

Cornerstone
Community Church

REVELATION

Part 2

Chapters 21-38

John Marc Wiemann

TABLE OF CONTENTS [1 of 5]

CHAPTER 21 The War of the Ages	1
The Wonders in Heaven	2
The War in Heaven	4
The War on Earth	6
Questions for Review and Reflection	9
CHAPTER 22 The Coming World Ruler	11
The AntiChrist	12
The False Prophet	16
Questions for Review and Reflection	19
CHAPTER 23 The Victory of the Lamb and His Followers	21
The Identification of the 144,000	22
The Celebration of the 144,000	24
Presentation of the 144,000.....	27
Questions for Review and Reflection	29
CHAPTER 24 Three Angels with Messages	31
The First Angel: Preaching the Gospel	32
The Second Angel: Pronouncing Judgment	34
The Third Angel: Promising Hell	35
The Heavenly Reward for the Faithful	36
Questions for Review and Reflection	39
CHAPTER 25 The Harvest of Judgment	41
The Grain Harvest	42
The Grape Harvest	44
Application	47
Questions for Review and Reflection	48

TABLE OF CONTENTS [2 of 5]

CHAPTER 26 Heavenly Preparation for God’s Final Wrath.....	49
The Perfection of God	50
The Praise to God.....	51
The Plan of God	52
Questions for Review and Reflection	56
CHAPTER 27 The Seven Bowl Judgments	57
The First Bowl Poured on the Earth	58
The Second Poured on the Sea	59
The Third Bowl Poured on Rivers and Springs	60
The Fourth Bowl Poured on the Sun..	61
The Fifth Bowl Poured on the Beast’s Throne Revelation	62
The Sixth Bowl Poured on the Euphrates	62
The Seventh Bowl Poured on the Air	64
Questions for Review and Reflection	65
CHAPTER 28 Seduced by the World	67
The World Described	69
The World Demystified	71
The World Destroyed	73
Questions for Review and Reflection	76
CHAPTER 29 Weeping and Rejoicing Over Babylon’s Fall	77
The Voice of Condemnation	79
The Call to Separation	81
The Response to Lamentation	81
The Response to Celebration	83
Questions for Review and Reflection	85

TABLE OF CONTENTS [3 of 5]

CHAPTER 30 Heaven's Hallelujah Chorus	87
What God Provides – Salvation	88
What God Settles – Justice	89
What God Occupies – His Sovereignty	90
What God Fulfills – The Wedding	91
Questions for Review and Reflection	95
CHAPTER 31 The Glorious Return of Jesus Christ	97
His Promise Delivered.....	99
His Power Displayed	100
His Plan Demonstrated	103
His Preeminence Decided	104
Questions for Review and Reflection	105
CHAPTER 32 The Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ	107
Introduction	108
The Removal of Satan	113
The Reign of the Saints	114
The Return of Satan	115
The Revolt of Society	115
Questions for Review and Reflection	117
CHAPTER 33 The Great White Throne Judgment	119
The Inescapable Judge	123
The Incontestable Trial	124
The Irreversible Sentence	126
Questions for Review and Reflection	127
CHAPTER 34 The New Heaven and the New Earth	129
The Appearance	130
The Capital	132
The Presence of God	133
The Changes	134

TABLE OF CONTENTS [4 of 5]

CHAPTER 34 The New Heaven and the New Earth	129
The Residents	135
The Outcasts	135
Questions for Review and Reflection	137
CHAPTER 35 The Glory of the New Jerusalem	139
Perfect Sanctification	140
Perfect Representation	141
Perfect Dimension	142
Perfect Illuminated City	143
Perfect Redemption	144
Perfect Restoration	145
Perfect Satisfaction	146
Questions for Review and Reflection	147
CHAPTER 36 Our Response to Revelation	149
Obedience	150
Worship	152
Proclamation	154
Service	155
Questions for Review and Reflection	156
CHAPTER 37 Christ's Final Reminders	157
Christ's Control is Absolute	157
Christ's Cleansing is Essential	159
Christ's Invitation is Free	160
Christ's Word is Complete	162
Christ's Return is Certain	163
Questions For Review and Reflection	164

TABLE OF CONTENTS [5 of 5]

CHAPTER 38 Revelation Question and Answer	165
Why is God Making a New Heaven and Earth?	165
Is the Gospel Complete Without Revelation?	166
What is the Role of the Holy Spirit in Heaven?	167
Do All Christmas Live in the New Jerusalem ?	167
Will There be a Shared Language in Heaven ?.....	169
Is the Antichrist alive Now?	169
What is the Status of those Outside the New Jerusalem?	171
What is the Difference Between Sheol, Hades, Hell, et cetera?	171
How Should we Live today Based on the Book of Revelation?	173
Questions for Review and Reflection	174

CHAPTER 21
“The War of the Ages”
Revelation 12:1–17

¹“A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; ²and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. ³Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. ⁴And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. ⁵And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. ⁶Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days. ⁷And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, ⁸and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. ¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night. ¹¹And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death. ¹²For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.” ¹³And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child. ¹⁴But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. ¹⁵And the serpent ¹poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. ¹⁶But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. ¹⁷So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus”.

We are studying the book of Revelation where the curtain is pulled back and we see the war of the ages that takes place in heaven and on earth, The opening campaign the war of the ages took place in heaven. When Satan rebelled against God as described in Isaiah 14:12–15 and Ezekiel 28:12–17, one-third of the angels foolishly and wickedly cast their lots with him. None of them could have known what the eternal consequences of their choice would be. Wanting to be like God, they became as much unlike God as possible. These fallen angels (or demons) became Satan’s storm troopers, doing the bidding of their evil commander. They fight against divine purpose, making war with both the holy angels and the human race.

The final battles of Satan’s long war against God are yet to be fought. They will take place in the future, during the last half of the seven-year tribulation period, the time Jesus called the Great Tribulation in Matthew 24:21. At that time Satan, aided by the absence of the raptured church and the presence of increased hordes of demons (Revelation 9:1–11), will mount his most desperate assaults against God’s purposes and His people. But despite the savage fury with which those assaults will be carried out, they will not succeed. In Revelation 19 we will see that the Lord Jesus Christ will effortlessly crush Satan and his forces and send him to the abyss for the duration of the millennial kingdom (20:1–2). After leading a final rebellion at the close of the Millennium, Satan will be consigned to eternal punishment in the lake of fire (20:3, 7–10).

The sounding of the seventh trumpet will proclaim the triumphant victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over the usurper, Satan. Revelation 11:15 says, “*Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.’*” There will be great joy in heaven because Christ has defeated Satan and established His eternal kingdom. Thus, the outcome of the war between Satan and God is not in doubt. Christ’s ultimate triumph is certain.

Though chapter 11 records the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the effects it produces are not described until chapters 15–18. The seventh trumpet will sound near the end of the Tribulation, launching the brief, but final and devastating bowl judgments just before Christ’s return in power and glory. Chapters 6–11 describe the events of the Tribulation up to the sounding of the seventh trumpet; chapters 12–14 reviews that same period but describing the events with Satan’s involvement. And in verses 3-4, we are taken all the way back to the original rebellion of Satan.

Revelation 12 is something of a panorama of redemptive history. We are going to go both backward and forward as we survey God’s plan of salvation from beginning, to almost the end. The Lord Jesus, the believer, and the nation of Israel will figure prominently in this text, but looming large with respect to each will be the archenemy of God, the devil himself.

Note with me first of all that our text teaches:

I. The Wonders in Heaven

Verse 1...John sees a “*great sign in heaven.*” This is the first of 7 signs in the remainder of the Revelation (13:3; 13:13, 14; 15:1; 16:14; 19:20). And in this great sign we are introduced to the characters of the war of the ages.

Who is the woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and with a crown of 12 stars on her head? Some believe it is Mary and others believe it is the church. However, the immediate context as well as the Old Testament background for this clearly indicates that the woman it is the nation of Israel that is in view.

First, notice it is the woman who gives birth to the Christ child. This would rule out the Church. Secondly, in Genesis 37: 9-11, we have the dream of Joseph recorded. Verse 9 says, “*Then he dreamed still another dream and told it to his brothers and said, look I have dreamed another dream and this time the sun, the moon, and the 11 stars bowed down to me.*” This vision tips us off that what we see in Revelation 12 is nothing less than the nation of Israel - the crown of twelve stars on the woman’s head refers to the twelve tribes of Israel. (Joseph would constitute the 12th star in John’s vision).

Having described the woman’s attire, John noted that she was with child. That also is familiar imagery describing Israel (Isaiah 26:17–18; 66:7–9; Jeremiah 4:31). Being pregnant, the woman cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. Just like a pregnant woman in labor feels pain, so the nation of Israel was in pain, waiting for Messiah to come forth. The cause of some of the pain is the persecution by Satan, who attempts to destroy the mother.

The second character of the war of the ages is introduced in verse 3.. “*Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems*”.

With the second sign, a new character emerges. Verse 9 clearly identifies the great red dragon as Satan. Revelation 20:2 says... *“And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;”*

Only in Revelation is Satan referred to as a dragon. The devil will appear as a dragon 13 times in the Revelation. His fiery red color speaks of his murderous intent and the bloodshed that he will cause to happen. That he is a dragon speaks of his terror and ferociousness.

The dragon is further described as having *“seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.”* He is depicted as a seven-headed monster that rules the world.

These represent seven consecutive world empires running their course under Satan’s dominion to include the Antichrist’s future empire. We will revisit this in Revelation 17:9-10. The final kingdom, ruled by Antichrist, will be a ten-nation confederacy. The ten horns represent the kings who will rule under Antichrist (17:12).

Satan’s pervasive, evil influence is not limited to the human realm but extends first into the angelic realm. Notice verse 4... *“And his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.”*

The stars refer to angels who fell with Satan in history past. His tail drawing a third of the stars of heaven and throwing them to the earth would seem to indicate 1/3 of the angels falling and becoming demons when Satan initially rebelled against God (Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:12–17).

As the next event in his dramatic vision unfolded, John noted that *“the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth, he might devour her child.”* This conflict between Satan and “the woman” began soon after man fell into sin in Genesis 3. In Genesis 3:15 God said to the serpent, *“And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”*

Throughout Old Testament history, Satan tried to prevent the birth of the Redeemer. There was always a “dragon” standing by, waiting to destroy Israel or the ancestors of the Messiah. Pharaoh is called a “dragon” (Ezekiel 29:3), and so is Nebuchadnezzar (Jeremiah 51:34). When Jesus Christ was born, Satan used King Herod to try to destroy Him (Matthew 2). Satan thought that he had succeeded when he used Judas to betray the Lord and hand Him over to be crucified. But the Cross was actually Satan’s defeat! Revelation 12:11 says about believers *“And they overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb.”*

Satan’s strategy is to persecute God’s people and devour them if possible. 1 Peter 5:8 says, *“be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.”*

Satan has a special hatred for the Jewish people and has been the power behind anti-Semitism from the days of Pharaoh and Haman (see the Book of Esther) to Hitler to Hamas and Hezbollah. Finally, in the middle of the Tribulation, there will come a wave of anti-Semitism such as the world has never seen. But God will protect His people during those three-and-a-half years (1,260 days).

Verse 5... *“And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.”*

In spite of Satan's relentless efforts to prevent it, the woman (Israel) gave birth to a son. The incarnation of the male child, the Lord Jesus Christ, Romans 1:3 says Jesus "*who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh*", was the fulfillment of prophecy (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Micah 5:2).

Verse 5 says her child was "*caught up to God*." The ascension of Jesus is the unquestionable proof that Satan was defeated in that he could not prevent Christ from rising from the dead and ascending back to His Father where He now is seated at the right hand of the throne of God, perhaps the very place that Satan coveted when he fell (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28).

Satan could not stop Christ from accomplishing redemption and therefore being exalted to the right hand of the Father as a perfect Savior. Once the Messiah was in that heavenly presence, Satan had no further access to Him, so he had to redirect his animosity. The woman was the only one left for him to attack, so she fled into the wilderness. Verse 6... "*Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*"

The fleeing into the wilderness in this verse comes chronologically after the warfare in heaven that is about to be described in 12:7–12, and the woman's escape receives a more detailed treatment in 12:13–17.

The heavenly defeat of the dragon and his angels by Michael and his angels in verse 7 happens at the midpoint of Daniel's seventieth week, so the 1,260 days of the woman's protection must correspond to the last half of that week, the 3.5 years of the great tribulation, and synchronizes with the time that the two witnesses are serving in Jerusalem (11:3).

God will frustrate Satan's attempt to destroy the remnant of Israel during the tribulation by hiding His people, just as the Lord Jesus Christ predicted in Matthew 24:15–21. Look at Matthew 24:15-21 with me...

The wonders of heaven move next to:

II. The War in Heaven

Having introduced the combatants in 12:1–6, John describes the first phase of Satan's final assault on God before Christ's return. Look at verses 7-8... ⁷ "*And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,* ⁸ *and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.*"

Michael is named in Scripture as the archangel (We heard that when Adrian read Daniel 12:1. Jude 9 also says that Michael is the archangel).

Interestingly, the name Michael means "who is like God?" and stands in stark contrast to Satan's egocentric attack on the Lord where the devil said in Isaiah 14:14, "*I will be like the Most High.*"

Satan and his angels (demons) are defeated and they are cast out of heaven and, as verse 13 notes, they are cast to the earth. Satan and his demons were cast out of heaven as their home at the time of their original rebellion. However, the Bible seems to indicate that they still have some degree of access to heaven (see Job 1:6; 2:1, Luke 22:31 Jesus says "*Satan has requested to sift you like wheat.*").

However, in the future, during this great battle that takes place during the tribulation, Satan will be cast out permanently and denied any access to heaven at all. In other words, he will be banished and barred from the presence of God and heaven forever.

Notice verse 9... *“And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”*

This verse contains 4 instructive titles of our archenemy: 1) the great dragon – which emphasizes again his ferocity and terror, 2) that serpent of old – which identifies him with the serpent of Genesis 3 who seduced Adam and Eve into committing sin, 3) the devil – literally diabolos which means “to accuse or slander.” Satan is a malicious prosecutor of God’s people, constantly trying to arraign them before the bar of God’s holy justice. and 4) Satan – a Hebrew word that means “adversary,” and is a fitting name for the enemy of God and His people.

Tragically, the most glorious, created being, the *“star of the morning”* (Isaiah 14:12), is now and forever branded “the adversary.” He assaulted God in his original rebellion when he demanded to be *“like the Most High”* in Isaiah 14:14, and he deceitfully led Eve into sin by manipulating her to distrust the character and word of God in Genesis 3:2–5.

Notice in the middle of verse 9 the devil is described as *“the one who deceives the whole world.”* The use of the present tense indicates that this is Satan’s habitual, continual activity.

The phrase, *“cast down”* occurs 3 times in the ninth verse to emphasize the certainty and finality of his defeat. That same phrase will occur 3 additional times in 12:10, 12, and 13. Satan has been cast from the throne of God (Ezekiel 28:16 &17), he will be cast from heaven (Revelation 12:9), he will then be cast into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:3), and he will finally be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

Notice the defeat of Satan is followed by great celebration. Verse 10... *“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, ‘Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, he who accuses them before our God day and night’* “.

The loud voice in heaven is not specified, though it could be the 24 elders. But four things are said to come as a result of the devil being cast out of heaven: 1) Salvation, 2) Strength, 3) The Kingdom of our God (the Father), and 4) The Power (authority) of His Christ (the Son). Have come – the phrase *“have come”* is actually fronted toward the beginning of the verse for emphasis.

Why has all of this occurred? Because the accuser who accuses day and night, emphasizing the consistency and continuation of the evil one’s attack on us, has been cast down. Salvation and the kingdom of our God have come. Salvation is a settled fact.

His heavenly role of accuser will end, but his role as persecutor of the brethren will intensify after he no longer inhabits heaven.

Notice verse 11... *“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death”.*

Those who follow the Lamb, the Christ of God, have also become victorious over the dragon. And how did they overcome it? Three bases for their victory (and our victory) is noted: 1) the blood of the Lamb and 2) the word of their testimony (witness) and 3) they did not love their lives.

Amazingly the blood of the martyrs shows not the triumph of Satan, but rather the triumph of the saints as their acceptance of Jesus and His work on the cross provides victory over sin as well as Satan. Because our sins have been washed in the blood of the Lamb of God, no accusation by the devil can stand against us.

We have not been forgiven because of who we are, we have been forgiven because of who He is and what He has done for us. He washed our sins away in His precious blood.

Verse 12... *“For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time.”*

The Greek word for great *“wrath”* refers to a violent outburst of rage. Satan’s rage is even more violent because he knows that he has only a short time: the three and a half years of the reign of the Antichrist (13:5), whom Satan places in power immediately after being cast down from heaven.

Truly, hell will come to earth during these horrible final days of the tribulation. It is a *“short time”* because Jesus Christ will return to establish His earthly millennial kingdom.

We have seen the characters and the war in heaven, now let’s look at:

III. The War on Earth

Verse 13... *“And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.”*

Following his defeat by Michael and the holy angels, the dragon (Satan) *“was thrown down to the earth.”* Satan hates the Lord Jesus. Satan hates the child of God. But Satan also has a special hatred for a particular nation: the nation of Israel. Verse 6 taught us that the woman would flee to a wilderness place where she would be protected and nourished by God.

Verses 13 – 17 expand upon that brief introduction and further reveal the wrath of the dragon as it is vented against the woman, the nation of Israel. Satan will pursue her with fiery red passion. God, however, will watch over her, provide for her, protect her.

Israel’s situation when the storm of Antichrist’s persecution breaks upon them during the tribulation will be terrifying and tragic. God will intervene directly on their behalf. Verse 14, *“the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”* This is figurative language that symbolically depicts Israel’s escape from Satan. The striking imagery of the two wings of the great eagle is taken from Exodus 19:4: *“You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself.”* God will bring Israel to safety, just as He delivered the nation from Egypt.

“Wings” symbolize strength (Isaiah 40:31) and speed (2 Samuel 22:11; Psalms 18:10; 104:3), but most commonly speak of protection (Deuteronomy 32:9–11; Psalms 17:8; 57:1). *“Eagle”* here can also refer to a vulture (Matthew

24:28; Luke 17:37). These large birds with enormous wing spans serve as a fitting symbol for God's protection for Israel.

The location of the place where the Jews will flee is not revealed. Some have suggested Petra, an ancient city carved into the rocky cliffs of Edom between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. Approachable only through a narrow gorge, Petra was easy to defend in ancient times. The term "*wilderness*" does not reveal the exact location of Israel's place of refuge, since that term is a general one.

The duration of Israel's hiding and God's provision is defined as "*a time and times and half a time.*" That phrase, drawn from Daniel 7:25 and 12:7, refers to the second half of the tribulation. This period will mark the overtly evil career of Antichrist. Although Satan may know where the Jews are hiding, he will be unable to defeat them because of God's divine protection. Frustrated by this defeat of his first assault on the Jewish people, the Devil will launch a second attack.

Verses 15-16....¹⁵ "*And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.*"¹⁶ "*But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.*"

Thwarted in his initial attempt to massacre the Jewish people, Satan will resort to long-range tactics. Since the serpent is not an actual snake but a symbolic representation of Satan, the water he spews like a river out of his mouth is likely symbolic as well. In the Old Testament, floods symbolize trouble in general (2 Samuel 22:17; Job 27:20) and an invading, destroying army (Jeremiah 46:8; 47:2; Daniel 11:26). Satan's attacking force will sweep toward the Jews' hiding place like a great flood.

Yet in dramatic fashion, the earth will help the woman; "*it opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.*" The imagery is reminiscent of Moses' description in Exodus 15:12: "*You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them.*" It may be that one of the frequent earthquakes during the tribulation (6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18; Matthew 24:7) will cause the ground to split open and swallow Satan's forces. Whatever this symbolic language pictures, it marks the destruction of the attacking army and the end of Satan's second assault.

Verse 17 describes the third attack.... "*So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus*"

Frustrated, the dragon (Satan) will turn his fury toward new targets. Some have identified "*the rest of her children with whom Satan will make war*" as the 144,000 (7:2–8; 14:1–5). Others see them as believing Gentile tribulation saints (7:9–14), who are sons of Abraham by faith (Galatians 3:7). It seems best to take this as an all-inclusive phrase, referring to all those who name the name of Jesus Christ.

They are further described here in verse 17 as "*those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.*" The word translated here as "commandments" is a word used frequently in John's writings to refer to New Testament commands (14:12; John 14:15, 21; 15:10, 12; 1 John 2:3–4; 3:22–24; 5:2–3). "*The testimony of Jesus*" is not testimony about Him, but the truths He taught that are revealed in the New Testament. These persecuted believers will give further evidence that their salvation is real by their obedience to Scripture.

Like his first two attacks directed against Israel, Satan's third attack on God's people will also fail.

In closing, look again at verse 11... *“And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.”*

John Phillips wrote, “What can Satan do with the likes of these believers? Lock them up in prison and they convert their jailors; torture them and they become partakers of Christ’s sufferings and heirs to a greater reward; martyr them and they go straight to be with Christ; turn them loose and they evangelize the world.”

In four weeks from today we will host our annual Missions Conference March 5-6. Three of our missionaries will travel here to be with us. If you were to ask why they would take such risks to serve the Lord, they would say, “It is all for His glory and our joy.”

How do you overcome the enemy and live for God’s glory?

First, repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and your sins will be forgiven and washed away in the blood of the Lamb.

Second, confess your faith publicly before others – you are an ambassador for Christ.

Third, love Christ more than your own life. 1 Corinthians 6:20 reminds us, *“Your life is not your own. You were bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body.”* 1 Corinthians 10:31, *“Whether you eat or drink (whatever you do), do all for the glory of God.”*

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What did the voices say about the reign of Christ?
2. How did the twenty-four elders respond in the wake of the message of the heavenly voices?
3. What is the kingdom of God and how does it differ from the kingdom of the world? Is the kingdom of God present or future? Or is it both present and future?
4. How did the elders describe “the Lord God, the Almighty”?
5. What is the response of the nations of the world?
6. Whom did the elders describe as deserving a reward? Whom did the elders describe as deserving destruction? What does the promise of both reward and judgment mean to you personally?
7. Where else in Revelation have we read of God’s temple? What is the significance of the fact it is open?
8. How are you personally impacted by the truth/reminder in these chapters that God is sovereign and that all events (past, present, and future) are under His control?
9. What is one specific act you could perform this week to advance the kingdom of God in your neighborhood, school, office, or home?

CHAPTER 22
“The Coming World Ruler”
Revelation 13:1-18

¹ “And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. ² And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. ³ I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; ⁴ they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?” ⁵ There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him. ⁶ And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven. ⁷ It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him. ⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear. ¹⁰ If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints. ¹¹ Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. ¹² He exercises all the authority of the first beast¹ in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. ¹³ He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. ¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life. ¹⁵ And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. ¹⁶ And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, ¹⁷ and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. ¹⁸ Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.”

We are studying the book of Revelation. In our text today we are introduced to the “Antichrist.” The title itself conjures up images of supreme evil and ultimate deception. The prefix “anti” can be translated “against”. As the word then suggests, the Antichrist is the one who is against Christ. The prefix can also be translated “instead of.” Both meanings illustrate the agenda of the Antichrist. This man is both against Jesus Christ and all who follow the Lord, and he will also try to pass himself off as the true Christ; he will attempt to replace the true Messiah.

He is the coming world ruler who will be given power, a throne and great authority from Satan himself (13:2). This demon-possessed man will be a gifted orator, an intellectual genius, possess great charm and charisma, and have immense leadership power. Yet no one in human history will be more completely the devil’s child than the Antichrist. He will be worshiped as a god and the whole world will “*marvel as they follow*” him (13:3). But, his reign of terror will not last. Actually, it will be quite brief: just 42 months or 3.5 years (13:5-7).

Now remember as John records the book of Revelation, the Holy Spirit led him to first to give us a panoramic view of the wrath of God poured on unbelieving world in the form of seals and trumpets, which we have studied at length in the first eleven chapters.

Beginning with Revelation chapter 12, the perspective changes to show the faces of evil involved during this seven-year period – he reveals to us the key participants who will do the bidding of Satan during this time of Tribulation.

John begins in chapter 12 by introducing us to the first and foremost face of evil he called the “*red dragon*”. It is an unusual title for Satan himself; a title which depicts the unleashing of his ferocious, bloodthirsty pursuit of the Jewish people, as well as of the Jews and Gentiles who trust in Christ as their Messiah during the time of Tribulation.

In chapter 13, we are about to be shown Satan’s evil prince, the Antichrist and his minister of propaganda, the False Prophet.

Two beasts are introduced to us in this chapter. The first beast is the Antichrist a political ruler who sets up one world power and the second beast is the false prophet who partners with the Antichrist in establishing one world religion in which the inhabitants of the earth worship the first beast, the Antichrist.

The false religious system, which was supported in this way imitated the divine Trinity. Satan seeks to take the place of God the Father; the first beast assumes the place of Jesus Christ, the Son, the King of kings; and the second beast, the false prophet, has a role similar to the Holy Spirit who causes Christians to worship God. This is Satan’s final attempt to substitute a false religion for true faith in Christ.

