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation). This is what is depicted for us in this chapter. Jeremiah 51:26 indicates that no stones from the destroyed city of Babylon will be used to build any other building. That prophecy has not been fulfilled. At least six other cities have been built using stones from ancient Babylon. Those cities are "Seleucia, built by the Greeks; Ctesiphon, by the Parthians; Almaidan, by the Persians; ... Kufa, by the Caliphs ... [and] Hillah, just a twenty-minute walk from the Babylonian ruins ... *The Encyclopedia of Lands and People*, Vol 3, published by Grolier, states in reference to Babylon, '... they found great treasure and the materials of its wonderful buildings were used for the construction of Bagdad in 762.'" (LaHaye p 240) So this prophecy has yet to be fulfilled and requires the rebuilding of the ancient city of Babylon.

History of the site of the ancient city of Babylon after its destruction:

AD 917 – an insignificant village is built nearby

AD 1100 – a town of some importance is built nearby and named Al Hillah (means rest)

AD 1898 – Al Hillah has a population of about 10,000

AD 1965 – Al Hillah has a population of about 85,000 and the ancient site of Babylon is a suburb with a few people living in it.

4 – 8 Then John hears another voice from heaven say, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues." Since the voice says "my people," it is God warning his followers not to be in the city when its final destruction comes during the pouring out of the seventh bowl. God says he has remembered her crimes and will pay her back double for what she has done. He will give her as much torture and grief as she gave

herself glory and luxury. The physical city cannot boast herself to be a queen, so it is an indication that the city's ruler will believe nothing can happen to it. But God says that in just one day the city will be overcome by plagues (and thus death, mourning, and famine) and that it will be consumed by fire. This is not the work of the ten kings controlled by Antichrist that is spoken of in Rev 17:16. That is not a reference to the physical city but to the religious system with which all the kings of the world have committed adultery and by which the people of earth have become drunk by participating in luxuries. This indicates a judgment on the physical city by God himself.

- 9 – 10 When the kings of the earth (the governmental power brokers of the day) see what happens to Babylon, they will lament that the city of power has been destroyed in one hour. This indicates a swift judgment, not one that takes several days, weeks, or even a month to occur. It is part of the cataclysmic culmination of the seven years of tribulation through which God encourages people to accept him as God and follow him. The fall of Babylon is the fall of worldly power structures.
- 11 – 17a When the merchants of the world see what happens to Babylon they will weep and mourn because no one will be buying their goods any more. Note that included in the list of the goods they sell are the bodies and souls of men. This indicates not only physical slave trading but also the trading of philosophical ideas opposed to God and drugs which enslave a person's mind and soul. This is the fall of the financial/commercial systems of the world.
- 17b – 19 When the sea captains see what happens to Babylon they will weep and mourn because their livelihood has ended. This is also the fall of the financial/commercial systems of the world.
- 20 Believers and all of heaven are told they can rejoice over what has happened to Babylon because God has judged her (the religious-political-commercial system and the city) for the way she had treated God's followers throughout the ages. This is the answer to the prayers of believers throughout the ages and specifically the souls of the Tribulation Saints seen under the altar in Rev 6:9-10.
- 21 – 24 Then John sees a mighty angel pick up a boulder the size of a large millstone and throw it into the sea. And he announces that with such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. This is the destruction swift and final destruction of the physical city of Babylon. We know this will be the fulfillment of the prophecy that no stone of the city will be used to build any other building because the city will never be found again after God destroys it. We also see its final destruction because no music, trade, light, or voice will be found in the city ever again. The angel says that the city's merchants were the world's great men and that by the magic spell of the city all of the nations were led astray. That indicates the prominence that the rebuilt city of Babylon will attain during the Tribulation. The angel's statement about the blood of the prophets and saints and all who have been killed on the earth is an indication that God holds the religious-political-commercial systems of the world, which are represented by the city of Babylon, accountable for all of the blood shed.

Questions for thought:

1. What does the Babylon the Great represent?
2. Of the three systems opposed to God which began with the building of ancient Babylon, which are shown in this passage as being destroyed?
3. When are the systems (which answer question 2) destroyed?
4. Which system was previously destroyed and by whom?
5. Why must a physical city of Babylon be rebuilt?
6. How prominent will that rebuilt city be?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty-five)

Study (Revelation 19)

This chapter begins with the heavenly Hallelujah Chorus.

Verse

Discussion

1 - 10

After John sees the destruction of Babylon he hears the sound of a great multitude in heaven shouting praises to God. This is the response the angel from 18:4 commanded in 18:20. This is the response he said heaven should give because of the destruction of Babylon the Great, the woman on the beast of chapter 17. This great multitude could be the same as in chapter 7:9 which was explained in 7:14 as the tribulation saints but it could also include the Old Testament saints and the angels. This multitude begins by shouting “Hallelujah!” This is a Hebrew word formed from two other words “halel” and “Yah.” “Halel” is the verb “to praise” and “Yah” is a form of the name of God. The word “hallelujah” is only found in the New Testament in this chapter. It means “praise the Lord.” The Hebrew word is also found in the Old Testament in the Psalms but there it is translated. (See Psalm 111, Psalm 112, and Psalm 113.)

The multitude is praising God because he is the source of salvation. They praise him because of his glory. And they praise him because of his power (which is so great that he could create the universe and everything in it). They acknowledge that God’s judgments are true and just. He has condemned the great prostitute (the woman on the beast) for corrupting the earth with her adulteries and he has avenged the blood of his servants that she shed. After the multitude praises God for these things, they again shout “Hallelujah!” and announce that the smoke from Babylon’s destruction rises up for ever. At this point, the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures around God’s throne fall down in worship of God and add their “amen” and “Hallelujah” to the end of the multitude’s chorus.

Then a voice comes from God’s throne. Since the voice says “praise our God,” it is not God or Jesus. So who is the source of the voice? We know that after Jesus ascended into heaven he sat down at the right hand of his Father on the throne. (See Luke 22:69, Eph 1:20, and Col 3:1.) But who else is allowed to sit on the throne? In Rev 3:21, Jesus promised the Church Age saints who overcome that he would give them the right to sit with him on his throne just as he overcame and sat down with his Father. And Paul revealed to the Ephesians (2:6) that God has raised up believers with Christ and seated them with him in the heavens. So this must be the Church saints, the Bride of Christ, who tell God’s servants to praise God.

