

REVELATION
Lesson 1: "Things You Have Seen: The Vision"
Revelation 1

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND:

The opening verses of Revelation states that "John" wrote the book (1.1, 4, 9; cf. 22.8). From the first century to the present day, almost all orthodox scholars concur that this is the Apostle John. The Apostle states that he received "the revelation" from Christ Jesus Himself through angelic mediation (1.1). The book has a threefold genre. It is partially apocalyptic (cf. Ezek. 1.1-14) which is "the word for crisis, and a crisis which bordered on the end" (Moffatt). John often alludes to the apocalyptic writings in the Old Testament (Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Psalms). One scholar claimed that 278 of the 404 verses in Revelation contain references to the Old Testament (Swete). Barclay claimed that John quoted or alluded to the Old Testament 245 times, citing about 20 Old Testament books. The book is also part prophecy (i.e. Isa. 53.1-6; Rev.1.3; 22.7) and epistle (letter) (i.e. 1 Cor.; Rev. 1.4-5; 22.21).

John tells us that he wrote this book while in exile on the island called Patmos, which was in the Aegean Sea (1.9). He was sent there because of his testimony of Jesus by Rome near the end of Emperor Domitian's reign (A.D. 81-96). This would date the book around A.D. 95. John describes himself as a "fellow partaker in the tribulation. This persecution would have been during Domitian's reign as large-scale and systematic persecutions of all Christians took place throughout the entire empire (Eusebius).

The book was written to encourage believers who were living during difficult times of tribulation in John's day. It is not to be read as a road map to predict the future, for no one knows the day or hour when these event will take place (Matt. 24.36). Yet, the events in this book are imminent. Meaning, that they could take place almost any time. The things written in this book may seem obscure in our times, but for those who read it in John's day must have been able to understand it's message.

John tells us that the original content of Revelation was address to seven churches in Asia Minor. These seven churches were located in major urban centers in what today is western Turkey. The Christians in these churches were committed to Christ as their Lord, not the Roman emperor cult worship where Caesar was honored as a living deity. For example, Domitian accepted the divine title, "Our lord and god" from Ephesus and other cities. All Christians were to expected to participate in the imperial cult. If not, they would face social and economic sanctions from city officials. A good example of this is food sacrifice to idols. An abundant of quality meat that was sacrificed to idols was available at all temples and markets.

The subject of Revelation is the person of Jesus Christ. The book unveils who He is and what He is. This book is the climax of Biblical Christology. By revealing who Christ is, this book clarifies Jesus' essential being. He is the same Jesus who was born on earth of a virgin at His first coming.

He is the same Jesus who is the "son of man," possessing full human nature (1.13) at the same time fully divine, one in essence with the Father (1.12-18; 3.14). He reveals God fully and will share the throne of the universe with the Father (22.1,3). He is also the eternal God (1.8; 21.6; 22.13).

Revelation also shares with us what Jesus Christ is. He is the "Root of David," the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," and the promised "Messiah" (3.7; 5.5; 22.16). He is the "Lamb of God" who takes away the sins of the world (5.6, 12-13; 6.1). He has proven to be "the firstborn from the dead, the victor over death and Hades" (1.5-6, 18; 2.8; 3.21). He is also the "Lord of the churches" who reigns over the church (2.1; 3.1; cf. 22.20). In the future Jesus will be "the Judge of all humankind" (2.12, 18; 3.14; 6.1) and "King of kings and Lord of lords" (1.5; 17.14; 19.16). Finally, He is "the Morning Star" (22.16; cf. 2.28). His Second Coming will signal the dawning of a new day in history. His millennial reign will serve as a foretaste for the new heaven and earth that is to come.

Revelation reveals the power of Christ. His personal power that is inherent within Himself. This is seen in His control of all other beings and forces. This book also reveals Jesus' instrumental power. That is, His authority over all things as He executes His power. Finally, Revelation shows that Jesus has effectual power. In that, He has power to accomplish anything. He can effect any changes that he desires. It is both destructive, He can destroy anything that exist. It is also constructive, He can create all things new.

Revelation reveals the program and purpose of Jesus. The program and purpose of Jesus reveals the imminent and final conflict between God and Satan. This conflict intensifies as the Lord increases His wrath against those working with Satan and who are increasing their persecution against God's people. Those who remain faithful are to be steadfast, even to death. They will be avenged when Jesus returns. The wicked will be destroyed and punished forever and God's people will dwell with Him in a blessed state and glory for all eternity.

Thus, the Book of Revelation is the unveiling of Jesus Christ - His person, power and program - for the rest of history. Jesus is the subject of this book and we must seek to know what He has unveiled for us to see.

KEY THEME(S): Power, sovereignty, justice, wisdom and goodness of God the Father and Jesus Christ.

KEY THOUGHT: Christ Jesus, the Overcomer, is our victorious King and Savior, whose ultimate purpose is to dwell among His people.

KEY VERSES:

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near" - Rev. 1.3

"Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things" - Rev. 1.19

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war" - Rev. 19.11

"These words are faithful and true; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place. "And behold, I am coming quickly., Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book" - Rev. 22.

From these verses we get a sense of what a blessing it is to read and study this book. This study should not disturb the believer, but give them hope and encouragement. If in the reading or studying this book you feel you are not prepared to meet the Lord, then pray to Him at this very moment to save you. Acknowledge you are a sinner. Believe that Jesus died on the cross, rose up from the dead three days later and ascended into heaven. Confess Him by name as Lord and Savior, and the Bible says you will be saved. This book should encourage everyone to be prepared for death and/or the coming of the Lord, for after both occasions, it will be too late for anyone to change their decision concerning Christ Jesus the Lord. Therefore, take heed of the words of prophecy of this book.

STUDY LESSON OUTLINE:

- I. Things You Have Seen: The Vision (Rev. 1)
- II. Things Which Are: The Message (Rev. 2-3)
- III. Things Which Will Take Place: The Throne (Rev. 4-5)
- IV. Things Which Will Take Place: The Tribulation, Pt. 1 (Rev. 6-11)
- V. Things Which Will Take Place: The Tribulation, Pt. 2 (Rev. 12-18)
- VI. Things Which Will Take Place: The Eternal Victory (Rev. 19-20)
- VII. Things Which Will Take Place: The Eternal Ages (Rev. 21-22)

**THE MESSAGE:
"The Things You Have Seen: The Vision of Christ"
Revelation 1.1-20**

LOOK IT UP: (*Read Revelation 1.1-20*)

1. Who is the Book of Revelation about? (v.1)
2. What is it about? (vv. 1, 19)
3. Who is it from and who is it addressed too and where are they located?
4. Who is John and how does he describe himself?
5. Who commissioned John to write Revelation?
6. How does John describe Christ?
7. What was John's reaction to what he saw and how was he comforted?
8. What is the message and outline of this book? (v.19)
9. What are you expecting to receive and do by studying this book? (v. 3)

LEARN IT: (The Exposition)

I. The Theme (vv. 1-3)

The Revelation: The preface of the Book of Revelation quickly informs us who and what this book is about. The book is the "unveiling" or "uncovering" of Jesus Christ. This is what the word, "Revelation (apokalupsis)" in Greek means. So much of what has been written about Jesus in the Old Testament and gospels has been somewhat veiled. The Old Testament introduces Christ by revealing Him through His pre-incarnate or theophany state. A good example of this is found as God is walking through the garden looking for Adam (Gen. 3.8), when the Lord appeared to Abraham in the promise land (Gen. 12.7-9), when Jacob wrestled with what appeared to be a man (Gen. 32.22-30), and other examples (Ex. 3.2; Job 38-42). In the gospels, Jesus is unveiled through human flesh, God in flesh (Jn. 1.14a). In this flesh, John testifies that he and others "*saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*" (Jn. 1.14b). The epistles explain who and what Jesus is, but it will be through the "unveiling" of Revelation that God will show the world who Jesus really is.

The Audience: The chain of communication of this revelation comes from God, Who gave it to Jesus to communicate to His servants (the community of faith) by one of His angels dictated by John. Just like Noah, Abraham, Moses and the prophets, the Lord wants to unveil to His church the final days of the earth and the glorious age to come.

The Purpose: If Jesus is the subject of this book, what is the purpose of its' message? The purpose of this book is to not only reveal who Christ is, but those things that will soon take place. What things? Prophetic things which concern the imminent and inaugurated fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ.

The Messenger: John, Apostle of Jesus, already has the distinct privilege in writing a gospel, three epistles and now Revelation. John is the brother of James, both who were called by Christ during His earthly ministry (Matt. 4.21; Mk. 1.19). John often identifies himself in his gospel as

the "one Jesus loved." He was also the one who laid His head on Jesus' chest (Jn. 13.23) and whom Jesus gives responsibility to look after His earthly mom, Mary (Jn. 19.26). John was also the only Apostle not martyred, yet his life and ministry is without tribulation as he is exiled to the island of Patmos, a Roman penal colony off the coast of Asia Minor for the testimony of God's word and of Jesus Christ (v.2,9).

The Blessing: Finally, in this preface comes a blessing and exhortation. Those who read this book and obey it will receive from God a special blessing. This is the first of seven blessing John mentions in Revelation (14.13; 16.15; 19.9; 20.6; 22.7, 14; cf. Lk. 11.28). The things which will take place, that are written in this book are imminent as indicated by the word "near." This means that the fulfillment of the things written in this book could begin at any time.

II. The Salutation (vv. 4-8)

The Seven Churches: After the preface, John pens this book like an epistle (letter). Beginning with an address, salutation, and doxology. This was common in ancient letters. John grouped many things into sevens in Revelation. Seven churches, spirits, candlesticks, stars, lamps, seals, horns, trumpets and i.e.. The significance of seven is that it is the Biblical number of completeness. We are not sure why he chose these seven churches. Some interpret the seven churches as real churches during John's time and as representatives of the seven church ages or representation of kinds of churches. Nevertheless, these churches actually existed in the Roman province of what is now present day Turkey. These churches are later identified as the church in Ephesus (2.1-7), Smyrna 2.8-11), Pergamum (2.12-17), Thyatira (2.18-29), Sardis (3.1-6), Philadelphia (3.7-13), and Laodicea (3.14-22).

The Trinity: Next, after the address, John includes the usual greeting found in New Testament letters. "Grace" represented the traditional Greek greeting and "peace" represented the traditional Hebrew greeting. It is followed up then by a triadic reference of the Trinity.

- The Father: "*who is and who was and who is to come.*"
- The Holy Spirit: "*and from the seven Spirits...*"
- The Son: "*and from Jesus Christ,*"

The faithful saint who was persevering in their in faith in the midst of tribulation needed this greeting, a greeting from the only eternal God who is sovereign over all time, space and history. The triadic reference to the Father is a reflection of His divine name found in Exodus 3.14. The seven Spirits before the throne is more likely the full expression and function of the Holy Spirit as seen in Isaiah 11.2 (the spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and fear). Finally, from Christ Jesus Himself. He is seen in His threefold office as Prophet (faithful witness), Priest (First begotten from the dead) and King (Prince of the kings of the earth).

The Gospel: This greeting not only gives the faithful hope from the messenger (the Lord), but also reminds them who they were, how they were saved, and the eternal hope they possess. They are reminded that from God's love they have been released from sin by the atoning blood of Christ and have been transformed into a kingdom of priests. They are a kingdom of priest and a

holy nation (Ex. 19.6; Isa. 61.6; 1 Pet. 2.9). Just as Israel of old was redeemed through the Red Sea and was called to be a kingdom under God as a nation of priest to serve Him, so too, John points to these saints redeemed by Christ's blood and made heirs of his future kingly rule on earth who are to offer spiritual sacrifices and praise to God (Heb.13.15; 1 Pet. 2.5). But, to be sure, these saints are not replacements of the Mosaic covenant, they are grafted in with the whole household of God as one people, both Jew and gentile in Christ (Gen. 12.3; Rom. 1.16; Eph. 2-3).

The Doxology: The final statement of this greeting ends with a word of praise (doxology) to the Lord. It is a tribute to God (to Him), His glory, and His kingdom (dominion). It is a kingdom without end. Sometime, in the imminent future, Jesus will come again. When He does, there will be no mistake concerning His identity. The unveiling will have taken place. John tells us that *"every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him."* This will be a supernatural event that even those who pierced Him, such as Pilate, Annas, Caiaphas, the Jewish leaders and crowd, all the peoples of the earth who rejected Him, they will see Him and they will mourn over Him. A mourning as a result of His judgment upon all the peoples of the earth. Then, as if to speak into the weightiness of this book and to give it divine authentication, the Lord speaks. *"I AM the Alpha and the Omega...who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (v.8).*

III. The Commission (vv. 9-20)

The Call (vv. 9-11): John next explained a vision of the glorified Christ that God had given him (cf. Isa. 6; Ezek. 1). John directly addresses the seven churches as a fellow "partaker in the tribulation" because of the *"word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (v.9)*. The word "partaker" simply means a "fellow companion" or "joint partner." As evidence he discloses his writing location from the Roman penal colony on the island of Patmos located in the Aegean Sea. John then describes how he received the call to write this book. He tells us that as he was worshiping on the Lord's day (Sunday), he was caught up in the Spirit. Possibly similar to that of Phillip who was snatched away by the Spirit (Acts 8.39) or Peter's vision of Cornelius while he was praying (Acts 10.9-16). In John's vision, the Spirit projected his spirit to a future time in a vision (cf. 4.2; 17.3; 21.10; Ezek. 3.12, 14; 8.3; 11.1, 24; 43.5). Then, John tells us a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet instructed him to write a message to the seven churches (v.11).

The Source (vv. 12-16): John now turns to see the person who had given him his commission. This is what he saw:

- *A person, dressed in a robe* (cf. Exod. 25.31-40; 1 Ki. 7.49; Zechariah. 4.2; Matt. 18.20). This description resembled a priest ministering in the tabernacle or temple. The "seven golden lampstands" represent the seven churches (v. 20; cf. Zechariah. 4.2-6).
- *A son of man (v.13)* - This expression refers to the divine Messiah in Daniel 7.13-14. "Son of Man" was Jesus' favorite title for Himself as noted in the gospels (cf. Mk. 13.26).

The man John saw looked like a human man. His clothing similar to that of a priest: a long robe with a golden sash around it, girded across His chest (cf. Exod. 28.4; Lev. 16.4). This represents Jesus' present office of our High Priest (Heb. 14.4).

Next, John describes His head, hair, eyes, feet and voice (vv. 14-15):

- *His head and hair* (like white wool, like snow) often represents wisdom, purity, and the dignity of age in Scripture.
- *His eyes* (like a flame of fire) refers to His piercing judgment and omniscient understanding (cf. 2.18; 19.12; Dan. 10.6; Mk. 3.5, 34; 10.21; 11.11; Lk. 22.61).
- *His feet* (were like burnished bronze) a reference to His purity as He moves among the churches (cf. Lk. 1.79; Acts 5.9; Rom. 3.15; 10.15; Heb. 12.13). It denotes strength and stability.
- *His voice* (like the sound of many waters) like the sound of a rushing river or water going over the Niagra Falls, reveals the authoritative, powerful and irresistible voice of Christ (cf. 14.2; 19.6; Ps. 93.4; Isa. 17.13; Ezek. 43.2).

Finally, John describes his vision of the glorified Savior holding in His right hand "seven stars" and from His mouth "*came a sharp two-edged sword*" as His face shined as the radiance of the sun in all its strength (v.17).

- *The seven stars*: These represent the symbol of official honor and sovereign control. Barclay states that "the hand of Christ is strong enough to uphold the heavens and gentle enough to wipe away our tears."
- *Sharp two-edged sword*: This was the type of sword the Roman used to kill with (2.12, 16; 6.8; 19.15,21). This proceeded from His mouth which is His word, both spoken and written - will judge all His enemies (Isa. 11.4; 49.2; Eph. 6.17; 2 Thess. 2.8; Heb. 4.12; Rev. 19.13-15).
- *His face*: Shined like the sun which was a picture of pure holiness and righteousness (Judg. 5.4, 31; Matt. 13.43).

John had seen a similar image of Jesus at the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17.2). In his gospel he testifies that he and his fellow disciples had witness "*His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father...*" (Jn. 1.14).

The Message (vv. 17-20): John's response to what he has just seen is similar to Daniel (cf. Dan. 10.7-9) as he fell to his feet like a dead man (cf. Isa. 6.1-7). This revelation of Jesus took all the strength out of John. He could not stand in the presence of One so holy. Yet, the glorified Christ comforts John and encourages him not to fear.