And while many have tried to identify exactly who today may be the Antichrist and the false prophet, Revelation 13 is not intended to provoke our speculation as to who they are. Rather, Revelation chapter 13 is God’s design to instruct us now and in every generation concerning what the coming Antichrist will do, how he is empowered and deployed by the dragon (13:2), Satan himself and how the false prophet will delude people into worshipping the Antichrist.

Chapter 13 is a part of a long parenthesis or interlude (10:1-14:20). The seventh trumpet has been sounded but before the judgments are announced in chapter 15, we are here introduced to two beasts. The Antichrist or beast from the sea is the focus of verses 1-10. The false prophet or the beast from the earth is the focus of verses 11-18. Let’s begin with:

I. The Antichrist

I want you to note four features presented here of the Antichrist. The first is:

A. His Appearance

Verse 1... *“And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.”*

When John introduces us to the antichrist in the book of Revelation however, he always refers to him as a “beast”. The word translated “*beast*” is from a Greek word which can be translated “monster”. This is the monstrous person who becomes the world ruler in the last half of the seven-year tribulation.

We know from Revelation chapter 6 and Daniel 9:27 that the Antichrist began his career as a peacemaker and even “settled” the Arab-Israeli problem by making a covenant with the Jews to protect them for seven years. This protection would permit the nation to rebuild the temple and reinstitute religious rituals (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 11:1). But in the middle of the seven-year period (the time we are studying now in Revelation chapters 10–14) the Antichrist will break that covenant, stop the ceremonies, and set up himself as god in the temple (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12).

He is described here in verse 1 as “*the beast*” so that we understand that while he is a man (Rev. 13:18); he is energized from hell, under control of Satan. Just as Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, so “*the beast*” will be Satan in a human body.

In Revelation 20, the sand of the seashore is used to speak of the nations of the world. So, in verse 1, the dragon who is Satan is standing as ruler, so to speak, over the nations of the world. However, this is not enough – he needs a physical body; he needs a man to do his bidding. Satan longs for one who will live and serve as Antichrist!

His “family likeness” to Satan becomes strikingly apparent from John’s description of him as having ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on his horns. That same grotesque description was applied to Satan in 12:3. “*Horns*” in Scripture symbolize strength and power, both for attack and defense. Here they represent the power of the kings who will rule under Antichrist’s authority. “*Ten*” fits the imagery of the fourth beast in Daniel 7:7, 24, and is a symbolic number representing all the world’s political and military might.

The Antichrist will rise from among these ten (Daniel 7:16–24) and will not rule merely ten nations, but the entire world (Daniel 7:23). Unlike the seven heads, which represent successive world empires, all the rulers symbolized by the ten horns will rule at the same time (we will see this again in 17:12).

In addition to his ten horns, the beast is described by John as having seven heads. Those seven heads represent seven successive world empires: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Antichrist’s final world kingdom. The ten diadems indicate the horns’ regal authority and victorious power. John also noted that on the beasts’ heads were blasphemous names. Like many of the Roman emperors and other monarchs before them, these rulers will choose divine names and titles that dishonor the living God.

Verse 2... “*And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.*”

Verse two draws on the vision of Daniel 7:3-8 but in reverse order, perhaps because John is looking at it in the past. Here, three terrifying elements of three great empires of the ancient world are said to characterize the beast. The leopard represented the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great. It speaks of the swiftness of its destructive power. The bear represented Medo-Persia, and symbolized its great strength and devouring power. The lion was Babylon. Majesty power, fierceness are the ideas here.

The Antichrist will be empowered by Satan and given three things: 1) his power, 2) his throne and 3) great authority. His appearance.

B. His Adoration

Verse 3... “*I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed the beast,*”

A startling event will help the Antichrist solidify his hold on the world. John “*saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed.*” Whether this fatal wound, this death, is real or fake is not clear. It may be that Antichrist is really killed and God allows him to be resurrected. More likely, Antichrist’s alleged death and resurrection will be a counterfeit of Christ’s death and resurrection, staged, as one of the “*lying wonders*” perpetrated by the false prophet we will meet in verses 12–15.

Whatever happens, people will believe that Antichrist has transcended death. Since the tribulation will be a time when the world will experience wrath and death at an unequaled level, the Antichrist’s apparent power over death will win him widespread acclaim. As a result, verse 3b says “*the whole earth was amazed and follow after the beast.*”

The world’s fascination with the Antichrist will quickly become worship. 2 Thessalonians 2:4 says he will encourage and demand that worship by “*exalting himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.*”

Verse 4... “*they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”*”

The implied answer to both rhetorical questions is “No one!” Divine worship is substituted by devil worship. Idolatry of the most terrible sort imaginable now blankets the earth. Chuck Swindoll writes, “This rabid fit of idolatry and hyper nationalism will make Hitler’s Third Reich look like a high school sporting event.” Worship of Satan (the dragon) is explicitly mentioned only here in Revelation. Satan desires to be worshiped and treated like God. He always has. He always will.

We have seen the antichrist’s appearance, His adoration. Third:

C. His Activities

The beast’s and his reign of terror will include definite and specific characteristics. These are carefully logged in verses 5-8. Notice verse 5.. “*There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.*”

The phrase “*there was given to him*” refers to God’s sovereign control of events. God will allow the Antichrist to blaspheme and so give full expression to the wickedness that will cover the earth at that time. Directly he is given this mouth by the dragon, but ultimately, he is permitted to speak by God. Like the devil, the antichrist is on God’s leash.

With this mouth he will utter haughty, boastful, proud words of arrogance. He will also speak “*blasphemous words,*” a word appearing 3 times in verses 5-6. The objects of his slanders are noted in verse 6: it is God, His name, His dwelling (“tabernacle”) and His people (“those who dwell in heaven”). Verse 6 ... “*And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.*”

This activity of the Antichrist is clearly portrayed in 2 Thessalonians 2:4: “*He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God...proclaiming himself to be God.*”

These blasphemies, these slanders, indeed will go on for a sustained period of time. John says in verse 5 it will be for 42 months or 3 ½ years. But not only will he speak against God and His people, he will act against God and His people. Verse 7... *“It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.”*

He will persecute God’s people and many will perish as they take their faithful stand for the Lamb. Conquering the people of God will not satisfy the insatiable appetite of Satan and his Antichrist.

Why does the antichrist pull out all the stops? He does so because his time is short; because he only has forty-two months left. He will be passionate to dishonor Jesus Christ.

By the way, if only we would have such passion to honor Jesus Christ, knowing our time to serve Him in this life is short. Who knows how many months you and I have left to bring Him glory with our lives? The antichrist is passionate to defy God, are we passionate to obey? The Antichrist loves to blaspheme God, do we love to praise? The antichrist is eager to corrupt others, are we eager to share Christ and convert others? The antichrist is zealous to dishonor Christ, are we zealous to honor Christ as Lord and Savior?

We have seen the antichrist’s :

- Appearance 13:1-2
- His Adoration 13:3-4
- His Activities 13:5-7

D. His Admirers

Look at verse 8... *“All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.”*

The phrase *“all who dwell on the earth”* in verse 8 is used throughout Revelation to describe unbelievers and does not include everyone who will be alive at that time. Here the limiting factor is specifically stated. Notice it is *“everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.”*

Seven times in the New Testament, believers are identified as those whose names are written in the Book of Life (3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; Philippians 4:3). The Book of Life is the registry in which God inscribed the names of those chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world.

Not only the decree of election, but also the atoning work of Christ seals the redemption of His elect forever. Peter reminds us in 1 Peter 1:18-19 that believers *“were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold ... but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”* The Antichrist may take the lives of Christians, but he cannot destroy their faith.

How are the persecuted saints to respond to their persecution? Verse 9.. *“If anyone has an ear, let him hear.”*

The warning *“If anyone has an ear, let him hear”* is echoed fifteen times in the New Testament with the phrase *“He who has an ear ...”* to emphasize a particularly important truth. In all its previous uses in Revelation (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22), it is followed by the phrase *“what the Spirit says to the churches.”* The omission of that phrase

suggests that the church is not in view in this passage, having been raptured before the start of the tribulation. Revelation 3:10, *“I will keep you from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole world.”*

Verse 10... . *“If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.”* This proverb contains important practical truth for those believers alive at the time of Antichrist’s persecution. They are to depend on God’s providence and not take matters into their own hands.”

Remembering that God is sovereign over all that happens and that the dragon and the beast have only a short time, will provide hope and strength for believers to persevere and trust in God. After describing four elements of the Antichrist: His appearance, His adoration, His activities and His admirers. We are now introduced to the False Prophet.

II. The False Prophet

Verse 11.. *“Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon.”*

Notice the first of three features of the false prophet.

A. His Person

In contrast to the first beast, who will come up out of the sea (13:1), the second beast will come up out of the earth. Like the Antichrist, the false prophet will be indwelt by a demon out of the abyss (13:1), which is pictured here as coming out of the depths of the earth.

The description of the first beast, with its ten horns, seven heads, ten crowns, and seven blasphemous names (13:1), was grotesque and frightening. In contrast, the second beast merely had two horns. That indicates that he is not characterized by the same massive might as Antichrist. Unlike the savage, ferocious, fierce, and deadly Antichrist, who is likened to a leopard, bear, and lion (13:2), the false prophet seems as harmless as a lamb. Instead of ten horns he has two little horns. He does not come as a conquering dictator, but appears as a subtle deceiver, with meekness and gentleness, though not without great authority.

Jesus said in Matthew 7:15, *“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits.”*

Despite his deceptive appearance, the false prophet is no less a child of hell than the Antichrist. That is evident because verse 11 says *“he spoke as a dragon”* —a strange voice indeed for a lamb. The dragon is Satan, and this where he gets his second feature:

B. His Power

Verse 12... . *“He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.”*

Simply put, his passion is to bring about a one-world religion that raises the voice of humanity to praise and glorify the false messiah. He literally will function as one who seeks to glorify the antichrist.

And we begin to see here is nothing less than a counterfeit trinity.

1. The first person – Satan – anti-God who is the father of this plan and scheme.
2. The second person – Satan’s “son of perdition” – the antichrist – a human being empowered by him to perform his bidding.
3. The third person – anti-spirit (the False Prophet)– the one who exalts the “*son of perdition*” and seals his followers forever. This is the anti-trinity – the counterfeit trinity from the kingdom of darkness, coming to deceive the world from following the true and living God and those heading for the kingdom of heaven.

Verses 13-14... ¹³ *“He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. ¹⁴ And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.”*

The false prophet, energized by Satan, will perform his “*lying wonders*” and even duplicate some of the signs performed by the two witnesses that we saw in chapter 11. Up to this time, the two witnesses have been ministering at the temple in Jerusalem, but “*the beast*” will slay them and take over the temple.

As a result of these deceptive powers, the earth-dwellers obey the false prophet and erect an idolatrous image. This echoes Daniel 3:1–6, where Nebuchadnezzar constructs a 90-foot gold idol and commands the nations to worship it.

We have seen the False Prophet’s person, His power and third:

C. His Program

Verse 15... *“And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”*

The false prophet will animate the image of Antichrist so that it gives the appearance of being alive. With today’s amazing special effects technology, that is not out of the realm of possibility. Add to that the world’s desperate need, amid the carnage of the tribulation, to believe in a death conqueror, and the deception becomes very believable.

After his immense worldwide success and after dropping his façade of gentleness, the false prophet will cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. Many of the martyrs mentioned earlier in Revelation (6:9–11; 7:13–14) are those who will be killed during this terrible time of persecution.

Verses 16... *“And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead,”*

“*Mark*” was the term for images or names of the emperor on Roman coins. In the ancient world, such marks (tattoos or brands) were commonly given to slaves, soldiers, and devotees of religious cults.

We saw in Revelation 7:2-3 that God sealed, with a mark on the forehead, the 144,000 to preserve them from His wrath against the unbelieving world. In fact, look at 14:1... *“Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.”*

But in 13:16 the false prophet marks the unsaved to preserve them from Antichrist's wrath against God's people. The mark will signify that the person bearing it is a loyal follower of the Antichrist.

Refusing to take the mark of the beast will have dire practical consequences in daily living: no one will be able to buy or to sell without it. Verse 17... *“and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.”*

Antichrist's empire will maintain strict economic control over the world. Food, and the other necessities of life in demand on the devastated earth, will be unobtainable for those without the mark. Currency will probably vanish, to be replaced by controlled credit. Instead of a credit card, people will have a mark of some unspecified type in their forehead or hand.

Verse 18... *“Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.”*

This special mark is the name or number of *“the beast”*—the mystical 666. In Revelation 22:4, when believers see Christ in eternity, we are told that *“the Lord's name will be on their foreheads”*, so once more the antichrist is imitating or parodying Christ.

Perhaps no detail in Revelation has intrigued people more than this number 666. There has been no end to the speculation as to its significance and how to calculate it. Bible students have been attempting for years to unravel the mystery of this name and number. If you work at it hard enough, almost any name will fit!

But the simple truth is this: Since the Antichrist is still to come, the number 666 cannot be associated with any historical individual.

Friends, the good news is that the mission of the church is not a puzzle – it has never changed. I read this week of a search and rescue team in Colorado. When asked about their mission they responded “Millions of people visit the mountains Colorado each year. A few will become lost, stranded, or injured – and some will die. Our objective is to find and rescue these lost or injured people before it is too late. We are dedicated to saving lives.”

I think that is a great reminder of our simple mission to know Christ and make Him known. From the first century to the twenty-first century, our commission remains the same. Jesus said in Matthew 28:18, *“Go – make disciples, baptizing and teaching them all I have commanded you – and listen, I am with you always.”*

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. Describe what John saw rising from the sea. Where else is this animal mentioned? How does it compare to the dragon in chapter 12?
2. What did the people do according to 13:4? What does this tell you?
3. Peace is good, but “peace at any price” is unacceptable for the Christian. In what ways have you been lured into a compromising situation just to maintain peace?
4. How do we see God’s sovereignty in what the beast can do? Compare Daniel 7:1-8 with Revelation 13:2. What is the interpretation of Daniel’s vision and how might it relate to what John saw? See also 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 for more insight as to the possible identity of this beast. What practical words do we see in John’s epistle about the Antichrist (1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6)?
5. The coming world leaders is also attractive to the general population because of his miraculous powers. Some would say “if it is miraculous, it must be from God.” What is the best way to discern truth from error? See Acts 17:11 and 2 Timothy 3:15- 16.
6. Read 13:16-18. What tactic does the beast use to separate unbelievers from true believers? What tactics are used today to pull us away from worship of the one true God? What do we know of this number and what don’t we know?

CHAPTER 23
“The Victory of the Lamb and His Followers”
Revelation 14:1-5

¹“Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads. ²And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. ³And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth. ⁴These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.”

Last week Paula and I were babysitting our grandchildren. One evening as we were putting them to bed, our three-year-old grandson Hudson asked, “Can you sing me a song?” Paula and I looked at each other and started singing Amazing Grace. And when we finished singing Amazing Grace and He asked for another song, and the song that came to mind was Victory in Jesus.

That song is one that we would sing with our children around the dinner table, Victory in Jesus. “I heard an old, old story, how a Savior came from glory, how He gave his life on Calvary to save a wretch like me. I heard about His healing, of His saving power revealing, how He made the lame to walk again and caused the blind to see. Oh, victory in Jesus, my Savior forever He sought me and bought me with His redeeming blood He loved me 'ere I knew Him and all my love is due Him He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.”

The song Victory in Jesus is a story of redeeming power from start to finish. It is a joyous song and it was written by Eugene Bartlett during the darkest period of his life. He wanted to focus on the victory that Christ has purchased for believers and he chose to make the melody full of joy and enthusiasm.

This morning we begin Revelation chapter 14. In the midst of much darkness, fear and evil in our present world, and in the utter terror of the future time of the Antichrist in Revelation 13, our text today begins with a glorious picture of the joy of God’s people singing and celebrating the victory that we have in Jesus.

In order to understand this text, we need to remember that chapters 12–14 of Revelation form an interlude in the midst of God’s final judgments on the sinful world. We studied the unfolding of those judgments in chapters 6–11. We saw in chapter 11, verse 15, the sounding of the seventh trumpet, but the judgments associated with it will not begin to unfold until chapter 15.

So, chapters 12 and 13 describe the events of the Tribulation that we saw back in chapters 6 thru 11, but this time giving a description of the unholy trinity that are involved in the events: Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet. Chapter 12 exposes Satan’s efforts to destroy Israel and chapter 13 detail the careers of the Antichrist and the final false prophet.

Chapter 14 is a stark contrast that returns to what our sovereign God is doing. In fact, it is another scene in Revelation that looks ahead and sees with such certainty what is going to happen that it is described as if it has

already happened. And what John sees is a monumental moment in redemptive history. He sees the Lamb standing on Mount Zion and with him the 144,000 Jewish believers that we were introduced to back in chapter 7.

Our text today is a bright contrast to the darkness of chapter 13, which describes Satan (the dragon), Antichrist, the final false prophet, deception, the unredeemed, idolatry, and the mark of the beast. Chapter 14 describes the Lamb, angels, redeemed saints, genuine worship, and those sealed by God. In chapter 13 there is falsehood, wickedness, corruption, and blasphemy; in chapter 14 there is truth, righteousness, purity, and praise.

In addition to its prophetic significance, our text today provides important practical principles for triumphant Christian living. This morning we will look at three features that characterize the 144,000:

First, we will see the Identification of the 144,000 in verse 1
 Their Association with the Lamb
 Their Assurance of belonging to the Lamb

Second, the Celebration of the 144,000 Verses 2-3
 We will hear a United Choir with the heavenly saints praising the Lamb and His victory
 An Unknown Chorus as this is a new song for those who endured the Tribulation Verse 3

Third, the Presentation of the 144,000 Verses 4-5
 Their Spiritual Purity
 Their Sacrificial Perseverance
 Their Sanctified Position

My prayer is that we will each see the power, majesty and glory of the victorious Lamb. And that no matter who or what may be tempting you, distracting you, discouraging you – that you will see your afflictions, trials and temptations as momentary burdens that are producing for you an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

My prayer is that you will have a new song in your heart that rests on the victory we have in Jesus. May it be said of believers at Cornerstone, they follow Jesus the lamb of God wherever He leads and they love to give Him all the glory and praise. Let's begin with:

I. The Identification of the 144,000

Verse 1.. *“Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.”*

The phrase *“I looked, and behold”* appears frequently in Revelation to introduce startling, dramatic events (4:1; 6:2, 5, 8; 7:9; 15:5; 19:11). What arrested John's attention was the awe-inspiring sight of the Lamb ... standing on Mount Zion. The book of Revelation depicts the Lamb as slain (5:6; 13:8), glorified (5:8, 12–13), exalted (7:9–10), the Redeemer (7:14) and Shepherd (7:17) of His people, and the Lord of Lords and King of Kings (17:14). The Lamb is our victorious Jesus Christ!

The appearance of the Lamb on Mount Zion is a monumental moment in redemptive history. The psalmist wrote of this moment in Psalm 2:6–9 where God says, *“But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.”*

Mount Zion has both an earthly reference – the city of Jerusalem – and a heavenly reference in Hebrews 12:22 as the heavenly city of God, yet to come. But of the 162 references to Mount Zion in the bible, 160 of them refer to the literal place of Jerusalem.

And in verse 2 we are told that John is looking at these men standing with Christ at Mount Zion and they hear a voice from heaven. So, this scene takes us to the end of the Tribulation and John is given a picture of Jesus after the second coming, standing among the 144,000 Jewish believers in Jerusalem.

The 144,000 will not be the only ones redeemed during the Tribulation. Zechariah 12:10–14; 13:1, 9; Romans 11:26–27 tell us a great host of Jews will be saved and Matthew 25:31–46 tells us many Gentiles will be saved. Many who come to saving faith during the Tribulation will die as martyrs during the savage persecution unleashed by Antichrist. The rest, however, who will live through the horrors of the Tribulation will enter the millennial kingdom. But the 144,000 Jewish evangelists are unique because all of them, every single one, will survive. When Christ returns and stands on Mount Zion, they will stand with Him in triumph.

There are a couple of things we need to consider concerning 144,000.

A. Their Association

We first met these 144,000 in Revelation 7:3–4. Remember at the end of chapter 6 we are told that when the sixth seal is opened the unsaved on earth “*will hide in caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’*”

And the answer is given in chapter 7, who will be able to stand? The 144,000 who are sealed by God. You don’t need to fear God if He has sealed you under His divine provision and protection.

And in chapter 13 we met the unholy trinity of the Devil, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet working together to establish an earthly kingdom that worships a false messiah, all an attempt to replace the coming millennial kingdom of Christ. And we saw that the devil caused all rich and poor, small and great to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. The mark of the beast. And anyone who did not worship the Antichrist would be killed.

And the question at the end of chapter 13, is this: Is there going to be anyone who is able to survive the Great Tribulation, the last 3.5 years of the seven-year Tribulation when the Antichrist is being worshipped. Is there anyone who refused the mark of the beast, anyone who refused to worship the beast, anyone who faithfully follows and serves Christ and is going to live to tell about it? The answer is in chapter 14. A resounding Yes!

Just like chapter 6 asked who can stand and chapter 7 answers, now in chapter 13 who will survive in faithfulness to Christ and the answer in chapter 14, those are sealed, set apart, and sanctified in Christ will make it. We have seen the association of the 144,000. Let’s consider:

B. Their Assurance

Verse 1b, “*His name and the name of His father was written on their foreheads.*” Their emblem of recognition distinguishes these believers from the worshipers of the beast (13:16). They bear the name of the Lamb and of

His Father because they belong to the Father and the Son, not to the dragon and the beast. This is the same seal mentioned in 7:3 and is the mark of ultimate security and victory.

Satan and the unbelieving world will desperately seek to kill these powerful, fearless preachers of the gospel. But, having marked them as His own possession, God will not permit them to be harmed. Throughout the outpouring of God's final judgments and Satan's final fury, the 144,000 will preach the gospel. They will confront unbelievers with their sins, call them to repentance and faith in the Savior, and proclaim that the catastrophes taking place are God's righteous judgments. And despite Satan's best efforts, all 144,000 will survive to meet Christ on Mount Zion at His second coming. They will enter the millennial kingdom as living men.

Most likely, the 144,000 will continue their evangelistic work throughout that thousand-year period. While only redeemed people will enter the kingdom, the children born to them will not all believe. In fact, we will see in Revelation chapter 20 that there will be enough unregenerate people by the end of the Millennium for Satan to lead a worldwide rebellion against Christ's rule. Isaiah 60:3 and Zechariah 8:23 speak of salvation during the Millennium - a salvation the 144,000 will no doubt proclaim.

We need to remember that our sovereign God will protect His own and bring them triumphantly through their trials. That is true both of survivors on earth, like the 144,000, and of Christian martyrs in heaven like those described in Revelation 6:9–11 and 7:9–17.

Believers are eternally secure, Jesus declared in John 10:28-29, "*My sheep hear my voice and follow Me, no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*" Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6, "*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

If you are a Christian then as 1 Peter 1:5 says, that you can know you are "*protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*" As believers we can live courageously and minister boldly knowing that God is in control.

Look with me at the majestic words of Romans 8:35-39 that eloquently summarize the marvelous truth that God protects and delivers His own....³⁵ *Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"*³⁶ *Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."*³⁷ *But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.*³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,*³⁹ *nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The Identification of the 144,000 is followed by:

II. The Celebration of the 144,000

Verse 2.. "*And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.*"

Notice a couple features of this celebration. It is:

A. An Unending Celebration

John described “*a voice, (singular) as the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder.*” This mighty voice was not mere noise. It had a musical quality, notice the end of verse 2 says it is “*like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.*” The reference to harpists and harps suggests that this is a joyful sound, a joyful voice. (2 Samuel 6:5; 1 Chronicles 13:8; 15:16, 28; 2 Chronicles 5:12–13; Nehemiah 12:27; Psalms 33:2; 71:22; 144:9; 150:3).

Verse 3... “*And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.*”

B. An Unknown Chorus

They will learn to sing a new song that no man can sing but these 144,000. It will be a song that is unique unto them. Why? They alone have endured these trials and they made it thru alive because of the mark of God on them. Many believers are being martyred for their faith, but these have known the redemption and protection of God to bring them safely through the Tribulation. They alone will know the words to this glorious song.

Henry Morris writes, “Although the words of the song of the 144,000 are not recorded, it surely dwells in part at least on the great truth that they had been ‘redeemed from the earth.’ Although in one sense all saved people have been redeemed from the earth, these could know the meaning of such a theme in a more profound way than others. They had been saved after the rapture, at that time in history when man’s greatest persecutions and God’s greatest judgments were on the earth. It was at such a time that they, like Noah (Gen 6:8) had ‘*found grace in the eyes of the Lord*’ and had been separated from ‘*all that dwell upon the earth*’ (Rev 13:8). Not only had they been redeemed spiritually but, percussively as it were, they had been redeemed from the very curse on the earth (Gen 3:17), being protected from pain and death by the guarding seal of God.”