Then the great multitude replies, “Hallelujah!” because God Almighty reigns. Then they say that they should rejoice because the wedding of the Lamb has come and the Bride has made herself ready, wearing the fine, white, clean linen that was given to her to wear. And John gives us the explanation that the fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints. Jesus told us in Rev 3:5 that he has a few who have not soiled their clothes and will walk with him in white because they are worthy. He also said that those who overcome will be dressed in white like those worthy ones. And in Rev 3:18 he admonishes lukewarm believers to buy white clothes from him to cover their nakedness. The clean, white garments indicate the status of believers before God – forgiven of their sin.

From John the Baptist’s statement in John 3:28 – 29, we see that he, as an Old Testament saint would be one of the friends attending the bridegroom and being joyful when the bridegroom comes to marry his bride. So this great multitude appears to be the attendees at the Lamb’s

wedding to his Bride, the Church. Since the bride has made herself ready, that indicates the Church has already been judged by Jesus (Rom 14:10, 12) and received her rewards (crowns) for her works.

Then the angel told John to write that those invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb are blessed. And he added, "These are the true words of God." At this statement John falls at the feet of the angel to worship him. But the angel commands him not to do that because he is just God's servant like John and other believers. Instead, worship God! This is the same exclusive command as in Exodus 20 when God says to have no other gods before him. What does the angel mean that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy?" That means that the purpose of prophecy is to reveal the person and work of Jesus.

11 – 16

Then John sees heaven standing open and a rider on a white horse before him. John says the rider is called Faithful and True. At the beginning of John's gospel, he refers to Jesus as the "true" light. Then in chapter 15 Jesus emphatically says, "I am the way and the truth and the life." The Old Testament and the New Testament state that God and Jesus are faithful. (See Psalm 33:4, Psalm 145:13, Psalm 146:6, 1 Cor 1:9, 2 Thes 3:3, Heb 3:6, and 1 John 1:9.) So John is saying the rider is Jesus. Then he describes the rider as one who judges and makes war with justice, one whose eyes are like blazing fire, one who has many crowns on his head, one who has a name that only he knows, one whose robe is dipped in blood, and one whose name is the Word of God. This rider is followed by the armies of heaven riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.

Just because the armies of heaven and the Church are described as dressed in fine linen, white and clean doesn't mean they are the same. Joel 2:11 describes the day of the Lord with him returning at the head of an army which is mighty and beyond number. In 2 Thessalonians 1:6-7 we are told about the return of Jesus as he "is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels." These verses show that the army is the heavenly angels who have been engaged in battle with their brethren who followed Satan in his rebellion against God and fell from their heavenly home. Now they are returning with Jesus for a battle that will end the freedom of Satan and his fallen angels to deceive mankind and tempt them to disobey God.

Out of the rider's mouth comes a sharp sword with which he will strike down the nations. The description of Jesus that John gave us in Rev 1 said he had eyes like blazing fire and a double-edged sword coming out of his mouth. So this is a further indication that the rider is Jesus. Then John tells us that on the rider's robe and thigh was written this name: "King of kings and Lord of lords." This indicates Jesus' authority over all the rulers of the world. According to Acts 1:11 and Zech 14:3-5, Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives.

17 – 21

Then John sees an angel standing in the sun, telling the birds to gather for the great supper of God so that they may eat the flesh of kings, generals, mighty men, and the flesh of all people. This is a call for God's creatures to come and clean up after the battle. Then John sees the beast (Antichrist indwelt by Satan) and the kings of the earth (the ten horns with ten crowns on the beast's head) and their armies gathered to make war against the rider and his army. John doesn't give details of the battle but only the results. The beast and the false prophet are captured and thrown into the lake of burning sulfur. All of the kings and armies are killed with the sword that comes out of the rider's mouth and the birds eat their fill of the flesh. The battle is won not by the angels fighting but by the spoken word of Jesus.

Question for thought:

1. Who is the rider on the white horse, who is the army with him, and where do they come to earth?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty-six)

Study (Revelation 20)

Chapter 19 ended with Jesus returning to the Mount of Olives with an army of heavenly angels and being confronted by the gathered followers of Antichrist who intended to engage him in battle. Jesus responds by fighting the battle through the use of the words that he speaks – causing Antichrist’s army of followers to fall dead. At the end of that battle, Antichrist (the real, eternal being and not his body indwelt by Satan) and his false prophet are thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Chapter 20 shows us a brief look at the following millennium.

Let’s review the conditions at the end of the Tribulation and before the Millennium. Mankind and the earth have just finished experiencing seven bowl judgments that contained plagues from God. As a result of the plagues, all marine life on the earth has been destroyed because the waters had turned to blood. The sun gained in intensity for a time period scorching the planet and probably killing all outdoor plants and the animals that depend on plants for food. Then the sun did not shine for a time period keeping any outdoor plants which sprouted from growing. Earthquakes have leveled the cities of the world and caused the mountains to crumble and the islands (which are mountains that are mostly under water) to disappear. The city of Jerusalem was split into three parts by an earthquake and this would have destroyed the temple that had been constructed and desecrated by Antichrist. All the people of earth who had followed the Antichrist were killed by the words of Jesus (for more of a description of what happens to Antichrist’s armies read Zech 14:12-15) and the flesh-eating birds were allowed to feast on the bodies. The picture is an earth that has been devastated and not fit to be called Jesus’ kingdom. The ecological system needs to be restored. I’m sure Jesus could do this just by speaking and it would instantaneously happen. But it appears from the revelation to Daniel, Jesus has planned to take longer than that.

Verse Discussion

Daniel

12:11-12 With the Tribulation being seven years long (Dan 9:27), the beginning to the mid-point would be 3 ½ years or 42 months or 1260 days. From the mid-point, when the abomination that causes desolation is set up in the temple, to the end would also be 3 ½ years or 42 months or 1260 days. So when Daniel is told that from the abomination there will be 1290 days, this indicates an additional month or 30 days for some purpose. Since the focus is the temple where the abomination occurs, it is safe to presume that the additional 30 days has something to do with the temple. Ezekiel 40 – 48 describes a temple during the millennium. This means another temple must be built and prepared for use. This is most probably the purpose of the additional 30 days.