The comfort comes from Christ as He introduces Himself to John as the self-existent eternal One to whom he was familiar with many years ago during His earthly ministry (v. 18). Jesus connects Himself with Yahweh (Exod. 3.14) as the "first and last," which is essentially the same as "the Alpha and Omega" or "the beginning and the end." All these titles stress the eternal sovereignty of God. Jesus then repeats His instruction more specifically to John to "write down the things" God was revealing to him through an angel (v.11). The things "which you have seen, which are, and which will take place" provides an inspired outline of the Book of Revelation.

Finally, Jesus explains to John the meaning of some of the symbolic things John had seen. Jesus states that the "seven stars" represent the "angels of the seven churches." Who are these angel? There is no one satisfactory answer to this question, only speculation. "Angels" occurs sixty-seven times in Revelation and every other instance refers to heavenly messengers, though occasionally in the New Testament it can mean a human messenger, such as a pastor. As to the "seven lamp stands," Jesus says they are the "seven churches."

Whatever the "seven angels" are, their connection with the "seven churches" and Christ message to these churches are link together. The church belongs to Christ, by which He is the head. It is His bride Whom He loves. As such, He has the authority to rule and judge His own. To condemn or to commend. Though this heaven and earth will pass away, His Word and His bride will remain because He is the first and last, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and Omega, the Living One, Who once was dead and now is alive.

LIVE IT:

As we study the Book of Revelation, we should consider a couple points of application:

1. Do you know who Jesus is? Many of us have our own mental picture of what Jesus is like. Some from Scripture, some from iconic pictures and images. Even though most Christians see Jesus as the benevolent Savior of sinners, the compassionate healer of those who are hurting, the person of Jesus and His office as prophet, priest, and king is overwhelmingly different than we could ever imagine. This study unveils for the believer and non-believer who Jesus really is. God, the creator and sustainer of all things who has the power to destroy and create. To punish or reward. To judge or to forgive. It is a blessing for anyone who take heed the words of this book and yields their lives to Christ. For in doing so, you secure your eternal destination in heaven with Him. In not doing so, you bring on to yourself the many plagues and eternal damnation that is written in this book (Rev. 1.3).

2. Do you trust in God's Word and Wisdom? Some read and study God's word for all its worth. Still some use it sparingly, like tools in the home that are rarely used. Still others use it like a charm by extracting good parts that bring comfort, but avoiding the some parts that speak truth into their soul. My prayer is that all will accept the full counsel of God's word. Just as He is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, so too His word. Receive the full counsel of God's word for your soul and life for it will never pass away (2 Tim. 3.16; Mt. 24.35)

REVELATION
Lesson 2: "Things Which Are: The Message"
Revelation 2-3

LOOK IT UP:

Read Revelation 2-3 and answer the questions below before reading the lesson.

1. List the seven churches.
2. Describe who Christ is to each of the churches.
3. Which church received commendation from Christ? What was it?
4. Which church received condemnation from Christ? What was it?
5. List Christ' exhortation to the churches.
6. What promise did each church receive from Christ?
7. In examining yourself, which church resembles your faith and walk today?

INTRODUCTION:

Before we begin analyzing each of the seven letters to the seven churches, we should gain an understanding what the church is. The doctrinal term is "ecclesiology" (the study of the church).

The Universal and Local Church: What is the church? The "church" in the New Testament Greek is translated as the "called out ones." Meaning, that this institution that Christ has ordained and built is centered on the truth that Jesus is the "Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16.15-18). Based on this confession the church is the body of Christ, of which He is the head (Eph. 1.22-23). It is made up of true believers (2 Tim. 2.19) who are His bride (Eph. 5.25-27), visible and invisible (Heb. 12.23), for whom Christ died to redeem for all time in both the Old and New Testament ages (Heb. 11.4-32; 12.1). The church is universal, in that, it consists all those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12.13). It is also local, as in the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, or likewise, the local body of true believers in your neighborhood. Those who belong to the universal church should devote themselves to the preaching and teaching of God's word (Acts 2.42; 2 Tim. 3.16) by pastors and teachers who equip the saints in biblical doctrines so believers can be grounded in their faith in Christ (Eph. 4.14).

The church is not a building or denomination, but according to the Bible, it is those believers who assemble together, who have made a common, personal, inward confession of faith in Christ alone, instead of being an outward shell whose confession of faith is outside the works of Christ alone. The church gathers for worship (1 Cor. 11.18), fellowship (Acts 2.45-46; 4.31), teaching and prayer (Acts 2.42, 11.26; 1 Cor. 4.17). It observes the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper until Christ returns (Acts 2.41; 1 Cor. 11.23-24). The church sends out missionaries (Acts

13.2; 15.3), cares for one another through various ministries (Acts 2.45; 6.1; 1 Tim. 5.9) and evangelizes to the lost, locally and globally (Acts 1.8; 1 Pet. 2.9-10). In brief, this is a short theology of the church.

The Seven Churches in Revelation: The letters (or messages) to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3 are like seven short epistles addressed to it's "angel" (or human representative/messenger). The churches in the first century were probably house-churches (local church) which had a "messenger" who would have made the letter known to the congregation when he read it publicly. The word translated "angel" usually refers to a heavenly messenger in the New Testament, but it describes human messengers as well (cf. Matt. 11.10; Mk. 1.2; Lk. 7.24, 27; 9.52).

The letters are similar in that the message is from Christ, yet each message contains a unique description of Jesus, drawn from (1.12-20) that was appropriate to that particular church. Each letter contained a word of commendation (except Laodicea). Each received some rebuke (except Smyrna and Philadelphia). Each letter exhorts its readers to specific action and holds out a promise as an incentive for faithful obedience.

Just as Paul wrote to historical churches in the first century, likewise, these seven churches were historical congregations. The letters written carry application to the church both then and now. To the individual local congregation and the individual Christians who gather in them.

The Seven Churches and Prophetic/Historical Views: There are several point of views that attempt to connect the seven churches in Revelation with the western church throughout history. Some hold that parallels have proven to be prophetic, although there is no statement in the text that God intended them to be prophetic. The three views are:

- *The prophetic view:* This view states that the seven churches addressed were not in existence, but those that will come into being in the day of the Lord.
- *The historical view:* This view states that the seven churches addressed existed in the first century, and what each characterized has marked other local church in various locations throughout church history.
- *The historico-prophetic view:* This view combines the first two but adds that these churches reveal the history of seven successive periods of the church from John's time to the Rapture. Below describes the general scheme of the seven western periods of the church by some scholars.
 - Ephesus: Apostolic Era (ca. A.D. 33-64)
 - Smyrna: Period of Persecution (ca. A.D. 64-313)
 - Pergamum: Era of Official Patronage (ca. A.D. 313-606)
 - Thyatira: Middle Ages (ca. A.D. 606-1520)
 - Sardis: Protestant Reformation (ca. A.D. 1520-1750)
 - Philadelphia: Missionary Era (ca. A.D. 1750-1900)
 - Laodicea: Modern Period (ca. A.D. 1900-????)

I am not incline to take this point of view with respect in making Scripture say something it was not intending to say. When we analyze the seven churches we first must see them as real

churches. They were real congregation which existed during John's time to whom Christ wanted to reveal Himself. The purpose of His revelation was to encourage and exhort these congregations to continue with the great commission (Matt. 28.18-20) until He comes again. For instance, when Daniel shares his imagery of the "four kingdoms" in Daniel 2, 7 and 8, he gives clear indication of prophetic history of the Babylonian, Medes, Persian and Greek kingdoms. John in Revelation 2-3, does not indicate that the churches were seven distinctive periods of church history as Daniel did with the "four kingdoms." John is simply dictating Christ' message to seven churches, just as Paul would write to the church in Ephesus, Colossae, Corinth and Rome. Now, that is not to say that there are key applications. There are certainly characteristics in those congregations in John's time that give churches and Christians today instruction and application. We can be encourage by Christ' commendation, exhorted by His commands and hopeful in His promises to anyone who overcomes to the end. The chart below serves as a textual synopsis of the seven churches in Revelation.

KEY THOUGHT: The message of Christ to the church universal and local is to encourage and exhort them to finish the task unfinished until He comes again.

LEARN IT: (The Exposition)

I. The Letter to the Church in Ephesus (2. 1-7):

The Church, Angel and Christ (2.1): Ephesus was a leading seaport and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Paul evangelized it for three years (Acts 18.19-21; 19; 1 Cor. 16.8). Timothy pastored there (1 Tim. 1.3) as had John the Apostle. The church itself is mentioned in four New Testament books (Ephesians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Revelation). The church, which was the largest city in Asia Minor, was very important in the early history of the church. The primary recipient of this letter was to the "angel" (v.1) who was probably a human messenger of the church who carried this letter, along with the rest of Revelation, to the church at Ephesus. Many of the churches during the first century met in houses. The messenger would have made the letter known to the congregation when he read it publicly. John describes Jesus figuratively, as "the One" in authority over the churches' leaders ('who holds the seven stars'), and One who knew their situations ("who walks among the...lampstands"). Jesus was walking tirelessly among them and watching over them (cf. 1.13, 16).

The Commendation (2.2-3,6): Jesus indicates that He "knows" with absolute clearness the church's situation. Jesus commends the church's faithfulness to Him and approves their good works (deeds). For forty years they have labored in His service with patient endurance (perseverance) while under affliction. They by put to the test (church discipline) evil men and false teachers who claimed to be apostles. These were self appointed apostles, not official apostles called by Christ (cf. Acts 1.15-26). In all this, they were faithful, persevering, "and have not grown weary" (v.3).

Another word of praise has to do with the "Nicolaitans" (v.6). We know very little about them, other than, they followed a man named "Nicolas." What we do know is that Jesus stood by the church in their hatred toward them (v.6). It could be that these "Nicolaitans" were pressuring the

believers to participate in the imperial cult and temple worship. The pagan temple life dominated Ephesus and other cities and these were probably teaching that this practice was permissible.

The Condemnation (2.4): Yet, while serving faithfully, Jesus rebuked them for leaving their "first love." Their service to Christ had become a habit of orthodoxy rather than fervent "love" for their Savior (cf. Eph. 1.15-16). They did what was correct, but for the wrong reasons. Service and orthodoxy are important unless it becomes more important to you than your love for Christ and others. The story of Mary and Martha is a good example of this (cf. Lk. 10.38-42).

The Exhortation (2.5-6): To correct this cold heart the Lord exhorts a three-step process to rekindle their love for Him. First, "remember" how they used to feel about Him (first love). Second, "repent" (change their attitude) and finally, "return" to the love that formerly motivated them (do the deeds you did at first). Paul commanded this church a generation earlier to grow in love (Eph. 4.2, 15-16). The "deeds" Jesus pointed out they needed to practice refer to the activities that fanned the flame of their love (i.e. Lord's Supper) as well as their service for Him (v.2). To rekindle "first love" there needs to be a return to "first works" because there is an intimate relationship between love and good works (1 Jn. 5.2). This is a warning to any church and believer. Eventually, the church in Ephesus passed out of existence, like many around the Mediterranean and in Europe. The site of the ancient city has been without inhabitants since the fourteenth century. If a church does not keep the flame of faith going, Jesus says, "I will remove your lampstand out of its place - unless you repent" (v.5b).

The Invitation and Promise (2.7): Jesus appeals to His hearers to make a significant change. Jesus makes this appeal through His "Spirit" (Holy Spirit) in the form of an invitation. The invitation is to listen and obey Christ's message (v.5) and it is for believers "who overcome" (v. 7). The promise here is that Jesus would "grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God" (v.7b). "Paradise" comes from a Persian word meaning, "a walling around." This resembles a kind of walled park or garden (cf. Gen, 2.8-10; Rev. 22.1-4, 14). The "tree of life" is presented as a literal tree as is "the tree of life" in Eden and the "tree of life" in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22.2, 14, 19). This "tree of life" is in reference to eternal life and intimate presence with God for all eternity that only He can give.

II. The Letter to the Church in Smyrna (2. 8-11)

The Church and Christ (2.8): Smyrna was another seaport on the Aegean Sea. It was forty miles north of Ephesus. It was a wealthy city with a population of 100,000. The city name means, "bitter." The Greek word translates the Hebrew word, "mor" (myrrh). It was a fragrant used in embalming the dead. It becomes fragrant when someone crushes it. Believers would have found encouragement, that even the prospect of death threatened them, resurrection and eternal life with Christ were certain. This plays into Jesus' description of Himself as being the eternal One ("the first and last") who had died and rose again. This also plays against what the residents in Smyrna believed. They worshipped a goddess named "Cybele" whom they claimed rose from the dead every spring.

The Commendation/No Condemnation (2.9): Jesus assures them that He knows clearly their "tribulation/pressures" as a result of their testimony for Him. This included being poor ("poverty") but reminds them that they "are rich." Those who were persecuting them were Jews who both slandered the Christians and cursed Jesus Christ (cf. Act. 18.12-17; 26.11). They claimed to be committed to God, but were not true (believing) Israelites. Jesus points out that they came from Satan's camp (the synagogue of Satan"). Because of their suffering, Jesus had no rebuke for the saints in Smyrna. In their trials, they had remained pure in belief and behavior.,

The Exhortation (2.10a): Jesus instructs them not to fear for their adversaries and death, since they would live with Him forever. He warns them that they will be "tested" when the Devil (Adversary) will "cast some" of them "into prison." The "ten days" may refer to a brief period of duration by the Roman government. During this time Jesus exhorts them to remain "faithful until death."

The Promise (2.10b-11): The reward for their faithfulness unto death, Jesus promises to give them "the crown of life." This is probably the fullness of eternal life as a reward (cf. 1 Cor. 9.25; 1 Thess. 2.19; 2 Tim. 4.6-8; Heb. 2.9; James 1.12; 1 Pet. 5.4; Rev. 4.4). This appears to be a victor's crown given for enduring the trials and tests of life - even to the point of 'death": without denying Christ. This is not to be confused with the gift of eternal itself, but the fullness of that life (cf. Jn. 10.10). Jesus will award this gift when He evaluates the believer's works at His judgment seat (1 Cor. 3.13,14).

III. The Letter to the Church in Pergamum (2.12-17)

The Church and Christ (2.12): Pergamum was the provincial capital of Roman Asia. It was known for its wealth, but also for its shrines to gods of healing, and many made pilgrimages to the city. It was an active center of paganism and was rightly called by Christ where Satan resided. This reference to "Satan's throne" could be an allusion to one or more pagan temples or to emperor worship, which was stronger in Pergamum than anywhere else.

Jesus describes Himself here as "the One" who judges with His Word ("the sharp two-edge sword" cf. 1.16; 19.15,21). God's Word both separates believers from the world, and sinners from God.

The Commendation (2.13): The Pergamum Christians held firmly ("hold fast") their commitment and witness to Christ, even though they lived in one of Satan's strongholds. This steadfast faith would cost them their lives. Jesus points out the faithful witness of "Antipas" who was punished to death for His witness and loyalty to Christ rather than to pagan gods and the Roman emperor.

The Condemnation (2.14-15): While holding fast to Christ, the believers in Pergamum were effected by their surroundings. The reference to the teaching of Balaam suggests a relaxing of moral standards in the church. This teaching goes back to Numbers 25 when Balaam told Balaam that he could overcome the Israelites if he would involve them in Moabite religious feast that included sacred prostitution. This would render them unfaithful to God and consequently subject

to His discipline. The pagans in Pergamum were likewise involved in pagan feast that included sexual immorality. Some of the believers participated in this immoral behavior and approved of the teachings of the "Nicolaitans" (v.6, 14-15).

The Exhortation (2.16): Jesus' rebuke is clear. If the erring believers would not judge themselves and "repent", they could anticipate God's judgment (cf. 1 Cor. 11.31). They would die by "the sword" proceeding from Christ's "mouth" just as Balaam died by the Israelite's sword (Num. 31.8). This judgement would be by the unyielding standard of God's revealed Word - that clearly condemns any immoral behavior. By approving the teaching of Balaam and Nicolaitans, they could expect God to oppose them in His "war" against evil.