God did this work on their behalf and the saints in heaven rejoice not just over their preservation but because the Lamb has returned. All of heaven will overflow with praise because God’s redemptive work culminating in the return of Christ is accomplished.

We can’t sing that unknown chorus, but every child of God has a song to sing! Psalm 40:2-3 reminds me I have a song within my heart for the Lord. I know what it is to be brought out of the miry clay of sin. I know what it is to have been placed upon the Rock of my salvation. I know what it is to feel His presence near me.

What kind of song are you able to sing today? What lyrics can you identify with?

Perhaps you are discouraged and worried about a wayward child? Perhaps you are fearful of what you see happening in the world? Maybe you could identify with the song we started with:

There’s a river that flows
 With mercy and love
 Bringing joy to the city of our God
 There our hope is secure
 Do not fear anymore
 Praise the Lord of living waters.

Or perhaps you are blind to the treasure you have in Jesus because you have put your hope in the stock market, or in a career, or in a savings account. Now you can identify with the truth of the song:

I will not boast in wealth or might
 Or human wisdom's fleeting light
 But I will boast in knowing Christ
 At the cross
 I rejoice in my Redeemer
 Greatest Treasure
 Wellspring of my soul
 I will trust in Him, no other
 My soul is satisfied in Him alone.

Or perhaps you are in the midst of suffering and pain and you wonder does God even care and how long will it go on? Or maybe you are overwhelmed with the guilt of your sin and you don't know what to do? And the song from Psalm 130, (I will wait for you) seems especially written for you:

God, were You to count my sinful ways
 How could I come before Your throne
 Yet full forgiveness meets my gaze
 I stand redeemed by grace alone

I will wait for You
 I will wait for You
 On Your word, I will rely
 I will wait for You
 Surely wait for You
 Till my soul is satisfied

You know, there are many in the secular music industry who earn large sums of money as music artists, but they can't sing our song. Our song is sung from the heart to the glory of our Redeemer. When you are truly redeemed, when you are born again by faith alone in Christ alone, then you cannot help but sing of God's amazing grace.

J.I. Packard said, "Any theology that does not lead to song is, at a fundamental level, a flawed theology." Theology is not meant to increase the size of your head, but the size of your heart.

There is coming a day when Christ will come down and stand on Mount Zion. And that moment will be marked by singing. According to everything we are being taught in the book of Revelation: There will come a day when we will stand with Christ. There will come a day when we will sing with Christ.

But you don't need to wait for that day. Stand for Jesus now. Let the singing begin now – in preparation for the coming day when all heaven sings.

Add songs to your life that will inspire and encourage you to: glorify Christ; stand for Christ; serve Christ; wait for Christ; love Christ.

We have seen the identification of the 144,000. The celebration of the 144,000.

III. The Presentation of the 144,000

We see three virtues of their character:

A. Their Spiritual Purity

Verse 4a... *“These are the ones who have not been defiled with women,”*

In the midst of the darkness of the Tribulation period, the 144,000 will shine forth like beacons of purity. Despite the rampant sexual sin that surrounds them, they will not be defiled with women, but will keep themselves chaste.

This is not teaching that sex within marriage is sinful, but rather the 144,000 will say No to sexual sin that will be so prolific during the time of the Antichrist.

Garrett Kell writes in his book entitled *Pure in Heart*: “Satan offers a cup of promised refreshment but doesn’t disclose the drop of poison within. He is a master counterfeiter, assuring you that compromise will not kill; that you can escape any time you like. Like a fisherman who presents the bait and hides the hook, Satan fishes for us with personalized lures. He has studied you and knows what you like. He desires nothing more than to keep you from seeing Christ. So he does all he can to keep your Bible closed, your prayer closet empty, your fellowship shallow, and your trust in God’s promises hollow.”

The 144,000 recognized the poison in the cup and said No to sexual sin so they could say Yes to following Jesus. And that leads to the second thing we see in them:

B. Their Sacrificial Perseverance

Verse 4b ..*“These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.”*

They were consistent in serving the Lord and following His commands. Their lives were lived entirely for the Lord, come what may. The perseverance of these servants of God challenged my heart because they served God in the midst of great Tribulation.

We often find it hard to serve Him in a Christian environment. But we have fellow believers and the church to lean on. God expects us to live committed to Him and His purpose for our lives. The word follow means to be in the same way as someone else.

In Matthew 16:24 Jesus said, *“If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.”* In Matthew 19:21 Jesus advised the rich young ruler, *“If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”*

In John 10:27 Jesus told the unbelieving Jews that they were not His sheep, noting that *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.”* Their sacrificial perseverance was followed by:

C. Their Sanctified Position

Verse 5.. *“And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless”*

The 144,000 will not propagate Satan's lies, but will speak God's truth. They will be like those of whom Zephaniah wrote: "*The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths*" Zephaniah 3:13.

The 144,000 will accurately proclaim the Word of God without wavering, equivocating, or altering it. Because they will trust in God's power and lead lives characterized by praise, purity, devoted loyalty, and singleness of purpose, the 144,000 will be blameless. That does not, of course, mean that they will be sinless, but they will be sanctified. They will be above reproach, leading godly lives before all who see them.

So, we have seen the identification, the celebration and the presentation of the 144,000. Are there lessons we can learn from these spiritual heroes. Let me close with two:

1. Instead of dreading Satan and the darkness of the world, delight in God and have hope in Him.

The stark contrast between chapter 13 and chapter 14 is meant to give us hope. If God is giving hope for the worst of times, in the end times, then He is giving hope to us today in the present time. If God gives hope in the worst of times, He certainly gives us hope now even when you feel that everything in California politically, morally, and spiritually is only getting worse. It is not as bad as the tribulation. So however bad you think the times are, do not give evil more power than it really has. Don't succumb to culture and complain, don't be the Christian who implies that the sky is falling and Satan is going to win, but trust God and follow Him. Be faithful and persevere in following and praising our victorious Christ!

As 2 Corinthians 2:14 declares, "*But thanks be to God, who always leads us in victory in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.*"

2. Faithfully follow the voice of the Lamb.

These 144,000 are the first fruits. They are not even here, not even born yet, but they are inviting us to follow them as the first fruits. They did not believe the lies of the devil; they did not get defiled with the temptations of this world.

On page 95 of *Pure in Heart*, author Garrett Kell writes, "When you are tempted today, remember the last day. Make decisions today that you will be grateful for ten thousand years from now. With each passing moment, we draw nearer to that day when we'll be saved to sin no more. Until then, read often of heaven and ask God to make you homesick for that everlasting city where the pure in heart will see him at last. Kill your love for sin, or sin will kill your love for God."

If you want to follow the 144,000 but you feel hopeless. Remember the source of their victory. The answer is in the middle of verse 4, "*They are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.*" The way they remain pure, truthful and blameless is they follow the Lamb. Who do you follow? Whose voice is loudest in your ear? Is it social media? Is it the news on TV or the internet? Is it a friend, your boss or coworker? Whose voice are you following? Do you open this book? The Bible is the HIM Book; Jesus is the theme and focus of the Bible.

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "If you follow the Lamb, you may be called to suffer, you may have to lose friends, you may come under the cruel lash of slander. Whatever the cost may be, follow the Lamb, and say to yourself: "Through floods and flames, if Jesus leads, I'll follow where He goes." The blood-spattered footprints of my Master shall receive mine! Not with equal strides, but still with gladsome footsteps, I will follow in His track."

I love that last statement, “Not with equal strides (I cannot walk as blamelessly as Christ), but still with gladsome footsteps, I will follow in His track.”

Listen friends, you will not know someone you don't love, and you won't follow someone you don't trust.

Love Christ and follow Him. May we at Cornerstone love Christ, know Him and make Him known.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. How does God's care, protection, and preservation of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries encourage you and embolden you in your witness for Christ? 2-27-22
2. How do we know that Mount Zion in verse 1 is a place on earth and not just a reference to heaven?
3. What is the significance of the Lamb standing on Mount Zion with the 144,000? What does this mark the beginning of?
4. Look back to Revelation 7:3-4, who are these 144,000?
5. What were they singing in 14:3? Whom did they sing before? Who could learn the song?
6. It has been said that worship is most meaningful and effective when it is rooted in God's inexhaustible greatness and glory. What songs help you love Christ, serve Him, follow Him, and wait for Him?
7. The difference between a believer and an unbeliever is how they react to the Word of God. How does God's Word bring both comfort and conviction to your heart?
8. Are the 144,000 kept from marriage or from sexual sin? What's the difference? 9. What can we learn and apply from Revelation 14:1-5?

CHAPTER 24
“Three Angels with Messages”
Revelation 14:6-13

⁶”And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people; ⁷and he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.’ ⁸And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality’. ⁹Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.’ ¹¹And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” ¹²Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. ¹³And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’ ”

A Washington Post article that was published just this past Thursday, March 10 had this headline: “Russia’s war on Ukraine has some Christians wondering: Is this the end of the world?”

Is this the end of the world? Are we in the end times? More specifically, are we in the seven-year tribulation? God gave us the book of Revelation to tell us what must take place in the end times, to help us understand that terrible times are coming but also reveal the glorious victory that we have in our savior, Jesus Christ.

We need to be careful that we don’t read the news as if it was the Bible and read the Bible as if it was the news. Instead, what we need to do is study the Bible in its context and understand what will be the clear signs of the coming tribulation.

We discovered in Revelation 6 Jesus breaks open the seals one at a time. As He does, judgments come on the earth. The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse ride on the surface of the earth bringing judgments and suffering. The sixth seal brings the end of the physical universe as we know it — the sun, moon, and stars falling, and every mountain and island removed from its place. Chapter 6 ends with the question, where will there be a refuge from the wrath of God?

Revelation chapter 7 answers that question. The refuge is Jesus Christ. Those who flee to Christ, including 12,000 who are sealed from each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and a multitude greater than anyone could count from every tribe, language, people, and nation, the answer to the question “Who shall be able to stand?” Sinners who are redeemed and saved by the shed blood of Christ. In fact, all who trust in Christ stand fully forgiven in white robes celebrating the salvation that God alone can give.

The Lamb breaks open the seventh seal as Revelation 8 begins, and the seventh seal contains seven trumpet judgments. They start to flow, bringing a level of suffering and judgment on earth such as we can hardly imagine. The first four trumpets in Revelation 8 are terrifying judgments on the ecology of the earth: on the green vegetation, burning up all the green grass, a third of the trees, and a third of the earth; on the oceans, turning a third of them into blood and killing a third of all the aquatic creatures in the ocean; on the fresh water, turning a

third of the water to poison so that people cannot drink it.; the light of the sun and the moon and the stars is reduced by a third.

In Revelation 9, the fifth and sixth trumpets unleash a horde of demons coming up out of a shaft from deep in the earth. It is a demonic assault on the human race likened to a plague of locusts and the attack of scorpions. People are in agony for five months, crying out for death, which will elude them. This is followed by an invasion of a demonic army, 200 million strong, bringing death to one-third of earth's population (that would equate to 2.63 billion people dying today).

So, are we in the end times? More specifically, are we in the seven-year tribulation? The answer is clearly No. God gave us the book of Revelation to tell us what must soon take place to help us understand that terrible times are coming but also reveal the glorious victory that we have in our savior, Jesus Christ.

Keep in mind that these three warnings by the angels are given by grace from a loving God who is perfectly just. Wrath is most certainly coming, so be warned and flee while there is time. Those who take the warnings seriously will flee to Christ and find a Savior. God will literally send these three angels with three messages, but He is not obligated to give any warnings. We have their message already recorded in Scripture, which is sufficient warning.

God in His providence has you listening to this message from Revelation 14 and my prayer is that if you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you will turn from sin and bow your knee to the Lord Jesus and ask Him to save you and change you, to make you a child of God.

And if you do know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, my prayer is that you will be a faithful ambassador of truth and joy in sharing the good news of the gospel of Jesus with others and warning them of the judgment that awaits the unrepentant sinner. And that you will be encouraged by the truth of the perseverance of the saints

Thru these angels God will graciously offer sinners another opportunity to repent before unleashing the terrifying bowl judgments. We will see:

The First Angel: Preaching the Gospel	Verses 6-7
The Second Angel: Pronouncing Judgment	Verse 8
The Third Angel: Promising Hell	Verses 9-11
The Heavenly Reward for the Faithful	Verses 12-13

And that forms our outline of our text:

I. The First Angel: Preaching the Gospel

Verses 6-7... ⁶“*And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;* ⁷*and he said with a loud voice, ‘Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters ‘.*”

Notice the angel in verse 6 is preaching “*an eternal gospel.*” Here it is described as “*eternal*” because it provides the means to eternal life. It is also eternal in that it is timeless and unchanged. It is the same gospel that has been preached throughout human history – that mankind is sinful and in need of atonement in order to be right with God.

The pre-Christ world looked forward to the coming Messiah who would suffer for the sins of the world (Genesis 3:15). The people of the Old Testament world had the gospel promises delivered to them that a suffering One was coming, upon whom the Father would place the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

The ancient world looked forward to the cross where Jesus Christ would be the atonement for sin, while we look back in faith to the cross of Christ where He bore our sins in His body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24).

It would seem that the angel's warnings would be contradictory. After all, by this point people will have experienced the devastating seal and trumpet judgments of God. The earth will have been devastated by worldwide wars, famines, and earthquakes. Chapter 6:15-17 we learn they eventually will realize those disasters are God's judgments, yet they will defiantly refuse to repent (9:20-21).

Still, in His grace and mercy, God will again call sinners to repentance through the preaching of this angel. The angel's message is addressed to *"those who live on the earth,"* a phrase always used in Revelation to refer to unbelievers. The all-inclusive phrase *"every nation and tribe and tongue and people"* stresses the comprehensive, worldwide nature of the angel's proclamation. The angel will call out with a loud voice to all unregenerate people everywhere. His loud voice ensures that he will be heard and emphasizes the urgency of his message. The angel's message to sinners is *"Fear God, and give Him glory."*

To *"fear God"* means to reverence Him and honor Him. Solomon wrote in Proverbs 9:10 that the fear of God is the beginning of true wisdom. Peter challenged his readers to fear God in I Peter 2:17. The world would be fearful of retribution by the antichrist with his murderous agenda against all who follow Christ.

But Jesus said in Matthew 10:28 *"Don't be afraid of someone who can only hurt your body temporarily; . . . fear God who is able to bring torment to both soul and body in hell."*

The angel not only preached from the sky for mankind to fear God, but to glorify God. And to give Him glory! This means to elevate Him, honor Him, and exalt Him – for He is worthy of all glory!

Notice again verse 7... ; *"and he said with a loud voice, 'Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters' "*.

Unbelievers will be called to fear and glorify God immediately *"because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters."* The created universe both offers proof of God's existence and provides grounds for worshiping Him. Psalm 19:1 says *"The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands."*

Every person on the planet who sees a sunrise and a sunset knows there is a Creator. But God's physical creation is not sufficient alone to save people, they still need to hear the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Seeing the extent that this first angel can preach the gospel to the nations, it is tempting to ask the Lord to send angels to preach instead of sending us. If the angels took care of reaching the nations, then there would be no need for sending missionaries, taking missions offerings, and hosting missions conferences. If the angels took care of declaring the gospel to all the nations, then we would not need passports, visas, or dealing with TSA or customs. After all, angels are relentlessly determined, completely obedient, fearless; they cannot be killed, hurt or arrested; they cannot be stopped.

However, the ministry of reconciliation has been entrusted to humans. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, “*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.*”

In the great commission of Matthew 28:19, Jesus said, “*Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.*”

We cannot be lazy and lean back on angelic intervention for unreached people groups. We have no biblical right to assume that God will send an angel to those people. We are called to reach out to those who have never heard the Gospel.

Wasn't that a great missions conference last weekend? Thank you to the missions committee and for all who attended, thank you for being here and for the love and interest you showed our missionaries. And thank you for your generosity as you gave over 8,000 dollars toward missions.

The first angel came preaching the gospel. We have been entrusted with the good news of the gospel too, and we are to clearly share it with those who in our homes, neighborhoods, schools and workplace.

II. The Second Angel: Pronouncing Judgment

Verse 8 .. “*And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.’*”

Unlike the first one, the second angel does not preach the good news of the gospel but pronounces the bad news of judgment. Sadly, that implies that the first angel's message was largely rejected. The second angel's equally brief and direct message is “*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great.*”

The introduction of Babylon without explanation assumes that the readers would understand the allusion. The city of Babylon on the Euphrates River had become the political and religious capital of a world empire. The original city of Babylon was the birthplace of idolatry where the residents built the Tower of Babel, a monument to rebelliousness and false religion. Such idolatry was subsequently spread when God confounded man's language and scattered them around the world in Genesis 11.

Babylon in this passage refers not just to the city, but to Antichrist's worldwide political, economic, and religious empire. “*Babylon*” is God's name for the world system of “the beast,” the entire economic and political organization by which he rules.

Notice the repetition in verse 8, “*Fallen, fallen is Babylon*” – the repetition underscores the certainty of Babylon's judgment. Babylon's future fall is so certain that it can be spoken of as though it has already taken place. The actual fall of Babylon will occur at the end of the tribulation as described in Revelation 18, the announcement is made by the second angel again and again to assure those on earth that Babylon will soon be destroyed.

The world drinks this intoxicating wine of spiritual adultery, immorality and corruption that destroys the soul. The Greek word translated “passion” describes strong, consuming desires. As a result of their passion, sinners will engage in great rebellion and the nations of the world will continue on their course of spiritual defection. The world will be intoxicated and seduced by the Babylonian false religion headed by Antichrist.

The first angel preaches the gospel, the second angel pronounces the judgment.

III. The Third Angel: Promising Hell

Look at verses 9-10 .. ⁹ *“Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.’ ”*

The third angel pronounces a much worse fate for those who do worship the beast and bear his mark. They will drink the wine of God’s wrath and endure eternal torment in hell.

The angel describes hell as a place of fire and brimstone. The words “*fire*” and “*brimstone*” or “*sulfur*” occur together six times in the book of Revelation. Four times they refer to the lake of fire and brimstone that is the destination of unbelievers. This phrase, “*fire and brimstone,*” takes us back to Genesis 19:24 when, “*the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire.*”

Notice they will suffer in the presence of the Lamb and his holy angels. Robert Mounce writes, “To suffer in the presence of the hosts of heaven is not to lessen the fierceness of the judgment but to make it more grievous.”

There is no presence of believers who see their oppressors burning in hell. It is only the holy and the Lamb who witness divine retribution upon the wicked.

Notice verse 11, “*The smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night.*” The punishment of the condemned is not a temporary measure. Many try to soften the idea of damnation in hell, saying it is not eternal punishment but annihilation. This popular belief that is giving more and more Christians a loophole, states that after some time, depending on the wickedness of the sinner, their soul will be annihilated; extinguished.

I would love to believe this idea of annihilation. However, the angel in Revelation in verse 11 is clear, “*And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night.*”

It was Jesus who spoke more about the fires of hell than anyone else. He said in Mark 9:43, “*If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire.*”

In Luke 16:19-31, it is Jesus who narrates the story of the rich man tormented in the fires of hell who begged to have Lazarus dip his finger in water to cool his tongue.

Jesus said in Matthew 25:46 that those who are condemned will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life. The parallel between “*eternal life*” and “*eternal punishment*” clearly states that both are without end. In other words, the torment of the lost in hell will last as long as the blessedness of the redeemed in heaven.

The gospel is not just, “Believe in Christ and repent of your sin in order to go to heaven”; it is also just as correct to say, “Believe in Christ and repent of your sin in order to not go to hell.” Avoiding the wrath of God is a very good thing – and I am recommending it to everyone today!

Notice in verse 11, the third angel's dire warning is addressed to anyone who "*worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand.*" The angel warns that a terrible fate awaits those who persist in worshipping Antichrist. Once again, God graciously calls on sinners to repent in the final hour.

Those who drank the wine of the harlot Babylon also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, "*which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger.*" To drink of the wine of the wrath of God is to experience His wrath (Job 21:20; Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15). God's wrath will be undiluted retribution, unmixed with any trace of compassion.

In his sermon entitled, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, Jonathan Edwards writes, "Almost every natural man that hears of hell, flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security; he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do. But your sinfulness makes you as it were heavy as lead, and to tend downwards with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf, and your healthy constitution, and your own care and prudence, and best contrivance, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider's web would have to stop a falling rock."

Listen friends, if you have any doubt about your salvation, why not settle it now? Repent, turn from your sin and turn in faith to Jesus Christ.

We have seen the three angelic messages, now a voice booms out of heaven to declare:

IV. The Heavenly Reward for the Faithful

Verses 12-13... ¹² "*Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.* ¹³ *And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!' 'Yes, says the Spirit, so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.'*"

We are reminded that the Bible has much to say about happiness. We heard Eric Zeller give an excellent message last Sunday from the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5. Eric and Heather named their second daughter Makaria which is the female form of the NT word *markarios* that is translated "blessed" here in verse 13. Makarios ("blessed") refers to spiritual joy, bliss, happiness, fulfillment, and satisfaction. It describes an inner joy that is the fulfillment of every longing, a serene, untouchable, unassailable contentment and peace.

So, why are these dead blessed? The answer is twofold: The dead in view here are blessed because of how they lived and because of how they died.

Verse 12 tells us how they lived, "*Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*" The phrase "*the perseverance of the saints*" introduces one of the most important teachings in Scripture. All those God has elected, called, and justified will never lose their faith, but persevere until death. That reality provides assurance to every true believer in Christ. It reveals that believers' deaths are blessed because death ushers them into the glories of heaven.

The persevering character of saving faith is never more clearly and powerfully seen than in this passage. No group of believers will face stronger assaults on their faith than the tribulation saints. This large group of believers will include both Gentiles (7:9) and Jews (12:17). They will be saved through the ministries of the two witnesses

that we saw in 11:3–13 and the 144,000 we saw 7:1–8; 14:1–5. The tribulation believers will endure the most intense persecution in human history. There is no stronger evidence that saving faith perseveres than the reality that the most tested believers in history will be faithful to Christ until the end.

Verse 12 tells us how they lived. And verse 13 tells us how they died. *“And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, ‘Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ‘Yes, says the Spirit, so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.’”*

Having lived with perseverance, the tribulation saints will die with promise. The heavenly voice ordered John to write, *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.”* These martyrs are blessed not only because they lived life to the fullest in obedience, trust, and purpose, but also because they died in the Lord.

The Holy Spirit is quoted directly in Revelation only here and in 22:17. His emphatic *“Yes”* shows that He agrees with the heavenly voice that the dead are blessed. As their Comforter, the Holy Spirit longs to see that suffering end. He adds two further reasons for the tribulation martyrs’ blessedness:

First, the Spirit declares them blessed because they may *“rest from their labors.”* The Greek word translated *“labors”* describes difficult, exhausting work. Certainly, the tribulation saints will experience the whole gamut of that word’s meanings. They will be filled with deep sorrow as they watch those they love suffer torment and death. Their lives will be a hard, difficult, dangerous struggle for survival. Not having the mark of the beast, they will be excluded from society, unable to buy or sell, and live lives on the run as hunted fugitives. Death will come as a welcome relief.

The Holy Spirit also pronounces the tribulation martyrs blessed because *“their deeds follow with them.”* The Greek word for *“deeds”* refers to their service to the Lord. When these believers go to heaven, the record of their diligent labor will follow along with them. The Bible teaches that God will reward believers in heaven for their earthly service to Him. Hebrews 6:10 says, *“For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.”*

So, we have heard the three angels with messages of the gospel and the warning of judgment. Better to reign with Christ forever than with Antichrist for a few short years! Better to endure persecution patiently now than to escape it and suffer throughout eternity!

And we have heard the heavenly pronouncement of the reward to believers who persevere to the end.

You may be asking, *“Will I persevere to the end? What assurance do I have as a believer that I truly belong to Christ and will be faithful to Him until the end of my life?”*

Here are three questions you can ask yourself:

1. Do I have a present trust in Christ for salvation?

If you were to die tonight and stand before God’s judgment seat, and if he were to ask you why he should let you into heaven, what would you say? Would I begin to think of my good deeds and depend on them, or would I without hesitation say that I am depending on the merits of Christ and am confident that He is a sufficient Savior?”

When my children would ask, how do I know that I am a Christian? How do I know I have saving faith? I would not respond by saying, “Remember when you were eight years old and you prayed that prayer and asked Jesus to save you?” Instead, I would ask, “Do you love Jesus today? Do you understand that it is only His righteousness that gets you into heaven? Are you trusting in Jesus today for your salvation?”

2. Is there evidence of a regenerating work of the Holy Spirit in my life?

The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and opens our eyes to Jesus. He also illuminates the Scriptures for us so that we can understand the Bible.

Ephesians 1:17-18 and 1 Corinthians 2:10-13 tells us that the Holy Spirit gives wisdom and revelation concerning Jesus Christ and opens the eyes of understanding so we can read and understand the Bible and know God’s purposes in our lives. The illuminating and leading work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is a confirmation that we are indeed children of God.