Then Daniel is told, “Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1335 days.” This indicates 45 days in addition to the 30 days for some purpose. Since it speaks about people, it is probably referring to the people who live to the end of the Tribulation and some event that awaits them.

Matthew

25:31-46 Here Jesus says that when he returns to earth with the angels of heaven with him, he will sit on his throne (not in heaven but on earth with all of his heavenly glory being seen) and judge all the nations of the world. This indicates a judgment to occur at the end of the Tribulation and before the Millennium begins. At this judgment, all the people who have lived through the Tribulation will be judged and separated as sheep and goats. The sheep are those who have followed their master, Jesus, and the goats are those who have followed their master, Satan. To those who believed in him and followed him through the Tribulation, Jesus says, “Come ... take your

inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.” (v 34) And to the followers of Satan he says, “Depart from me ... into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.” (v 41) This would be the event at the end of the 1335 days which blesses the person who believes in Jesus and follows him. And it also indicates that no one but believers enter the Millennial Kingdom.

Zechariah

14:8 There will be living water flowing out from Jerusalem beginning from the day that Jesus returns. It will flow east to the Dead Sea and west to the Mediterranean Sea. That will bring healing to the waters of the earth and begin the process of restoring marine life.

So, the passages from Daniel and Matthew indicate that during 75 days after the end of the Tribulation a temple will be built for Jesus and he will judge all the inhabitants of earth to reward them for their work as believers or non-believers. The passage from Zechariah indicates that the earth will be restored during this time and made ready for the Millennial Kingdom.

Revelation

20:1-3 John sees an angel coming down from heaven to earth and holding the key to the Abyss and a great chain. The angel seizes Satan and binds him in the Abyss for 1000 years (a millennium). So we won't mistake who is being bound, he is referred to as “the dragon (Rev),” “that ancient serpent (Gen),” “the devil (NT), and “Satan (Job, Zechariah, NT). In 1 Peter 5:8 we are told that “Your enemy the devil (Satan) prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” In 1 Cor 4:4 we are told, “The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of Christ, who is the image of God.” So John tells us that the purpose of binding Satan is to keep him from deceiving the nations (people) during the Millennium. Then we are told that at the end of that time he must be set free for a short time

20:4-6 Then John sees thrones on which are seated those who had been given authority to judge. In Matt 19:28, Jesus tells the Twelve disciples that at the renewal of all things when he sits on his throne that they will each sit on their own throne and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. In 1 Cor 6:2, Paul says, “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” If the Church, the Bride of Christ, is to judge the world, it would seem likely that she would sit upon a throne. So the thrones that John sees are those of the original disciples and the Church. Since Judas betrayed Jesus, does that mean one of the twelve thrones Jesus told the Twelve about is empty? Not likely! It could mean Judas repented and asked for forgiveness before he hanged himself in remorse and thus will sit on one throne. Or it could be that Judas' replacement, Matthias (Acts 1:26), is on the throne. At this point, John sees the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. We know this is just the Tribulations saints because John says they had not worshiped the beast or received his mark. He says that they come to life and reign with Jesus during the millennium. And he indicates that this is the first resurrection. This also indicates that there is at least a second resurrection at a later time. John is also quick to point out that the rest of the dead do not come to life until the end of the Millennium. We are also told that these resurrected souls will be priests of God and Jesus as they reign with him.

What the conditions during the Millennium will be (other than no deception or temptation because Satan is bound) is not described for us in Jesus' revelation to John. For that we have to refer to other passages of God's word.

Isaiah 9:6-7 This passage says that “the government (of the world) will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his

kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” So there will be a government, established and ruled by Jesus from Jerusalem and since the Church sits on thrones judging the world, they will rule like governors under him. It will be a time of justice, peace, and righteousness.

Zechariah
14:16-21

This indicates that the people will go to Jerusalem each year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Any of the people who do not go to worship will have a plague of no rain brought upon their land. There will be so many people coming to Jerusalem that all the cooking pots in the city will be considered sacred to the Lord at that time and be used to cook the food for the people to eat. The Canaanites were known as merchants so the fact that there will be no Canaanite in the house of the Lord (temple) means that there will be no selling of sacrifice animals and thus no money changers like Jesus drove out of the temple with a whip (John 2:13-16).

Isaiah
65:17 – 25

Although this passage begins with the creation of a new heaven and earth, it is not the same new heaven and earth that we will see in Rev 21 because here there is death shown in verse 20 but in the heaven and earth of Rev 21 there will be no death (21:4). So this is the earth and sky restored for the Millennial Kingdom. There will be no weeping or crying in the city of Jerusalem because Jesus will be there. During this time, there will be no infant deaths nor old people who do not live out their years. As in the days before the flood of Noah’s time, people will live to be hundreds of years old. That’s why anyone who dies at 100 is considered an infant. That indicates the people who go into or are born during the Millennium will live to the end of it (see also verse 25). Some will obviously be over 1000 years old (older than Methuselah – Gen 5:27). Since anyone who doesn’t reach the age of 100 will be considered accursed, it appears that everyone will be given until that age to accept Jesus’ reign or else they will die and await the final judgment. People will build their own houses to live in, plant vineyards and eat the fruit. No one will toil for the pleasure of others. No child born will be doomed to misfortune because the people and their descendants will be blessed by Jesus. The animal kingdom will be like it was in the Garden of Eden with wolf and lamb feeding together and lions eating straw like oxen. But serpents will still be crawling in the dust of the earth. Thus during the restoration of the earth, the animals will be recreated in their original state. And finally, there will be nothing harmful or destructive.