The Promise (2.17): The promises given by Christ to this church are "some of the hidden manna" and a "white stone." The "hidden manna" might reference the miraculous manna from heaven that sustained the lives of the Israelites in the wilderness, of which a sample keepsake lay "hidden:" in the holy of holies. The Christians in Pergamum did not need food of the pagan festivals. They already had a much better food. The spiritual food from Christ, the "Bread of Life" (Jn. 6.48-51). The "white stone" represented a vote of acquittal or a favorable vote. Victors in contests or battles received a white stone. God is saying perhaps that the one who overcomes will have a position of a ruler over the earth. They will also have a new name like Joseph (cf. Gen. 41.39-45) or Jacob (Gen. 32.28). This name though is probably that of "Christ" (cf. Phil 2.9) because it is "unknown" to others who do not possess it.

IV. The Letter to the Church in Thyatira (2.18-29)

The Church and Christ (2.18): This city was a commercial center when John wrote. It was the smallest and least significant of the seven cities, but received the longest letter. It was located 45 miles to the southeast of Pergamum and was known for its textiles, especially purple dye (cf. Acts 16.14) and trade of guilds.

Jesus describes Himself as the "Son of God" "who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze." The flamed like "eyes" suggest discerning and sever judgment (cf. 1.14; Dan. 10.6). The "burnished bronze" feet in this context, picture a warrior with protected feet (cf. 1.15; Dan. 10.6). The "Son of God" reference emphasizes Jesus' deity and His right to judge. This is the only use of this title in Revelation. Thyatira was "Tyrimnas" who, his worshippers said, was a "son of the gods." They pictured him on the city coins: as a warrior riding a horse, and wielding a double-edge battle ax in judgment.

The Commendation (2.19): This church was strong in good "deeds," "love" for others, trust ("faith") in God, service of their Savior, and patient endurance ("perseverance") in trials. Moreover, they had become even more zealous recently ("your deeds of late are greater than at first").

The Condemnation (2.20-23): Though this church was active and faithful in many respects, it had accepted the leadership of a woman characterized as "Jezebel." She calls herself a "prophetess" and who like the first Jezebel (1 Ki. 18-21) introduced idolatry and gross

immorality and led believers not only into this lifestyle, but also in the eating of food sacrificed to idols (v.20). The Lord had not yet brought any judgment on her in order that she might "repent" (2 Pet. 3.9), but "she does not want to repent of her immorality" (v.21). Therefore, the Lord will inflict on her a fatal illness ("bed of sickness"; cf. 2 Ki. 1.4; 1 Cor. 11.29-30), and her followers might experience "great tribulation." This could refer to the seven year Tribulation, but it seems more likely to refer to severe divine discipline similar to what is coming during the Tribulation. This "pestilence" will come in the form of infant mortality that will clearly indicate to the churches Christ' judgement on those who follow her teachings (v.23).

The Exhortation (2.24-25): This church was divided into two groups, the faithful and the corrupt. Jesus' only exhortation to the faithful was to abstain from her teaching. The belief among believers in this church was "Gnosticism" which taught that the soul was not effected by what the flesh did. Jesus exhorts the faithful to hold fast to their present good conduct until He comes again (v.25).

The Promise (2.26-29): The prize for faithfulness was the privilege of reigning with Christ in His earthly kingdom (cf. 1.6; 12.5; 19.15; Ps. 2.8-9; 2 Tim. 2.12; Rev. 20.4-6). The idea that the people of little Thyatira, of all the seven cities, would one day rule the nations would have been almost unbelievable to the original readers. This authority to rule comes from God the Son by God the Father (v.27-28). This indicates God's sovereignty ("the morning star") over all (v.29).

V. The Letter to the Church in Sardis (3.1-6)

The Church and Christ (3.1): Sardis was a prosperous and strategic city. It was known for its successful defense against invaders, its burial mounds, raised like a thousand hills on the skyline some seven miles from the city and its jewelry, dye, and textile industries.

The Lord presents Himself as the all-wise God ("the seven Spirits") over His seven messengers ("seven stars"). Here the Lord indicates that without His Spirit empowering the churches, they can not exist. They will die off without Him. The church grows and flourishes because of Christ' Spirit indwelling in its fellowship. It dies when He withdraws His Spirit from it.

The Commendation and Condemnation (3.1-2): The Lord gives less praises to this church that is known for compromising its faith. The only good thing he said to the Christians in this church is that they had a good reputation, but in the same breath, He tells them they are dead (v.1). There were only a few faithful to the Lord in this church (v.4). Others failed to finish what they had begun in Christ. This death of ministry in the church model that of the city's reputation for its burial monuments.

The Exhortation (3.2-3): Christ' exhortation to them was to "wake up" from their spiritual slumber and examine their spiritual condition to realize their needs (cf. Matt. 24.42; 25.13; 26.41). This city had fallen a number of times into enemies hands because of the carelessness of sentries who had relied too much on the town's natural fortifications. Likewise, Jesus exhorts the Christians to "strengthen the things that remain" or they too will suffer the same fate that of

Sardis. If they do not heed what He says, He will come to them like a "thief in the night" at an hour unknown (v.3).

The Promise (3.4-6): The few who did not compromise and who are completing the task unfinished, will receive a blessing from the Lord. They will "walk" with Christ in eternity and "white garments." This symbolizes one's works (19.8) that are pure and free from defilement (cf. 7.9, 13; 19.14; Matt. 22.11-12). They will overcome and their names will not be "erased" from the "book of life." Jesus then will confess their name before the Father and His angels (v.5). The "book of life" is a metaphor for eternal life (cf. 2.7). Meaning they have eternal security in Christ Jesus our Lord.

VI. The Letter to the Church in Philadelphia (3.7-13)

The Church and Christ (3.7): Philadelphia rested on a major highway which was a gateway to Central Asia Minor. The location of this city was prone to earthquakes. It was founded by a Pergamene king, Attalus II (159-138 B.C.). The town received its name from his nickname, "Philadelphus" (brother lover or city of brotherly love). This was because the king had a special devotion to his brother, Eumenes II.

Jesus presents Himself as "holy" (cf. 4.87; 6.10; Ps. 16.10), "true" (genuine), and authoritative (cf. 1.5; 6.10). He also presents Himself as having the "key of David" which refers to Isaiah 22.20-23, where Hezekiah's servant, Eliakim, received authority over David's house, including access to all the king's treasures. All this means that Jesus has God's full administrative authority over salvation and judgment. He has the authority to distribute or not to distribute. To open or not to open. All of God's resources are according to His will.

The Commendation/No Condemnation (3.8): Jesus placed before this church an open door that no one can shut. This is an encouragement to any church or ministry that has the open door policy from Christ. The opportunity for ministry will continue until Christ closes the door. In this case the Lord opens the door for this church because they have "little power" (v.8). They were few in number and small in strength. Yet, they had faithfully obeyed God's Word and maintained a faithful testimony for the Lord by not denying His name.

The Promise and Exhortation (3.9-12): Jesus gives this church no rebuke. This church was bothered by Jewish antagonists (synagogue of Satan) who would eventually have to acknowledge that the Christians were the true followers of God. To this Jesus promises that He will make these antagonist bow before them at their feet "to make them know that I have loved you" (v.9). God also promises the Christians that they would not go through the Tribulation period (Rev. 6-19). He promised to "keep" them from the hour of testing, which clearly means, the Tribulation. Though, this does not mean He would "preserve" (them or "remove" them. This is the pre-tribulation position. Next, the Lord promised to come "quickly" (cf. 1.1, 7; 2.16; 22.7; 2 Pet. 3.8). This can only mean His imminent second coming to earth described in Revelation 19.11-21 (v.11). God also promised that he will not simply honor overcomers by erecting a pillar in their name in heaven, He will make them pillars in the spiritual temple of God in the New Jerusalem. Jesus also promises they would be secure forever. Because Philadelphia experienced

earthquakes, majority of the population lived outside the city walls. Jesus promises you will not have to go outside from the pillars of the New Jerusalem. You will dwell securely. Finally, Jesus will identify with His faithful people by writing on them God's name, God's city and His new name (v.12). This indicated ownership in John's day. In the ancient world, columns often bore the names of conquerors. Scripture does not reveal Jesus' new name. All this signifies the permanent communion believers will have with God in the future.

Since Jesus' return is imminent, believers should remain faithful to Him so that their detractors do not rob them of the reward that would be theirs (cf. 2 John 8).

VII. The Letter to the Church in Laodicea (3.14-22)

The Church and Christ (3.14): Laodicea was a wealthy city. The district around it produced the famous black wool and specialized banking and health care. It was located about 90 miles east of Ephesus. The city was named by Antiochus of Syria in honor of his wife: Laodicea. It was destroyed by a severe earthquake. Its prosperous citizens were able to rebuild the city without the aid of Rome. Thus made the city generate a self-sustaining and self-sufficient attitude and heart. This attitude flowed over into the heart of the church.

Jesus calls Himself the "Amen" (So be it). This should be understood as a testimony to His ability to make happen what he predicts (cf. Isa. 65.16). He also calls Himself the "faithful and true witness." The Laodiceans had a reputation for saying and doing whatever was necessary to preserve their own well-being. In contrast, Jesus spoke the truth. The "Beginning (origin) of God's Creation" sets forth His authority to pass judgment. The Laodiceans were creative, but Jesus alone was the Creator (cf. Jn. 1.3; Col. 1.15-16).

The Condemnation/No Commendation (3.15-17): This church receives no commendation from Christ. This makes this letter unique compared to the other six. The self-satisfied and comfortable nature of this church fit in with its city. It was just another one of its many private clubs that characterized the first century social life. They were lackadaisical in their deeds which manifested their heart attitude. They were neither cold or hot in their love for God. Just "lukewarm" (v.15). because of this Jesus tells them "I will spit you out of My mouth" (v.16). Literally, the Lord is saying, "you make me vomit." This does not they will loose their salvation, a teaching Scripture nowhere teaches. This simply indicates His intense disgust with this church. Jesus also doesn't mean that He wished us to be hot or cold, but spiritually refreshing or healthful rather than spiritually bland.

The Exhortation (3.18-19): The Laodiceans enjoyed material prosperity (v.17), this led them to a false sense of security and independence. Jesus advised them to buy from Him "gold refined" so they would become "rich" in Him. To clothes themselves with "white garments" instead of the "black garments" to cover their shame of nakedness and spiritual eye "salve" to anoint their eyes "so that they may see" instead of the health care salve the Laodiceans sell (v.18). Whereas the church at Smyrna was the rich poor church, the church at Laodicea was a poor rich church.

The Promise (3.20-22): The promise Jesus gives to the Christians at Laodiceans is a well known in Scripture. Jesus stands at the door and knocks. He says, "if anyone hears My voice and opens

the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me" (v.20). This promise is for the indifferent Christian. It is for the one who invites Jesus in for intimate fellowship. This verse expresses a truth taught in other places in Scripture, that Jesus Christ desires intimate fellowship with His Elect (cf. Song of Sol. 5.2-6; Mk. 10.45; Lk. 19.10; Jn. 10.10; 1 Tim. 4.10). The second part of this promise is to rule with Christ (v.21). The privilege of reigning with Christ will be the portion of the overcomer (cf. Matt. 19.28; Lk. 22.29-30; 1 Cor. 6.2-3; 2 Tim. 2.12). This promise is the climax of all the promises. We can choose not to live like princes now, because one day, we will live like kings.

LIVE IT:

"He who has an ear..." (vv. 2.7, 11, 17, 29; 3.6, 13, 22). This phrase of exhortation should resonate with every believer. For, the only people on earth who can hear and understand these words are those whose soul has been born from above (Jn. 3.5). This phrase assumes that one who hears will obey.

As a way of applying this lesson to our lives, complete the following statement:

In studying Revelation 2-3...

1. What did you learn about Christ?
2. What did you learn about yourself?
3. What do you need to repent from?
4. What is Christ exhorting you to do?
5. What promises do you have in Christ?
6. Are you an overcomer and if so, how will you demonstrate your obedience to Christ?

REVELATION
Lesson 3: "Things Which Will Take Place: The Throne"
Revelation 4-5

LOOK IT UP:

Read Revelation 4-5 and answer the questions below before reading the lesson.

1. In the beginning of chapter 4, what did John see, who spoke to him, and what was said to John?
2. How did John describe God in verses 2b-3?
3. What was John's description of things around and before the throne? (vv. 5-11)
4. Why was John "weeping" in (5.1-4)?
5. Who is able to open the sealed book and from Whom did He receive it? (5.5-7)
6. What was the reaction of those in heaven? Describes their actions (5.6-14).
7. How do the songs (5.9-14) describe Jesus and His role in Revelation?

INTRODUCTION:

John recorded the rest of this book to reveal those aspects of the future what God wanted his people to know (cf. 1.19). He revealed the events in chapters 4-22 to enable the readers to understand events leading up to Jesus Christ's Second Coming.

There are many proposed interpretations by scholars concerning the events in chapters (4-22), they are:

- *Idealist (allegorical)*: This approach sees these chapters as containing the story of the conflict between God and Satan in the present age, which a symbolic presentation of God's ultimate victory.
- *Preterist*: This approach see these chapters as a picture of conflicts that took place in the early history of the church. Some preterist see these chapters as a symbolic revelation of God's principles of dealing with humankind throughout history.
- *Historical*: This approach interprets these chapters as a history of the church, ranging from Jesus Christ's first advent to his second advent. A major problem with the approaches just named is that their advocates do not agree with one another on the interpretation of individual passages.
- *Futuristic*: This approach has resulted in consistency in the interpretation of the major interpretive problems (D.A. Carson). This approach also has the support of (1.19), which promises a revelation of things yet to come (future).

Thus, the approach that makes most sense (one we will use) is the *futuristic* interpretation. But, as you can see, depending on your view of interpretation, this can have an impact on the meaning and application of the Book of Revelation.

OVERVIEW:

John is called up into heaven before the throne of God, in the Spirit, by Christ (4.1-4). John records the amazing sights and sounds of worship from and before the throne of God (4.5-11). Next, John witnessed as Jesus is the only One Who is worthy to take and break the seal of a book that sits at the right hand of God's throne (5.1-10). The response is exalted worship and praise by the angels and the living creatures who fell down before Him (5.11-14).

John prepares his readers for the outpouring of judgment on the earth that is to come. These chapters present the place from which these judgments originate, and the Person from whom they come. In revealing these judgments (chs. 6-18), and the victory we have in Christ (chs. 19-22), provides hope for those who overcome to the end.

KEY THOUGHT: Jesus is exalted and worship as the worthy Lamb of God who is able to take and break the seals of the book from the throne of God.

LEARN IT: (The Exposition)

I. Things around the throne (4.1-4):

These Things (v.1): This refers to the revelation of the messages to the seven churches (cf. 1.19; 2-3). Now he will see a throne-room in heaven, a new vision by Christ.

New Things (v.1b): In this new vision, John sees an "a door standing open in heaven." The door that John sees opening in heaven is similar to what Ezekiel witnessed in his vision (Ezek. 1.1; Rev. 19.11). Since this book is about the "unveiling" of Christ, Jesus (cf. 1.10) is seen here pulling back the veil of heaven for John to enter the throne room of God to see the things "that must take place."

Heavenly Things (vv.2-4): As John enters into this visionary state, His body remains on earth, but "in the Spirit" he saw God sitting on a throne (cf. Ps. 47.8; Isa. 6.1; Ezek 11.1,5). The word "throne" occurs 45 times in Revelation, but only 15 times in the rest of the New Testament. In other words, John sees God continuously sitting on His throne in all His majesty. The description John gives of God is like "jasper stone and a sardius in appearance" (v.3). These stones were like a diamond (jasper) and the "sardius," a fiery red stone first discovered in Sardis. They symbolize the holiness and purity, and the justice and wrath of God respectively (cf. 1.14; 10.1; Ezek. 1.4,26-28; Dan. 7.9). Circling around the throne, John saw a green (emerald) rainbow and twenty-four elders sitting on thrones clothed in white garments with golden crowns on their heads. Some have seen these as either angels or men. Some believe the elders to be representatives of Israel and the church. The twelve tribes and the twelve apostles. The number twenty-four may also relate to the twenty-four priestly orders in Israel, whose priest worshipped and served the Lord in the Old Testament times (1 Chron. 23.6; 24.7-18). Whoever they are, their

purpose is to serve God by executing His will in the universe. This is witnessed by their "white garment" which is characteristically the dress of angels. The crown refers to a victor's crown (2.10; 3.11), which also could represent their limited authority under God (6.2; 9.7; 12.1; 14.14).