If the Holy Spirit is genuinely at work in our lives, he will be producing the kind of character traits that Paul calls “*the fruit of the Spirit*” in Galatians 5:22. He lists several attitudes and character traits that are produced by the Holy Spirit: “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*” (Galatians 5:22–23). Of course, the question is not, “Do I perfectly exemplify all of these characteristics in my life?” but rather, “Are these things a general characteristic of my life? Do I sense these attitudes in my heart? Do others (especially those closest to me) see these traits exhibited in my life? Have I been growing in them over a period of years?”

3. Do I see a long-term pattern of spiritual growth in my Christian life?

Yesterday, Paula and I went on a hike in San Luis Obispo and as we followed the trail in the midst of trees, I felt like I wasn’t making any progress, while the trail was challenging and legs were taking a strain I could not see if we were actually progressing. But then we came to a clearing and suddenly we had a full panoramic view of the city.

So, it is in our spiritual lives. Romans 8:28-29...²⁸ “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*” ²⁹ “*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren.*”

The conforming to Jesus Christ is not immediate, but it is a progressive change of spiritual growth in my life as I follow Him.

When you answer those three questions: Do I have a present trust in Christ for salvation? Is there evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in my life? Do I see a long-term pattern of spiritual growth?

Then you should not have to wonder, “Will I be able to persevere to the end of my life and therefore be saved?” Rather you should think, “I am truly born again; therefore, I will certainly persevere to the end, because I am being guarded ‘by God’s power’ working through my faith (1 Peter 1:5) and therefore I will never be lost. Jesus will raise me up at the last day and I will enter into his kingdom forever” (John 6:40).

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. If God is judging the world in the end times, why is the “eternal gospel” still being preached? To whom is it being preached? How does this demonstrate God’s grace and mercy in the midst of His holiness and justice?
2. What is the meaning of “Babylon” in verse 8? How is God’s judgment of Babylon described?
3. How do we know that hell is real? What happens to the soul of the unbeliever? What Scriptures support your answer?
4. How will the messages of the three angels alter the way you approach each day and the opportunities that God gives you to 3-13-22 be a witness for Him?
5. How is it possible for a person to give external signs of conversion and later to fall away from the Christian faith?
6. What can give a believer a genuine assurance of salvation?
7. What insight or truth is most meaningful (comforting or convicting) to you as a result of Revelation 14:6-13?

CHAPTER 25
“The Harvest of Judgment”
Revelation 14:14-20

¹⁴“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. ¹⁵And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ ¹⁶Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. ¹⁷And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. ¹⁸Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.’ ¹⁹So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. ²⁰And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.”

We have come to another difficult passage in our study of Revelation, difficult in that it tells of the judgment that will fall on those who do not worship Christ. It is not hard in general terms that there is a place called hell. But it is really difficult to think of a someone going there.

A Gallup poll revealed that 94% of Americans believe in God. 89% believe in heaven. 73% believe in hell. 75% of those surveyed are pretty sure they are going to heaven. Only 2% believe they may be going to hell. In other words, much of this country believes there is a hell but they don’t believe hardly anyone is there. Most Americans think they are already on God’s side. Many think the idea of divine wrath is barbaric and only reserved for the worst barbarians. Hell is for bad people like Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong, and Joseph Stalin.

Most believe there is a place called hell, but they don’t think they deserve to go there. But in our text today we find that God is angry at sin and there is a harvest of judgment for those who remain in that condition and do not belong to Jesus Christ.

The Puritan Charles Simeon said, “To warn people of danger is the kindest act of love.”

Revelation 14 warns of judgment that is coming over the whole earth. Warnings that were prophesied in the Old Testament and New Testament are now coming to the fulfillment.

Daniel, Joel, Isaiah, and the Lord Jesus Christ all spoke of a coming harvest of divine wrath when the Messiah will execute final judgment. We will look at some of those texts in this message today.

The final outpouring of the judgmental fury of the Lamb is the theme of the remaining text of Revelation 14.

This passage describes the final harvest of divine wrath in two agricultural pictures: the grain harvest (verses 14–16) and the grape harvest (verses 17–20). The grain harvest symbolizes the seven bowl judgments. The grape harvest symbolizes the judgment of Armageddon. Both harvests involve a sickle and reaping.

We will see each harvest has the same elements: The reaper, the ripeness, and the reaping. My prayer is that you know Christ and will live each day for His glory.

I. The Grain Harvest

Verse 14.. *“Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.”*

A. The Reaper

The familiar phrase *“I looked, and behold”* often introduces a new and important subject in Revelation (4:1; 6:2, 5, 8; 7:9; 14:1).

Throughout Scripture, the cloud represents the shekinah glory of God—that physical form of divine power that reminded God’s people that He was with them. It appears in Exodus 13:21 as the pillar of fire by night and pillar of cloud by day. Its purpose? To lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. The glory of God appeared in the cloud, from which the Lord often spoke to His people (Ex. 16:10; 19:9; 20:21). The cloud also rested on the tabernacle and in the temple, reminding Israel that God graciously dwelled with His people (Ex. 33:9; Lev. 16:2).

In the New Testament the cloud also represents the presence of God’s power and glory. On the mount of Christ’s glorious transfiguration in Matthew 17:5, a *“bright cloud”* overshadowed the disciples and God spoke from its midst: *“This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”* At Christ’s ascension in Acts 1:9, *“a cloud received Him,”* marking the translation from the earthly to heavenly realm. Acts 1:10-11 says, *“And as the disciples were gazing intently into the sky while Jesus was ascending, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them. They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”*

It is therefore fitting that the second coming of Christ in judgment would be portrayed as the Son of Man riding on a white cloud. In fact, centuries ago the prophet Daniel wrote in Daniel 7:13-14,

*“I kept looking in the night visions,
And behold, with the clouds of heaven
One like a Son of Man was coming, And
He came up to the Ancient of Days And
was presented before Him.
“And to Him was given dominion,
Glory and a kingdom,
That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might
serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion
Which will not pass away;
And His kingdom is one
Which will not be destroyed.”*

Jesus quoted that prophetic statement and applied it to Himself when He predicted His second coming in Mark 13:26, *“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.”*

Jesus comes on the clouds and as the reaper is sitting as He waits for the proper time to stand and begin the reaping. That reaping (the seven bowl judgments) will be followed by Christ’s return to establish His kingdom.

Revelation 14:14 is the last time Scripture refers to Jesus by the title Son of Man, and it presents a marked contrast with the first time the New Testament calls Him the Son of Man. Listen to Matthew 8:20, Jesus said, *“The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”*

In His first coming Jesus did not even have a place to lay His head. Now He is about to take possession of the entire earth. In His first coming Jesus came humiliation, now He comes in exaltation. He came in poverty, now in his second coming He comes in majesty. In His first coming He went to a cross, now He arrives on a cloud. In His first coming He came to save sinners, now He comes to judge sinners. He came the first time as a sower, but He returns as a reaper. He came in grace and He will return in wrath.

Notice the reaper is further described as *“having a golden crown on His head.”* This crown is not the kind worn by a king (Greek *diadēma*) but the type of crown (Greek *stephanos*) worn by victors in war or athletic events. It pictures the Son of Man as the triumphant conqueror over all His enemies. (Matthew 24:30).

The reaper also had *“a sharp sickle in His hand.”* The sickle was a long, curved, razor-sharp iron blade attached to a long, broomstick-like wooden handle. Sickles were used to harvest grain. They were held with both hands spread apart and swept back and forth; their sharp blades would cut off the grain stalks at ground level. The picture is of the Lord Jesus Christ mowing down His enemies like a harvester cutting grain.

The hour is fast approaching when Jesus Christ will return from heaven with power and glory. All the misconceptions about who Jesus was and is will be dispelled at that time, and the whole world will stand face-to-face with the one true Christ. He is the Reaper. Next, we see:

B. The Ripeness

Verse 15.. *“And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.’”*

Another angel, the fourth one mentioned in this chapter (verses 6, 8–9), appears on the scene. The first three angels proclaimed that judgment was coming. The fourth brings the command to execute it. This angel came out of the heavenly temple before the throne of God. In a loud voice conveying the authority delegated to him from God, the angel cries out, *“Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.”* He delivers the message from God the Father to the Son of Man that it is time for Him to move in judgment. God’s anger has reached its limit, and His wrath is poured out.

The verb translated “is ripe” means “dried up” or “withered.” The grain pictured here has passed the point of any usefulness and is fit only to be *“gathered up and burned with fire”* (Matthew 13:40). This tells us that the Lord, in His mercy, has delayed judgment as long as possible.

Jonathan Edwards describes death as an arrow and God’s wrath as a bow. He wrote, “The arrows of death fly unseen at noonday; the sharpest sight cannot discern them.”

Romans 2:4-5 warns, *“Do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”*

Though God is merciful and restrains His hand of judgment for the sake of those who will repent, there will come a time when He says, “Enough is enough!” At that moment, the day of harvest will arrive.

C. The Reaping

Verse 16.. *“Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.”*

Here is one of the most tragic and sobering statements in all of Scripture. Without fanfare, it announces the executing of divine judgment. Instantly the Son of Man in John’s vision swept His sickle over the earth and executed judgment. Robert Thomas notes, “The brevity of the statement dramatizes the suddenness of the judgment.”

The frightening details of that judgment will be unfolded in Revelation 16. Those seven rapid-fire bowl judgments mark the first phase of the final reaping of the earth.

II. The Grape Harvest

The vision of the grain harvest is followed by the vision of the grape harvest, which speaks of the judgment that takes place at the battle of Armageddon. This judgment is more dramatic because of the imagery of the winepress.

Verse 17.. *“And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.”*

A. The Reaper

The reaper in this vision is not the Son of Man, but an angel, the fifth one mentioned in chapter 14. Like the fourth angel (verse 15), he came out of the temple in heaven and *“also had a sharp sickle.”* That an angel is pictured in this vision as the reaper is not surprising. The Son of Man will be assisted by holy angels in His final judgment.

In Matthew 13:36-43 with me...³⁶ *“Then He left the crowds and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him and said, ‘Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.’* ³⁷ *And He said, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man,* ³⁸ *and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one;* ³⁹ *and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.* ⁴⁰ *So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age.* ⁴¹ *The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness,* ⁴² *and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* ⁴³ *Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.’”*

So, in the grape harvest we see the reaper, and in this case, it is an angel. Next we see:

B. The Ripeness

Verse 18.. *“Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.’”*

As the apostle John watched, another angel appeared, the sixth one in the vision. That title “*the one who has power over fire*” is closely connected with the fact that he “*came out from the altar.*” Unlike the angel in verse 17, this angel does not come from the throne of God, but from the altar associated with the prayers of the saints. His appearance means that the time had come for those prayers to be answered.

Leaving the altar, “*he called with a loud (and urgent) voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.’*” In answer to the saints’ prayers, the time for the reaping of judgment comes.

The word “ripe” is not the same Greek word used in verse 15. This word refers to something fully ripe and in its prime. It pictures earth’s wicked people as bursting with the juice of wickedness and ready for the harvest of righteousness.

C. The Reaping

Verses 19-20...¹⁹ “*So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.*”²⁰ “*And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles*”.

What resulted when the angel swung his sickle was catastrophic. All the enemies of God who survive the seven bowl judgments will be gathered like grape clusters from the vine of the earth and flung into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

In the time of the apostle John, grapes were trampled or stomped by foot in a trough that had a duct leading to a lower trough or basin where the juice was collected. Treading grapes in a winepress was a familiar figure of divine wrath and judgement. The splattering of the juice as the grapes are stomped vividly pictures the splattered blood of those who will be destroyed.

Isaiah 63:3-4, “*I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me. For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.*”

Lamentations 1:15, “*The Lord has trampled underfoot all my mighty men in my midst; He has called an assembly against me to crush my young men; the Lord trampled as in a winepress the virgin daughter of Judah.*”

Joel 3:13-14, “*Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.*”

Revelation 19:15, “*Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*”

Verse 20 says, the judgment takes place “*outside the city*” (14:20), referring to the great city of 11:8, Jerusalem. To be executed outside the gate is to be cut off from the covenant people (Hebrews 13:12; Revelation 22:14–15). These sinners have no part with God or his people; they are God’s enemies, cut off from any hope of salvation.

The symbols in this verse reveal an unmistakable reality: the battle pictured in this vision will be massive and bloody beyond imagination. Nothing in earth's history has come close. Revelation 14:17–20 describes in breathtaking images the result of the final battle of the Antichrist and the kings of the earth. The grape harvest represents the people who will gather for war in the valley of Har-Megiddo—better known as “Armageddon.” That epic battle is described more fully in 16:16 and 19:15–21. We’ll examine that location and that “*war to end all wars*” in more detail there, but for the time being it’s important to realize that we are seeing a brief, symbolic preview of that event. There will be millions of people engaged in the battle of Armageddon, as all the nations gather together to fight against Christ. Verse 20 tells us the horrifying bloodbath of the battle of Armageddon will be so widespread that blood will come out from the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

Armageddon, as this passage indicates, will actually be a slaughter rather than a battle. When the Lord Jesus Christ returns, Antichrist, the false prophet, and all their human and demonic forces will be immediately destroyed. Those who refuse to repent, even after repeated warnings, will learn firsthand the sobering truth that “*it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” Hebrews 10:31.

Though Armageddon will spell certain doom for the enemies of God, it will also mean salvation for His people. Christ and the armies of heaven will return to destroy the Antichrist and his armies. Then the King of kings will establish His everlasting kingdom (Revelation 19:11–16).

I don’t know whether any of us in this room will be on the earth when this battle takes place. I hope not! But I do know this, some in this room may be where Joel spoke of in Joel 3:14. You may be in the “valley of decision”. You need to decide whether you will claim the blood of Jesus and the salvation it supplies; or whether you will face Him someday to shed the blood of destruction. His blood saves; your blood condemns you to judgment and Hell!

Thousands of years ago in Egypt, God saved His people by the blood of a lamb. They killed that lamb, placed its blood on the doorposts of their houses and went in. when they did, they were saved, safe and secure. They were under the blood. When the death angel passed through that night, they were spared because they were under the blood.

What about you? Are you under the blood today? Has the blood of Jesus been applied to the doorposts and lintels of your heart? Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? I hope so, for if you haven’t, you will face Him as your Judge one day.

If you are in the valley of decision, come to Jesus right now! One day Jesus will call His court to order; you need to be sure that you are saved before that day comes!

III. Application

As we peer into the future through the apostle John’s prophetic words and see Jesus as the sickle-wielding Judge of the earth who treads the wine press of God’s wrath, two principles present themselves. One relates to God’s grace, the other to His justice. Ponder both carefully.

A. God’s grace gives us the ability to please God.

In Genesis 2:15–17, when Adam and Eve sinned, they became slaves to sin, sending humanity headlong into a state of sin and death (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22). Christ’s death, however, has set us free from slavery to sin (Rom. 6:5–7).

Romans 8:6-9 says, *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.”*

The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to choose righteousness instead of wickedness. As believers in Christ, Paul’s exhortation calls us to use this freedom in the service of God, not self.

Romans 6:12- 13 says, *“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”*

Second,

B. God’s justice holds every person accountable.

Have you ever gone over the speed limit driving down the grade into San Luis Obispo? I have and have gotten away with it repeatedly. But let’s say on the 100th time I get pulled over and ticketed and what do I say, “That’s not fair! You didn’t ticket me all the other times!” The police officer will respond, “That was grace, this is justice.”

Somehow, we don’t think our offenses against God are serious. We don’t feel the weight of our sin. We need to remember we are His creatures, and He alone is the Creator. We will work for international justice, social justice but we don’t expect God to execute justice. We expect everyone to be fair, except for God. We expect the world that God created is to be absolute just to me, but we also expect our perfect Creator to not be just. Honestly, I deserve to be a grape to be crushed in the wine press.

Most of us agree that serious crimes need serious consequences but isn’t there a crime of infinite offense because it is committed against one of infinite worth such that the only fitting punishment would be of infinite duration.

I deserve to be beaten, mocked and punished unless God would have someone to do that on my behalf. Isaiah 53:4-6 tells us what Christ did for us: *“Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.”*

Isaiah 53:10 *“But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many and interceded for the transgressors.”*

You can experience the wrath of God for yourself, or you can worship the One who will come again on the clouds, the One who bore God's wrath for all who belong to Him.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. How is the second coming of Christ different than His first coming? What are some Scriptures that help us see the differences?
2. How is Revelation 14:14 a fulfillment of Daniel 7:13-14?
3. What kind of crown is Christ wearing? Why is this significant?
4. How do Isaiah 63:1-6 and Joel 3:12-13 use the same imagery found in Revelation 14?
5. What is the meaning of Christ using a sickle in verse 14? How is this a preview of the seven bowl judgements of chapter 16?
6. Read Revelation 19:11-21. How does 14:17-20 relate to the Battle of Armageddon?
7. Read 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. What spiritual opportunities that are like "gold, silver and precious stones" do you need to invest your time in?
8. Read Philippians 2:12-13. How can you not work "for" your salvation, but work "out" your salvation? What does that look like?

CHAPTER 26
“Heavenly Preparation for God’s Final Wrath”
Revelation 15:1-8

¹ “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. ² And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. ³ And they *sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! ⁴ “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.” ⁵ After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, ⁶ and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. ⁷ Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. ⁸ And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.”

Let’s start with a quiz this morning: What is the most repeated Bible verse or the most repeated phrase in the Bible?

Some might answer with Psalm 2 where our heavenly Father says to His Son, “Ask of Me and I will surely give the nations as your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.”

Others might say Psalm 118 this is the day the Lord has made let us rejoice in it. He is the Cornerstone that the builders rejected.

The answer is Exodus 34:6-7, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished.”

That phrase is repeated 27 times in the Old Testament alone. We tend to focus on the first part, but today’s passage reveals that God will fulfill that last phrase, “He does not leave the guilty unpunished.”

In Revelation chapter 6 we witnessed the unleashing of God’s judgment against an unholy world in the seal judgments, involving bloodshed, famine, death, economic upheaval, a great earthquake, and severe cosmic disturbances. In Revelation 8-9 we then witnessed the unleashing of the trumpet judgments, involving hail and fire mixed with blood, the sea turning to blood, water turning bitter and the death of a third of humankind.

Now, finally, the worst judgments of all fall on the earth during the great tribulation—the bowl judgments. Chapter 15, which is the shortest chapter in Revelation, serves as a prelude then to the final series of judgements.

Proverbs 16:4 says, “*The Lord works out everything for his own ends — even the wicked for a day of disaster.*” God works everything out for His own purposes, including rebellion; He has a meticulous careful plan for the wicked of the Earth.

There will come a day when His righteous judgment will be revealed. Romans 9 says that God bears with great patience the objects of His wrath, but the same verse says that they are prepared for destruction.

Revelation 15 introduces the heavenly preparation of God’s final judgment on a sinful world. Seven angels are commissioned to pour out bowls of God’s wrath on the earth, while others in heaven celebrate God’s justice and holiness expressed in his judgment against evil.

Chapter 15 forms a preview of the rapid-fire bowl judgments and provides three reasons for God’s final wrath.

First, The Perfection of God in verse 1.

Second, The Praise to God in verses 2-4.

Third, The Plan of God in verses 5-8.

I. The Perfection of God

Verse 1 .. “*Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.*”

The wrath of God is a perfect expression of His character. It is nothing that He must repent from or snap out of later; it is not irrational or mindless. It flows from His character, a perfect expression of His justice and His passionate nature. Our God is passionate; He has emotions. We are created in His image, so we have feelings too. Our anger, however, is usually unrighteous, not often mirroring God’s righteous wrath and righteous indignation. Usually, our wrath is based on pride or inconvenience.

Notice in verse 1 the terms great and marvelous that expresses the enormous importance of this sign as it contains the final outpouring of God’s wrath on the wicked, unrepentant sinners of the earth. God’s wrath will be finished for redemptive history. There will be no more such display of His wrath of God in the New Heaven and the New Earth, except for the eternity of hell.

Notice in verse 1 the sign itself consists of seven angels who had seven plagues. The Greek word for plague literally means “a blow,” or “a wound.” For example, in 13:3 and 12 it describes the beast’s fatal wound. Thus, the seven plagues are not really diseases or epidemics, but powerful, deadly blows that will strike the world with killing impact.

That they are called the “*last plagues*” sets them apart from the seals and trumpets in spite of some similarities. That they are the last also indicates that the bowls come after the seals and trumpets in chronological sequence. They are different chronologically and in intensity. Why? “*For in them the wrath of God is finished (complete),*” brought to its appropriate and climactic conclusion. These are the last and these are the worst judgments. They are the 3rd woe (11:14), the time of destruction (11:18), the wrath of God poured out in full strength (14:10), the final reaping of the earth (14:14-20).

The word translated “plague” in this verse literally means a “blow” or “wound.” These judgments are not long, drawn-out epidemics like the flu or Covid. Rather, these plagues come with sudden impact—swift, severe, destructive, and fierce.

The seven bowl judgments will be the last expression of God’s wrath toward the inhabitants of the earth. They will climax at the Battle of Armageddon and the return of Christ.

This snapshot preview of coming judgment should give hope to all people of faith in Christ. God’s judgment will accomplish its purpose and come to an end. The wrath of God is an expression of His perfect character.

The scene suddenly shifts to heaven, where we are shown a scene of incredible rejoicing.

II. The Praise to God

Verse 2.. *“And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.”*

In this vision of heaven, John observed “a glass sea” as well as a group of victorious Christians standing by the sea, ready to worship God for his righteous acts of deliverance. In 4:6 John had witnessed such a “glass sea” in the heavenly throne room and likewise struggled to describe what he had seen. The best he can do in both places is to phrase a comparison when he says, “something like a glass sea.” More important for this vision is the group he sees standing “beside the glass sea,” “the ones who had been victorious over the beast”, that is, had faithfully resisted all the compulsion and deception of Satan to tear them away from allegiance to Christ.

These believers were victorious over three horrendous pressures to reject Christ during the tribulation: political pressure through the first Beast’s compelling, charismatic military skill
religious pressure through the idolatry to worship the Antichrist
economic pressure through the number of the Beast, necessary to buy and sell

These pressures, described earlier in chapter 13, pushed all people to the edge of a life-and-death decision. Revelation 13 told us who the beast is: the Antichrist, the one-world ruler who will come under the power of the dragon, the Devil. He will claim his throne over all the peoples and languages of the earth, not only going to be political power but religious power as well. People will worship him as God and bow down before him. He will require everyone small and great to receive the mark of the beast on the hand or forehead; no one will be able to buy or sell without it, and those who will not receive it will be executed. Revelation 12:11 says of these martyrs, *“They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.”*

Either they could worship the Antichrist and save their lives, or they could resist His regime and lose them. The redeemed standing on the sea of glass chose faithfulness to Christ—a foolish decision in the midst of unparalleled persecution. But to quote the famous line of missionary and martyr Jim Elliot, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”

These martyred saints had no standing on earth, but they do in heaven! They stand on the majestic sea of glass, harps (joy, celebration) of God in hand. God is just in honoring his faithful servants. What they lost on earth they more than gain back in heaven.

The final phrase in v. 2, “*holding harps of God,*” leads into the worship song presented in verses 3–4..³ “*And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and marvelous are Your works O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!’*”⁴ *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.’*”

Notice this heavenly choir will sing two songs: “*the song of Moses*” and “*the song of the Lamb.*” Commentators offer several theories for the identity of these songs. Most agree that the song of Moses probably incorporated lyrics from one or both of two Old Testament passages: Exodus 15:1–18 and Deuteronomy 32:1–43.

These songs refer to deliverance from Egypt through the ten plagues, God’s defeat of the Egyptian army, and Israel’s preparation for entrance into the Promised Land. How appropriate for victorious saints who were delivered from the judgments of the tribulation to witness the defeat of the Antichrist and the establishment of Christ’s earthly kingdom!

“*The song of the Lamb*” appears to be a new song, so John went on to describe the lyrics. This passage points to a profound truth about worship. Whether the songs are old or new, the purpose of worship is to glorify God for His awesome Person and awe-inspiring works.

Regarding the relationship of the two songs sung before the throne, one commentator observes:

“The song of Moses was sung at the Red Sea, the song of the Lamb is sung at the crystal sea; the song of Moses was a song of triumph over Egypt, the song of the Lamb is a song of triumph over Babylon; the song of Moses told how God brought His people out, the song of the Lamb tells how God brings His people in; the song of Moses was the first song in Scripture, the song of the Lamb is the last. The song of Moses commemorated the execution of a foe, the expectation of the saints, and the exaltation of the Lord; the song of the Lamb deals with the same three themes.”

The song of these redeemed saints praises God’s character as the omnipotent, immutable, sovereign, perfect, and righteous Creator and Judge. Because He is all that, God must and will judge sinners; if He ignored their sin, He would not be holy, righteous, and true to His nature.