Zephaniah
3:1-20

Verses 1-8 describe Jesus punishing the unrighteous (vs 6 & 8) so this is part of the 75 days after the end of the Tribulation. Verse 9 says the remaining people will be purified so that they may call on the Lord (Jesus) and serve him. People scattered around the world will bring offerings to Jesus. The city of Jerusalem will be cleansed from the wrongs done to Jesus and only meek and humble people who trust in Jesus will live there (or anywhere else in the world from what we have seen above). The Promised Land will be inhabited by the remnant of Israel. No one will need to fear harm because the Lord, the King of Israel (Jesus) is with them. Jesus will delight in his people, love them, and rejoice over them with singing. (I expect it will be quite a treat to hear Jesus sing!) No longer will anyone mourn for the appointed feasts of the Old Testament because the requirement to observe them (except the Feast of Tabernacles as seen above) will be removed.

Isaiah
35:1-10

The desert and wilderness will no longer be lacking in rain and will bloom with flowers like the crocus. The glory of the old forests of Lebanon and Mt. Carmel and the area of Sharon (between the hills of Judah and Samaria) will be restored. The hands of people will not be feeble. The

knees of people will not be unsteady. People will need to fear nothing. The blind will have their sight restored and the deaf will have their hearing restored. The lamb will be able to walk and those who could not speak will be able to once again. The desert will become like a pool of bubbling water with grass, reeds, and papyrus growing there. There will be a highway called the Way of Holiness that the redeemed and the ransomed of the Lord will use to travel to Jerusalem. The redeemed and ransomed will be crowned with everlasting joy and all sighing and sorrow will be taken from them.

Isaiah

11:6-16

Here, again, we find that the animal kingdom will be restored to its condition in the Garden of Eden and that the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord. We also see that the scattered nation of Israel will be restored to the Promised Land and that there will be a highway for the remnant from Assyria (where Petra is located and the place to which the remnant will flee from Antichrist shortly after the mid-point of the Tribulation).

Isaiah

2:2-4

Jerusalem will be established as the place from which Jesus will rule. Everyone will come there to so Jesus can teach people to walk in his ways. People will turn their weapons of war into implements for tilling the soil and fishing.

Isaiah

60:1-22

This describes the glory of the New Jerusalem of the Millennium.

Jeremiah

32:37-41

This shows Jesus bringing the scattered remnant back to the Promised Land. It doesn't refer to them returning from their captivity in Babylon although that is where the passage starts. It must be referring to the gathering for the Millennium because the gathered people will have a "singleness of heart and action, so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them." This has never happened to the Jews up to today. God will also make an everlasting covenant with them to never stop doing good to them and inspire them so they will never turn away from him. Since the nation of Israel and most of the Jews have yet to turn to Jesus, this covenant has not been made yet.

Revelation

20:7-10

At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released for a short time to deceive the people of the world and gather those who want to follow him for a battle against Jesus at Jerusalem. Why anyone would want to follow Satan after living for their entire life under the loving rule of Jesus is hard to understand. But the same could be said of Adam and Eve. The purpose for Satan's release is so the people who have been born and never had to choose between Jesus and Satan will have to make a choice. No one is allowed to enter the new universe that will be created in Rev 21 unless they have chosen to believe and follow Jesus. Incredibly, the number of people choosing to follow Satan are like the sand on the seashore. Although they come together around Jerusalem for battle, there is no battle because fire comes down from heaven and destroys them. Then Satan is thrown into the lake of burning sulfur where the beast and the false prophet have been thrown. And in that place they will be tormented in some way for all of eternity.

Revelation

20:11-15

Then John sees a great white throne and the earth and sky flee from his presence like a scroll. This is the de-creation of the universe as we know it. And the result of the de-creation is that the souls of the dead are presented before the throne of God for their final judgment. Their fate has already been decided by their decision to accept or reject Jesus and his death on the cross so this is just to show them the fallacy of their belief in trusting something or someone other than Jesus.

Anyone whose name is not written in the book of life (or the Lamb's book of life – see Ex 32:33; Daniel 12:1; Phil 4:3; Rev 3:5; and Rev 21:27) is thrown into the lake of fire (the fiery lake of burning sulfur). Death and Hades are also thrown into the lake of fire indicating that there is no more death and there is no need for a holding place for deceased people. We are told that the lake of fire is the second death. It is the separation from God of those who refused his way of escaping the second death.

Questions:

1. How many judgments are there?
2. Why is Satan bound for the Millennium?
3. Why is Satan released at the end of the Millennium?
4. How many will be deceived by Satan at the end of the Millennium?
5. What is the fate of those who refuse to accept God's offer of salvation?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty-seven)

Study (Revelation 21)

In Chapter 20 we learned that the earth was de-created and the souls of all the dead who had not been judged before this time were brought before the great white throne of God. There, as a part of their judgment, each person is shown their works from the books where they have been recorded. Each person is shown that their works are not sufficient to pay for their disobedience of God and that their rejection of the work God accomplished through allowing his Son to die as the perfect and complete payment is what causes their being sent to the lake of fire for all of eternity. While most people think God's sending people to the lake of fire for eternity just for rejecting his Son's death to restore them to a right relationship with himself is an act of hate, it really is an act of love. First, their rejection of God's way for them to enter heaven and spend eternity with him is the same problem that began with Satan – trying to be their own god and decide what is right and wrong. Second, their rejection of God's lordship means they don't want to be around him and be accountable to him. So to spend eternity in heaven where they would have to be in his presence and accountable to him for everything would indeed be a definition of hell and it would not be loving of God to allow them to enter heaven when they would hate it for all of eternity. Instead, it is loving of him to provide another place for those people while at the same time not allowing the more evil people to be able to force their evilness on those less evil. Thus the judgment of the works. Those who are less evil will have more freedom and those who are more evil will have less freedom. That is justice and at the same time torment for those who want to do the most evil. The end of chapter 20 shows that no one enters heaven who does not believe in and trust the work of Jesus to make it possible for them to live with God for eternity.

Chapter 21 begins with the creation of a new heaven and earth.

| <u>Verse</u> | <u>Discussion</u> |
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| 1- 5 | John sees a new heaven and a new earth because the old one had been de-created. A characteristic of this new earth catches John's attention. It has no sea. And he also sees a new Jerusalem, the Holy City, descending out of heaven from God. So God will design and make his Holy City with just the look that he desires. It is obviously completely built and furnished because John says it looks like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. |
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Then John hears a voice from the throne say that the dwelling of God is now with men and he will live with them and be their God. The voice goes on to say that God will wipe every tear from their eyes and that there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain because the old order of things has passed away. That indicates that when God creates the new universe, that it doesn't have the characteristic of our present one where things age, decay, and move from order to disorder if left alone. These things are all part of what science has described as the second law of thermodynamics and are the result of the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Since it is a voice from God's throne that announces this information to John, that indicates it is God's own statement. He also says that he is making everything new and to write it down because it is trustworthy and true. This is further proof that this universe is completely destroyed and a new one created like God had originally created this one. But this new universe won't have the possibility of sin entering it and causing to problems we currently have.