II. Things from the throne (4.5):

Divine Things (v.5): Next, John tells us he saw coming out from the throne "flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder." These images in Scripture often refer to God in the act of judgment (8.5; 11.19; 16.18; Exod. 19.16; Job 37.4; Ps. 77.18; Ezek. 1.13). The "seven lamps" which John tells us are the "seven Spirits of God." These "seven Spirits" are either angels of God who will carry out His judgment or they could refer to the perfect activity of the third Person of the Godhead. Regardless, what comes from the throne of God is the execution of His divine sovereign will to battle against the wickedness during the Tribulation period.

III. Things before the throne (4.6-11)

Holy Things (v.6a): Now before the throne, John sees "something like a sea of glass." He likens it to "crystal." This may symbolize the need for cleansing before approaching God. This is similar to the "laver" (sea) in the Old Testament (cf. 1 Ki. 7.23). This served the need for cleansing in the Israelite tabernacle and temple. It also could refer to the firmament that separates God (His holiness and purity) from all of His sinful creation (cf. Gen. 1.7; Exod. 24.10-11; Ps. 104.3; Ezek. 1.22,26). This nevertheless is a reminder that nothing unholy can approach the throne of God. We must be holy as He is holy (1 Pet. 1.5).

Living Things (vv.6b-11): There are also four "living creatures" who seem to be angelic beings that reflect the attributes of God. These creatures are described as forming a circle that surrounds the throne and God Himself (cf. Ezek. 1.12). In this vision, they appear to be similar to the seraphim which Isaiah saw in his vision of God's throne (Isa. 6.2) and possibly even more like the cherubim that Ezekiel witnessed (Ezek. 1.4-14; 9.3). John describes all four of them as having "full of eyes in front and behind" which would symbolize their penetrating intelligence that makes them immediately aware of whatever is happening. This would give them judicial responsibility (cf. Ezek. 1.18; 10.12).

Created Things (vv.7-8): These same "living creatures" probably represent four classes of created beings: wild beast, domesticated animals, humans beings, and flying creatures. They all picture all of creation glorifying and praising God, or God's sovereign control over all aspects of his creation, or both. They all possess different qualities that are appropriate for their service of God. Lions are strong (cf. Ps. 103.20), Oxen (calves) are worker-servants (cf. Heb. 1.14), men have intelligence (cf. Lk. 15.10) and eagles are swift (cf. Dan. 9.21). The four creatures are similar to the seraphim in that each have six wings and full of eyes which may suggest their alertness and comprehensive knowledge and constant vigilance (cf. Ezek. 10.12). Their action ascribed holiness to God "day and night (v.8). The focus of their worship is on God's holiness, His omnipotence, and His externality (v.8b). This song of holiness to God is the first of 20 hymns sung by various heavenly groups in the Book of Revelation.

Singing Things (vv.9-11): As these "living creatures" give "glory and honor and thanks" to God, the "twenty-four elders" prostrate themselves before the Lord and worship Him (v.9) They give glory and honor to God for His perfections and thanks for His great works. When the elders fall down before God's throne in humble adoration, they remove their crowns and throw them before His feet. This symbolized their willing subjection of their power to His superior authority, unlike Lucifer when he attempted to raise his throne above God's (cf. Isa. 14.11; Ezek. 28). In taking this humble posture before God's throne, the elders begin to sing as the living creatures did. The song of the elders focuses more on the wonders of God's creation as the evidence of His glory and power (v.11). This should be a reminder to all of us that the songs we sing as we gather together should give honor, glory and thanksgiving to God who is perfect in His ways and for the wonders of His creation.

IV. Things between the throne (5.1-10)

Sealed Things (5.1): The next thing John records from his vision concerns the revelation of the sealed scroll and its Recipient. This sealed scroll unveils what must take place before God pours out His judgment on the earth (chs. 6-18). John sees a book in the right hand of God while sitting on his throne (v.1). This "book" (scroll) in God's right hand suggest He is the source and authority of its content. John describes the book as being written on the inside and back. It was also sealed with seven seals.

This rolled document was so full of words that John could see writing on the outside (the back) as well as on the inside of the scroll (cf. Ezek. 2.9-10). This scroll was probably sealed by God with "seven seals." In Roman times, law required that people seal their wills "seven" times because they were very important documents. The perfect number (seven) of seals may also hint at the absolute inviolability of the scroll (Barclay). People in John's day used a seal to keep the contents of a document secret, unchangeable, and free from tampering - until some authoritative person broke the seal revealing its content and message.

In this case John "weeps" because when the call went out proclaiming "who is worthy to open the book," "no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it" (v.3). Then John was told to stop weeping by one of the elders for "behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals" (v.5).

The titles mentioned here by the elder are titles of the divine Messiah who would fulfill the Old Testament promises of salvation and rule (Gen. 49.9; Isa. 11.1,10; Jer. 23.5; Matt. 22.42-43; Rom, 15.12). This is the only place these titles, "Lion of Judah and the Root of David," occur together in the New Testament. As God's ultimate Anointed One, Jesus alone possesses the authority necessary to open the book. He is worthy because He overcame Satan, sin, and death. Only He can implement God's purposes for the future that this scroll reveals.

Powerful Things (vv.6-10): After the elder comforted John concerning this One who is worthy to open the book, from between the throne John sees a "Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven

horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth" (v.6). The "Lamb" here is the symbol of Christ. In His first advent, Jesus came meek and submissive to a sacrificial death as our substitute (Isa. 53.7; Jn. 1.36; 21.15). John now sees the Lamb in the center of all the angelic creatures gathered around the throne, as the central character and most important personages in the entire heavenly scene.

He is "standing" because He is ready to complete His work bearing the marks (wounds) of His death (as if slain). His self-sacrifice led to His supreme power. John witnessed that the Lamb had "seven horns" which represent the fullness of His power. The horn in the Old Testament was a symbol for power or strength and it came to represent kingly authority (Num. 23.22; Deut. 33.17; 2 Sam. 22.3; Ps. 75.4; Dan. 7.20-21). Thus, the Lamb is the all-powerful Warrior and King.

The "seven eyes" are the "seven Spirits of God." The "seven Spirits of God" may be the sevenfold work of the Holy Spirit. That is, they communicate to Christ all that transpires. This makes the Lamb omniscient as well as omnipotent.

Transferable Things (v.7): Jesus, the Lamb came and took the book out of the Father's right hand. A dramatic scene that clearly symbolizes a transfer of authority from the Father to the Son, who in turn would reveal the future and execute judgment (cf. 1.1).

Prayerful Things (v.8-10): When the Father and Son made the transfer of power, this triggered an outpouring of praise and worship for the Lamb. The reason, this signaled that Christ would begin judging. This scene of worship is led by the "four living creatures," "twenty-four elders" who "fell before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayer of the saints." In the Old Testament, the offering of incense was a priestly prerogative (Num. 16.6-7). These elders were functioning in a priestly capacity. The Jews believed that angels carried human prayers to God (cf. 8.3). The "prayers" offered are probably all of those as-yet-unanswered petition that people have prayed, asking God to judge unrighteousness, including "Thy kingdom come, They will be done on earth as it is in heaven (cf. 5.10; 6.10; 8.3-5; Matt. 6.10; Lk. 18.7-8).

In response to this, they sang a new song that celebrated the Lamb's death, His purchasing of people for God by His death from every nation and tribe and tongue and people (v.9; cf. Gen. 12.3; Acts 1.8). The song continues as they praise the Lamb for creating these He redeemed into a "kingdom and priest to our God; they will reign upon the earth" (v.10). Christians will be part of Christ's kingdom when he sets it up on the earth. We will come back with Christ during His millennial reign to serve as priest in it. The final reason for a new song is for allowing the redeemed to "reign" on the earth and thereafter with Christ.

Many believers do are not aware of this place of honor to serve and rule with Christ in the future. So much of what is focused on Heaven is likened to a glorified retirement retreat for eternity. This is not so. Everyone one who is redeemed by Christ will have a priestly and prince role to serve and rule with Christ forever.

V. To Him who sits on the throne (5.11-14)

Many Things (vv.11-14): As this vision in the throne room comes to a close, John witnesses the "myriads of myriads" of voices singing to the Lamb. John doesn't even attempt to count. The numbers of the host of heaven which includes the "living creatures, elders, and angels" are in the "thousands of thousands" (v.11). Their song present seven qualities that intrinsically belong to Christ: "to receive all power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing.

Then as in a antiphonal response, John heard "every created things which is in heaven...under the earth and on the sea" giving praise to God the Father (Him who sits on the throne) and the Son (Lamb of God). These intelligent creatures capable of worship, fully appreciate God and the Lamb - not the stars, planets, and animals.

One day, just as these creatures were praising and blessing the Lord, one day, every creature from the beginning of the earth to the end will bow their knee before Christ Jesus and acknowledge Him as Lord (cf. 5.10; Phil. 2.8-11).

Real things: The vision John received in heaven presents God's dwelling as a real place. John saw God receiving great honor, surrounded by innumerable angelic worshippers. Even though this was a vision, it was a vision of something that truly exist today. One day, we may be able to see both heaven and the individuals said to be there - one day.

LIVE IT:

In studying Revelation 4-5, there are key applications we must keep in mind in regards to God's sovereign purpose and plan for His church, the world and universe.

1. God has every intent to execute His sovereign judgment on this world against Satan and anyone who has rejected Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior.
2. Only that which is holy can come before the presence of God. Our holiness can only be achieve through Christ alone.
3. Only Christ is worthy to complete the task given to Him by the Father to execute judgment because He overcame Satan, sin, and death.
4. Only Christ is worthy of our praise because He is the Lamb of God who was, and is, and is to come. He is both sovereign Lord and sovereign God and shares the Father's place receiving all glory, honor and thanks.
5. All that takes place in heaven's throne room is real. One day we will see God and His Son in all their glory because of Christ righteousness that was imputed on us by His blood. We will see God as He is, completely unveiled in all His glory. What a glorious day that will be!
6. The questions we will continue to ask are these:
 - Are you prepared to die?
 - Do you have peace with God through Christ?
 - Will you go to heaven and why?

REVELATION

Lesson 4: "Things Which Will Take Place: Tribulation, Pt. 1" Revelation 6-11

LOOK IT UP:

Read Revelation 6-11 and answer the questions below before reading the lesson.

1. List and give a brief title to each of the seven seals (Rev. 6-7.17)
2. What is the purpose of these seals?
3. List and give a brief title to each of the seven trumpets (Rev. 8.2-11.19)
4. What is the purpose of these trumpets, including the woes?
5. In Revelation 10.8-11, what is John instructed to do? What do you suppose this represent?
6. Describe the role of the two witnesses and what will become of them (11.1-14).
7. How does the final trumpet and woe encourage you? (Rev. 11.15-19)

INTRODUCTION:

The Tribulation: The powerful message of Revelation is to make all who read it aware of who Christ is, the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, God the Father demonstrated His patience and long suffering to humanity's sin. His message from the prophets, Christ and apostles is that God must judge sin and vindicate His servants.

The execution of God's judgment in the future begins with the seven years of tribulation. The book of Daniel 9 tells us that seven literal years of judgment will take place on earth. Jeremiah calls it the day of Jacob's trouble: "*Alas! For that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob's distress (trouble)...*" (Jer. 30.7). It is a time unlike any in the history of the world.

Jesus describes the Tribulation as the "beginning of birth pains" (Matt. 24.6-8) as false Christ's, wars and rumors of wars, famines, and earthquakes begin to increase like a pregnant woman going into labor. The Apostle Paul also describes this day (period) as "labor pain" no one will escape (1 Thes. 5.3). For those who reject Christ will know God's wrathful judgement and discipline during this time of Tribulation (Rev. 6-19). Yet, the worshipful aspect of Tribulation is for those who have received Christ as Savior. They will praise the Lord for keeping His promise. His promise of eternal life and loving discipline of His nation Israel so that they may return to Him.

The word "Tribulation" comes from the Greek word (thlipsis) which means "affliction" or "distress." It is a seven-year period that involves judgments poured out as Christ opens the seven-

sealed book. These judgments are described as seals, trumpets and bowls of plagues. Each grow in intensity with the last half being far worse than the first. This is called the "Great Tribulation." The source of this tribulation originates from God the Father and is executed by God the Son (Jesus Christ). He is the only One worthy to take the scroll from the Father and open its seals. This is because He is the perfect Lamb of God, slain as the substitutionary sacrifice for our sin.

Here is what the day of Tribulation will be like as noted by J. Hampton Keathley III: (bible.org/ July 4, 2004):

1. It will be a day of unprecedented trouble (Joel 2.2; Zeph. 1.14-18; Matt. 24.21)
2. It will be a day of God's wrath (Zeph. 1.15, 18; Rev. 6.17; 1 Thess. 1.10; Rev. 14.7,10; 19.2)
3. It will be a day of darkness (Joel 2.2; Zeph. 1.15)
4. It will be a day of destruction (Joel 1.15; 2.3; 1 Thess. 5.3; Rev. 6-19)
5. It will be a day of lawlessness and sin (Rev. 9.20-21; 2 Thess. 2.12)
6. It will be a day of great deception and delusion (2 Thess. 2.9-12; Rev. 9.1ff; Dan. 8.24ff.)
7. It will be a day of death (Rev. 6.3-11; 9.15, 18; 11.13)
8. It will be a day of rebellion against God (Rev. 6.14-17; 9.20; 11.10,18)
9. It will be a day of one world order religiously (Rev. 17); politically (Rev. 13.17), economically (Rev. 18), militarily (Joel 3.2,9-14; Rev. 17).
10. It will be a day of extreme anti-semitism (Rev. 12; Matt. 14.9,13)
11. It will be a day of apostasy and blasphemy against God (Rev. 11.1; 2 Thess. 2.3)
12. It will be a day of martyrdom of believers (Rev. 6.9; 7.14)
13. It will be a day of global war (Rev. 6.2-4; 16.14; 19.14; Joel 3.2,9; Rev. 12.7).
14. It will be a day of faithful evangelism (Rev. 7.9; Matt. 24.14).

The Tribulation will occur (according to the traditional premillennial view) sometime after the rapture of the church (1 Thess. 4.13-18; 5.1-9), followed by the millennial reign of Christ (Rev. 20.1-4; Ezek. 20.33-38; Matt. 24-25).

The Purpose of the Tribulation: My purpose in explaining the Tribulation is not to get bogged down in explaining the different views and interpretations. My purpose is to explain as best I can what God plans to do during this period. So, the question may be, what is the purpose of the Tribulation? The purpose of the Tribulation is to discipline the nation of Israel for her stubbornness and rejection of Christ. It is designed to break the yoke of Gentile bondage (Matt. 23.37-39; Ezek. 20.33-38; Zechariah. 12.10; Jer. 30.1-17). It is also to serve as God's divine judgment against anti-Semitic nations and bring Gentiles to faith in Christ (Zech. 1.15-21; Joel 3.2; Jer 30.1-17; Rev. 7.9; 13.10). As much as Revelation unveils who Christ is, the Tribulation reveals Satan's true nature and plan (Matt. 25.41; Rev. 12.7-12; Isa. 14.12-17; Ezek. 28.12-19). Finally, the Tribulation demonstrates as stated earlier, God's holiness, righteousness, and sovereign reign. It also demonstrates God's mercy and patience that He has had on humankind, not willing that any should perish (2 Pet. 3.9).

KEY THOUGHT: Only Jesus, the Lamb of God, slain for our sins is worthy to open the seven seals which brings judgment on His people and Gentiles so that they may repent and believe in Him as Savior and Lord.

LEARN IT: (The Exposition)

I. The Seven Seals Opened (6.1-7.17):

The seven seals, along with the seven trumpets and seven bowls represent God's judgments which increase with intensity as each are successively unleashed on mankind and the earth. This is known as the period of Tribulation (see above for explanation).

The Horsemen (6.1-8): The opening of the first four seals by "the Lamb" (v.1) unleashes four horsemen which are symbolic descriptions of different events which will take place during this time of Tribulation.

- *The first seal/horseman (vv.1-2):* The first horseman is described as riding a white horse with a bow and a crown which was given to him. This rider represents the specter of tyranny and the conquering threat of power. Scholars differ in opinion on the identification of this rider. Some say he portrays Christ, others say the Anti-Christ. The latter identification seems to be the best explanation. Mainly because when Christ comes riding on His white horse, He is symbolized and associated with righteousness and is only armed with His word which is described as a "sharp sword" to strike down the nations who stand against Him (Rev. 19.11-16). This rider is armed with a "bow" which is usually connected with the enemy of God's people (Ezek. 39.3). Also, the Lamb is the One who is opening the seals and would not be one of the riders. Therefore, this is more likely the Anti-Christ who is given the opportunity to rule and conquer during this period of Tribulation.
- *The second seal/horseman (vv. 3-4):* This horseman riding on a red horse is "to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another." With his sword this horseman refers to terrible warfare that will break out in the end times.
- *The third seal/horseman (vv. 5-6):* This rider is on a black horse holding a pair of scales in his hands. The reference to "wheat for a day's wage..." refers to a great famine that will take place, probably because of the wars from the second horseman.
- *The fourth seal/horseman (vv.7-8):* This horseman who is riding on a pale horse is given the name, "Death." He is given the power to kill over a fourth of the earth by sword, famine, plague and wild beasts of the earth. This rider is symbolic of death and devastation.