Notice how the song closes with joyful anticipation of the millennial reign of Christ, when all the nations will come and worship before God. In the words of the psalmist in Psalm 66:4, “*All the earth will worship You, and will sing praises to You; they will sing praises to Your name.*”

John’s attention is drawn away from the praises of the redeemed before the Lord. Verses 5-8 reveal the third and final scene of this chapter; the final act before the bowl judgments are poured out. The Lord is everlasting. He will send His divine judgement on His time in fulfillment of His plan, and that time has come.

III. The Plan of God

Verses 5-8..⁵ “*After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened,*⁶ *and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.*⁷ *Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.*⁸ *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.*”

John saw a temple in heaven, similar to the physical building that once stood in Jerusalem. By the time of John's writing, the earthly temple had lain in ruins for more than twenty-five years. Yet even that earthly temple was a "model" of the heavenly temple fashioned by God Himself (Heb. 8:2–5). Unlike the earthly temple, however, the "most holy place" or "holy of holies" in the heavenly temple was open. In its earthly counterpart, that place where the presence of the Lord dwelled had always been concealed (Lev. 16:2–3; Heb. 9:2–7). Only the high priest could enter the holy of holies once a year to make sacrifices on behalf of sinful people. In heaven, where no sinful people dwell, Christ Himself serves as our eternal High Priest. For the saints in heaven nothing obscures God's glory. For believers the heavenly tabernacle is a temple of unhindered access to God, but for unbelievers that same tabernacle becomes a temple of doom.

As the vision proceeded, seven angels emerged from the heavenly temple, each clothed in pure white and adorned in priestly garments (15:6). With solemnity, these angels approached the throne of God. One of the four living creatures mentioned in chapters 4–6 handed each of them a bowl "*full of the wrath of God*" (15:7).

The word translated "*bowl*" verse 7 refers to a shallow, saucer-like dish used for boiling liquids as well as for "drinking or pouring libations." One dictionary adds that the use of this term in Revelation is "suggestive of rapidity in the emptying of the contents."

The imagery is not that of a stream being poured gradually out of a pitcher, but of the whole contents of the shallow saucers being hurled down in an instant flood of judgment. Bowls were part of the temple furnishings (1 Kings 7:50; Zechariah 14:20) and were associated with the sacrifices (Exodus 27:3; 38:3). Those who refuse to drink the cup of salvation of the Lord (Psalm 116:13) will be drowned in the judgments poured from the bowls of wrath.

300 million people died of smallpox in the 20th century, and perhaps over half a billion people have died from it overall, making it the worst plague in history. Because of Edward Jenner's vaccination, little by little it was conquered to some degree. Now, the only place it exists is in two research laboratories, one in Russia and one in Atlanta, Georgia. Imagine being responsible for transporting this liquid death in a box.

Smallpox is nothing compared to this round of judgments in Revelation 16. It is hard to describe what we are about to see. The human race cannot endure long after the seven bowls are poured out — it will not be a third this time but the entire thing — the whole ocean, all the rivers. It is terrifying. These four living creatures give the seven angels the liquid death and wrath in these bowls.

These bowls may relate to the bowls filled with the prayers for vindication offered by the martyred believers in 5:8. They are the direct response to that plea for God to avenge their suffering and death. These bowls of wrath also begin to answer the age-old question of why the wicked seem to go unpunished while the righteous suffer injustice. The truth is that God's mercy during the tribulation delayed the full measure of judgment to give people an opportunity to repent (2 Peter 3:9). But we must never presume on God's mercy. Judgment postponed is not the same as judgment denied.

As John continued to stare into the open temple, verse 8 says he saw it "*filled with smoke from the glory of God.*" As in the days of Moses, after the earthly tabernacle was completed (Exodus 40:33–35), the heavenly tabernacle was consumed by the glorious holy presence of God. Similarly, when Isaiah witnessed the Lord sitting on His throne, "*lofty and exalted*" (Isaiah 6:1), he saw the heavenly temple "*filling with smoke*" (Isaiah 6:4).

John's vision of the final wrath of God underscores three important contrasts.

First, as God's temple fills with His glory the earth is filled with His wrath.

Second, In the past the wrath of God poured was poured out on Christ to save sinners, but in the future the wrath of God will be poured out on sinners to judge them.

Third, while the righteous in heaven rejoice over the triumph of good the rebellious on earth will suffer with the destruction of evil.

Conclusion:

W. Tozer wrote, "We talk of God much and loudly, but we secretly think of Him as being absent, and we think of ourselves as inhabiting a parenthetic interval between the God who was and the God who will be." The song of Moses draws on God's past deliverance; the song of the Lamb looks forward to His future judgement and justice. Yet John's vision of joy in heaven and sorrow on earth in Revelation 15 should turn our attention to our own situation today.

First, the law of Moses leads us to the faith in Christ.

The stone tablets Moses received were with the ten commandments clearly revealed God's standard for His people living in a fallen world. The Mosaic Law defines sin and exposes its heinous nature. Romans 3:20 says, "*Through the law we become conscious of our sin.*" Ever since Moses received the commandments on Mount Sinai, there can be no question of God's opinion of adultery, murder, theft, etc.—they are wrong. And the severe penalties that befell transgressors underscore the serious nature of sin as rebellion against God. In defining sin and setting a divine standard, the Law convicts us of sin ... but it cannot change our hearts.

There is only One who perfectly obeyed the Law, and He did it on our behalf and then died in our place so that we might receive the promised blessing of salvation by faith in Christ.

Galatians 3:23-26 says, "*But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed. Therefore, the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*"

The purpose of the law of Moses was to shatter our pride and self-reliance and disclose what he is underneath—sinful, rebellious, guilty, under the judgment of God and helpless to save himself.

And the law must still be allowed to do its God-given duty today. People need to understand the bad news of their sin and impending judgment, to understand the good news of the gospel. Not until the law has arrested and imprisoned a man and sentenced him to death will he be driven to despair in himself and turn to Jesus Christ.

John Stott wrote, "No man has ever appreciated the gospel until the law has first revealed him to himself. It is only against the blackness of the night sky that the stars begin to appear, and it is only against the dark background of sin and judgment that the gospel shines forth."

The law's purpose has always been to show us our sin and our need of a Savior. So, let me ask you: Are you seeking to build and maintain your relationship with God based on "keeping the law," that is, on the basis of your personal performance, or on the basis of the merit of Jesus Christ?

Do you try to obey by your own sheer will and determination, or do you rely on the Holy Spirit daily for His power to enable you to obey?

Do you view God as an ogre who has set before you an impossible code of conduct you cannot keep, or do you view Him as your divine heavenly Father who has accepted you and loves you on the basis of the merit of Christ? In other words, in terms of your acceptance with God, are you willing to rely solely on the finished perfect work of Jesus, instead of your own pitifully imperfect performance?

Second, we should express gratitude for God's promise of protection. Prior to the tribulation events described in Revelation 15, those people on earth who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ will be raptured, as 1 Thessalonians 4:17 says, they will be "*caught up ... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.*" While the final triumph of good over evil is yet future, believers in Christ can offer thanks for victory over the enemy.

Regarding this hope of future salvation, Paul wrote in Romans 8:23-25, "*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.*"

One of the ways we can keep a heavenly perspective is to sing songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. If you don't know any by heart, I encourage you to learn them. Besides a Bible, every believer should get to know some of the songs of faith.

Spend time alone or with family fulfilling Ephesians 5:19-20 says, "*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father*"

Our third response should be concern for those who choose to reject Christ. After the church is raptured and the Antichrist rises to power, many will realize that their choice to reject Christ was a regrettable, tragic error.

Others will continue to reject Jesus as their sovereign Lord and undergo horrible suffering as a result. The most important decision in life is to repent of sin and embrace Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Therefore, the greatest concern for believers today must be for the lost. How do you express your concern for them in a world increasingly hostile to the claims of Christ?

The apostle Peter answers this question in 1 Peter 3:15... "*but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;*"

First, "*sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.*" Set Christ apart and let Him set you apart as a holy vessel. Offer yourself for His service—anytime ... anywhere ... for anyone. Prepare yourself to be a ready and willing soldier to obey His prompting at any moment.

Second, always be "*ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.*" Rehearse your own testimony about how Christ saved you. Keep it fresh on your lips. Tell it freely and sincerely. Few things pique the curiosity of unbelievers more than the testimony of a joyous, transformed life.

Finally, treat unbelievers with “*gentleness and reverence.*” Steer clear of anything resembling a self-righteous, modern-day Pharisee. Let God do the judging in His own time. Let’s pursue people not with sour derision or proud contempt, but with the sweet fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23, “*love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.*”

Yesterday, I was out in town and saw someone who I know needs faith in Jesus Christ. I wasn’t sure how to start the conversation, so I silently prayed and asked the Lord to open a door for me to share the gospel. And then this person asked, “Hey, can I get your advice on a situation I am in?” And as soon as he asked, the door was open and I answered his question but also spoke about the most important decision he could make: to repent of his sin and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. We talked about what it means to be a Christian and how to find our greatest hope, joy and purpose in obey the Lord Jesus.

So, friends, be praying about how to be a willing witness of the gospel message. Share your testimony of a transformed life. The law of Moses leads us to the cross of Christ. We sing songs because we find our greatest joy in Christ. Therefore, we can’t help about His saving power and how we can have assurance of salvation in the midst of tribulation.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. Though we are sobered by the prospects of divine wrath being poured out on the world’s evil, how does it remind us of God’s perfection and power?
2. How can knowing God’s perfection in executing justice bring hope, strength, and endurance to us in a sinful world?
3. Who are the ones singing in verses 3-4? Why are they singing?
4. What are the historical backgrounds behind the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb? What is the relationship between the two songs?
5. How can singing songs of faith help you in your spiritual journey? How can singing help us draw closer to other believers? See Ephesians 5:19-20.
6. Read Romans 8:23-25. While the final triumph of good over evil is yet future, how can you as a Christian offer thanks for victory over the enemy?
7. What is significant about the bowls that the seven angels receive from the four living creatures? How may they relate to the prayers of the martyred believers?
8. Read 1 Peter 3:15. How can you prepare to be a witness for Christ this week?

CHAPTER 27
“The Seven Bowl Judgments”
Revelation 16:1-21

¹ “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go, pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth.’ ² The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. ³ The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died. ⁴ The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: ‘You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; ⁶ for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.’ ⁷ And I heard the altar respond: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.’ ⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹ They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. ¹⁰ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony ¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done. ¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. ¹³ Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. ¹⁵ “Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.’ ¹⁶ Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. ¹⁷ The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ ¹⁸ Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. ¹⁹ The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰ Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. ²¹ From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.”

A common phrase that we use, that is meant to comfort one experiencing affliction, but in effect demonstrating a lack of compassion, is the saying, “It’s not the end of the world.” We say something like, “I am sorry you are going through that, but look it’s not the end of the world.”

Today we will study a prophecy of the end of the world, and it reveals in detail what the end of the world will be like. It is a weighty and sobering thing and difficult for us to grasp.

Today we see and experience the world around us — blue skies, warm temperatures, trees, flowers and shrubs are blooming, sunshine on the beach and life in the ocean, there are mountains and islands. It is difficult to grasp in our minds that someday the ocean will turn to blood and all sea life will end and the mountains and islands will no longer exist. This world will be destroyed by the wrath of God because of human sin. That is the impact of Revelation 16.

The end of the world will be worse than we can imagine. It will be worse than any movie can predict, worse than any film director could produce.

Now to set the context, what will follow this chapter in Revelation 17, 18, and the first part of Revelation 19 provide a parenthetical descriptive insight into the wickedness of the world called Babylon the Great, which is the reason for the destruction poured out from the bowls. Babylon is the world system that is described as a harlot with whom the kings of the earth commit acts of immorality. She is described as riding on a beast and as a big city with commerce and trading. Revelation 19 celebrates Babylon's destruction, and then describes the Second Coming of Christ.

So, the seven bowl judgments of chapter 16 are the last events on earth right before the Second Coming of Christ. In Revelation 16, we come to the end of God's patience waiting for sinners to repent.

My sermon outline for Revelation 16, has seven points. Each point being a bowl judgment that is described for us.

My prayer for you this morning is that if you don't know Christ then you will heed the warning of Hebrews 4:7 *"Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts."* My prayer is that you will repent and know the joy of forgiveness and salvation in Christ.

And for Christians, Revelation 16:15 applies to us when it says *"Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame."* We need to remain focused and occupied with God's work in the world in the time that He gives us. Our mission is to know Christ and make Him known. Blessed are the faithful and vigilant.

I. The First Bowl Poured Out On Earth

Notice with me Revelation 16:1 begins the bowl judgments with a command from God... *"Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."*

These seven angels are identified in Revelation 15:5-7. They come out of Heaven, receiving from the living creatures these seven bowls of the most toxic spiritual substance ever seen, the wrath of God that will be poured out on the earth.

Some may ask, why would God judge the world? Why pour out wrath on His own creation? But the real question is why is God so patient with us? It is not because He does not care about sin or because He is not holy, or because He is weak. 2 Peter 3:9 says, *"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."*

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 2:4-5, *"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."*

God was patient with Paul as he was punishing the church, hardening his own heart, dragging off Christian brothers and sisters, throwing them in prison, breaking up homes, seeing that people were executed for faith in Christ.

Paul says in 1 Timothy 1:15-16, *"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me*

as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life.”

In Romans 9, Paul writes of the astonishing level of patience God shows to vessels of wrath who will never repent, even in the end. In Romans 9:22-23 Paul writes, *“What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory.”*

God is patient with objects of vessels of wrath to teach us how gracious he was to us in Christ. God is an amazingly patient God. The Scripture reveals this again and again. God’s patience is immeasurable and matchless but not endless. Revelation 16 describes the day in which God will judge the earth for its sins.

Some writers see these bowl judgments as repeating the seal and trumpet judgments. There are similarities, but many more differences, especially in the degree of devastation. The fourth bowl has no parallel in earlier judgments. No personal suffering accompanies the first four trumpets, but the bowls bring torment from the very start. The bowls are universal, and they increase in intensity culminating in Armageddon. In Revelation 15:1 they are called *“the last”* judgments, showing they do not go back in time to repeat earlier plagues.

Revelation 16:2.. *“The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.”*

The angel does not hesitate as he pours this poisonous bowl on the land, resulting in a direct assault on human bodies. One translation says *“... loathsome and malignant sores.”* The Greek word is tied to the English word for ulcer — disgusting, ulcerating, bleeding, running sores on the skin, bleeding, like Job had when he scraped his skin with shards of pottery.

Who is judged? Everyone who receives the mark of the beast (the Antichrist) and worships his image.

The saints — those who believe in Jesus during the tribulation — are excluded. They do not experience the sores. 2 Peter 2:9 says, *“the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.”*

God rescued Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah; he rescued Noah from the flood; He is able to make a distinction between the wicked and the redeemed. With the first bowl of wrath, everybody will begin to realize that though the Antichrist had been briefly allowed to wreak havoc on the saints, the tide was about to turn.

As the sores continued to bring misery and pain to the afflicted, the second angel arrived with his bowl and poured it upon the saltwater seas. In John’s symbolic vision, the water immediately became *“blood like that of a dead person.”*

II. The Second Bowl Poured on the Sea

Revelation 16:3... *“The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died.”*

Some commentators try to link this to red tide, a common name for harmful algal blooms occurring along coastal regions. This is far worse than any red tide ever seen, in that the oceans turn to blood and every single living creature in the sea dies. That is absolutely mind-boggling.

We have no idea how many living creatures are in the sea. Billions? Trillions? Think of all the fish, shrimp, krill and plankton; the Great Barrier Reef, said to be the largest single living entity, if it is indeed single; all the beautiful tropical fish that swim in schools through the clear water of the Caribbean; all the stingrays and sharks and orcas. Biologists estimate 50% to 80% of all living creatures live in the sea — that is a wide range. How could they possibly give a more precise percentage? We do not know what is in the depths of the sea, but they will all die because of human sin. Let me intensify, because of our sin, they will die. It is incalculable and unimaginable.

They did not die in the flood of Noah's day; in fact, they prospered. But at the end of history, they are the first creatures to die. After the sea dies, we die. This must be the end of human history. There is no way to survive if the ocean is dead. From the sea we get 70% of our oxygen and 83% of our rainwater. Billions of people cannot survive long without that level of oxygen and rainwater. As the wicked inhabitants of the earth reel at the realization that their lives were being torn apart, they turned inland toward the rivers and lakes. Yet just as they were about to console themselves, the third angel poured his bowl on "the rivers and the springs of waters," turning them to blood.

III. The Third Bowl Poured on Rivers and Springs

Revelation 16:4.. *"The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood."*

This is an expansion of the third trumpet judgment, which polluted a third of the fresh water and turned it into wormwood. This bowl affects all fresh water — all rivers and springs of fresh water in the world are turned to blood.

The destruction of what is left of the earth's fresh water will cause unthinkable hardship and suffering. There will be no water to drink; no clean water to wash the oozing sores caused by the first bowl judgment; no water to bring cooling relief from the scorching heat that the fourth bowl judgment is about to bring. The scene will be so unimaginably horrible that people will wonder how a God of compassion, mercy, and grace could send such a judgment. Perhaps you are asking that question even now.

What kind of God would do this? Do these people really deserve these extreme judgments? So, it's fitting that the angel immediately answers our questions in God's defense in verses 5-6.. ⁵ *Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; ⁶for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve."*

Notice there is no hesitation, no queasiness, no vacillating, but just clear vindication of God. The angel does not shrink back or question what God is doing. Instead, he celebrates what God is doing. *"You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One..."*

Why would the angel be so sure that God is right? Two thoughts come to mind. First, everything God does is right, because He is righteous. He is the standard of justice and righteousness. If I take a measurement in inches or feet and my measurement is off even by a little, it is not the Bureau of Standards and Measurements that is in error.

The problem is my measurement. People who accuse God of being unfair just don't know how messed up our standard of righteousness is. How can we judge God who is perfectly just? His character proves the justice of His action. There is no standard of righteousness or holiness above God that He obeys. When Abraham interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah, he said in Genesis 18:25, *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”*

Second, God created angels and humans alike with minds and hearts to evaluate God's actions and our own. We actually can see a rightness in what is happening. It lines up with justice. The angel says in verse 6, *“For they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.”*

There is a rightness to it, like when Haman was made to hang on the gallows he made for Mordecai and the Jewish people.

This is the Old Testament principle known as “lex talionis” meaning that the punishment fits the crime. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but in this case, it is a life for a life. These blood-thirsty killers will be given blood to drink; it is what they deserve.

Revelation 16:7 . *“And I heard the altar respond: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments’ ”.*

The altar is where the martyred saints from the fifth seal are, crying out. Back in Revelation 6:10-11 we read, *“The martyrs cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.”*

The number of Christian martyrs is complete now. The full number of martyrs is in, and it is time for judgment.

After this brief doxology, the fourth angel looked down upon the earth, where the marked men and women waited expectantly for rain to quench their thirst. Instead, we read about:

IV. The Fourth Bowl Poured on the Sun

Revelation 16:8-9.. ⁸*“The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.”*

The bowl is poured on the sun. The sun is in the hand of God, and He can do whatever He wants with it. The sun has served the earth since the fourth day of creation. It gives us light and heat, which we need for living. All life depends on sunlight because of photosynthesis. Every second the sun puts off the same amount of energy that our human race would consume in 500 million years. The surface of the sun, the outer corona, is 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The core is estimated to be 27 million degrees.

The sun is 93 million miles from the earth, positioned exactly where it needs to be to sustain our fragile life and our fragile ecosystem. Do you see the precision with which God has set up our world? God will not turn it way up or we would instantly die. A minute adjustment will create a searing heat, made more miserable because of lack of drinking water. That will genuinely be global warming. The ice caps will melt and the oceans will rise, meaning the death contained in the seas will flood the coastal cities, bringing unimaginable disease and suffering. Talk about global warming!

You would think that after a series of four consecutive judgments, which bring wicked humanity to its knees, human hearts would melt. One might expect that the next verse would describe how all those sore-inflicted, starving, thirsting, burning men and women of earth will raise their hands and cry out to God for mercy. But instead of humble repentance, we see nothing but increased hardness.

In response to judgment, notice verse 9 says .. *“They will refuse to give Him glory.”*

V. The Fifth Bowl Poured on the Beast’s Throne Revelation

Verses 10-11... ¹⁰*“The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony ¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.”*

God plunges the world into darkness. Light and darkness are metaphors for good and evil, but we also know that God declared light itself good. When He takes light away, it is a tremendous judgment on us, lining up with our spiritually dark hearts. John 3:19 says, *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”* It makes sense that the bowl is poured out on the throne of the beast, plunging the dark kingdom of the Antichrist into darkness. The people are powerless to stop it; there is nothing they can do. It will be like hell on earth.

Joel described this time of judgment in Joel 2:2 as *“a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”* In Joel 3:14-15 we read, *“Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon grow dark and the stars lose their brightness.”*

Zephaniah described the Day of the Lord as *“a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness”* Zephaniah 1:15. In Mark 13:24, Jesus declared in His Olivet discourse that *“in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.”*

The cumulative effect of the painful sores, fouled oceans, lack of drinking water, intense heat, all engulfed in thick blackness, will bring unbearable misery. Yet, incredibly, the wicked, unbelieving people of the world will still refuse to repent.

Notice at the end of verse 10 it says they gnawed their tongues (literally “kept on chewing”) because of the most intense and excruciating pain, yet with those same tongues they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds—the ultimate act of defiance by those hopelessly engulfed in Antichrist’s satanic system. This is the last reference to their unwillingness to repent. The first five plagues were God’s final call to repentance. Sinners ignored that call and are now confirmed in their unbelief. The final two bowls, containing the severest of all the judgments.

VI. The Sixth Bowl Poured on the Euphrates

Revelation 16:12-16... ¹²*“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. ¹³ Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. ¹⁵ ‘Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays*

awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed’ ¹⁶ *Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”*

Unlike the previous five bowls, the sixth has no specific assault on humanity but prepares for what is to come. When his turn came, the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates. The Euphrates appeared earlier in Revelation in connection with the sixth trumpet judgment (9:14), when two hundred million demons who were bound near it were released.

God’s drying up of the Euphrates is not an act of kindness toward the kings from the east, but one of judgment. They and their armies will be entering a deadly trap. The evaporation of the Euphrates provides a clear path and will lead them to their doom, just as the parting of the Red Sea led to the destruction of the Egyptian army.

Like something out of a horror movie, John *“saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.”* From the mouth (symbolizing the source of influence) of each member of the unholy trinity (Satan, Antichrist, and the false prophet) came a foul, unclean spirit resembling a frog. Frogs were unclean animals (Leviticus 11:10, 41), but these are not literal frogs. John identified the froglike apparitions as spirits of demons.

These demonic frog-like spirits go out performing signs and wonders to get them to come, and the Antichrist and all the armies will be there. Joel 3 details how they will be gathered to the valley of Jehoshaphat (“the Lord judges”). He will judge the nations on every side, multitudes in the valley of decision. When they are gathered there, God will pour His wrath out on them.

For Christians, God gives us a final warning in verse 15.. *“Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.”*

Like a thief comes, Jesus will come quickly and unexpectedly. But unlike a thief, He will come not to steal but to take what is rightfully His. The imagery of Jesus coming like a thief appears elsewhere in the New Testament.

In the Olivet discourse Jesus said in Matthew 24:42-43, *“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming. But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into.”*

The apostle Paul reminded the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:2 that *“the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night”* - a truth that Peter also affirmed in 2 Peter 3:10. Jesus’ sudden, unexpected return will bring fear and dismay to His enemies, but it brings hope and comfort to His people.

But Revelation 16:15 is not a call to watch for visible “signs” of Christ’s return but to maintain conduct that is godly and faithful, because God has promised that justice will prevail in the end. The imagery of clothing in verse 15 is used to refer to holiness given to us freely by the Lamb’s sacrifice for us, a holiness that we live out in consistent faith and obedience toward God. It is a call to be faithful to our mission to know Christ and make Him known.

VII. The Seventh Bowl Poured on the Air

Revelation 16:17-21... ¹⁷“*The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’*” ¹⁸“*Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.*” ¹⁹“*The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath.*” ²⁰“*Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.*” ²¹“*From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail because the plague was so terrible*”.

The seven bowls are poured out onto the land and the sea, the rivers and springs, the sun, the throne of the beast, the River Euphrates, and into the air. All the realms are covered; everything is touched. God is judging the universe — the end has come.

The seventh bowl sets the stage for the Second Coming of Christ. Verse 18 says there will a massive earthquake, the likes of which has never occurred, is a judgment on all the great cities of the world. Every city on earth, especially Babylon the Great, will split apart and fall.

Do you remember where you were on the morning of December 23, 2003? I remember being with my family around our kitchen table on the morning of December 23, 2003 when the San Simeon earthquake hit... estimated 6.5 magnitude shook the Central Coast of California. Being from Maryland, I had that you were supposed to get under a table. But when it happened I started running around yelling, “It’s an earthquake get under the table!” Then I heard, “We are under the table! Now you need to get down here.”