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| 6 – 8 | Then the voice from the throne tells John that "It is done." This means that God's plan to redeem those people who would trust his plan and follow his Son is finally finished. There is nothing left to be done and from this moment forward God and man will be together. The voice says he is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. That is why we know the voice is |
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that of God himself.

God says that he will give every person who is thirsty the privilege of drinking from the spring of the water of life without cost. This is what Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:13 – 14. God also says that the person who overcomes (remember Jesus' statements to the churches in Rev 2 and 3) will inherit all of this new universe and be God's son. This is also what Jesus promised those who followed him during his first advent on earth.

The God indicates the type of people who will not be allowed to enter his new universe and live there with him. He lists the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, idolaters, and all liars. He says that they will all be sent to the lake of burning sulfur and says that this is the second death.

9 – 27

Then one of the angels who had poured out one of the seven bowls of God's wrath upon the earth in the last years of the Tribulation tells John to come with him and he will show him the bride, the wife of the Lamb. Since he says "bride" and also "wife" it is an indication that the Church, which is called the bride, has now been joined with Jesus and become his wife with all the privileges and responsibilities associated with that relationship. Then the angel spiritually carries John to a great, high mountain where he sees the Holy City, Jerusalem, descending from heaven to earth. John then begins to describe this Holy City in which the Church dwells.

The city shines with the glory of God – because he dwells there. He compares the brilliance of the city from God's glory to that of jasper that is clear as crystal (this doesn't say the city is made of jasper). Jasper is a stone that is normally opaque and may have one of many colors, especially green or ruddy red. So this is an indication of an extraordinary jasper that would indeed be rare and very precious. There is a high wall (indicating protection even though none is necessary) with twelve gates (three on each side) honoring the twelve tribes of Israel because one of their names is written on each gate and an angel at each gate (again indicating protection). There is a wall with twelve foundation layers honoring the apostles because one of their names is written on each layer.

The angel has a measuring rod with which he measures the city, its gates, and its wall. The city was laid out like a square having a side 12,000 stadia (about 1400 miles) long. The city is also 12,000 stadia high. Either a cube or a pyramid would fit this description. A cube with a side of about 1400 miles would have a volume of about 2 billion, 744 million cubic miles. That would equate to a mansion 1 mile square and 1 mile high for nearly 2 and 3/4 billion believers. A pyramid has 1/3 of the volume of a cube so that would equate to the same size mansion for nearly 915 million believers. The wall is measured as 144 cubits (about 200 feet) thick (probably height rather than thickness). The city is made of pure gold that is clear as glass (that doesn't exist in this universe). The wall is made of jasper (possibly clear since the city is clear). Each layer of the foundation is made of a different type of precious gemstone and decorated with every kind of precious gem. Each gate is made of a single pearl and the streets are made of pure, transparent gold.

There is no temple in this new city because God, Father, and God, the Son, are there. Thus there is no need for a sun or moon to give light because the glory of the Father and the Son are the city's light. There doesn't seem to be a need for a sun or moon for the rest of the earth because the nations are said to walk by the light of the Holy City. Thus God's glory illuminates the entire new world. The gates of the city are never shut because it is never night there with the glory of God shining in the city. The kings of the earth (rulers of different areas) will bring the splendor of the world to the city. John closes this part of the description by saying that nothing impure nor anything that is shameful or deceitful will ever enter the city and only those whose names are

written in the Lamb's book of life are allowed to enter. This has to be the case because no one who is a liar (deceitful) or who does things that are shameful (disrespectful or disobedient of God) nor anyone whose name is not written in the Lamb's book of life enters this new universe. They all go to the lake of fire.

Questions:

1. Is the new heaven and earth this present heaven and earth just restored to its Garden of Eden condition?
2. What does John see coming down to the new earth from the new heaven?
3. How large is the city?
4. How many gates does the city have?
5. How many foundations does the city have?
6. What is unique about the construction material for the city and its streets?
7. Why is there no need for a sun or moon?
8. Where do all the believers from the Church age live?

Revelation Revealed

(Lesson twenty-eight)

Study (Revelation 22)

In Chapter 21 the new Jerusalem that will be the eternal home of all believers was described for us in enough detail that we could understand that it is a magnificent place, a real “mansion” as the King James Version translates John 14:2. Now in Chapter 22, we are given a glimpse inside the city before Jesus closes his revelation to John.

Verse

Discussion

1- 6 The angel shows John a river flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. John says the water in the river is the water of life. Zechariah 14 describes some of the conditions during the Millennium. In Zech 14:8 we are told that living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and half to the western sea (Mediterranean Sea), in summer and in winter. When Ezekiel is taken in a vision to see the future temple of God he says in 47:1 that he saw water coming out from the temple. He goes on to say (v 9) that “where the river flows everything will live.” Joel 3:18 says that there will be a fountain flowing out of the Lord’s house. In John 4:10 Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well that if she had asked him he would have given her living water. Jeremiah 17:13 indicates that the Lord is the spring of living water. In John 7:38 Jesus says, “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” Then verse 39 says that Jesus meant the living water is the Spirit. So this living water in the new Jerusalem appears to be the life-giving Spirit flowing out from the throne.

The water is described as being crystal clear, indicating purity. John says it flows down the great street of the city. On each side of the river, so along the street, stands the tree of life that bears twelve crops of fruit and yields its fruit each month. And he says the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Ezekiel saw fruit trees of all kinds growing on both banks of the river whose leaves never wither nor their fruit fail (rot), and that bear fruit every month because they are fed by the water from the throne. Ezekiel says the fruit will serve for food and the leaves for healing. This means that although we probably will not need to eat to sustain life in the new universe, we may eat for the pleasure of doing it. Does the fact that the leaves will be used for healing mean there will be pain or suffering? No! Remember Rev 21:4 said that there would be no more mourning or pain because the old order of things has gone. This is a new universe so the laws we have learned that govern this one are not the same for our eternal home. What the healing of the leaves means is that the Gentile nations that have throughout history been inhuman in their dealings with each other (and even their own people) will be healed in their relationships and live peacefully.