What is terrifying about these four horsemen is that they are just the precursors of worse judgments to come later in the Tribulation (chs. 8-9, 16).

The Fifth Seal/Martyrs (6.9-11): The next scene takes place in heaven when the "Lamb" breaks the fifth seal. John sees those who were "martyred" for their faithfulness and testimony to God's Word and Christ (v.10). The symbolism of them being located under the "altar" represents the altar of sacrifice as they had offered their lives to the Lord as faithful and living sacrifices. Their cry was when was the Lord going to "avenge" their blood? (cf. Ps. 79.10; 94.3; Hab. 1.2) They are given a white robe which represents their salvation and immortality and are told by God to

rest a little while longer until the number of their brethren who will be killed for their faith has reached its limit.

The Sixth Seal/Terror (6.12-17): When the Lamb broke the sixth seal, this unleashes numerous earthly and celestial calamities. This scene will probably be a literal event in the future, rather than symbolic. John describes for his readers catastrophic events that brings distress on the inhabitants of the earth (kings and great men, every slave and free men alike). Literally, all hell will break loose and there will be no place for anyone to hide, which is what they attempt to do. Except their hiding is not for safety, but for the rocks to fall on them so they may escape the pains and terrors of God's judgment Whom they confess is behind this terror. The destruction unleashed by this seal brings on such terror that they cry out, "Who can stand? (cf. Joel 2.11; Na. 1.6; Mail. 3.2). This is a reminder that God's judgment will fall on all who refuse to repent and follow Christ. This is only a foretaste of terrors to come on earth, later in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 20.15).

The First Interlude (7.1-17): God shows John in between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, how merciful He would be during this period of judgment. As we have witnessed God's retribution and man's response from the opening of the first six seals, John will record God's mercy to redeem as He will seal and deliver two groups of people during the first half of the Tribulation (cf. Matt. 24.14). He will preserve 144,000 Israelites alive on the earth (7.1-8) and He will take to heaven a multitude of people from all nations who will die during that time (7.9-17).

John reveals for us the stark contrast of the unbelievers who were panicking (6.12-17) verses the security of those in Christ.

- *The 144,000:* Some interpreters view these symbolically representing the total number of the church during this time. This can not be, because the number is representative of those who are from "every tribe of the sons of Israel" (v.4) as 12k are taken from every tribe of the sons of Israel (vv. 5-8).
- *"who were sealed":* This means they were divinely protected by God from all of the judgments and the Anti-Christ so they may perform their mission of evangelism during the Tribulation period. These will be the ones who can stand during this time (cf. 6.17). They received a "seal" which was placed on their foreheads by an angel identifying them as God's bondservants. The background of this seal goes back to Ezekiel 9.4-7. From this passage a divine messenger with stylus in hand was to go through the apostate Jerusalem during Ezekiel's day and put a mark on the foreheads of those who deplored faithless idolatry of their fellow Israelites. By being marked as true servants of God, they would be spared the divine slaughtering of the rebellious inhabitants in the city (Expositor Bible Commentary). Thus, this mark showed divine ownership, the presence of the Holy Spirit, marking them as Christians, not unconverted Jews or Gentiles (cf. 2 Cor. 1.22; Eph. 1.13; 4.30).
- *The Redemption of a great multitude(vv.9-17):* These are the Tribulation saints who are seen here worshipping and serving God in heaven (white robes) before the Millennium. They are

praising God for their salvation and deliverance from the Great Tribulation along with all the host of heaven (vv.9-12).

- *The Great Commission Continues:* Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every one (Mk. 16.15; Matt. 28.19). This mandate is not only for this present age, but the one to come, until Christ brings an end to all things on heaven and earth. These Tribulation saints heard, received, testified, and died for Christ and His Word. John sees them serving the Lord before His throne. No longer suffering for the cause of Christ, but forever shepherded by the Lamb who will guide them to springs of the water of life where God will wipe every tear from their eyes (vv. 13-17).

As stated earlier, this is in stark contrast to those in chapter 6 who wanted to hide from God's judgment rather than receive Him as Lord. Both (the believer and unbeliever) will die during the Tribulation. Unbelievers to greater terror of hell, while believers to the peacefulness before God's throne in heaven.

II. The Seven Trumpets Sounded (8.2-11.19)

The Seventh Seal (8.1-6): Verses 1 through 6 introduces the seven trumpets, just as 4.1-5.14 introduced the seven seals, and 15.1-8 will introduce the seven bowls. The opening of the seventh seal results in the silence in heaven, which John says was “for about half an hour” (v.1). This tells us that John is experiencing something more than a vision, but an event that is happening in real time for him. The seven trumpets given to seven angels who were standing before the heavenly throne are the “contents” of the seventh seal.

The Trumpets of Destruction (8.7-12): The first trumpet causes hail and fire that destroys much of the plant life in the world (v.7). The second trumpet brings about what seems to be a meteor hitting the oceans and causing the death of much of the world’s sea life (vv.8-9). The third trumpet is similar to the second, except it affects the world’s lakes and rivers instead of the oceans (vv. 10-11). The fourth trumpet causes the sun and moon to be darkened (v.12).

The Trumpets of Woes (8.13-9.21): The word “woe” means “grief or affliction.” The three woes revealed after the fifth trumpet are the final judgment God pronounces on the evil inhabitants of the earth in order to spur them to repentance. It is also for those who have pledged their allegiance to the Antichrist during the Tribulation. These woes come toward the end of the seven-year tribulation period, right before the second coming of Christ. The fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpets are called the three woes (8.13).

- *The Fifth Trumpet/First Woe (9.1-12):* It involves something like locusts that can sting like scorpions (9.3). Unlike the first four trumpets whose objects seem more literal, these locusts are not accepted as literal because of their demonic description and origin from the Abyss. They are only allowed to harm those who do not have God’s seal on their foreheads (7.3-4) These being the 144k or possibly believers living during this time. These locusts torment unbelievers for five months (9.5) with painful stings. The victims long for death, but they will not be granted that release (9.6).

- *The Sixth Trumpet/Second Woe (9.13-21)*: This woe begins when a voice commands, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates” (9.14). The four angels are demons who were cast from heaven with Satan. They had been kept by God for this occasion (9.15). These angels and their armies, numbering two hundred million, are released to kill a third of mankind (9.15-16).

The Second Interlude (10.1-11.14): This interlude, in similar way which stood between the sixth and seventh sealed judgements, this interlude is placed between the sixth and seventh trumpets and sets the stage for that final trumpet.

This interlude encourages and reminds God’s people in the midst of the terror of divine judgment, that He is sovereign over all the events. It is during this interlude that God comforts His people with the knowledge that He has not forgotten them and that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ” (11.15). In other words, this final stage of judgment will be the end, and righteousness will be restored to the earth during Christ’s millennial reign (Rev. 19.11-16).

- *The Angel (10.1-7)*: Some say the “strong angel” is Christ. Some say Gabriel or Michael. But, it might be the same “strong angel” who proclaimed “who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?” (5.2). Apparently this angel has some divine authority. Perhaps it is one the seven angels who stand before God (8.2) and were given trumpets. But all this is simply guessing, nevertheless this angel reflected the appearance of the radiant glory and majesty of Christ (v.2). His role is to proclaim there will be no more delay in the revealing of the mystery of God (v.7). In his hand was a small book which was open (v.2), he is to give it to John as instructed by the voice John heard (v.8).
- *The small book (10.8-11)*: We are not told what the contents of this book was, but we are told that John is to take, eat and digest the book, which will cause his stomach to become bitter, but will be sweet as honey (v.9). What does this mean, John is to digest and declare God’s Word. This is similar to the other two times in scripture where a person is told to eat a book (cf. Jer. 15.13-17; Ezek. 2.8-10). Why? Because eating is a universal idiom for receiving knowledge. John is challenged to know and understand God’s prophetic Word and proclaim it to all people, nations, and tongues (v.11).
- *The Two Witnesses (11.1-14)*: The two witnesses are two preachers who will proclaim Gods message of judgment during the final stages of the Tribulation. There is much speculation as to who these witnesses are. Some say Moses and Elijah because of their witness to truth and miracles. They will preach so that the Jewish remnant can believe and enjoy God’s protection. The number of two is significant, in that the Bible requires the testimony of two people to confirm a fact or verify truth (Deut. 17.6; 19.15; Matt. 18.16; 2 Cor. 13.1; 1 Tim. 5.19; Heb. 10.28). Their responsibility is to prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, which is the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, when the Antichrist’s forces oppress the city of

Jerusalem (v.2). If they are threatened, fire will flow out of their mouths and devour their enemy (v.5). They are given certain powers to stop the rain and turning water into blood and strike the earth with plagues, reminiscent of Elijah and Moses (v.6). They will be killed by a beast from the abyss and rise again from death three and a half days later and ascend into heaven (vv.7-12). After their ascension a great earthquake in Jerusalem will kill seven thousand people as the rest are terrified and give glory to God in heaven (v.13).

The Seventh Trumpet/ Third Woe (11.15-19): This final trumpet and woe parallels the trumpet that sounds in Joel 2. It signals the unveiling of God’s plan for the entire world. This woe marks the finishing of God’s judgment on sin and its content will carry us through the 19th chapter of Revelation, when Christ’s Kingdom is established on the earth. Imbedded in this final woe are the seven “bowls” of God’s wrath which are described in Revelation 16.1-21. These are a series of judgments of great horror the citizens of earth have ever seen, even now. Jesus states that if those days had not been cut short, no one would survive (Matt. 24.22). This will introduce the “Great Tribulation” which will come upon the earth for the final three and a half years.

LIVE IT:

I had stated in the introduction that the powerful message of Revelation is to make all who read it aware of who Christ is, the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. This would be my desire for you. Reading and studying these chapters takes commitment, endurance, and patience. Yet, by doing so, we are aware of the blessing that whoever reads, hears, and obey this message will be blessed (1.3). Here are some ways you are blessed by reading and studying these chapters:

1. You have been given a glimpse into the future what will take place.
2. This vision is to prepare you to receive Christ as the only Lord and Savior of your life.
3. By receiving Christ, you will overcome any persecution or Tribulation that comes your way whether you survive or are martyred. For in Christ He will keep you safe regardless, for you will see and be with God, worshipping before His throne, exalting Him with praise.
4. You are witnessing the sovereign hand of God before it happens.
5. You can take courage because in the end, Christ is the victor and Satan is defeated.

These are some of the things I’ve listed, what is your list. How have you been blessed thus far in reading and studying this book, especially this lesson?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I pray you will continue to endure to the end in this study. Don’t give up. Persevere for great is your reward and blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord and only Savior. Amen.

REVELATION
Lesson 5: "Things Which Will Take Place: Tribulation, Pt. 2"
Revelation 12-18

LOOK IT UP:

Read Revelation 12-18 and answer the questions below before reading the lesson.

1. What is Satan's primary objective in chapter 12?
2. Who are the Beasts in chapter 13 and what is their objective?
3. How many angels are found in chapter 14? What do they announce?
4. Briefly describe the seven bowls in chapter 16.
5. What is the destiny of Babylon in chapter 17 and what is the reaction of the kings of earth in 18.9-20?
6. Why is Babylon destroyed? (18.21-24)

INTRODUCTION:

The Anti-God Forces: This section of Revelation introduces three principle players in the drama of the remaining three and half years of the Tribulation. These players are Satan the dragon, the false Christ, and the false prophet. These are in a sense an evil trinity who are anti-God and oppose the Lord's will and people.

The Great Tribulation: The great tribulation is a time set in the future by God to complete His discipline of Israel (Dan. 9.24) and judge unbelieving and godless people of the earth (Rev. 6-18). The total length of the Tribulation period is seven years as one would understand the seventy weeks of Daniel (Dan. 9.24-27). The Great Tribulation is the second half or the last three and a half years of the Tribulation period. The unique feature during this period as God's wrath intensifies is the unveiling of the Beast or Antichrist.

The term "Great Tribulation" was used by Christ Himself in Matthew 24.21 when He stated: *"For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall."* Here in this passage Jesus describes the Antichrist and His own Second Coming (Matthew 24.21-30).

The Great Tribulation also has much to do with the abomination of desolation. This describes the act of the Antichrist (Dan. 9.26-27; Matt. 24.15). The Antichrist will make a peace covenant with the world for seven years. He will also allow the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem to allow Israelites to make sacrifices and offerings to God. Halfway through the seven-year period (in the middle of the week) - the Antichrist will break the covenant he made, stopping all sacrifices and

offerings at the temple and demanding all to worship him (Rev. 13.1-10) and will be in power for 42 months (which is three and a half years).

Babylon: Defining what Babylon is in Revelation 17-18 is difficult says John Walvoord because most expositors have not agreed as to the details of their interpretations. He suggest that in dealing with Babylon, it would be helpful to consider it as a religious system in chapter 17 and as a political system in chapter 18. Some see these two systems located in Rome where the religious system is entrenched with the political realm. Still others see Babylon as a rebuilt city because this city and name personifies the whole system religiously, politically, and commercially (J. Hampton Keathley III).

The Wrath to Come: The wrath to come during The Great Tribulation is obviously much greater and more intense than those during the first half of the Tribulation (Seals and Trumpets). The bowls or vials described in Revelation 16 are called forth by the seventh trumpet and will bring on all sorts of plagues, death, pain, darkness, and every kind of catastrophic event on the earth, including the war of wars, the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16.12-14). It then concludes with a devastating earthquake followed by giant hailstones (Rev. 16.15-21).

KEY THOUGHT: The anti-God forces and their activity have no power over God's strategic judgment in the history to come.

LEARN IT: (The Exposition)

I. The Great Tribulation: Satan and His Agents (Rev. 12-13):

The Lord now gives John knowledge of the forces and persons behind the climax of anti-God hostility so he and his readers could understand the bowl judgments which the seventh trumpet announces.

Satan's Himself: (12.1-6): The first anti-God person introduced is Satan himself. Satan is introduced as the "Red Dragon" (v.3). This term "Dragon" (Gr. drakon) occurs 12 times in the New Testament, and only in the Book of Revelation and in every occurrence it refers to Satan. Why a "dragon?" A dragon symbolizes a powerful aggressive, deadly foe. His "red" color suggest bloodshed. His "seven heads" and "ten horns" probably represent seven nations and ten rulers (17.12). Ten kings will rule at first under his authority, but when the Antichrist rises to preeminence among them, he will subdue three of them, leaving only seven (Dan. 7.7-8, 20, 24; Rev. 13.1). The seven royal crowns or "diadems" picture the political authority of these seven rulers during the Great Tribulation. Satan also has authority over a specific number of angels (third of the stars of heaven) whom he led in a rebellion against God (cf. vv. 8-9; 9.1; Dan. 8.10; Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2.4). His sole purpose was to prevent the "birth" of the Messiah, Jesus Christ (cf. v. 5; Ex. 1.15-22; 1 Sam. 18.10-11; Matt. 2.13,16). Since Satan could not destroy Jesus Christ (Israel's son who was to rule all the nations, v.5) he turned his attention to Israel (the mother). John sees Israel fleeing into the wilderness where they are protected and nourished by God and His angels (v.6).

Satan's Removal from Heaven (12.7-12): Up to this time, Satan still had access to God and heaven (Job 1.6-12). It is at this time that Satan and his angels "waged war" against "Michael" the archangel (Jude 9) and his angelic army. Satan and his forces were not strong enough and were forever banned from heaven and will no longer be able to accuse believer's before God (v. 8). This is followed by a voice of praise to God because the accuser has been "thrown down"(vv. 9-12).

Satan's Vengeance on Israel (12.13-17): Because of this defeat, Satan then turns his attention on taking vengeance on "the woman/Israel" (12.1-2; 13) since he can no longer defeat Christ or harm the church anymore. Here we see the Israelites fleeing "into the wilderness" and are protected by God (vv.13-16). Enraged still, Satan moves on to "make war with the rest of her children" (v.17). These, some believe are messianic believers (Christians who are Jews) because they keep God's commandments and believe in the testimony of Jesus, signifying their Jewish heritage and faith in Christ.