Even a smaller scale earthquake is terrifying. But this earthquake in Revelation 16 will shake the whole earth. In addition to the earthquake, 100-pound hailstones fall from the sky. Even small hailstones the size of a marble can cause damage, but these massive ones are killing people.

Physically, the worst part of these bowl judgments is that they are cumulative. Spiritually, the worst part is they do not produce repentance.

In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus tells the parable of a rich man in hell and a poor beggar named Lazarus who is at Abraham’s side in heaven. The rich man cries out, “*I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.*” Abraham replied, “*They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.*” “*‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’*”

I want to close with a couple points of application:

First, justice in this world will always appear distorted.

Adrian read from Psalm 73 at the beginning of the service. Turn there with me and look at Psalm 73:12-14 with me, “*Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased in wealth.*” ¹³“*Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence;*” ¹⁴“*For I have been stricken all day long and chastened every morning.*”

In other words, life is often a raw deal. You work hard at school and make a hard-earned B+, but a fellow student cheats or cuts corners and not only gets an “A,” he is granted a scholarship. Your wicked coworkers get promoted by flattery and slander, but you follow the rules and lose your job. You maintain insurance on your car, but somebody without insurance hits you and leaves you with the bill.

How have you experienced unfairness? How have you expressed your frustrations about the injustices inherent in this fallen world system? Do the words of the psalmist resonate with you?

Second, escaping the reality of God’s judgment is impossible.

The same psalmist, coming to his senses and looking at the world from a divine rather than human perspective, continues in Psalm 73:16-19: *“When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight. Until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!”*

Just as the tribulation rebels will be held accountable for their wickedness, so every person will be held accountable for his or her life. It is impossible to escape judgment. Reminding ourselves of this fact will help us come to terms with the brutality of the present world and the injustice that seems to reign. One day the tables will be turned and justice will be served.

How are we to live? Don’t just look at life horizontally, but look up vertically like the Psalmist in Psalm 73 who went on to pray in Psalm 73:25-26, *“Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”*

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What evidence is there that the seven bowl judgments are different than the seal and trumpet judgments?
2. When do these judgments take place? Who are the recipients of these judgments?
3. How do these judgments demonstrate God’s perfect righteousness and holiness?
4. How does the angel affirm that God’s judgment is justified? How does God’s punishment portray the Old Testament principle known as “lex talionis” – the punishment fits the crime?
5. Have you ever experienced unfairness or injustice? How can Revelation 16 be an encouragement to you when justice in your circumstances appears to be distorted?
6. Can someone escape the reality of God’s judgment? How?
7. How do the survivors of the hailstorm respond to God? How does their response debunk the idea that signs and wonders will convince people to repent and believe in Christ?

CHAPTER 28
“Seduced by the World”
Revelation 17:1-18

¹ “One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. ² With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.’ ³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵ The name written on her forehead was a mystery: ⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. ⁷ Then the angel said to me: ‘Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. ⁸ The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.’ ⁹ “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹ The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction. ¹² “The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.’ ¹⁵ Then the angel said to me, ‘The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. ¹⁶ The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. ¹⁸ The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.’ ”

What’s the greatest danger you face? Heart disease? Cancer? Traffic or other accidents? Crime? Natural disaster? Terrorism?

In some countries, people might answer: Economic collapse, political upheaval, or war. These can all bring physical pain and death. But there is a greater danger we all face – much more deadly than any of these.

The New Testament character of Demas exemplifies this danger. In Colossians 4:14 and Philemon 24, Paul sends greetings from Demas, whom he calls a fellow worker. Demas was a companion of Paul’s – some might say a disciple. Paul wrote Colossians and Philemon while under arrest, so Demas had the courage to stay with Paul when things got tough. We don’t know how long Demas had been with Paul prior to his passing along these greetings, but afterwards he remained by his side for several years: at least three, perhaps as long as eight years. Paul refers to him one more time, in his last letter, 2 Timothy. Paul writes 2 Timothy from his final imprisonment – the imprisonment that ends in his execution. And he writes these sad words in 2 Timothy 4:9-10: “*Do your best to come to me quickly, for Demas, because he has loved this present world, has deserted me.*”

Demas loved this world. And after years of being with Paul, after years of being disciplined by Paul – he deserts him.

Friends, the greatest danger you face is being seduced by the world.

In Revelation 17 the world is introduced to us as a harlot, a prostitute named Babylon. We've been introduced to Babylon already. In Revelation 14:8, one of three angels preceding the final bowl judgment declares: "*Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her immorality.*" Revelation 14:8

Then in chapter 16, when God's wrath is completed through the pouring out of the seventh bowl, John once again records Babylon's demise: "*The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.*" Revelation 16:19

So, in a sense, chapters 17 and 18 describe in detail why the seven bowl judgments of chapter 16 are necessary and, in particular, how Babylon will fall. Babylon is a city, but it is also a system. It represents a final godless, humanistic, and worldwide religious system that is void of God. In the same way we might refer to "Wall Street" to describe the entire American financial system, Revelation uses the word "Babylon" to refer to the Antichrist's end-time religious/political/economic empire and she is a harlot who seduces many in the world, but she will ultimately be destroyed.

Our text begins by explaining that the great harlot, Babylon the great, will lead the kings, the rulers of the world, into immorality. The image is one of spiritual adultery and idolatry. Not only does she seduce the leaders of the world, but she also seduces common people - verse 2 says "*those who dwell on the earth,*" are drunk with the wine of her immorality. The lust for power, material stuff, sex, and pleasure has intoxicated the world! No one under the sun has escaped her enticing allurements. The prostitute captivated their hearts and taken over their lives.

As 1 John 2:15-17 warns, "*Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*"

All of God's plans for history from beginning to end have one goal: worship God! Don't worship the prestige of the world, don't worship the prosperity of the world, don't worship the power of the world, don't worship the pleasures of world, and don't even worship the holy messenger who brings you the news that Babylon has fallen forever. Instead, worship God and do His will!

So, the main point of our text is this: In Revelation 17 we see the true nature of the world, its alluring system of corruption, and its future judgment.

Our outline has three points:

First in verses 1-6 we will see The World Described.

Then in verses 7-15 we will see The World Demystified

And third, in verses 16-18 we will see The World Destroyed

God tells us through John that the world is doomed to destruction so that we stand guard are not seduced by the world, and instead we worship and obey God.

My prayer is that as we study this passage, you will evaluate your own heart and ask: Do I worship God with all my heart? Do I find my salvation, my security, my hope, my pleasure, and my satisfaction in the Lord Jesus Christ? What steps will I take to not be seduced by the world and instead to know Christ and make Him known? Let's begin with:

I. The World Described

Verses 1-2 ..¹ *“One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. ² With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries. ‘ ”*

The fact that one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with John connects the judgment of the harlot with the final seven bowl judgments of chapter 16.

The harlot in John's vision sits in a position of authority and sovereignty like a king on his throne on or beside *“many waters.”* Cities in ancient times were usually located near a source of water, either the ocean, a river, lake, or spring. That was true of Babylon, which was located on the Euphrates River. Just as the proud capital of the Babylonian Empire took her seat beside many waters, so also will the Babylonian harlot city of the future.

Many of the greatest cities in the world, ancient cities like Tyre and Sidon, modern day cities like New York, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, are port cities because of the ease of commerce and trade.

Verse 15 tells us ..*“Then the angel said to me, ‘The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages ‘ ”.*

The harlot will not merely influence but will dominate all the unredeemed peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues of the earth. The harlot's authority will be universal; the entire world will be committed to the false worship of the Babylonian system, rather than the true God.

Look back at verse 2 ..*“With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”*

Rulers from around the world will become obsessed with the Babylonian harlot. Deceived by the false prophet, Antichrist, and Satan and his demon hosts, they will become enamored with the false world religion. But having joined themselves to the harlot, economically, socially, militarily, politically, and religiously, they will share her disastrous fate.

Verse 3: ..*“Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns”.*

Isaiah and many other prophetic books in the Old Testament use the desert as a picture of the judgment of God - sterility and fruitless deeds of darkness which Paul discusses. Nothing eternally good comes from this system of wickedness; it is the absence of God's blessings and of life.

Revelation 17:3-5... ³*“Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a*

golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵ *The name written on her forehead was a mystery:*”

She is seated on a scarlet beast. Both the beast and the woman are scarlet, a vivid, lurid color, which reminds one of the shedding of the blood of the saints and prophets. The beast, the Antichrist, a tyrant, who has consolidated power into a worldwide geopolitical and military system.

Sitting on the beast, the woman shows either that she is riding the beast where she wants it to go, like she is in charge, or that the beast is supporting her and enabling her to do the things she wants to do. The latter is a better fit, because in verse 16, the Antichrist rises and eats her flesh and burns her up with fire after using her for his own purposes.

Verse 3 says the beast, the Antichrist, is covered with blasphemous names, indicating that he openly embraces blasphemy. He demands to be worshipped as God, and he defies the true and living God, so he is blasphemous. Like the dragon, Satan, in the vision in Revelation 12, the Antichrist has seven heads and ten horns. These represent the different kingdoms and nations that come together to make the beast’s empire, and it also represents the total harmony between Satan, the Antichrist, and the wicked world system together.

The Antichrist supports the woman, enabling her to live a lifestyle of luxury, power and comfort. Look at verse 4...”*The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries*”.

Her garments are purple and scarlet, symbols of wealth. In John’s day, purple dye was obtained from the secretions of mollusks - snails and clams - native to the Mediterranean Sea. Four species in particular give off a purple dye; it would take approximately 8000 of these small aquatic sea creatures to make a single gram of purple dye. Thus, purple cloth was extremely expensive and almost exclusively reserved for royalty and nobility- the wealthy and powerful in every nation. In addition, she is glittering with gold, precious stones, and pearls. She is holding a golden cup in her hand, a picture of wealth.

She is drinking from the golden cup, a picture of ease and pleasure as she reclines on the beast. The cup is filled with abominable things and the filth of her adultery. She is drunk with illicit pleasure.

Revelation 14:8 told us, “*A second angel followed and said, ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.’*” She is drinking the wine that gives insanity. Since the word adultery is used, we can see her reclining at a raucous feast, getting drunk on wickedness, living out a life of pleasure and ease and immoral, sensual excess, especially sexual.

In verse 5..“*The name written on her forehead was a mystery*”: she has a mysterious title written on her forehead, proclaiming her identity to John and through him to us, to the world. “Mystery. Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the Earth.” The word “*mystery*” refers to the special spiritual insight you need to understand this vision. Her identity and activity in the world are a spiritual mystery, hidden from us unless God reveals it.

Verse 5 says the woman’s name also involves “*mystery*.” In the New Testament, a “*mystery*” is a hidden truth that was concealed but is now revealed to those with spiritual discernment. For example, In Ephesians 5 marriage is called a mystery for it only when we are in Christ do we see that marriage is to be a picture of Christ and His bride the church. In this case in Revelation 17, the mystery has to do with Babylon. Her true character and identity of the woman, previously kept concealed, are now objects of clear revelation.

Babylon is the essence of human rebellion against God, begun in Genesis 10 by the son of Cush who name was Nimrod. Nimrod was known as the first mighty man and hunter, and he founded the City of Babel. Just an interesting fun fact, when I was deployed with the Navy and flying missions in Europe, we often worked with the British anti-submarine warfare aircraft called the Nimrod (since then the aircraft has been decommissioned).

The name **Bab-el** means “the gate of God.” The famous tower of Babel in Genesis 11 was an idolatrous attempt by man to defy God and elevate themselves and show their own greatness. When the Lord sent judgment on the builders by making mankind’s one language into many, the word **bab-el** came to mean “confusion.”

Verse 6.. *”I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus. When I saw her, I was greatly astonished.”*

The woman is drinking a mixed wine of adulteries and immoralities and illicit pleasure, but also the blood of the saints and prophets, the followers of Christ, whom she hates. The faithful saints of God will not join in her immorality, so she heaps abuse on them and take pleasure in seeing them killed, getting drunk with their blood.

The Romans were an example of this: they delighted in watching defenseless Christians be ripped to shreds by wild animals or killed by Gladiators; they could not get enough of it.

John’s reaction to this is seen at the end of verse 6 .. *”I was greatly astonished”*

John stands in utter amazement; he marvels, he is surprised; he underestimates the wickedness of this woman, Babylon the Great. Let me apply this to here today: ask God to show you immediately with eyes of faith this world we live in, what it will look like on Judgment Day, to warn you away from this corrupting influence of the world.

We have seen the world described in verses 1-6. Now will see:

II. The World Demystified

Verse 7.. *“Then the angel said to me: ‘Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns’“* ”

In response to John’s confusion and amazement, the angel asked, *“Why do you wonder?”* There was no need for John to remain puzzled by the relation of the beast to this beautiful yet bloody woman in the vision.

In verses 8–14 the angel gives John a lengthy description of the beast. He is explaining to John the relationship between the harlot and the beast, which had mystified the apostle. However, the angel needed first to give him further details about the beast.

The beast that John saw is the Antichrist, the satanic ruler of the last and most powerful empire in human history, who will serve as Satan’s instrument to attack Israel, persecute believers, who tries to conquer the world for Satan, and oppose Christ. He is described as one “who was, and is not, and is about to come” again. This description contrasts with the divine Christ, *“who is and who was and who is to come”* from heaven to rule forever (Revelation 1:8).

Seven heads refers to seven world empires that stood in opposition to God and His people—five that were in John’s past (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece), one that existed in John’s present (Rome), and one that will arise in the future (empire of the Antichrist).

Verse 8 ..*“The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.”*

The beast “was” (i.e., “existed in the past”) and “is not” (i.e., does not at the time John is writing exist in the world of the living) and “is about to come up out of the bottomless pit.” Back in 11:7, we are told he will arise from the abyss, the bottomless pit.

All this is true because he had been put to death but was expected to return to life soon. He appears in 13:3 as one with a mortal wound (“as though slain unto death”), whose deathblow had been “healed” (13:3, 12), that is, he had “the wound of the sword but came to life” (13:14).

The response of the non-Christian world (we are told in the middle of verse 8 those not recorded in “the book of life,”) to non-Christians this remarkable recovery is worshipful amazement (they “will marvel,” v. 8d; 13:3) at what appears to be a supernatural recovery.

The career of the beast will seem wildly successful until he turns his satanic-inspired hostility against the returning Christ. And as we will see in Revelation 19, His defeat at that point will be swift and overwhelming.

In verses 9-13 the beast’s heads are “mountains” in that they show the woman’s location, but they are “kings” in that they characterize the Antichrist’s role and that of others associated with him in that role.

Seven heads means seven world empires that stood in opposition to God and His people—five that were in John’s past (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece), one that existed in John’s present (Rome), and one that will arise in the future (empire of the Antichrist).

The seven mountains is a way to equate the grandeur of a city with the grandeur of Rome. So, Constantinople was regarded as a city on seven hills, as were other cities in the ancient world. It is uncertain whether this means the capital city of the Antichrist will have seven literal hills.

Verse 11 ..*“The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.”*

The Antichrist, who is one of the preceding kings, is also an “eighth.” This may refer to the two phases of his rule—before his marvelous “death and resurrection” (the “seventh” king) and after this astounding feat when Satan turns his local political career into a global empire (as the “eighth” king).

Verses 12-13 .. ¹²*“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ”*

Ten political powers that will unite to empower the Antichrist. The reference to one hour is a figure of speech that emphasizes the brevity of their rule; their reign will be short-lived because their master’s empire itself will be

short-lived. During their brief reign, they will be unanimously devoted to Antichrist; they will have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. They will do his will, and his will alone.

Verse 14 .. *“They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”*

Verse 14 is an interjection that anticipates the 2nd Coming of Jesus described in 19:11-21. It is also a simple summary of Armageddon (16:16) and the final battle. The beast and his kingdom, in a spiritual suicide mission, attack the Warrior Lamb, the Lamb who is also a Lion! It is no contest. The Lamb will conquer them. Why? Because *“He is Lord of Lords and King of kings.”* The title is well known looking back to Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalm 136:2-3; Daniel 2:47. It is a title reserved only for God.

When Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to overcome the beast and the kings of the earth, He will be accompanied by *“the called and chosen and faithful.”* This same group is called the *“armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean”* Revelation 19:14. The New Testament commonly uses the terms “called,” “chosen,” and “faithful” to describe saints, so these are likely the resurrected and raptured believers returning with Christ to the earth at the battle of Armageddon.

We have seen The World Described in verses 1-6, The World Demystified in verses 7-15, and finally ,

III. The World Destroyed

Look at verses 16-18 .. ¹⁶*“The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire.”* ¹⁷*For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled.* ¹⁸*The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”*

Antichrist’s alliance with the false religious system will not last. Eventually the ten horns (the ten kings) and the beast (Antichrist) will hate the harlot. Having used the false religious system to help the Antichrist gain control of the world, Antichrist will discard it. He will want the world to worship only him. He will turn on the harlot and will make her “desolate and naked and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.” That graphic language of extreme violence is used to make clear that Antichrist and his henchmen will completely obliterate the false religious system.

Yet the ten kings’ unity of purpose (mentioned already in v. 13) will not originate from solely human intent but is prompted by the sovereign God who controls the events of his world, even the actions of evil, God-opposing powers (v. 17).

In verse 17 the angel makes this clear by repeating the key word from v. 13, the word “*purpose*” two times, showing that the unified purpose that the ten kings will execute will be God’s intention.

God’s power is behind the destruction and consolidation of the evil empire. As always, Satan is the instrument of God’s purposes. The one-world unification government so long sought by the humanists will have finally arrived, only to be destroyed in one great act of divine judgment. All prophecy of Christ’s return and the setting up of His kingdom will be fulfilled completely.

In closing, what does this passage have to say to us today? The world has an influence even today on the way that you think and live — the way you think about money, time, your profession, your future, marital relations. Satan still attempts to seduce people, including Christians, to believe the world has more to offer more than Christ does. He will attempt to seduce you like He did to Demas, and I the enemy does it in four ways, four temptations that you must be on guard against:

1. Prestige

Those of us in such places must constantly refer to the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:20, "*Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?*" The world's wisdom, and the acclaim that comes from aligning with the world's wisdom, should not be our goal.

Instead of desiring to be prestigious in the eyes of the world, we should pray to be strategic. We should emulate our Lord Jesus Christ, who cared nothing for fame and power, and who gave everything He had to strategically advance His kingdom for the glory of the Father.

2. Prosperity

Notice verse 4 .. "*The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.*"

There is allurements in all of her wealth. It is not wrong to be rich, but it is wrong when you are full of greed. Look at 1 Timothy 6:6-11... ⁶"*But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.* ⁷*For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.* ⁸*If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.* ⁹*But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.* ¹⁰*For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.* ¹¹*But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love^lperseverance and gentleness."*

Like Demas who left the faith because the lure of wealth, verse 10 .. "*They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while.*"

3. Pleasure

In verse 4, the harlot's cup is full of pleasures. Are you tempted by pleasure? Do you have a price which you are willing to pay? If you are promised the greatest amount of pleasure, what will take for you to compromise? Satan has deep pockets and he is willing to pay for you to leave your first love.

In Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis, an older demon advises a younger demon about tactics of temptation. On the topic of normal physical pleasure, Screwtape says to his nephew Wormwood, "Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on enemy territory. I know we demons have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is God's invention, not ours. God made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce a single one. All we can do is encourage the humans to take the pleasures which God has produced, and to seduce man to indulge in them at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden."

Look at Proverbs 6:23-26 with me....²³ *“For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life* ²⁴ *To keep you from the evil woman, From the smooth tongue of the adulteress.* ²⁵ *Do not desire her beauty in your heart, Nor let her capture you with her eyelids.* ²⁶ *For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.”*

The harlot takes a small payment from her victim but as an adulteress she steals away his very life and he is reduced to a loaf of bread.

If you want real pleasure, go to Jesus and drink from the fountain of living water. You want true joy, repent of your sin and trust in Jesus Christ for salvation. Psalm 16:11, *“You will make known to me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”*

4. Power

If you love your life more than faithfulness to God, then you will do whatever it takes to have control and power.

In Matthew 4:8-11, Satan took Jesus to a high place where He could see all the kingdoms of the world, offering Him all of the power and splendor of earth. Why would this matter? Jesus had just been proclaimed the Son of God, the one who would inherit the whole universe. So, what was the big enticement?

Satan, with cunning subtlety, tempted Jesus to compromise *“Why do you have to wait for what is rightfully Yours? Why go through the humiliation of the cross and sacrifice Your life when You can have it all now?”* All Satan asked in return was for Jesus to compromise and bend the knee to the devil.

It seems insignificant, but that is Satan’s deceptive way. If Jesus had succumbed, He would have done nothing less than sell His soul to the devil, all for the sake of power and glory now without the suffering and sacrifice that would lead to our salvation.

If Jesus had fallen for this temptation, He would have been disqualified from being the King of kings and the Savior of the world. Instead of the mob at the cross crying, *“He saved many. Now let Him save Himself!”* Satan would have cried, *“He saved Himself. Now He can't save any!”*

So, like the other temptations in Matthew 4, Jesus quoted the infallible Word of God, beginning with *“It is written.”* And Satan fled from Him, defeated.

In the wilderness, Jesus showed us that all who believe in His name and embrace Him as Savior will have strength to defeat the enemy. When faced with any temptation, we must remember that the way through is to flee from it and submit to Christ, proclaiming to ourselves and our enemies, *“It is written.”* 1 Corinthians 10:13 ... *“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.”*

Which of these four temptations (prestige, prosperity, pleasure, power) is most seductive to you? Talk to your community group about these so they can pray for you, and you can develop a battle plan.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What is the greatest danger you face?
2. What effect does the harlot in Revelation 17 have on the kings and rulers of the world? According to 1 John 2:15-17, how are many seduced by the world today?
3. Why is the harlot called Babylon the Great? How does her spirit continue in every generation?
4. How is the harlot's system of spiritual idolatry such a mystery to many? How can we demystify and identify her wickedness?
5. Why are all the kings and leaders being drawn to the place that in Hebrews is called Armageddon? What is God's ultimate purpose for having them together there?
6. How are you being influenced by the world? Where are your appetites? Are there desires, habits, and thoughts you need to repent and put off, and new thoughts and practices you need to put on? Read Ephesians 4:22-24.
7. Why is the pleasure of the world so deceptive and fleeting, while the pleasure of knowing, trusting, and obeying God is so fulfilling? Read Psalm 16:11.
8. How can you apply what you have learned from Revelation chapter 17?

CHAPTER 29
“Weeping and Rejoicing Over Babylon’s Fall”
Revelation 18:1-24

¹ “After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. ² And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. ³ For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.’ ⁴ I heard another voice from heaven, saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; ⁵ for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her. ⁷ To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, ‘I SIT AS A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning.’ ⁸ For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong. ⁹ “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰ standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’ ¹¹ “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more— ¹² cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, ¹³ and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. ¹⁴ The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. ¹⁵ The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, ¹⁶ saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; ¹⁷ for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, ¹⁸ and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning’, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’ ¹⁹ ‘ And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’ ²⁰ Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her. ²¹ Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer. ²² And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer; ²³ and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth.’ ”

Good morning my name is John Marc Wiemann, I have the privilege of being the lead pastor here at Cornerstone. It is so wonderful to be back with you here at Cornerstone. Thank you so much for the 3-month sabbatical that I was able to enjoy, to travel, to visit with family and friends, to study, read, and write. Someone said to me this week, “Can’t wait to hear your sermon this Sunday since you had 3 months to write it!”

A special thank you to our elders who so faithfully preached God's Word each Sunday of my sabbatical. As well as thank you former Cornerstone associate pastors Shane Sander and Curtis Solomon who also came and preached. I was asked by family and friends and pastors of other churches if I was worried about the church in my absence, and I could tell them I honestly was not because we have such committed and capable men who serve as elders. And thank you Cornerstone family for being here and learning from them and encouraging them in their leadership.

If you started attending Cornerstone while I was on sabbatical, you can watch or listen to the Revelation sermon series by going to our website Cornerstoneca.org and click on Sermons and you will see the Revelation sermon series. You can also listen by using our Cornerstone phone app that is available through Apple iTunes, Google Play, or the Amazon App Store.

How is it that one event can make some people incredibly sad and others extremely happy? How is that one experience can make some people very frightened or disappointed and others tremendously excited or thankful? Take for an example a roller coaster at Six Flags Magic Mountain amusement park in Valencia. For some of you, that thought of getting on a roller coaster there excites you and for others the thought of getting on that roller coaster terrifies you.

Or how about a baseball game, like the San Francisco Giants vs the Los Angeles Dodgers. I guarantee you, that no matter which team wins, some of you will be happy while others will be disappointed. One event, two different responses.

We see this often in an election year in our country. People are happy their candidate got elected, but others are sad that their candidate did not get elected.

One event, two different responses, two different reactions. In our text today, in Revelation chapter 18 we will see very different responses to one event. And the question for you this morning is this: What will your response be to this promised event in Revelation 18?

In Revelation chapter 18 we see very different responses to one event.