John tells us that no longer will there be any curse. In Genesis 3:17 God cursed the earth because of Adam’s and Eve’s disobedience. Jesus paid the price for that disobedience for everyone who will be living in the new universe so when he creates the new universe it is free from that old curse.

John says the throne of God and of the Lamb is in the city and his servants not only will serve him but they will see his face and have his name on their foreheads. Jesus said that those who overcome will be given the privilege of sitting with him on his throne just as he overcame and sat down with his Father on his Father’s throne. So there is only one throne in the city which God the Father and God the Son sit upon and which believers who are indwelt with the Holy Spirit

will be allowed to also sit upon. So who are the servants? The Church is called servants of Jesus but they are also his Bride and wed to him long before this so these servants would be the Old Testament Saints and the Tribulation Saints. In Rev 20:4-6 Jesus says the Tribulation Saints will be his priests during the Millennium so this is just a continuation of their privilege. The Old Testament people who believed God and looked forward to his Messiah served him in various ways. This will be their privilege to serve him now. The people who were born and raised during the Millennium will inhabit the remainder of the new earth. Having his name on their foreheads indicates the servants have a special relationship with Jesus.

That there will be no night and no need for the sun or a lamp is a repeat of what was told in Rev 21:23. As previously, this indicates the glory and majesty of God that man in this universe is not capable of viewing because of his fallen condition. Who are the “they” who are to reign with Jesus forever? The Church is promised in Rev 2:26-27 that they will rule over the nations and this occurs during the Millennium so this would appear not to be a reference to the Church. Following the logic of the verses after “his servants will serve him,” this must be the servants (the OT and Tribulations Saints) who are to rule over the rest of the inhabitants throughout the new earth.

The angel then says that these words are trustworthy and true and that God has sent him to show his servants (the Church) the things that will soon happen. That is a validation that what has been shown to John is a revealing of the future by the one and only God who exists outside of this universe and its time and therefore knows everything past, present and future all at the same time.

7 Jesus then speaks directly again to John like he did in Chapters 2 and 3. He proclaims that he is coming soon and promises a blessing on whoever keeps the words of the prophecy that he has given. The Greek word that is translated “soon” might be better translated “quickly” or “suddenly.” It doesn’t indicate a length of time as much as without warning or when least expected. Not only does “soon” appear in this verse but also in verse 12 and verse 20. The emphasis is to be watchful and expecting him at any time. How is a person to “keep” the words of the prophecy? We do this if we observe, fulfill, preserve, maintain, save, reserve, celebrate, and commemorate what has been prophesied. This is exactly what we are doing through this study. Since “blessed” can also be translated “happy,” we could paraphrase this verse in this way: “Happy are those who are sufficiently aware of the prophecy in this book so that they are ready when the rapture occurs.”

8 – 9 Here John repeats what he said in Chapter 1 about being the one who heard and saw all that he has written. After hearing and seeing all that the angel showed him, John falls down to worship at the feet of the angel. The angel says not to do that because he is a fellow servant and commands that God be worshipped.

10 – 18 Then John is told not to seal up the prophecy that he has been given. This is the opposite of what Daniel was told (Dan 12:4). Why? So that the events could be understood as they unfold. When the angel says for people to continue what they are doing, he is not commanding or even condoning evil or wrong actions. He is simply saying that everyone is free to choose what they will continue to do until what has been prophesied occurs. The reason for this is because God will not force anyone to obey him. They must choose to do so of their own free will.

Jesus then says he is coming soon and that his reward is coming with him so that he will give to each person according to what they have done. Then, so there is not mistake who is talking, Jesus identifies himself as the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. It is a statement of his deity because since he was present at the beginning of the universe it

means he existed before the universe began.

The blessing Jesus gives is for those who accept his death as payment for their disobedience of God and thus they “wash their robes.” That the others are “outside” doesn’t mean they are in the new universe and just outside of the city (Jerusalem). We know from previous passages that they are in the Lake of Fire (Lake of Burning Sulfur). This is a separation from God which is just what they wanted.

Then Jesus authenticates that this is his message stating that he is the Root and Offspring of David (the promised Messiah that was to come from David) and the bright Morning Star. The Morning Star is a reference back to Numbers 24:17 that promises “a star will come out of Jacob,” and 2 Peter 1:19 that warns us to pay attention to the word of the prophets “until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,” and Rev 2:28 which promises the morning star to those who are overcomers.

Notice that it is the Bride (the Church) along with the Spirit who is concerned for those who need to accept the free gift of Jesus. It is the primary purpose of the Church to “call” people to come to Jesus and accept his gift. The Spirit also “calls” people. And people who hear the word of the Bible may also hear the call to come to Jesus. Note that “whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.” No one is prohibited from being part of the new universe unless he chooses not to take the free gift and thus chooses not to be a part.

18 – 21

This is the epilogue of the book. There is a warning to anyone hearing the words of this prophecy. If you add anything to the prophecy, God will add to you the plagues described in the book. If you take anything away from the words, God will take away from you the share you would have in the tree of life and your home in the holy city. This does not mean you need to worry about reading the book and having these things happen to you because you accidentally add or omit a word. And you don’t have to worry that by trying to interpret what the words of prophecy are saying that you are somehow adding or subtracting from the prophecy. This is a warning about intentionally altering the words of prophecy.

Then Jesus again says he is coming soon (quickly).

And John closes the writing of the book by saying “Amen” (so be it) and that Jesus should go ahead and come. Then he gives a benediction prayer for God’s people, asking that God’s grace (free gift) be with them and closing with another “amen” (so be it).