Satan's Agents in The Great Tribulation (13.1-18): John also receives information about Satan's agents. The Antichrist and the false prophet. Through these Satan attempts to pursue his goals during the Tribulation. The term "beast" refers to two related entities in Revelation. Sometimes it refers to the end-times' empire or the man who is the political leader and head of the beastly empire. John and Daniel's vision of the beast are similar in many ways (Dan. 7.7-8, 19-27).

- *The Beast from the sea (13.1-10):* This first beast comes from the sea and receives power from Satan, the dragon. It is believed that this beast is the Antichrist who will "oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God" (2 Thess. 2.4). He is also called "the man of lawlessness" and "the man doomed to destruction" (2 Thess. 2.3). In Daniel, the Antichrist is the "little horn" that rises from the head of the terrifying beast (Dan. 7.8).

This beast (the Antichrist) will make war and overcome the saints and will rule over all the earth that is given to him. Those whose names are not written in the book of life will bow down and worship him (vv. 7-10). John also notes that this beast (the Antichrist) looks like it had been fatally wounded by a sword, but was healed (v.4). The key phrase is "as if it had been slain (or slaughtered to death). There is no explanation by John in regards to this wound, but he does mention it three times (Rev. 13.3, 12,14).

- *The Beast from the earth (Rev. 13.11-18):* The "beast" that comes from the earth is called the "false prophet" (Rev. 16.13; 19.20). This false prophet comes as a wolf in sheep's clothing (Matt. 7.15) but his association and identity becomes clear. He will dazzle people with signs and speech as he "deceives those who dwell on the earth" (v.14). He makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast (vv. 12-16). Just as Christians are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Christ, this beast, the false prophet gives to all who worship the first beast (the Antichrist) to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead in order to buy or sell. This mark is said to be either the name of the beast or the number of his name (the mystical 666). A number that no one has ever

unravel its mystery. If anything, the number six represents man since he was created on the sixth day. It is also a number that is short of seven, the number of perfection and fullness.

-The satanic trinity: Weirsbe states the dragon or Satan is the counterfeit Father ("I will be like the Most High"), "the beast" is the counterfeit Christ, and the false prophet is the counterfeit Holy Spirit. This is the satanic trinity.

II. The Great Tribulation: Christ and His Saints (Rev. 14-15)

Prelude to God's Final Judgments (14.1-20): Chapter 14 contains several incidents which John saw in heaven and on earth, that began and continue in 12.1. He saw some things in heaven, but most took place on the earth. The things he saw in heaven only provide the background for what he saw on the earth. From the revelation of the defeat of evil forces (ch. 13) John turned to the triumph of the forces of good (ch.14).

- The Lamb and the 144K Triumph (14.1-5): In this scene, John sees a time in the future at the end of the Great Tribulation when Jesus Christ will return to the earth. His Second Coming does not take place here, chronologically, but in 19.11-21. Here he sees the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with 144,000 saints who have the Father's name written on their forehead and did not receive the mark or name of the beast. They worship and praise loudly with all the hosts of heaven. These have kept themselves morally pure, followed Christ, spoke the truth and were blameless.

- The angelic announcements (14.6-13): John sees another vision of angels making three announcements and a voice which gave the fourth. The first angel flying in mid heaven commands all who dwell on the earth to "fear God" and to "give glory" to Him. He speaks with urgency because the "hour of His judgment has come" (v.7). The second angel proclaimed the fall of Babylon (v.8). Then the third angel warns those who worshipped the beast of their judgement (cf. 13.11-17). These will be drink God's wrath mixed in His full strength in His anger. They will be eternally tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb and His holy angels represented by endless trail of smoke which represents the constant reminder of the permanent misery of the beast-worshippers. This is a warning for all: It is better to experience the beast' punishment for not worshipping him rather than God's eternal torment and wrath. Finally, John hears a fourth voice. Some believe this voice to be "the Lamb" who blesses the tribulation saints who may rest from their labors because of their deeds to overcome the beast and their faithfulness to Him (the Lamb).

- The Reaping of God's Harvest (14.14-20): This is the final scene that furnishes the background information before the revelation of the seven bowl judgements. The scene John sees here is mainly taking place on earth. Here, John sees Christ sitting on a white cloud with a sharp sickle in His hand. An angel who also has a sharp sickle comes out and announces that the hour to judge those living on the earth had arrived. While the first three announced judgment was coming, this fourth angel conveys the command to execute it. He is followed by another who is also ready to execute judgement with a sickle in his hand. The sharp sickle in the hand of Christ and

the angel represent the work of judgment. The sickle is sharp so that the reaper can do his work swiftly and completely.

The sixth angel to come forward addresses the fifth angel to take his sickle as one would gather grapes and put them through the wine press. This seems to indicate the severe judgment on unbelievers that is to take place at the end of the Great Tribulation (19.15,17-21). The gruesome severity of the judgement is indicated by the amount of bloodshed that comes up to the horses bridle (4 1/2 feet deep) and spreads out in a distance of two hundred miles (v.20). This judgement will take place over most of Palestine. Some indicate this is in reference to the battle of Armageddon which will take place in the "Valley of Jezreel" in northern Israel (19.17-19; Isa. 63.1-6). The blood will evidently drain out of the Jezreel Valley for a distance of 200 miles, flowing eastward down into the Jordan Valley all the way to the Dead Sea. Depending on ones interpretive view (literal or symbolic), either way, this battle pictures terrible judgment to come on those who do not believe.

Preparing for the Bowl Judgments (15.1-8): The scene in this chapter depicts the praise of God for His judgment and the preparation of the final plagues of God's wrath which will bring a conclusion to the Great Tribulation which began in 14.1. The praise of God is by the Tribulation martyrs who had been victorious over the beast and his image. To God they sing the song of Moses (vv. 2-4). The final part of this chapter, John describes the angels preparing for God's final judgment. The seven bowls or vials (vv. 5-8). The clothing worn by the seven angels (clothed in linen, clean and bright) represent holiness and righteousness (cf. 19.8, 14). The "golden sashes" identify them as on a punitive mission (cf. 1.18). All this to say, their clothing reveals their purpose, which is to purify the earth.

III. The Great Tribulation: The Seven Bowls (Rev. 16)

The seven bowls/vials actually begin with the blow of the seventh trumpet or the third woe (11.15-19). Chapters 12-15 were supplemental chapters to prepare the believers and unbelievers for the final act of God's judgment. They also reveal the victory of the Lamb of God over Satan and his forces of evil to come. These last seven judgments cause the further hardening of the hearts of men, just as the plagues of Egypt had on Pharaoh. These plagues will show the total rebellion and independence of man to his Creator. These judgments will result in anger and blasphemy from the heart and mouths of men. These plagues will crush man's rebellion and remove the rebellious from the earth. The completion of this will be accomplished by the return of Christ with His armies (Ezek. 20.38; Joel 3.2-17; Matt, 13.40-43; Rev. 19.11-21).

The First Bowl/Sores (v.2): This bowl causes suffering for the idolatrous followers of the world system. The sores inflicted on them are ulcer-like sores. They are like the boils inflicted on the Egyptians in Exodus 9.9-11.

The Second Bowl/Bloody Seas (v.3): God punishes the world system economically. By plaguing the seas with blood, every sea creature will die. Some limit this to the Mediterranean Sea,

however, these are global judgments. This will wreck fishing and ocean navigation, transportation and shipping.

The Third Bowl/Bloody Springs (vv.4-7): Just as the oceans, God causes all rivers to turn into blood. This is done because the unbelieving poured out the blood of the saints and prophets, now God has given them blood to drink (vv.5-6). This is followed by praise of the tribulation saints whose deaths are being avenged by God by His judgements (v.7).

The Fourth Bowl/Fire (vv. 8-9): God causes the sun's heat to intensify, causing it to scorch men with fire. The climate will change, perhaps by destroying the ozone layer which allows the sun's solar radiation to scorch not only the earth but the flesh of man.

The Fifth Bowl/Darkness (vv. 10-11): God punishes the unbelieving by causing great darkness to envelope the earth and intensifying the sores from the first bowl.

The Sixth Bowl/Invasion (vv. 12-16): God gathers ungodly forces in order to punish them decisively. The sixth bowl causes the Euphrates River to dry up which allows the armies of the Antichrist gather together to wage the battle of Armageddon.

The Seventh Bowl/Earthquake & Hail (vv. 17-21): Finally, the seventh bowl results in a devastating earthquake followed by giant hailstones. The earthquake is unprecedented in history and causes widespread destruction, the cities and mountains fall. So great is the earthquake that none of the mountains can be found (v.20). The word "great" is "megas" in the Greek. Following the earthquake is the great plague of hail that John describes as being "extremely severe" (v.21).

IV. The Great Tribulation: The Doom of Babylon (Rev. 17-18)

The focus and attention of these two chapters deal with the destruction of Babylon with Christ as the Victor. Babylon is described best by John as a great prostitute who had influenced many kings and their cities along the seas and rivers. Just as Israel had committed spiritual adultery in the past against the Lord, so too all the peoples of the world influenced by Satan. To this, John is told that this harlot, the beast she rode, and all who followed her will meet their doom (vv.1-13).

Babylon's Doom (17.1-18): Before she meets her doom, she will yet once again attempt to wage war against the Lamb, yet He will overcome her and her forces (v.14). It is impossible to hypothesize what and where the "Great City" is. John's vision unveils that the real trans-historical system of satanic evil that has influenced all cities and kings will fall because of the Lamb of God (vv. 14-18).

Babylon's Fall (18.1-24): The fall of Babylon is announced by four other angels. These announcements warn of the pending judgment to come and plea for those who live in the harlot's cities to repent before the plagues of God's wrath come upon them. The first angel announces that Babylon the Great has fallen. This announcement is primarily for emphasis as it was mentioned before (vv.1-3). A second angel makes an appeal to believers to separate themselves

from godless and materialistic system of Babylon so that they will no longer participate in her sins and not receive her plagues (vv. 4-8).

When the kings of the earth who belong outside the ten nation confederation (17.12-16) hear this announcement, they lament because the one world religious and commercial system they invested in is now gone and lost (vv.9-10), as will the merchants and mariners of the earth (vv. 11-19). Babylon will be like a "great millstone" thrown into the sea which will not be heard from or ever found again because of her deception and bloodshed of the saints (vv.20-24).

LIVE IT:

How then should we live in regards to God's unveiling and imminent judgment on the earth.

1. The world system cannot escape the remembrance of God's law. God's actions in history with Babylon type systems teaches us that judgment must come. God does not ignore nor forget sin. He permits the build up of sin, but eventually judgment must come. Just like the first Babel conspiracy which attempted to place itself over God, the last Babylon conspiracy will fall and believers must flee from her influence by remaining faithful and true to Christ and glorify Him.
2. There is also God's law of retribution. Because the sin of Babylon was so enormous and God's holiness is so great, the retribution of God was greatly magnified. The thing judged in these chapters is the worldly and ungodly system. What is still to come for unbelievers is the final judgment before the great white throne in Revelation 20, where unbelievers will be resurrected, judged, and then cast into everlasting torment in the lake of fire.
3. Finally, any person great or small who glorifies themselves to the degree that they set themselves above God, rebels against Him. To this, God will retaliate against those who set themselves up over Him in holy and righteous indignation to dethrone them.

Therefore:

- Riches of life can never provide life eternal or abundant life.
- Riches can be destroyed in a twinkling of an eye.
- Life is precious and can be snatch from us in a moment. There will either be eternal separation as unbelievers, or loss of rewards as believers.
- Appeal to God through His only Son, Jesus Christ for eternal life through faith in Him alone.

REVELATION
Lesson 6: "Things Which Will Take Place:
The Second Coming of Christ"
Revelation 19-20

LOOK IT UP:

Read Revelation 19-20 and answer the questions below before reading the lesson.

1. How many "Hallelujah's" are listed in 19.1-6? What were they praising God for?
2. Describe Christ as He comes to earth again? (19.11-16)
3. What will Christ accomplish when He comes?
4. What becomes of the beast and the false prophet? (19.20-21)
5. What becomes of Satan? (20.1-10)
6. What becomes of the unbelievers? (20.11-15)
7. How does this study prepare you to be ready for death and Christ's Second Coming?

INTRODUCTION: The Bible tells us *"the heavens are telling of the glory of God"* (Ps. 19.1a). The heavens and all creation, including angels are doing the very thing that all the redeemed on earth, now and in the future ought to be doing, giving glorious praise to God for His work of salvation. Throughout the rest of this book we witness how the Lord not only desires but deserves to be worshipped for these things belong to Him: salvation, glory, and power.

KEY THOUGHT: The Second Coming of Christ is His vindication as He comes to judge, reign, and finally restore eternal paradise for His own.

LEARN IT: (The Exposition)

II. The Return of Christ to Earth (Rev. 19):

Resounding praise for what God has done (vv.1-6): The four "Hallelujah" songs look back to the judgment of Babylon. This is expressed by John's words, *"After these things I heard..."* (v.1; 16.17-18.24). The enthusiastic rejoicing in Heaven contrast that of the silence of the fall of Babylon on earth. "Hallelujah" means "Praise the Lord." Its only four occurrences in the New Testament are located here in verses 1,3,4, and 6. It occurs frequently in the Psalms and usually has some connection with the punishment of the ungodly, as it does here (cf. 104.35). God is worthy of praise because He possesses all "salvation" (cf. 7.10; 12.10), "glory" (cf. 15.8), and "power" (cf. 4.11; 7.12; 12.10; 1 Chron. 29.11). John Piper in his book "Let the Nations Be Glad" states that "missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate." Thus, "the salvation of God should awaken the gratitude

of man. The glory of God should awaken the reverence of man. The power of God is always exercised in the love of God, and should, therefore, awaken the trust of man. Gratitude, reverence, trust, - these are the constituent elements of real praise" (Barclay).

- *The first "Hallelujah"* praises God for judging the harlot (v.2). The essence of the harlot's guilt lies in her "corrupting the earth with her [immoralities]" ("immorality" cf. 14.8; 17.2; 18.3). By destroying Babylon, God will "avenge the blood" of believers who died as a result of its influences (cf. 18.24; Deut. 32.42-43; 2 Kings 9.7).

- *The second "Hallelujah"* praises God for judging Babylon for good and for all time - so that its influences will never rise again (v.3). Sodom, Gomorrah and Edom were previews of this judgment (cf. Gen. 19.28; Isa. 34.10). The "smoke" represents the effects of the fire that will destroy Babylon (cf. 17.16; 18.8,9,18). It will stop rising when the fire dies out, the destruction will be permanent. Meaning, that the punishment of God's enemies will be everlasting.

- *The third "Hallelujah"* by the "twenty-four elders" and the "four living creatures" echo the same sentiments. The "Amen" voices the elders' and creatures' approval of the two previous expressions of praise.

- *The final and fourth "Hallelujah"* follows the call of praise in verse 5. It included all of God's servants in heaven for the fact that He now reigns over all as they look forward to Jesus Christ's return to earth and the beginning of His eternal reign. From this praise, John heard a "voice" that sounded like multitudes ("a great multitude") of people, the roar of a huge waterfall ("many waters"), and loud "peals of thunder" announcing the Messiah's arrival to reign (cf. Ezek. 1.24; 43.2; Dan. 10.6).

Rejoicing for what God is about to do (vv. 7-10): The praise that has begun continues with an exhortation to "rejoice and be glad and give glory to Him" (v.7). God deserves praise because He has prepared the bride for the Lamb. The "bride of the Lamb" is the church (cf. v.9; 3.20; 21.2, 9; 22.17; John 3.29; 2 Cor. 11.2; Eph. 5.25-32). The bride (church) is the Lamb's newly married wife, having been joined to Him in heaven immediately after the Rapture (1 Thess. 4.13-18; 1 Cor. 15.51-53). The Rapture is when resurrected believers and living believers will all receive "glorified bodies" sometime before Jesus' millennial reign. It may happen before, during, or after the Tribulation.

Why is this the wedding of the Lamb? For one, Jesus, the Lamb, often referred to Himself as a bridegroom (cf. Matt. 9.15; 22.2-14; 25.1-13; Mk 2.19-20; Lk. 5.34-35; 14.15-24; Jn. 3.29). The marriage of the Lamb to the church (the bride) is very similar to the wedding practice in the Near East. It stressed the intimate relationship that will exist between God and His people in the earthly messianic kingdom. There were three main events involved in a marriage:

- First, the parents chose a bride for the groom (the church is called by the Holy Spirit from out of the world to be Christ's bride through regeneration.