The main point of our text is: God's justice in judging Babylon will be lamented by the world and celebrated by citizens of heaven. What will your response be to this promised event in Revelation 18? How does your response to this God ordained event in Revelation 18 reveal where your hope is, your desires, your focus?

In this chapter, John heard four voices.

The voice of condemnation v. 1-3 The call of separation v. 4-8 The response of lamentation v. 9-19 The response of celebration v. 20-24

The last two voices reveal the two responses.

Now by way of quick review, let's consider 5 key questions about the book of Revelation.

The Five "W"s of Revelation:

WHO? John, the disciple of Jesus and author of the gospel of John, as well as 1, 2, and 3 John.

WHAT? A written record of the revelation given to Jesus by God the Father and communicated to John by an angel.

WHERE? The tiny island of Patmos, about forty miles off the coast of Asia Minor, where John had been exiled for his faith.

WHEN? About AD 95 or 96, making Revelation one of the last books of the Bible to be written.

WHY? To reveal Christ in all of His glory, to assure believers that God's perfect justice will be served, to exhort them to not compromise with the world, and encourage them to persevere in faith.

Chapter 1 verse 1 introduces this book as "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ*" since it comes from Him and centers on Him. It begins with a vision of Christ's glory, wisdom, and power in chapter 1, and portrays His authority over the entire church in chapters 2–3. He is the Lamb who was slain and we see in chapters 4-5, Jesus is the only one declared worthy to open the book of God's judgment. God's righteous wrath is poured out upon the whole earth in chapters 6–18 in the form of the seven seal judgments, seven trumpet judgments, and seven bowl judgments. Although those judgments will be worldwide in scope, they will focus particularly on the Antichrist's world empire, known as Babylon.

Then in chapter 19 Jesus Christ returns in power to judge His enemies and in chapter 20 to establish His millennial rule and execute the Great White throne judgment, and in chapter 21 to establish the new creation and eternal state.

We praise Jesus for what He has done for us on the cross by taking away our sins, and we praise Him for what He is doing for us by interceding for us in heaven. Revelation gives us another reason to praise Him—what He will do for us in the future. As such, Christ remains the center of our worship, the focus of our obedience, and the source of our blessing—both now and in eternity to come.

During the last three and a half years of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will be able to build the greatest commercial empire the world has ever known. Chapter 18 describes God's destruction of commercial Babylon. And with the destruction of the satanic last and greatest human empire, the stage is set for the triumphant return of the Lord Jesus Christ in chapter 19 which we will see in coming weeks.

In Revelation chapter 18 John describes the four voices he heard. The first voice that John hears is:

I. The Voice of Condemnation

Look at verses 1-2 ..¹ "*After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.* ² *And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.'*"

John sees a glorious and mighty angel that descends from heaven to proclaim the effects of Babylon's judgment by God. This impressive messenger possesses "*great authority*" and "*glory*" that lights up the earth, reinforcing the credibility of his proclamation. The angel's message is loud and clear: Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!

The word “*great*” is used ten times in chapter 18...

What makes something great? Some of us remember TV commercials for Kellogg’s Frosted Flakes cereal with Tony the Tiger. And Tony always ends the commercial by saying, and you can say it with me now, “Kellogg’s Frosted Flakes are grrrrreat!” Presumably, Tony meant Frosted Flakes tasted great but not that they were great for your health.

Babylon is called a “*great city*” five times in the chapter (verses 10, 16, 18, 19, 21). It may be one city, but its influence will be worldwide. You see, as the Antichrist’s capital city, Babylon will represent his whole commercial empire. Babylon is powerful, influential, wealthy, and self-satisfied. The Antichrist thinks he is great and in total control. But the truth he is not.

In verse 2, the desolation of Babylon is described as a dark place where there are demons, scavenger birds and rodents. The point is that Babylon will become a dead ghost town with no inhabitants, an unclean place unfit for life.

Why? What is the reason for Babylon’s condemnation? Look at verse 3 .. *“For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”*

The all-encompassing terms “all the nations, the kings of the earth, and the merchants of the earth” reveal that Babylon will seduce the entire world.

Verse 4 mentions her “*sensuality*”: and verse 7 says *“she glorified herself and lived sensuously.”* To “live sensuously” is to live proudly in luxury while others go without. It means to make possessions and pleasures the most important things in life, and to ignore the needs of others.

Honestly, how many of us are tempted by what the world has to offer? Are there times in your life when you see luxurious, sensual living and say, “I want some of that!” Christians in every age need to heed the warning of 1 John 2:15–17, *“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”*

How easy it is to become fascinated by the things the world has to offer. Like a person sipping a delicious mixed cocktail drink and wanting more and more, we can soon find ourselves drinking in the idolatry of the world and getting intoxicated on it. The world system that opposes Christ has always been with us, and we must beware of its subtle influence. That is why the second voice is the call to separation.

II. The Call to Separation

Look at verses 4-5 .. ⁴*“I heard another voice from heaven, saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; ⁵for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.’ ”*

The use of **allos** (another of the same kind) suggests that the speaker is an angel like the one in verse 1. The message he proclaims, “*Come out of her, my people,*” is a call for God’s people to disentangle themselves from the world system.

Why are believers fleeing Babylon? Verse 4 so that they will not participate in her sins.

Babylon has committed sins of self-glory, pride, idolatry, immorality, and the exploitation of others – including the persecution of believers. Her sins are so immense in their extent and severity that verse 5 says her sins “*have piled up to heaven.*”

The second reason to be separate and distinct is provided in verse 4, that God’s people might be spared the terrible plagues He will send on Babylon. God had patiently endured the growing sins of the evil system, but now the time had come for His wrath to be poured out. He will judge Babylon for the way she persecuted and treated His own people.

The angel’s request in verse 6 that God give back to Babylon double “*according to her deeds*” (literally “double the double things”) is a request that Babylon’s punishment fit her crimes. Double has been her iniquity, double will be her punishment.

Then the angel notes in verse 8 that in “*one day her plagues will come.*” Babylon’s destruction will not be progressive. The wicked city will be instantly destroyed.

We have heard the voice of condemnation, and the voice of separation. Next, we hear the voice of lamentation.

III. The Response of Lamentation v. 9-19

John heard a new sound—this time coming from the earth. Loud lamentations poured forth from those who placed their faith, hope, and love in that last great Babylonian empire.

Verse 9 .. “*And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning,*”

Verse 11 ..¹¹ “*And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more—¹² cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble,*”

Verse 17b-18-19 .. “*And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance,¹⁸ and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’¹⁹ And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’ ”*

We hear this loud wailing and lamentation from three groups who have profited the most from Antichrist’s economic empire known as Babylon: First, the kings who gained power and wealth; Second, the merchants who shared the worldwide markets she created; and Third, the ship captains and sailors who carried her cargo over all the world. They have now lost all that Babylon had provided, so their sorrow is not for Babylon’s fall but for their

own economic loss. God had brought an end to their life of luxury and wealth. Even their employees who make their living by the sea weep in verses 17–18!

What is ironic is that the world's leaders and merchants are mourning the loss of their sales. They are despondent that no one is buying their merchandise, but they belonged to a system that refused to sell their goods to any Christian who did not take the mark of the beast. "You are not allowed to buy anything we sell to you, go away from us, in fact we are going to kill you." But now the tables are turned.

In verse 9 ..*"And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning,"*

The terms here are identical to account in Genesis when Sodom and Gomorrah was burned for sexual perversion and the people lament over her burning. That tells us something very important. When we see the sexual immorality of Sodom and Gomorrah we might say, "Of course their judgment was due for their perversion of God's design and command." But here Babylon is being destroyed for her materialism, for the people are greedy, discontented and will do whatever is right in their own eyes to get ahead. So, that tells us if they are being destroyed in the same way that God judged Sodom and Gomorrah, that tells us that materialism is just as dangerous in God's eyes as sexual immorality. It just as detested by God.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:25, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."*

As 1 Timothy 6:9-10 reminds us, ⁹*"But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."*

Money is not evil, it is *"the love of money"* that is the root of evil. Not surprisingly, when Babylon the great world empire begins to crumble, her lovers - those enslaved to her power and pleasures - will begin to wail in anguish. The objects of their absolute devotion - the Antichrist and his empire -will be crushed before their eyes. At the same time the objects of their hatred - Jesus Christ and His people - will be exalted by God.

The word translated "weep" in verse 9 could be translated "to wail." They are crying out in an inconsolable way. What they love the most they are losing. And it all happens very fast. In verse eight it says the fall of Babylon comes in *"a one day"*. In the remainder of the chapter this is shortened to *"one hour"* and repeated in verses 10, 17, and 19.

Verses 12-13 provide a list of twenty-eight items or categories of merchandise that brought wealth to these kings, merchants, and shipmasters. Gold, silver, and precious stones led the list. Then costly garments and very expensive wood and bronze and iron and marble used for decorative cabinets and other luxury furnishings.

Imported spices were greatly sought in that day, both for foods and for personal use as perfumes. Last on the list in verse 13, and most disturbing, is *"slaves and human lives."* Literally "bodies, and the souls of people. "People will be treated like pieces of furniture, bought and sold, used and abused.

All three groups, the kings, the merchants, the shipmasters and sailors are distraught because their shipping trade has been completely crippled and their profits have vanished. Keep in mind that Revelation 18 was written almost

two thousand years ago, and even today it is estimated that an overwhelming majority of material goods, around 80 percent, are transported by ships!

But notice all three groups see “*the smoke of her burning*” and stand “*at a distance.*” We see it in verse 9, 15 and 17. They stand at a distance, but they don’t want to get too close and get burned themselves. They are lamenting not Babylon but themselves; they have lost their livelihood. Babylon’s sudden ruin is their ruin; their future has gone with the destruction of the “great city.” But there is no remorse and no repentance, no confession of sin and turning to faith in Christ. There is only sorrow for what has been taken away.

They remember the glory days as they cry out at the end of verse 18, “*What city is like the great city?*” The sailors go further in their sorrow, throwing “*dust on their heads*” as a sign of mourning.

Verse 14 ..“*They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your luxury and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered.’*”

“*The fruit you longed for*” refers to all these luxuries that are now gone. The splendor of these expensive goods has vanished and you will “no longer find them.” They are gone forever, a warning to any society (like ours!) given over to the folly of conspicuous consumption. The adage, “I’ve never seen a funeral hearse driving to the cemetery towing a U-Haul trailer” or “You can’t take it with you” is still oh so true.

It recalls the parable in Luke 12 that Jesus told of a very productive farmer who became greedy. Look at Luke 12:15-21... ¹⁵“*Then He said to them, ‘Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.’*” ¹⁶ *And He told them a parable, saying, ‘The land of a rich man was very productive.*” ¹⁷ *And he began reasoning to himself, saying, What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?*” ¹⁸ *Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.*” ¹⁹ *And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.’*” ²⁰ *But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’*” ²¹ *So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*

Like the greedy, self-interested farmer, the judgment is coming quickly on Babylon.

We have seen the voice of condemnation, the voice of separation, the voice of lamentation and now, fourth:

IV. The Response of Celebration

Verse 20 ..“*Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.*”

Heaven will have quite a different perspective on Babylon’s judgment than that of Antichrist’s earthly followers. The angel calls on the redeemed saints to rejoice over Babylon’s fall, because God has pronounced judgment for them against her. The long-awaited moment of vindication, retribution, and vengeance, for which the martyred Tribulation believers prayed back in Revelation 6:9–10 and for which all the redeemed hoped, has arrived. Heaven rejoices, not over the damnation of sinners, but because of the triumph of righteousness, the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the elimination of His enemies, and the arrival of Christ’s kingdom on the earth.

Finally, as if to remind any who might feel God's complete destruction of the world system is too extreme or unjust or simply uncalled for, the angel reminds us at the end of verse 23 and in verse 24 why Babylon had to go. Judgment was needed *"because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth."*

Friends, we have seen the voice of condemnation, the call to separation, the response of lamentation and the sound of celebration. So, what will be your response to this promised event in Revelation 18? Will it be lamentation or celebration? Will it be condemnation or salvation?

Are you a Christian? A child of God? John 1:12 tells us .. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,"* Jesus said in 5:24, *'I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. If you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, come to Him now.'* "

And if you are a Christian, are you living a distinct life from the world's values?

Nobody wants the stock market to crash, the PG&E power grid to fail, your business or your employer to go bankrupt, or an earthquake to level our city. But friends, I am afraid that too much of our lives depends on the world continuing just as it is. As believers we have a different King and belong to a different Kingdom. Our mission is to know Christ and make Him known. We don't isolate ourselves from the world, we engage the world and lovingly share the good news with non-Christians. This is not our ultimate home, so we don't simply live for here and now, we live for eternity. We need to see life from God's perspective, from heaven's view as we have today from Revelation 18 where the Lord explains what is going to happen.

Philippians 3:18-21 reminds us, *"For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."*

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What if the entire world as you know it were suddenly to collapse? What if your sources of comfort, luxury, and entertainment were lost forever? What if the stock market crashed, the PG&E power grid failed, your employer went bankrupt, and an earthquake leveled the central coast of CA? How would you respond?
2. How influential will the Antichrist's commercial system be? Who will be under its spell? How are Christians to recognize and avoid the idolatry and materialism of Babylon? See 1 John 2:15-17 and Romans 12:1-2.
3. Why is the harlot called "Babylon the Great?" How does her "great" spirit continue in every generation?
4. What is God's call for believers in verses 4-8? See Jesus' prayer in John 17:14-17. How can you be in the world but not have the world in you? How can you have compassion, care, and evangelize non-Christians without believing and participating in their sins?
5. How do the responses of the kings of the earth (18:9-10), the merchants of the earth (18:11-17), and the traders of the sea (18:17-20) reveal their idolatry and worship?
6. In contrast to lamenting, how will the inhabitants of heaven respond to the fall of Babylon? How important is it for the church to look at events from God's point of view? What are some ways to do that better?

CHAPTER 30
“Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus”
Revelation 19:1-10

¹ “After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘ ‘ ‘ *‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; ²BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER.’ ³ And a second time they said, ‘Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER.’ ⁴ And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, ‘Amen. Hallelujah!’ ⁵ And a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.’ ⁶ Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His ¹bride has made herself ready.’ ⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. ⁹ Then he said to me, ‘Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are true words of God.’ ¹⁰ Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ ”*

In 1741 George Frideric Handel wrote *The Messiah*. No one would question that the most famous part of Handel’s *Messiah* is the “Hallelujah Chorus.” It is a tradition around the world that when the Hallelujah Chorus begins the congregation stands and remains standing until its completion.

In heaven, however, they respond quite differently. In our text today in *Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus* we will see the citizens of heaven fall down and worship “the God who is seated on the throne” because He has judged “the great harlot Babylon who was corrupting the earth with her immorality” (verse 2); God has rescued the Bride, the Church, for the marriage supper of the Lamb (verses 6-8); and directed all of heaven and earth to keep their attention and worship on Jesus Christ (verses 9-10).

Praise God, hallelujah, good news, great news, has arrived. The response of those who love and follow the Lamb is nothing less than unabated, unhindered, enthusiastic praise and worship. This is a day we have all longed for and it is finally here!

When Babylon fell on the earth, the command was given in heaven in Revelation 18:20, “*Rejoice over her...!*” and what we read in this section is heaven’s response to that command. The Greek word *alleluia* is the transliteration of a Hebrew phrase comprised of the verb *halal* (“to praise”) and the noun *Yah* (“God”).

So, hallelujah, means “praise the Lord.” Our text this morning is heaven’s “Hallelujah Chorus.”

Main point: Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! For in His sovereign Kingly rule, God has destroyed the great harlot of Babylon, and has rescued His bride, the church, and made her ready for her eternal marriage to Christ!

The four stanzas in heaven’s hallelujah chorus reveal four reasons for eternal praise:

- **What God provides - salvation in verse 1**
- **What God settles-justice, God’s Judgments are Righteous and True in verses 2-3**
- **What God occupies – His sovereignty, He reigns verses 4-6**
- **What God fulfills -The Wedding Feast, the Marriage of the Lamb Has Come in verses 7-10**

As believers we don’t need to wait until the events of Revelation come to pass. We can join with that heavenly chorus today in anticipation of what God will do in the future. The citizens of Heaven celebrate with mighty voices. Nothing is done halfway in Heaven or with any hesitation. And we should praise God with all our hearts for salvation, justice, His sovereignty and the coming celebration of the wedding supper of the Lamb.

The first “*Hallelujah!*” is sung for what God provides.

I. What God Provides - Salvation

The word Hallelujah appears only four times in the New Testament, and all four are in our text, in verses 1, 3, 4, and 6. Hallelujah expresses praise for God’s judgment on Babylon who tried to seduce and oppress the people of God. In chapter 18 we heard the loud laments of the rulers and merchants over Babylon’s destruction, but those fade into silence, loud hallelujahs ring out in heaven for the victory belongs to God. Notice with me from verse 1 and verse 6 just how loud the saints worship God.

We could do the same when we gather in the name of our great God. Our worship together is the declaration in the midst of Babylon that we will not be seduced by the world, because we have found in God the true satisfaction of our souls. As Psalm 16:11 says, “*In His presence is fullness of joy and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore.*”

Though we may live in the world, we will not be captive to the world’s ways. And we will celebrate with all our might the awesome truth that we are free from that which will be destroyed. As 1 John 2:17 says, “*The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.*”

In Revelation 19:1 why are they singing hallelujah? Verse 1 tells us, “*After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God.’*” The word “salvation” indicates that the redeemed in Heaven know they were saved out of Babylon. They were part of the world system known as Babylon, but we were saved by God. Salvation belongs to our God, and the glory belongs to our God, and the power belongs to our God because He saves us from the world. The fact is, we cannot change our own hearts in our own strength.

Jeremiah 13:23 says, “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.*” We can try to reform our sinful habits, but what we need is a transformed heart. None of us can say on our own, “I do not like the world – the lust of the flesh and boastful pride of life. I will come over to the kingdom of Heaven.” In our own strength, we are controlled by the mind of the flesh. It is impossible for us to change ourselves.

But God takes out our hearts of stone and gives us hearts of flesh. He saves us by His power. We will know it in Heaven even more than we do now. Titus 3:3-6 tells us, “*For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.* ⁴ *But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared,* ⁵ *He saved us, not on the*

basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit ,⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.”

Ephesians 2:1-9 describes how we were at one time part of Babylon the Great. Look at it with me...¹ “*And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, ²in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. ³Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”*

It takes the power of God to save you. When Paula and I lived in Florida we visited Cape Canaveral and saw the Saturn V rocket that blasted astronauts to the moon, on their historic Apollo missions from 1967 to 1972. The Saturn V rocket is 363 feet tall, that is 60 feet taller than the Statue of Liberty! It holds the record as the heaviest, most powerful rocket that man ever designed. It generated 7.6 million pounds of thrust at launch. It required so much thrust because of the earth’s gravitational pull.

Babylon the Great pulls on us like earth’s gravity, back into self-interest, self-gratification, self-glory, selfishness and sin. It takes infinite power to save us from that pull. That is why “Salvation and glory and power belong to our God!”

The power of God is also displayed in Babylon’s crushing defeat. The final Babylon, the world system of the Antichrist, will be more powerful than Nazi Germany or the Iron Curtain ever was. Incredible power will be required to defeat the vast system of wickedness with Satan behind it. But such power is nothing to God; as we will see next week, the battle will not be difficult for Jesus. His might and power and omnipotence will be on display at the doom of the Antichrist.

“*Hallelujah!*” God provides salvation. Second, we sing “*Hallelujah*” for what God settles.

II. What God Settles - Justice

Look at verses 2-3 ..² “*BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER.*”³ *And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER.”*

Babylon either enticed and allured Christians to sin, or she crushed and incarcerated them and seized their possessions and freedom and tortured and killed them. It is true that she deserves to die; it is right that she will burn. True and righteous are God’s judgments. Therefore, the inhabitants of Heaven show no reluctance to sing Hallelujah. They do not shrink back or hesitate to celebrate; there is no pity in Heaven for Babylon the Great.

The destruction of the last and most powerful empire in human history marks the end of man’s day. The rebellion that began long ago in the Garden of Eden is finally ended (apart from a futile, short-lived revolt at the end of the Millennium; 20:7–10). With Babylon’s destruction will be no more false religion, worldly philosophy, injustice, unrighteousness; no more temptation, all the results of human depravity, all the evil will be vanquished.

The angels shout in verse 3.. *“And a second time they said, ‘Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER.’* “ This may trouble some of us. Why would the angels and saints in Heaven celebrate the eternal torment of human beings? Imagine if you heard that a person or a group of people would suffer eternal torment in hell, and some responded, “Praise the Lord!” Something would seem wrong with that perspective.

But our hesitation to celebrate like those in Revelation 19 shows how much we underestimate the damage of the wickedness of Babylon the Great to us and to our brothers and sisters. These heavenly worshippers are not self-righteous, arrogant, haughty and smug. They know the redeemed are saved only by grace through faith.

Any reservation, reluctance, or reticence on our part toward understanding and joining the heavenly celebration of God’s wrath against Babylon comes in part from the fact that we are now still a bit hung over by the cup in the hand of the great harlot. We have drunk from that cup in this world, and we are still overcome by a haze in our minds and our souls. When we get to Heaven, that will be cleared up, and we will understand. In heaven we will be sober-minded, and we will see clearly and realize and celebrate God’s justice with the angels and the redeemed.

But friends, we are not there yet. We are in the church age and the day of salvation now, and we yearn for individuals, for unsaved family, friends, and coworkers to come out of Babylon, to repent and turn from self to faith in Jesus Christ. It is reasonable for us to weep as Jesus wept over Jerusalem and to have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in our hearts like Paul said he had for unbelieving Jews in Romans 9.

Why doesn’t God just save everyone? Paul gives a clear answer in Romans 9:22-24: *“What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.”*

“Even us.” It was so that we would know how much grace was shown to us, so we would be saved in such a way that we would be humbled forever by it. By contrast, we will know what we deserve because we can see it. But in Heaven, Revelation 21:4 says *“There will be no more mourning or crying or pain”* - no grief at all.

We have seen What God provides - salvation v. 1. Second, we have seen what God settles-justice, God’s Judgments are Righteous and True (verses 2-3). Third, we sing Hallelujah for:

III. What God Occupies – His sovereignty, He Reigns

Look at verses 4-6... ⁴ *“And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, ‘Amen. Hallelujah!’”* ⁵ *“And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.”* ⁶ *“Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.’”*

The twenty-four elders are best seen as representatives of the church. The four living creatures are cherubim, a high-ranking order of angels. Falling on their faces before God’s throne the heavenly chorus cried out, “Amen. Hallelujah!” That phrase comes from Psalm 106:48 and indicates their solemn agreement with the heavenly rejoicing over Babylon’s downfall.

The text does not identify the owner of the voice from the throne, but it is likely an angel, since he refers to God as “*our God*.” The voice authoritatively calls another group to join in the praise, saying, “*Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.*” The all-inclusive phrase “*the small and the great*” transcends all human categories to embrace everyone. All the redeemed are called to praise God.

When the redeemed obeyed the command from the heavenly voice and added their voices to the heavenly chorus, verse 6 says John “*heard something like the voice of a great multitude.*” The loud chorus of praise rose to a deafening level. The apostle likened it to “*the sound of many waters and ... the sound of mighty peals of thunder.*”

Have you been to Niagara Falls? Our family went to Niagara Falls in 2004 and went on the Maid of the Mist boat that took us right in front of the falls. You get a little bit wet from the mist, the sight is amazing, and the sound of the waters is incredibly loud. Revelation 19 describes this mighty waterfall of praise, like Niagara Falls, saying, Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

Revelation 19 is where the text of the Hallelujah Chorus in Handel’s Messiah came from. The chorus in Handel’s Messiah goes, “*Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*” Revelation 19:6; “*The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.*” Revelation 11:15.

In 1741, when Handel was writing Messiah, a friend came in and found him weeping over sheets of music strewn all over the room. Handel said, “Whether I was in the body or out of the body as I wrote it, I know not. God knows. But I think I did see all Heaven opened before me and the Great God Himself.”

That was Handel’s reaction as God gave him just a foretaste of this Heavenly celebration. They are celebrating the reign of the omnipotent God, the God who has all power in Heaven, earth, and under the earth. No one can hold back His hand, no one can resist Him, no one can stop Him.

And our great God knows the very number of hairs upon your head, He knows the trials and temptations you are facing, and in His sovereignty, He has designed all things for His glory and your good. Romans 8:28... “*And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*”

Our Almighty, omnipotent God reigns as a King over all things. Hallelujah! And this brings us to the fourth stanza of Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus.

IV. What God Fulfills -The Wedding Feast, the Marriage of the Lamb Has Come

Look at verse 6b-7... “*...saying, ‘Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. ⁷ Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.’*”

The previous “*Hallelujahs*” (verses 1, 3, 4) pointed back to the destruction of Babylon in chapter 18. The fourth “*Hallelujah*” at the end of verse 6 points forward in anticipation of the coming wedding of the Lamb.