This brings to a conclusion this study of Jesus’ revelation to John about what he has seen, “what is now and what will take place later.” (Rev 1:19) I pray that just because we have concluded this study you will not stop studying the revelation and trying to see that current events are leading us closer to the time of this prophecy. And I pray that you will share what you have learned with other followers of Jesus and especially those who are searching but have not accepted Jesus and follow him yet. They need to hear and understand this prophecy more than followers. May the Lord bless you and those with whom you share what you have learned in this study. If you have any comments or questions about this study, please share them with me.

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Questions:

1. Describe the river of the water of life.
2. Describe who will be living on the new earth and where.
3. For what is the fruit and leaves of the tree of life used?
4. When Jesus told John he was coming soon, what does “soon” mean?
5. If we try to interpret Jesus’ revelation to John and get something in error, does that mean we are in danger of having the plagues happen to us or having our right to eat of the tree of life taken from us?
6. What are we to do with what we have learned through reading, hearing, and studying the book of revelation?

Revelation Revealed

(Appendix 1)

Judgment in the Bible

Verses 11-15 of Revelation 20 depicts the judgment of the dead. That should cause a person to wonder if this is the only judgment mentioned in the Bible and if not how do any other judgments relate to this one. From Matt 25:31 – 46, which describes Jesus separating sheep and goats and judging them, it is obvious that the great white throne judgment of Rev 20 is not the only reference to judgment in the Bible. The following are a list of other judgments.

Judgment of Sin (disobedience of God's commands)

Genesis 3:1 – 24

Here God judges the original sin of Adam and Eve. Spiritual death is a part of God's judgment upon their sin of disobedience. Prior to this they enjoyed a close fellowship with God spiritually and were not afraid when he walked with them in the garden. Now, they are afraid and ashamed of their nakedness. God's judgment brings a curse upon the serpent for allowing himself to be used by Satan. It brings pain in child bearing for all women after that. It brings a curse upon the earth so that it no longer maintains an ordered existence but always moves toward disorder and decay. It brings hardship to living because man must now toil and sweat to make the earth produce food for them to eat. And finally it brings physical death not only to mankind but to the animal kingdom since God makes coverings for their nakedness from the skins of animals. God indicates in verse 15 that Satan will continue to be a source of problem for man. But God also indicates that he will bring forth from the descendants of Adam and Eve an individual that will end Satan's troubling of mankind.

Romans 2 – 6

Here Paul shows that not only did death come into the world as a judgment upon man's sin but that Jesus came to pay the price of that judgment for those who faithfully seek to follow him – whether Old Testament people looking forward to his work in faith or New Testament people looking back upon his work in faith. Paul shows that, by his death on the cross, Jesus allowed the judgment of all sin to be put upon him and paid the price for that sin so that he could offer it as a free gift to all people. Those who accept the gift in faith receive the righteousness of Jesus.

Luke 16:19 – 31

Jesus explains that after physical death the soul (eternal nature) of an unrighteous person goes to a place of holding called Hades in the Greek, Sheol in the Hebrew and commonly called hell. Separated from hell by a chasm but within vision of it was a place call Paradise or Abraham's Bosom where the soul of a righteous person goes after physical death.

1 Corinthians 11:27 – 32

In speaking about eating and drinking the Lord's Supper, Paul says "if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world." This indicates that we should judge our own selves so that we can avoid doing things that would cause us to be judged. Specifically, Paul says that if anyone participates in eating the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner is guilty of sinning against the body and blood (the work Jesus did by dying on the cross) and brings judgment upon himself because he has acted without recognizing the body of Jesus. Some people might think not recognizing the body of Jesus means not joining and participating in a local church congregation. If this were the meaning then many of the first century believers

would have brought themselves under judgment because a local congregation which a person can join was not recognized until several years after Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. So not recognizing the body of Jesus must mean not accepting the free gift of a restored relationship with God the Father that Jesus' death makes possible – in other words, not being a believer. This also says that Jesus judges believers with discipline so that they will not be condemned with the rest of the world. Discipline is a means of judging the sins of a believer so that they will recognize and turn from it (repent) and will receive forgiveness for those sins.

Hebrews 12:5 – 11

Here the writer indicates that Jesus' discipline is for our own good because it enables us to share in God's holiness.

Revelation 20:11 – 15; 21:7 – 8

Jesus reveals that physical death is only a partial or temporary judgment of sin and that Hades or Sheol is only a temporary holding place for souls after physical death. At the final judgment, death and the temporary holding place will be assigned a place in the lake of fire which is the second (final) death. The second death is a total separation from God (and thus everything that is love) for all of eternity.

Hebrews 9:27 – 28

God has determined that when a person dies they will face judgment. There is no possibility of changing status from unrighteous to righteous after physical death occurs.

From these passages we see that all sin is judged. The penalty that is judged upon sin is hard labor and death. Death is a separation from God that begins when a person disobeys God. Righteousness is having a "right" standing with God because you have not disobeyed him. Everyone is unrighteous from birth because they have inherited a nature of disobedience from Adam and Eve. That separates every person from God (spiritual death). At physical death, every person's soul is placed in a temporary holding place (hell or paradise) to await a final judgment. This means that the judgment of whether a person has a right standing with God takes place immediately after their death. Any further judgment is therefore a determination of what rewards they will receive for the works they have done. After the final judgment of a person's rewards, a person will either spend eternity in God's presence or separated from God's presence.

Judgment of the Old Testament Saints

Luke 23:26 – 43

When Jesus was crucified on the cross as payment for the sin of everyone who would trust in his work to give them a right standing with God, there were two thieves also crucified. One of the two thieves Jesus trusted that work and asked Jesus to remember him when he came into his kingdom. Jesus told that thief that he would join him in Paradise that day. This indicates that Jesus was going to the place of temporary holding for the souls of the righteous.

Matthew 27:50 – 53

When Jesus died, an earthquake shook the earth so that tombs were unsealed. Many righteous people that had died and gone to Paradise were resurrected to life and went out into the city and appeared to many people.

Ephesians 4:8 - 10

After his physical death, Jesus descended into Paradise just as all of the righteous people prior to him had done. But since Jesus is God and created death and Hades, he holds the keys that will release those held captive there (See Rev 1:18). After three days, Jesus ascended from Hades taking Paradise and all the captive souls with him.

John 20:1 – 18

When Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, he had not yet returned to his Father with the captive souls he had released.