- Second, when the time for the marriage had come (the ceremony), the groom would leave his home with his friends, go to the home of the bride, and escort her from her home to his. The bride did not know when this would occur, just as Christians do not know when Christ comes to take His bride from the earth to be with Him in heaven at the Rapture for their wedding (Jn. 14.1-2).

- Finally, the groom provides a feast for his bride and his friends at his home that lasts several days. This feast will probably occur at the beginning or just before the Millennium. The first stage is taking place now. This passage is speaking of the second stage that is to come. The most important point of the wedding of the Lamb is for the preparation of the bride for the wedding feast. This is why it is important for every person who is being called by the Lord into a saving relationship with Christ alone to heed, obey and follow this call.

- If you have never trusted in Christ Jesus alone for salvation do this today first acknowledging to God that you are a sinner and repent from your sin (Rom. 3.23; 6.23). Second, confess and believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead three days later (Rom. 5.8; 10.9-10). Finally, call on Him alone to save you and as Scriptures says, "anyone who calls on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved" (Rom. 10.13).

Now, there is much debate about the guest who are invited to the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (v.9). Is this a second group invited to the supper or are the "guests" and the "bride" one in the same. Some seem to interpret this verse as two. There is reason to believe that they are both one in the same as indicated by the word "invited" (v.9). The word "invited (kaleo)" is the same as in Rev. 17.14 (the "called ones). The bride (church) is viewed here not only as the one that is about to wed the Lamb (vv. 7-8), but also as individual guest at the marriage banquet because they have been "called/invited" by the Lamb to a communion relationship with God (v. 9).

Return of Christ (vv. 11-19): We now come to a climatic event that heaven and earth have been looking forward to. This event is essential to New Testament theology. In His cross and resurrection, Christ won a great victory over the powers of evil. By His Second Coming, Christ will execute that victory by His authority. This event includes Christ' return, Satan's capture, Satan's binding, the Millennium, Satan's final end, the last judgment, and the new heavens and earth, including the New Jerusalem. John records these events as taking place in chronological sequence.

Here Christ comes out from heaven riding a white horse. Unlike the white horse from the first seal (6.2), we are given an identification of who this rider is. He is called "faithful and true" (v. 11). This contrast the Antichrist who was unfaithful because he broke his covenant with Israel. Christ will fulfill His covenant with Israel. He is seen in having "eyes" that appear like "a flame of fire" (v. 12). This suggest as before in (1.14; 2.18) His piercing and all-knowing judgment of sin, that take everything into account. He also is wearing "many diadems" which are "many crowns" symbolizing His right to rule the world as King of kings. Written on Him, John tells us He has a name known only to Christ. Meaning, this specific name might become known when Christ returns. There is blood on His robe (v.13) which symbolizes the blood of His enemies.

This is because John sees Christ here not as Redeemer, but as Warrior and Judge. John also identifies Christ with the name as being "the Word of God." The logos who is the Word who was with God, and who was God" (Jn. 1.1). This designation emphasizes the authoritative declaration that will result in the destruction of God's enemies as described as a sharp sword which comes from His mouth (v.15). It will be with the power of His Word which He will strike down His enemies simply with His "word." With a word He spoke all things into creation. With a word He raised Lazarus from the grave. With a word the Roman and Temple guards fell to their feet. With a word He calmed the sea and with His word He will defeat His enemies. Those riding with Jesus also on white horse and dressed in fine white linen seem to be the Lamb's bride (v.8). They have no swords or spears. They will take no part in the action. They wear no armor because in being immortal they are immune to injury. They are simply noncombatant supporters of the Messiah as He wages the war single-handily.

John also shows Jesus ruling over those as He strikes them down with a "rod of iron" (v.15b). This indicates the inflexible righteousness of Christ. So much righteousness is being flexed into gross perversion today against God and His Word. When Christ comes, there will be zero tolerance of evil and sin. Anyone who comes against Him will be struck down by the sharp doubled edge of His of Word. The Word of truth and righteousness. This destruction, John describes as grapes that are trampled and crushed in a wine press. Since the fall of man in the garden the building up of sin in history reaches its peak in this last generation and like grapes ripe for harvest receive its retribution as Christ "treads" on them with the "fierce wrath of God, the Almighty" (v.15c).

The third name John mentions is located on His robe and thigh. It is "King of kings and Lord of lords" (v.16). The thigh was the typical location of the warrior's sword and the symbolic place under which the hand was placed to swear to promise to judge (Gen. 24.2). Again, John stresses that Christ' title gives Him total and ultimate rule over all kings. What a contrast with Jesus' first coming: as a baby, in humility and obscurity, riding a donkey into Jerusalem rather than a horse, coming to die rather than to reign! Everyone who lives during His Second Coming will know this is the Christ, the Son of the living God! There will be no obscurity in His arrival.

When the battle is done all that is left under the sun is the dead bloody flesh of kings, commanders, mighty men, horses, and all men, both free and slaves, small and great. To that, John saw an angel who cried to all the birds to come and assemble themselves for the "great supper of God" (v.17-18). Unlike the marriage supper of the Lamb, which was a scene of great joy (v.9), this supper is a scene of great sorrow. The battle witnessed here is the Battle of Armageddon (16.16).

Retribution of the Beast and False Prophet (vv. 19-21): One other scene John witnessed here is the gathering of the beast and his armies which represent the worldwide population of earth-dwellers. These armies will unite to oppose Christ (16.13-16). This battle will also be brief as the beast the false prophet will be seized and thrown into the "lake of fire" alive (cf. Num. 16.30; Ps. 55.15; 2 Thess. 2.8). As for "the rest" of Jesus' enemies, like those before them, they will die,

their flesh fed upon the birds (v.21) as their souls go to Hades where they will await their resurrection and final judgement at the end of the Millennium (20.11-15). Ezekiel 39.17-20 says that so many will die that the birds will have plenty to eat until they are "glutted" and "drunk" with the blood of men.

"The Lake of Fire" - The "lake of fire" is described in the Bible as a literal place reserved for the wicked, Satan and all his agents of evil. It is not a place of annihilation, but a place of indescribable eternal torment (cf. Gen. 19.24-25; Ezek. 38.22). Those who die without Christ today and before the day of judgement are in "Hades" or "the grave" (cf. Matt. 16.18; Lk. 16.23; Acts 2.27). "Hades" is the temporary abode of dead unbelievers, where they are held awaiting their resurrection. At the end of the Millennium, Christ will resurrect the unbelieving dead from Hades, judge them, and then will cast them all into the Lake of Fire (20.14-15) which was originally prepared for Satan and his rebel angels (Matt. 25.41). Thus, this becomes another reason for the gospel invitation to all who read and study this book. The Bible (Old and New Testaments) are clear that anyone who trust in Christ alone for salvation which is based on Christ's merit on the cross and resurrection, not one's own merit, will have eternal life with Christ forever. But, anyone who does not trust in Christ alone, who trust in themselves, their own merits will go to hell when they die, only to be resurrected by Christ in the end, judged and cast into the lake of fire for eternal torment cut off from God and all.

III. Reign of Christ on Earth (Rev. 20)

John now records his vision of Jesus Christ's thousand year reign on earth to encourage and inform his readers what will take place after He returns to the earth. There are many theological views and positions that are held to this passage.

- Amillennialism holds that the thousand year reign of Christ is a symbol for the period of the Christian church. This is an Augustine view held by the Roman Catholic, Reformed and Presbyterian churches.
- Postmillennialism holds that the kingdom of Christ is a reality in the hearts of Christians and that the conversion of all nations will occur before the return of Christ, though the term 'thousand years' refers to the quality of life and not to a literal length of time. Most Lutherans hold this view.
- Premillennialism hold that the return of Christ will occur before the beginning of the millennium, which is understood as a literal period of a thousand years. Most evangelicals, Baptist, non-denominations, etc hold this view. If we view these events as literal sequential and chronological, then it would make sense to view the millennial reign of Christ from the premillennial view.

The restraint of Satan (vv. 1-3): First we have the binding of Satan. This binding is real though the chain may be figurative since it is impossible to bind spirit beings with physical chains, though with God all things are possible (cf. 9.14). Christ defeated Satan at the cross, but did not bind him until now. The angel from heaven who binds Satan had already been given a "key to the abyss" (cf. 9.1-2, 11; 11.7; 17.8; Lk. 8.31; Rom. 10.7). Today, Satan has considerable freedom to attack God's people and oppose his work, but during the millennium he will be bound and sealed

in the abyss (v.3). This is done so that he will not deceive no longer the nations until the end of Christ millennial reign. The nations in view here are people who will be the descendants of mortal believers who did not die during the Great Tribulation, but lived on into the Millennium (11.13; 12.13-17). All the unbelievers will be destroyed and in hades. This suggest that it is possible for a person to live through the seven years of Tribulation and as long as they receive Christ as Savior and do not perish they could be the ones who repopulate the nations during the Millennial reign of Christ

It will be during this time that lifespans will much longer (Isa. 65.20) which means that the earth's population will increase rapidly, as was the case before the flood. A person born at the beginning could actually live for a thousand years. The children born during this time will need to believe on Jesus for salvation, but the Bible tells us that some will not do so. It may be these unbelievers who when Satan is released after will lead in a rebellion one last time against Christ.

The resurrection of the tribulation saints (vv. 4-6): John also sees "thrones" (v.4). The purpose of these thrones are for "ruling and judging" (cf. Dan. 7.9-10, 22; Matt. 19.28). Those who will sit on those thrones are probably the faithful raptured saints who have returned with Christ to the earth (cf. 2.26-28; 3.12,21; 19.7-8, 14, 19).

John also see the souls of some people not yet resurrected who were beheaded and did not worship the beast because of their testimony of Christ, and because they had refused to take the mark of the beast, or even to worship his image. Simply, they died for their faith (13.15). John saw these come back to life through bodily resurrection (cf. v.5, 1.18, 2.8; 13.14; Jn. 11.25; Acts 1.3; 9.41). As a reward for their martyrdom they will also reign with Christ on earth during the millennium (cf. 5.10). The whole reign of Christ during this time looks back to Psalm 2.2 tying this it to the Old Testament expectation of God's kingdom on earth. The blessing of this first resurrection is that because of Christ, death has no power over them. But, for the rest of the dead, as discussed, their resurrection to come will lead them to a second death and eternal torment.

The release of Satan (vv. 7-10): The Lord now reveals to John and for us Satan's final judgment. At the end of the millennium, God will release Satan from the abyss and he will come out to deceive the nations once again and will gather them together for one last for war. The people who will follow Satan will be those who have not trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior during the millennium (Jer. 31.33-34). Believe it or not, even with Satan bound in the abyss, people will still choose to reject Jesus as Savior. This says much about the depravity and condition of man's flesh and God's sovereign election. Not everyone will be saved during the millennium. Just as you and I need to trust in Him alone to be born again, so too will those during the millennial reign of Christ.

As Satan gathers his army together on a broad plain in Palestine (cf. Ezek 38.9,11-12, 15-16; 39.2). This is probably the plain of Jezreel in northern Israel (cf. Ezek. 11-16). However, topographical changes will precede Christ's Second Coming, so the location will look different. It will be here that God destroys the Rebels with "fire from heaven and devour them" (v.9). It

will be then that Satan is finally thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone that was prepared for him where he will be tormented day and night with his beast and false prophet (v.10).

The resurrection of unbelievers (vv. 11-15): The final scene of the wicked takes place in these verses. Here John sees the great white throne of God. The One sitting on this throne is God (both the Father and Son), both of which will judge in the final judgments (cf. 3.21; 4.2-3, 9; 5.1,7,19.4; 22.1,3; Dan. 7.9-10; Jn. 5.22-23; Heb. 1.3). From this scene, John sees all the unbelieving dead standing before the throne and saw books which were opened. From this John witnessed that if anyone's name was not found in the book of life, they were judged from the things written in the books according to their deeds. Then both Hades and death gave up the dead and after being judge all were thrown into the lake of fire, which John describes as the second death (vv.11-14). This is the end and destination of all the wicked (Ps. 1).

Eternal punishment is a doctrine that is unpopular among contemporary evangelicals. Some will go as far as to say that there is no such thing. But, the Bible is clear that it is as real as eternal life is in heaven. The Bible records Jesus speaking concerning eternal punishment more than eternal life in heaven. Warren Wiersbe comments that "if we once saw sin as god sees it, we would understand why a place such as hell exists."

LIVE IT:

How then should we live in regards to Christ' Second Coming and Millennial reign on earth? As with all things that are written in the Bible, it all must be received by faith that all that God has promised and accomplished will come true. We are told by Paul that *"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3.16-17).

We are also told by the Psalm writer that the *"law (Word) of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony (Word) of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts (Word) of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment (Word) of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes"* (Psalm 19.7-8).

This means we can trust God's Word, but one must delight themselves in it and receive His Word by faith just as the man in Psalm 1. My prayer is that you would heed and obey what it is written here and trust in Christ alone for salvation and know peace everlasting so you may escape the day wrath before it comes. This is what God's Word says.

REVELATION
Lesson 7: "Things Which Will Take Place:
The Eternal Ages"
Revelation 21-22

LOOK IT UP:

Read Revelation 21-22 and answer the questions below before reading the lesson.

1. What did John see in chapter 21?
2. What did John hear?
3. List the features of the New Jerusalem. If you can try to diagram it, listing names of the gates and its foundations.
4. What is uniquely different about the New Jerusalem verses the old city? (vv. 22-23)
5. Where does the river of life come? (Rev. 22.1)
6. What is the purpose of the tree of life? (Rev. 22.2)
7. How are you assured that you will go to heaven when you die?

INTRODUCTION: The end of the world will not happen the way most believe it will. There have been many stories, movies, articles both scientific and religious in regards to the fate of the world. Some depict victory on man's part to save himself as in some of the super hero movies. Some describe it as the next step of evolution. Some say, the extinction of man will fall into the same category that of the dinosaurs. John's final visions of both the end of the world as we know it, the new world and universe to come, and the New Jerusalem has a far more optimistic view of not only the end of this present world and universe, but also the eternal state to come.

Outside of these two chapters (Revelation 21-22), Isaiah 60-65 and Ezekiel 40-48 pictures a new beginning which are a sharp contrast with the Lake of Fire for the unbelievers, Satan and his evil agents. I believe that one of the most significant features for the future eternal dwelling of believers outside of the fact how gloriously beautiful it will be is that the Lord will dwell with us there. Ezekiel states, "...and the name of the city from that day shall be, 'The Lord is there'" (Ezek, 48.35; Rev. 21.3; 22.3; Isa. 12.6; 14.32; 24.23; Jer. 3.17; 8.19; Joel 3.10).

Another contrast is between the former creation and the future creation. The beginning and the end of the Bible share similar, but contrasting themes. Look at the chart below adapted from Warren Wiersbe:

GENESIS	REVELATION
Heavens and earth created (1.1)	New heavens and earth (21.1)
Sun created (1.16)	No need of the sun (21.23)
Night established (1.5)	No night there (21.25; 22.5)
Seas created (1.10)	No more seas (21.1)
Curse announced (3.14-17)	No more curse (22.3)
Death enters history (3.19)	No more death (21.4)
Man driven from paradise (3.24)	Man restored to paradise (22.14)
Sorrow and pain begin (3.17)	No mourning, crying or pain (21.4)

One other note is creation's point of view in regards to man's fate and his redemption. Paul has this to say according to Scripture:

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now, And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body., For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it." (Romans 8.18-25)

First notice here that the suffering that takes place is not to be compare to the glory that is to come. This is our hope. Secondly, creation anxiously awaits for the redemption and revealing of the sons of God. Third, creation has been hijacked by the fall of man and will be set free, just as we will from the slavery of sin and death. Fourth, creation is suffering as we suffer. Therefore, when the Lord makes all things new by doing away with this present universe, all wickedness and redeems not only our bodies and gives us a new place to dwell, but creation also, will be set free and all of it will be gloriously new. Just to add to this, and the one who created all of it will dwell personally with us and all creation. Praise the Lord!

KEY THOUGHT: The hope for all the saints of God and creation is God's plan to create a new heaven and earth where He will dwell with us for all eternity in a blessed state.

LEARN IT: (The Exposition)

IV. The Unveiling of the New Heaven and Earth (Rev. 21.1-8):

John's vision of the new heaven and earth is vastly different than this present age. In his vision he tells us that he see a completely new heaven and earth with no more sea (v.1). The reason why this present heaven and earth must pass away is because there is no place in eternity for a universe which has been corrupted by sin. Therefore, as John wrote, "the first heaven and the first earth passed away (v.1).

The passing away of the present heaven and earth: Isaiah and Peter graphically describe the dissolving of the material universe as we know it. For instance, Peter states: "*the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire...will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up*" (2 Pet. 3.7,10, 12).

The word "elements (stoicheion)" speaks of the fundamental or rudiment principles...the elements from which all things have come, the material causes of the universe, the heavenly bodies, the elements of man, life and destiny. This means that the fundamental physics of life that God originally created will be "destroyed" by His refiners fire. The elemental properties that exist today will no longer be. They will cease to exist and "no place was (will be) found for them" (Rev. 20.11).

The creation of a new heaven and earth: After the Lord destroys this present heaven and earth, John tells us that the Lord will create a "new" heaven and earth (v.1). This is simply not the present heaven and earth renovated as some may teach. There are only a few passages in the Bible that deal with the subject of the new heavens and the new earth, but they are often confused with the context of the millennium passages (cf. Ps. 72.8; Isa. 11.9; 65.17; 66.22; Ezek 47.10, 15, 18, 20; 48.28; Zech. 9.10; 14.8). The difference between these and Revelation 21.1 is the absence of "the sea." The millennial passages mentions bodies of water, but the eternal state is clearly indicated by the absence of sea (John Walvoord).

Another indication of a completely new heaven and earth is referenced by the word "new (kainos)." This word means something that has been recently made (not made over or renovated). It is something that is "unused and unworn." It denotes something that is "unprecedented, unheard of and uncommon." This is similar to its Hebrew reference found in Isaiah 65.17 where the word "new (chadash)" means a "new thing."

So, with these clues (new, passed away, no more sea) which John gives us in this vision we are to believe then that the Lord is not going to simply restore or renovate the heavens and the earth, but create for us and His glory something uncommonly different where He and His people can dwell together for all eternity. Amen!

V. The Unveiling of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21.2-27)

The presentation of the New Jerusalem (vv. 2-8): John's first vision of the New Jerusalem resembles something like a wedding when the bride which has been adorned and made ready for her husband descends down from heaven (v.2). John tells us that this city is uniquely "holy" in

contrast to the former Jerusalem (cf. 11.8; Isa. 52.1; Matt. 4.5; 27.53). The old city will be Jesus' capital during their Millennium, this New Jerusalem will be His capital throughout eternity.

John also tells us that God will finally dwell among His cleansed people, and they will experience intimate fellowship with Him. This is the supreme blessing of the New Jerusalem (cf. Ezek. 37.27; 48.35). This fellowship existed to some extent when God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, and when He dwelt among the Israelites in the tabernacle and later in the temple. It also existed partially when Jesus Christ "tabernacled" among people (Jn. 1.14). It exists today as God inhabits the bodies of Christians individually (1 Cor. 6.19-20) and the church corporately (Eph. 2.21-22).

The benefits of the New Jerusalem contrast that of the unbelievers in the lake of fire where they will be tormented with the weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 13.42). For those living in the New Jerusalem, God will "wipe away every tear from their eyes" (v.4). This happens at the inception of the Eternal State rather later. The tears here are probably caused by life in, and memories of, the old creation, not tears of repentance. This is God's compassion for His people. John also tells us that there will be no more "sorrow, death, pain, and mourning." All those things will be gone forever (passed away) because God is "making all things new" (v.5).

The promise of these things are based upon the reliable word of God for John is instructed to record these things because "these words are faithful and true" and are "done" by our eternal Lord (v.6). This promise is exclusive to those have "overcome" by trusting in Christ alone for salvation (v.7). Not for those who rejected the Lord out of fear and unbelief, their destiny is in the "lake of fire" (v.8).

The City's features (vv. 9-21): Now, the Lord provides John with more information about the New Jerusalem (v.2). The city that John saw had a radiant glow (brilliance). This is due in part because of the "very costly stones" that resembled "crystal clear jasper" (v.11) and the splendor of God Himself, because He was in it (cf. Exod. 40.34; Num. 9.15-23; 1 Ki. 8.11; Ezek. 43.5; Jn. 12.41; Acts 26.13). The city has a wall with "twelve gates" and had a square shape (v.12). Even though walls and gates were needed in the old earth for security and defense, the inhabitants of this city will have no need for security. They will be free to come and go in peace because there will be no more enemies. The names on the city gates are the names the "twelve tribes" of Israel which represents Israel's distinctive identity and role in this city, as it had throughout history (cf. 7.1-8). The twelve foundations and the names of the apostles represent the foundation of truth and righteousness which the inhabitants placed their faith on. In reference to this, Jesus says in response to Peter's confession of Him being the Christ, the Son of God, that He will build His church upon that confession and foundation of truth (Matt. 16.13-20).

The measurement and shape of the city suggest a cube shape that possibly may resemble the holy of holies. The size of this city is 1500 miles long and high and it's walls are 72 yards thick (v. 17; cf. Ezek. 40.5; 42.20). On the present earth, if you can imagine, the length of the city would begin in Dallas Texas to San Diego California to Seattle Washington to Chicago Illinois and

finally back to Dallas to complete the square. The height of the city would go up 1500 miles up in the sky. To give you a perspective, true space begins at 100 miles. Therefore, if placed on the present earth, this city proportionately would seem huge, only God knows how big the new earth will be and how it will rest on it (vv.15-17).

The city is constructed out of every kind of precious stones such as jasper, pure gold which is like clear glass, and its foundations are jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth and amethyst (vv. 18-20). The twelve gates are a single pearl and its city streets pure gold like transparent glass (v.21). This contrast the cities during John's time which were made from limestone, which during the rising of the sun or its setting took on beautiful colors. Even Jesus references Christians to shine like a city on a hill in the distance (Matt. 5.14). These cities are a pale shadow of what the New Jerusalem will look like.

The City's Illumination (vv. 22-27): Another feature of the New Jerusalem that makes it uniquely different than the old Jerusalem is the absence of the temple, sun and moon. This is because God and the Lamb will be its temple (v.22) and its source of illumination (v.23). The earthly tabernacle and temples were mainly symbols of the presence of God with man, but in the New Jerusalem, that presence is a reality. God will bring His people into an intimate relationship with Himself in the New Jerusalem illuminated by His own glory.

The illuminating glory of God provides light for the whole new creation as kings or rulers which are believing national leaders will bring their glory into the city, thus increasing the glory of God (v.24). Because of God's illuminating glory, there is no reason to fear because there will be no night, thus it's gates will never close because nothing unclean or evil will be allowed to enter the city, only "those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (v.27). This suggest that there will be nations on the new earth which are made up of saints of God who are believers from the old creation redeemed and resurrected by Christ.

VI. The Unveiling of the New Paradise (Rev. 22.1-5)

John's vision of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 focused more on the externals, his vision in chapter 22 focuses more on the interior of the city and its inhabitants.

The River and Tree of Life (vv.1-2): John is first shown "the river of the water of life" (v.1). The use of water in the Bible seems to be important to God and man. Civilizations were built around bodies of water. The life of cities and fortresses depended on the sustenance of water. The present earth is covered by seventy-one percent of water, yet only one percent is actually drinkable. On top of that, ground water only accounts for .28 percent of fresh water from the globe. When God created the first earth, water had an important part in it. The Lord placed a four rivers in the Garden of Eden, the Pishon, Gibson, Tigris and Euphrates (Gen. 2.10). Water was significant in the work of the Lord. Metaphorically, water symbolized the troublesome times in life that can and do come to human beings (Ps. 32.6). It symbolized spiritual cleansing (Heb. 10.22). Christ identified Himself as "living water" (Jn. 7.37). The righteous man in Psalm 1 who delights in the word of God is like a tree planted by streams of water (Ps. 1). Finally, Psalms 46

describes the river in the New Jerusalem as being the streams that make glad the city of God (Ps. 46.4). Therefore, there is something significant concerning the river that flows from the throne of God in the inner city of the New Jerusalem.

First, John tells us this river is a "water of life" (v. 1). Its source comes from God's throne. Ezekiel describes the water that flows under the threshold of the house of God (Ezek. 47.1). This tells us that this river has the power of life because it comes from the very throne of the One who is Life. The very Lamb of God. Jesus said that the one who drinks from Him would flow rivers of living waters (Jn. 4.14). Thus, God's throne is the place and source of all life, power, and authority (Job 1.6).

John tells us that this "water of life" appeared like "clear as crystal" (v.1b). We have nothing like that on earth. There are places on earth where water may appear to be clean and clear, such as in the mountains, but nothing that is described like "crystal." Crystals are beautiful objects that God created. Part of the New Jerusalem is created with crystals and it shines illuminating the glory of God, which has an appearance like jasper. This possibly represents the purity of God and the brilliance of His holiness. We can only speculate what John saw and we will have to wait until we see with glorified eyes when we all get to heaven to witness it for ourselves.

Secondly, John tells us that the "tree of life" is there (v.2). This "tree of life" is located on either side of the "river of life." It is described as bearing twelve crops of fruit and yielding its fruit every month. In Genesis 3.22-24, Adam and Eve sinned against God when they took and ate from "the tree of knowledge of good and evil." When they did this, God forbid them to eat from the "tree of life" and it was taken away from them and they were expelled from the garden and introduced to the curse as the result of their sin, a curse that has plagued all creation since. This "tree of life" is now made available to all the redeemed in Christ. It is a tree that receives its nutritious source from the river of life flowing from God's throne and produces twelve kinds of fruit monthly (v.2b). Because of this, everyone living in the New Jerusalem will have an imperishable source of food. Not that our glorified bodies will need food, but the water and the fruit from this tree will give us life that is abundant and will exist eternally as promised by Christ in Revelation 2.7.

Imagine, if Adam and his future generations were allowed to continue to eat from the tree of life? The result would allow mankind to perpetually live in sin. God's grace was to remove the tree so that in the future, mankind might depend on another tree, the tree that Christ Jesus our Lord died on to take away our sins so that we may have eternal life. Because of this, abundant life comes from this life-producing tree by the power and authority of God.

The leaves of the tree are therapeutic and are for the healing of the nations (v.2c). The word "healing" in the Greek is "therapies." We get our word, therapeutic from it. Now, the meaning of this could be that the leaves from this tree will be used in some way as a memorial fact that the cross is our eternal health both physically and spiritually for all nations, for all mankind? Or, it could mean that because of Christ's redemptive work, the nations represented in the New Jerusalem will no longer be at war, or hostile towards one another, because there is peace and unity in Christ.

The Personal Presence of the Lord (vv. 3-5): Because of the removal of the curse, we will now have unfettered worship and service before the throne of God. By removing the curse of sin we have access to God's throne (v.3). Since the fall, no one was allowed to see God or come before His throne unless he dies. Why, because He is holy and nothing unclean, sinful could approach or see Him and survive (cf. Ex. 33.18; Jn. 1.18). Because the curse is removed the redeemed can see God's face without the fear of death (v.4).

We will also have unfettered service before God's throne (vv. 3-4). Believers are described as God's "bond-servants." We are His slaves, bought and adopted by Him through Christ to be His servants. The word "serve" here actually has a worship application. Meaning that like the Levites in the Old Testament, we will be His servants in some form of service that has a liturgical application. Like servants, we will be able to enter into His presence with no restrictions. We will also bear His name on our foreheads (v.4b). This contrasts those who took on the number and name of the beast during the Tribulation period. We will be identified as God's people forever and there will be no doubt we belong to Him.

Finally, we will have the unfettered presence of the light of God (v.5). All the residence of this holy city of God will dwell securely. This city will never close (21.25) and there is no need for the sun or moon because God's glory will illuminate the city, as well as the Lamb of God (21.23). All nations will walk by the light of the glory of God. There will never be the fear of walking in darkness any longer. Another implication of the light of God is the absence of evil. It has been removed. Satan is no longer able to move about as a roaring lion seeking to deceive, kill, and destroy. We will dwell without the threat of being tempted by evil for the bursting light of God will be our guide.

There is also the perfect reign of God and His people (v.5b). Originally, Adam was given the clear command to rule over creation (Gen. 1.26). He was to subdue the earth by bringing it under his control. This is critical because of how sin entered into the world. Because Adam did not fully abide by this command, he allowed creation to subdue him and fell into sin by the craftiness of the serpent. Adam had abdicated his place of authority to the serpent and not only lost his place to rule, but also the tree of life, and was removed from the garden and was cursed spiritually and physically to the power of death and darkness. But verse 4-5 shows us that God restores man's position in the eternal state. God will re-establish man's role as rulers and will reign with Christ, in His presence for the ages to come. It will be a perfect rule. It will be a perpetual rule. Not partial, but fully restored as it should have been from the beginning.

VII. The Final Testament and Message (Rev. 22.6-21)

This now concludes all the visions in Revelation. All that Christ wanted John to record. The things seen, which are, and the things which will take place (Rev. 1.19). What is left are final closing words by an angel (v.6-7), and John himself (vv. 8-20).

Concerning the prophecy of this book (vv. 6-9): John is assured that the prophecy in this book will happen soon (4.1-22.5). The words of this prophecy are "faithful and true" (v.6). The words of this prophecy affirms that Christ is coming soon and that those who obey the words of this prophecy will be "blessed" (v.7). In response to all that he had seen and heard, John fell down to

worship at the feet of the angel, who in turn told him to worship God and obey these word (vv. 8-10).

Concerning the coming of Jesus Christ (vv. 10-17): John then tells us that he is commanded not to seal up the prophecy of this book because the time is near (v.10). This warning that the time is near is directed to any unbeliever who reads and studies this book. Because when Christ comes, people will not be able to change their destiny. What they are then, they will remain forever! There will be no second change. They must heed the warning and trust God now through Christ before they die or He comes again (vv. 11-13).

The final blessing in the book announces God's favor on those who cleanse themselves by turning to Christ for salvation, which is in stark contrast to those who are outside of faith. He describes the unbelievers as "dogs" which is a metaphor for the morally unclean (vv. 14-15). Jesus then states that he has sent His angel to testify to the churches this revelation about Himself and what is to come (v. 16) and then invites all who are thirsty for eternal life to come freely "without cost" (v. 17).

Concerning the warning in this book (vv. 18-21): As Jesus continues to speak contrast His open invitation with a sharp warning not to "add" anything to this book or "take away" from it. If they do, God will severely punish them with with plagues mentioned in this book and "take away his part from the tree of life" (vv. 18-19). The book is a blessing for the one who read, hears and obey it (1.3), but a curse to any who corrupts and rejects its message and truth.

Finally, John signs off with a final warning that Jesus is coming soon and a short benediction asking Christ to come and His grace be with all. "Amen!" (vv. 20-21). It is God's grace that makes faith for the unbeliever reader and faithfulness for the believing reader possible (cf. 1.4). God's grace through Christ Jesus our Lord begins and concludes this book. This indicates that though this book pronounces God's judgement on the unbelieving, His grace can be found in this book.

LIVE IT:

How then should we live after studying this book? The message is clear. The only way that one's name is written in the Lamb's book of life is to yield yourself to Christ, acknowledge you are a sinner, that Christ died on the cross for your sin and rose again three days later, and that anyone who calls on Him will be saved. This is the only way to know for certain, without a doubt that you will be blessed with eternal life in the new heaven and earth and Jerusalem with God.

There is no other way. No pastor, church, denomination, works, money, nothing. There is nothing that we can do to earn our salvation. It is simply God gifting you faith to believe and you responding to His Divine call to come to Him alone. Only He can give you eternal life.

I pray you will hear His call upon your life today at this very moment and trust in Him alone.

If you have done that, then your responsibility is to be faithful to Him alone. Live by walking worthily in manner to which you have been called in Christ. Be in community with believers who are devoted to the teaching of God's word. Pray with that community. Serve Christ in that community. Tell others about God's grace and how He has saved you. Live for Him and do not waste your days, for the days are evil. Live by walking in step with His spirit and do not yield yourself to fleshly desires. Flee from those things and pursue the righteousness of holiness of God. Be holy as He is holy, not for salvation, but for sanctification. Prove your faith is true in Christ as a witness to all that Jesus is for He will come again soon.

Grace and Peace to all!

Come soon Lord Jesus, Come soon! AMEN!