From these passages we discover that the Old Testament Saints (righteous) were given the reward of going to heaven with Jesus to immediately begin their eternity in his presence. Some of them were given the added reward of spending some additional time with people to prove that there is resurrection and life after death.

Judgment of Believers

2 Corinthians 5:8

This tells us that when believers die (are absent from our body) we are present with Jesus.

From this passage and the passages we have already examined we discover that anyone who trusts Jesus' death to pay the penalty for their sin is judged righteous upon their death and their soul immediately goes to Paradise. Since Jesus took Paradise to heaven as part of the reward of the Old Testament Saints, when believers die and are judged righteous because of their faith in Jesus' death, our souls go to holding in Paradise in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18

The souls of believers who have died physically before Jesus returns to catch up (rapture) the Church will return with him just like he took the souls of the Old Testament Saints with him when he returned to his Father after his resurrection. These souls will receive their glorified bodies just before the believers who are alive are transformed into their glorified bodies. Then we all return to heaven with Jesus.

2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 22:12

When Jesus returns and raptures the Church, a Crown of Righteousness is awarded to believers for their faith in Jesus' work on the cross.

Romans 14:10 – 12

This informs us that believers will give an account of what they have done and have their work judged.

1 Corinthians 3:10 – 15; 2 Corinthians 5:10

This warns us that the work we build upon Christ's foundation will be tested by fire. That fire will be the judgment of Jesus' examination of our work. What survives that judgment is what he approves and that which he will reward. If our work is not acceptable (burned up) then we lose the rewards we could have received from faithful service to him. But whether our work burns up or not, believers will still be with Jesus for eternity because we have already been judged righteous at the time of our death due to our faith in his death.

There are five crowns that are mentioned as rewards for believers. A Crown of Righteousness is mentioned in 2 Timothy 4:8. An Incorruptible Crown which is sometimes called the Victor's Crown is mentioned in 1 Corinthians 9:25. A Crown of Life which is sometimes called the Martyr's Crown is mentioned in James 1:12 and Revelation 2:10. A Crown of Glory which is sometimes called the Crown of Service is mentioned in 1 Peter 5:4. And a Crown of Rejoicing which is sometimes called the Soul Winner's Crown is mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 2:19 – 20.

Other than the Crown of Righteousness which is given at the rapture, the other crowns and any other rewards that aren't specifically mentioned would be given as Jesus judges our works. That judgment would be done in heaven immediately after the rapture as preparation for the wedding feast that will go on in heaven during the

Tribulation. The wedding occurs at the end of the Tribulation according to Revelation 19:7. Many wedding feasts in New Testament times would extend for an entire week. The wedding feast of the Lamb (Jesus) and his Bride (Church) appears to be for the week of the Tribulation (seven years). So when Jesus returns to earth and sets up his Millennial kingdom, he brings his wife (Church) to reign with him (Col 3:4) and this will be their honeymoon. When Jesus creates the new universe and places the new Jerusalem in it as the residence of his wife, it is their eternal home together.

Judgment of Non-believers

Jude 14 – 15

Jude tells us that Enoch, the seventh in generational line from Adam and the one whom God took to heaven without dying because of his close walk with God, prophesied that Jesus would come to judge the ungodly.

Revelation 20:11 – 15

This is the great white throne judgment and is the final judgment for non-believers where they receive rewards for their work. Their first judgment, like for believers, occurred at their death when they were judged unrighteous for having not placed their faith in Jesus' work on the cross to make them righteous. Now at the final judgment, books are opened to show them the rewards they will receive while they spend eternity in the lake of fire (separation from God for eternity). Those who have done more good and less evil will have more freedom and less restrictions/punishments given to them. Those who have done more evil will be restricted/punished more and have less freedom to do what they want while they are separated from God for all eternity.

Judgment of the Jews

Psalms 50:1-6

This says that the Jews, God's chosen with whom he made a covenant, will be judged by him.

Jeremiah 30:1-24

Verses 4 - 7 speak of a time of trouble for the descendants of Jacob through which they will be saved by through their trust in the Lord. Verse 11 promises that they will not be completely destroyed even if God destroys all the nations in which he scatters them. But it also says they will not go unpunished.

Daniel 12:1

Daniel is told that Michael, the prince (protector) of the Jews will arise at the end time and that there will be a time of distress such as has never happened before. Those Jews whose names are written in the book will be delivered (saved from enduring the time of distress).

Ezekiel 20:33 – 38; 22:17 - 22

Ezekiel was told to inform the Jews of a time of judgment that would come upon them after God has gathered them from the nations where they have been living and brought them into the desert wilderness. God is going to purge the house of Israel (Jacob) and remove all those who revolt and rebel against him.

From these passages, we discover that the Jews will have to be gathered out of the nations of the world where they have been scattered before judgment comes to them. Jews who presently believe in Jesus as the Messiah are a part of the Church and will be raptured with them. The rest of the Jews will go into the Tribulation (time of Jacob's trouble). Just after the mid-point of the Tribulation, the Jews who have now believed in Jesus along with some who don't but have not taken the mark of the beast will escape into the desert

wilderness (probably the area of Petra). There they will be judged and the ones who still refuse to believe will be cast out of the house to become part of the non-believers.

Judgment of the Nations

Matthew 25:31 – 46

This says the nations will be gathered before Jesus for judgment. “Nations” refers to non-Jews. The people are separated into sheep or goats depending on how they have treated these brothers of Jesus. Although we are spoken of as brothers and sisters of Christ, this reference to the “brothers of Jesus” is not to us but to his brothers, the Jews. This is a judgment of how non-Jews have treated the Jewish nation.

Joel 3:1-2, 9 – 16

The nations will be gathered into the Valley of Jehosaphat where God will judge them for their treatment of the Jews.

Revelation 14:14-20

This is the harvest of the earth at the end of the Tribulation.

From these passages we put together that at the end of the Tribulation, the people who are living then will be judged for their treatment of the Jews. Those who have taken the mark of the beast along with all others who mistreated the Jews will be condemned and await the final great white throne judgment before being cast into the lake of fire. Those who have not taken the mark of the beast and have treated the Jews with respect will be blessed by going into the Millennium.

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