A wedding was the single greatest celebration and social event of the biblical world, and it still is today. Weddings are a joyous occasion as husband and wife are joined together. And we can see the cause for rejoicing here as the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the groom and His beloved church is the bride.

The image of marriage symbolizing the relationship of God and His people appears several times in the Scriptures. 2 Corinthians 11:2 mentions the betrothal of the church to Christ. Paul wrote, *“For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.”* In biblical times parents would sign a contract of the children to be married, sometimes when the children were young. The church’s betrothal contract was signed in eternity past when the Father promised the Son a redeemed people and wrote their names in the Book of Life.

The apostle Paul described the church’s presentation in Ephesians 5:25–27: ²⁵ *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”*

In Revelation 19 we can read and sense this tone of overpowering joy and celebration of what God has done: the destruction of Babylon was to make ready for the bride of Christ and her wedding day to come.

The harlot of Babylon in Revelation 17 stands in contrast to the beautiful bride of Christ, the church, in Revelation 19 and following. She will be radiant, and she will be ready. Great joy comes from the triumph and the power, and God deserves all glory for it. The time of the wedding banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb has come, which is a great strong metaphor for the celebration we will all enjoy in Heaven as the bride groom, Jesus, and the bride, His church, are joined together forever.

In preparation for her marriage to the Lamb, verse 7b-8 says *“... for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. ⁸ It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”*

In other words, there is both the gift of Christ’s righteousness in our wedding gowns, as well as the responsibility of the Christian to live righteously which will evidently be apparent to everyone else. There is both a corporate sense to this wedding ceremony and a personal, individual sense to it as well.

This is the full picture of Ephesians 2:8-10. *“For by grace are you saved through faith . . . not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not because of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”* Since good works do not get a person into heaven, many have wondered “what difference good works will make in the future kingdom?”

Revelation 19:8 gives the answer: She is clothed in the *“righteous acts of the saints.”*

Let’s think about the timeline of what is happening. In Revelation 20 we will read about the Great White Throne Judgement of unbelievers, of non-Christians. Is there a judgment of believers, of Christians? Yes, there is. It is called the Bema seat judgment that Paul wrote about in 1 Corinthians 3 and 2 Corinthians 5 when the people of God come before the judgment seat of Christ and are rewarded for their faithful, good works. This is not to determine if we will be in the bridal party – everyone at the Bema is a believer – but believers will receive rewards for their faithfulness to Christ. Elders will have special crowns for having faithfully shepherded the sheep; martyrs for Christ will also wear unique crowns for their testimony; those who persevered under severe trials will be uniquely rewarded; those who pursued a holy lifestyle will also be uniquely marked.

When will this Bema seat judgement take place? Many evangelical scholars place the Bema seat judgment after the rapture of the church, and during the seven-year Tribulation.

And as 1 Corinthians 3:15 says, all that detracted from church's glory, all that detracted from her beauty will be burned up, and only her magnificent beauty remains and her purity. And soon in Revelation 19:8 we see the glorious church made perfect. This is the glory that was promised in 1 John 3 when it says when we see Jesus, we will be like Him, the glory promised in Romans 8 when it said it doesn't yet appear what we'll be like, but the glorious manifestation of the children of God will make it known.

One author wrote, "How true it is, we weave on earth what we wear in heaven. Sometimes the reality of that has not sunk in, that how we use the gifts God gave us on earth will determine the way we are presented with the Bridegroom when He comes. This is a challenging thought. It reminds me of the familiar lines, "Only one life, 'twill soon be past, only what's done for Christ will last."

Now we are not told whether the wedding ceremony takes place in heaven after the rapture of the church and the subsequent Bema seat or the ceremony takes place on earth as the Millennial Kingdom begins. John's vision in Revelation 19 seems to indicate that the wedding ceremony has just taken place in heaven. This is because when Christ returns to earth and the bride with Him, we are already dressed in our wedding garments.

It is interesting that the church has not been mentioned since Revelation chapter 6 when the Tribulation began. And now that Christ is returning from heaven, guess what? The church is clearly mentioned again – and she is with Christ in His return.

All this marriage imagery is to center our attention on the final all-glorious union of Jesus Christ with His beloved church, and friends this is what we live for today. This is the great climax of our lives.

When the wedding ceremony begins, we normally all rise to look at the beautiful bride (and the church will be beautiful and radiant), but in this case the focus will be on the groom, Jesus Christ in His power, glory and perfection.

And you normally do not have a wedding without a wedding reception – a wedding feast. And to prepare for the right amount of food and beverages, there must be a guest list.

John tells us about the guest list and writes a special blessing to all those invited to participate in the wedding feast – a celebration that will last for a thousand years of Christ's Kingdom on earth.

Notice verse 9 says, "*Then he said to me, 'Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'*" And he said to me, "*These are true words of God.*"

Who are these who have RSVP'd for the wedding reception? It cannot be the bride – the bride is not invited to her own wedding reception. The wedding banquet guests include Old Testament believers – Matthew chapter 8 and Luke chapter 13 both refer to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as being in the kingdom. The wedding guests include all the heroes of the faith mentioned in Hebrews 11, as will John the Baptist who describes himself as a friend of the bridegroom in John 3:29. And all the tribulation saints, glorified and still alive on earth and entering the millennial kingdom, will be guests.

The idea of the church being the bride of Christ can raise questions. But it must be remembered that the wedding imagery is just that; imagery that is not reality, but pictures God's close union with His people and the joy of us spending eternity with Him.

Some may question why the church-age believers should be granted the honor of being the bride, while believers from other ages are merely guests. But one may equally ask why God singled out Israel to be the covenant people. The only answer to both questions is that God sovereignly purposed that it be so (Deuteronomy 7:7–8).

The blessed truth that God will be in personal fellowship forever with all the redeemed saints of all the ages is so significant that the angel solemnly affirmed to John at the end of verse 9, *“These are true words of God.”*

Notice how John responds in verse 10a, “ .. *“Then I fell at his feet to worship him..”* .”

John was so overwhelmed by the angel’s message that he fell at his feet to worship him – which is a practice forbidden in Scripture. Colossians 2:18 says *“Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels.”*

So, the angel told John to stop in verse 10b... *“ But he said to me, ‘Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ ”*

One proof of the deity of Jesus Christ is that He did accept worship. People fell at His feet to worship Him as God and He did not stop them. When Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, Thomas said, *“My Lord and my God”*, and Jesus said, *‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed ? Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed. (that I am God and you should fall down and worship me.)’ ”*

But the angel would not accept worship, because it was idolatry to worship anyone in place of God. His statement at the end of verse 10 that *“the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy”* means that throughout the Old Testament, through all the prophets, the spirit of prophecy was testifying to Jesus.

Friends, we have heard Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus. God lets John hear the celebration of heaven so that in his exile on the island Patmos and in John’s isolation and suffering he might join in and worship God. And John wrote it down in a book so that we might listen to the worship of heaven and join in. Will you join in?

First, you must accept God’s gracious invitation. You are invited to repent and flee Babylon and come in faith to Jesus and join His wedding banquet now. What are you waiting for? What more gracious invitation could come? All of your sins will be forgiven by the atoning blood of Jesus.

And if you are a Christian, our mission is to know Christ and make Him known. Our job is given to us in 1 Peter 2:9, *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”*

We are the messengers of worship, proclaiming the excellencies of God and helping others to cross over from death to life so that they too may join Heaven’s Hallelujah Chorus and sing with all of their hearts, Hallelujah, Praise the Lord for salvation, for God’s justice, for He reigns and we will reign with Him forever at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. How is our salvation a demonstration of God's glory and power? See Jeremiah 13:23, Romans 5:5-8 and Ephesians 2:1-9. How does God's initiative in saving you keep you humble?
2. Why did God save you? What is His purpose for you?
3. Why would the saints in heaven celebrate the eternal torment of the unredeemed in Babylon? How should we balance grief for the unsaved with praise for God's justice? Read Romans 9:1-5; 22-24.
4. What are some practical ways to praise and glorify God for His omnipotent and sovereign reign?
5. What is the meaning of the wedding banquet metaphor in verses 7-9? How do the two women (Babylon and The Bride of Christ) represent two different communities and life choices?
6. Who is invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb? Are you trusting in Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins and the imputation of His righteousness?
7. How does Revelation 19:10 demonstrate the sinful humanity of John? How can we avoid making the same mistake of worshipping people or things in place of God?

CHAPTER 31
“The Glorious Return of Jesus Christ”
Revelation 19:11-21

¹¹ “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. ¹² His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. ¹³ He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white Horses. ¹⁵ From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶ And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.” ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, ‘Come, assemble for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.’ ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. ²⁰ And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.”

This morning, we come to Revelation 19:11-21 and the glorious return of Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ first coming to earth was one of grace. His return will be a coming of glory. The first coming occurred in meekness, lowliness, and obscurity. The second will occur in power, radiance, and majesty. The first was surrounded by animals in a stable — as a baby, he was wrapped in swaddling cloths and laid in a manger. The second will be surrounded by the mighty armies of heaven. The first was a picture of infinite humility and poverty. The second will be a display of position and authority.

In His first coming Jesus was like a lamb. In the second, He will roar like a lion; rise up to defend and vindicate His people, His bride, and will rip apart His enemies with no mercy.

God’s people throughout redemptive history have eagerly anticipated the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to defeat His foes and set up His kingdom. With the glorious return of Jesus,

- 2 Samuel 7 says God will establish the throne of David’s greater Son (Jesus Christ)
- Psalm 2 says the Son will rule the earth with a rod of iron
- Joel chapter 3 says the nations will be judged
- Zechariah 12 says the returning King will defeat His enemies and Jerusalem will become the center of Messiah’s kingdom
- Matthew 25 says the angels will gather the unbelievers for judgment
- Revelation chapter 19 tells us that Jesus Christ will visibly, physically descend in great glory to judge and rule the world.

Main point: In our text we are provided a four-fold description of the glorious return of Jesus Christ and the battle of Armageddon.

His Promise Delivered – verse 11 His Power Displayed v. 12-16 His Plan Demonstrated v. 17-19 His Preeminence Decided v. 20-21

The question for you this morning is: How will the promise of His return effect your life and service for Christ today? My prayer is that this description of the Glorious Return of Christ in Revelation 19 will motivate you today to live and serve for His glory.

Now to set the context we need to remember that the book of Revelation has informed of this battle in earlier chapters. Why is there going to be a battle? Revelation 12:17 says, *“the dragon [Satan] was enraged with the woman [Israel], and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.”*

Look at Revelation 16:12-16 with me...¹² *“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. ¹³ Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. ¹⁵ ‘Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.’ ¹⁶ Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”*

These deceptive demons of Satan pick people to assemble under the Antichrist to fight Jesus and His people. The Antichrist’s worldwide kingdom is made up of lesser kings who give their power and their allegiance to him.

The Antichrist gives the order to his henchmen, the demons, to do supernatural deceiving signs and wonders. People are tricked and lured into gathering by these signs. Behind the scenes is the dragon, Satan. His bitter hatred for the people of God drives his desire for the genocide.

Throughout redemptive history, Satan has sought to slaughter the Jews. Now he has the chance to do it (so he thinks) especially because by now in Revelation 19 God has taken away the blindness from the hearts of the Jews. God will remove that veil that has hidden their eyes from seeing Christ the Messiah. Romans 11 says that He will take away the heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh, and they will turn and all Israel will be saved. Satan wants to exterminate them since they love Jesus and have found in him the Son of David, the Son of God.

In fact, Revelation 17 speaks of the kings of the earth and their desire to assemble and fight for the Antichrist in his efforts to wipe out all of God’s people. Look at Revelation 17:12-14 with me...¹² *“The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. ¹³ These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”*

And as they assemble to slaughter God’s people in Armageddon, the heavens open and it is into this battle that Jesus comes back.

Revelation 19:11...The first point we see here is Christ’s promise delivered. *“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.”*

I. His Promise Delivered

Verse 11 says, *“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True.”*

No longer is Jesus portrayed as He was when He entered Jerusalem, *“humble, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey”* (Zechariah 9:9). Instead, He rides a white horse like the horse ridden by victorious Roman generals in their triumphal processions through the streets of Rome.

When I was 10 years old my mother took me to my uncle’s farm in Bogota, Colombia. One day our job was to round up some of the donkeys that were another pasture, and honestly, I was a bit afraid of getting kicked or bit by them. Those fears were relieved when I saw my uncle mount his huge thoroughbred horse. It was clear who had the upper hand.

Jesus comes as the commander-in-chief of the host of heaven on a white horse. White also symbolizes the spotless, unblemished, holy character of the Rider.

Continuing his description of the astonishing scene before him, John notes in verse 1 that He who sat on the white horse is called Faithful and True. There is no more appropriate name for the Lord Jesus Christ, who earlier in Revelation 3:14 was called *“the faithful and true Witness.”*

He is faithful to His promises (2 Corinthians 1:20) and what He speaks is always true (John 8:45–46; Titus 1:2) There are many promises of the Second Coming. For every one Bible verse referring to Christ’s first coming there are eight verses on His second coming. Too many prophecies and promises to read this morning, but let’s consider a few that describe His glorious return.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:30 says, *“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.”* It is a clear prediction of the Second Coming of Christ.

In Matthew 24:27 Jesus said, *“...as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”* He will come like lightning across the sky.

On August 16 of 2020 Paula and I were driving to see Marie in Davis, CA when there was an electrical storm such as I had never seen in my life. It is referred to as the August lightning siege. On August 16, 2020, when the first thunderstorms began, around 2,500 lightning strikes hit the Bay area, with 200 strikes happening in a 30minute time span. Within the next 72–96 hours, over 12,000 lightning strikes were recorded over Northern California. These lightning strikes sparked 585 wildfires.

The lightning could not be missed, it was obvious, big, powerful and visible. As lightning that flashes in the east is visible in the west, so will be the return of Jesus Christ.

In Matthew 25:31-32 Jesus said, *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”*

Jesus predicted His glorious return during his trial before Annas and Caiaphas, the Jewish leaders who hated Him and had conspired to kill Him. They were ready to put Jesus to death, but the false witnesses could not coordinate their stories, frustrating the leaders. Finally, the high priest said, *“I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.”* Jesus replied, *“I Am”* - which is God’s name.

Jesus said to them in Matthew 26:64, referring to Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13, and says, *“Nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”* He was saying to the religious Jewish leaders, *“Not only am I the Messiah and the Son of God, but one day you will see Me glorified with My Father in heaven and returning to earth as your Judge.”* Then the high priest tore his clothes...” The prediction of Christ’s own second coming in glory is what condemned Jesus to death.

So, in Revelation 19:11, Jesus is depicted here as faithful and true. He promised He would return, and He will do it. Earlier Revelation 1:7 says, *“Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of Him. So shall it be! Amen.”*

Because Jesus is faithful to His word and righteous character, it follows at the end of Revelation 19:11, *“and in righteousness He judges and wages war.”*

His holy nature demands a holy, righteous reaction to sin. And because He always does what He says, He must judge the wicked. In John 5:22 Jesus said, *“For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son.”*

Jesus came the first time as Savior; He will return as Judge. When He came the first time, wicked people, including Pilate, Herod, Annas, and Caiaphas judged Him; when Jesus returns, He will judge all wicked people (Acts 17:31). And He will not only be their judge, but Revelation 19 verses 15 and 21 tells us He will also be their executioner.

So, first we saw His Promise Delivered.

II. His Power Displayed in verses 12-16

Notice how verse 12 begins, *“His eyes are a flame of fire.”* Nothing escapes the notice of Christ’s piercing vision. The eyes of Christ that wept over the fate of unrepentant Jerusalem and over the sorrow, suffering, and death in this sin-cursed world, John now sees flashing with the fire of judgment.

On His head John notes in verse 12 *“are many diadems,”* a reference to a ruler’s crown. These are the crowns of royalty, the crowns of absolute, complete and total sovereignty. Today we sing All Hail the Power of Jesus Name. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.

This image of the multi-crowned King Jesus inspired Matthew Bridges in 1852 to pen a majestic hymn that we sang last week: Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon His throne: Hark! How the heav’nly anthem drowns All music but its own! Awake, my soul, and sing Of Him who died for thee, And hail Him as thy matchless King Thru all eternity”

Verse 12 ends with .. *“His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.”*

I thought a lot about that. My initial reaction is, “John, if Jesus has name which no one knows except Himself, then why did you tell us?”

Perhaps you have been told like I have on more than occasion by someone in the church, “Hey I was at this conference, and someone there knew you and said to say hello.” I ask, “Really? Who was it?” And they say, “I don't remember, but they said to say hello.” I thought, “I don't know what to do with that, but thank you.”

This verse may beg the question, “So why tell us?” But the reason is powerful. Jesus wants us to know that we do not know everything about Him. He has a name that He calls Himself which we know nothing about, though perhaps we will one day. You see in heaven we will be learning Jesus forever — we have much to learn about Him. He has other names given here in this very passage that He wants us to know, like King of kings and Lord of lords, and Word of God, but this name written on Him is not revealed.

Verse 13... Whenever we see blood on another's garment, one question comes to mind: “Whose blood is it - yours or someone else's?” In this case the blood-stained robe could symbolize the fact that Christ “tasted death” for everyone, having become the “*Lamb that was slain*” (5:12).

Or it may allude visually to Isaiah 63:2–4 which asks, “*Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? The Lords answers, ‘I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come.’*”

Because the context of Revelation 19 is clearly judgment, this second option is preferred. This meaning also matches the parallel scene in 14:9–11, 17–20 where John earlier alludes to Isaiah's prophecy.

In other words, this scene portrays the awful Day of Judgment in the Battle of Armageddon in which Christ is seen victorious and with the blood of His enemies literally splattered all over His garments. It is so certain that the blood is described in verse 13 as already on Christ's robe.

Verse 13 continues, “*and His name is called The Word of God.*” The “*Word*” has a rich meaning throughout the Old and New Testaments. It refers to God's revelation, especially contained in Scripture (1 Samuel 9:27; Matthew 15:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

In the gospel of John, the apostle John began his account of Christ's first coming by identifying Jesus as “*the Word.*” In John 1:1 John writes, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” And then in John 1:14, “*And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us.*”

So, when John calls Jesus “*the Word of God,*” he is presenting Jesus not only as a manifestation of God's revelation, but a manifestation of God Himself, a title of deity. In His case, it's a deity that is personally present, tangible. The “*Word of God*” is always “*God with us,*” Immanuel.

Verse 14... “*And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white Horses.*”

Verse 14 reflects what we saw last week in verse 8, which is clearly a reference to the redeemed, the church. Believers clothed in the imputed righteousness of Christ and their righteous acts come “in fine linen, white and pure...following Him on white horses.”

Revelation 17:14 already identified this army in advance: “*The Lamb will overcome them [the Beast and his armies], because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.*” The phrase “*called and chosen and faithful*” refers to resurrected, glorified, and rewarded saints, who were raptured at the beginning of the seven-year tribulation. They had been preparing to take their seats in order to rule with Christ; hence they will descend with Christ as He executes the final judgment at Armageddon.

The New Testament book of Jude repeats the very first prophecy, uttered thousands of years earlier by Enoch, saying in Jude 14-15a that, “*the Lord will come with many thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all.*” .

Don’t miss the observation in verse 14 that they (the church) are “*following Him.*” When we return with Christ, He will be out front. He will lead the way. We will not be participators in the battle, only spectators. King Jesus did not need our assistance or help when He came the first time to redeem sinners, and He will not need our assistance or help when He comes the second time to reign as Sovereign. Holy armies come with Him and are following Him. He fights the battle for us. He again wins the day on behalf of those who love and trust Him

Then in verse 15 John describes a sharp sword flying from Jesus’ mouth.... “*From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.*”

This sword indicates that Christ’s judgment on the wicked nations will not be conducted with physical weapons of mass destruction, but with the one sure spiritual weapon—the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12). Just as the Word was the Father’s Agent in Creation (John 1:1–3), so the Word is His Agent for judgment and consummation.

Verse 15 . . . “*From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.*”

John actually refers to several Old Testament messianic passages in his description of the coming King. Psalm 2:9 identifies Christ as the Davidic king who will strike the wicked Gentile nations with a rod of iron. Isaiah 11:1, 4 elaborates on this psalm, associating the prophecy explicitly with the Messiah, the “stem of Jesse,” and demonstrating that the “rod” of judgment is supernatural, not physical: “*He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.*”

Isaiah 63:3 and Joel 3:13-14 are Old Testament prophecies of how the Messiah will judge His enemies when the wicked are gathered in the “valley of decision”—Armageddon—to be crushed in the winepress of God’s wrath.

What qualifies Jesus to exercise this kind of judgment? Verse 16 . . . “*And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.’*”

The question is answered clearly by the final title of Jesus—a title so profound that it’s written on His robe and on his thigh: “King of kings and Lord of lords.” More than any other name for Christ in this vision, this famous title identifies Jesus as the supreme ruler over all the earth, along with God Almighty.

We have seen His Promise Delivered in verse 11. His Power Displayed v. 12-16 and

III. His Plan Demonstrated in v. 17-19.

Verses 17-19... ¹⁷ *“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, ‘Come, assemble for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great.’ ¹⁹ And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.”*

The apostle John sees in verse 17 an angel who cries in a “loud voice” to “all the birds,” the vultures “flying high overhead.” They are called to “Come, gather together for the great supper of God.” This supper is much different than the Marriage Supper of the Lamb we saw last week in 19:9. There the saints are called to come and celebrate with the Lord. Here sinners are called and condemned by the Lord for a “bird feast,” a vulture’s banquet where they are the main entrée. It is a great supper because all rebellious sinners on earth will be present. Try as they might, there is no escape.

There will be no discrimination. Everyone will participate in one of two eschatological feasts: the righteous saints joining in the wedding supper of the Lamb or the wicked hardened sinners becoming the feast at the great supper of God.

Verse 18 tells us that God will judge the wicked from every social category (6:15; 13:16); social status or rank will not be enough to exempt the ungodly from judgment. A day of universal, righteous reckoning is coming. Everyone will be held accountable for their rejection of the Lamb.

Verse 19 .. *“And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.”*

Behind the scenes, the dragon [Satan] and lying demons seem to be in control, but ultimately Satan, the demons, the Antichrist, the kings bringing their armies are not causing all to gather in one place. The real mover here is Almighty God, assembling all of Christ’s enemies into one place for that final battle.

Those who gather in the place called Armageddon think they will put an end to Israel to destroy the people of God, but God is gathering them for their own slaughter. This is predicted plainly in the book of Joel, which Adrian read. Nothing like Joel’s words of prophecy have yet been fulfilled in Israel’s history.

Joel 3:9, *“Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the mighty men! Let all the soldiers draw near and let them come up.”* [The sixth bowl judgment in Revelation 16 dries up the Euphrates and sends out frog-like demons to gather the kings of the world.] Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak say, ‘I am a mighty man!’ [Still weak, but ready to fight.] Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations and gather there. Bring down your mighty ones, O LORD!’ [the armies of God in Revelation 19:14] *‘Let the nations be aroused; and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, [which means “the Lord judges”] for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side [See Revelation 14]. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the winepress is full; the vats overflow for their wickedness is great!’ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon grow dark, and the stars lose their brightness. The LORD roars from Zion and utters His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth tremble. But the LORD is a refuge for His people, a stronghold to the sons of Israel. ‘Then you will*

know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy; and strangers will pass through it no more.’ ”

Revelation 19 is exactly what Joel said would happen. The Euphrates River has parted to allow these kings of the East to assemble for their death. They are motivated by Satan’s hatred for God and His people. Antichrist is motivated by his own prideful rage that this remnant will not bow down to worship him; his arrogance reaches to heaven. They assemble in Palestine, assuming it will be an easy battle. It be a very easy battle, the easiest in history, but not the way they think. They are confident in their own victory because they will be fighting against a small number of people who have no military strength and will be easy to wipe out, so they believe.

- We have seen Christ’s Promise Delivered – verse 11
- His Power Displayed verses 12-16
- His Plan Demonstrated verses 17-19

IV. His Preeminence Decided

Verses 20-21... ²⁰ *“And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. ²¹ And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh”.*

Before anybody on earth can utter the word “Armageddon,” the battle will be over. So swift and complete is the defeat of this evil army that our text does not even describe it! It simply notes the results.

John Phillips describes it well:

“Then suddenly it will all be over. In fact, there will be no war at all, in the sense that we think of war. There will be just a word spoken from Him who sits astride the great white horse. Once Jesus spoke a word to a fig tree, and it withered away. Once He spoke a word to howling winds and heaving waves, and the storm clouds vanished and the waves fell still. Once He spoke to a legion of demons bursting at the seams of a poor man’s soul, and instantly they fled. Now He speaks a word, and the war is over. The blasphemous, loud-mouthed Beast is stricken where he stands. The false prophet, the miracle-working windbag from the pit is punctured and still. The pair of them are bundled up and hurled headlong into the everlasting flames. Another word, and the panic-stricken armies reel and stagger and fall down dead. Field marshals and generals, admirals and air commanders, soldiers and sailors, rank and file, one and all—they fall. And the vultures descend and cover the scene. (Exploring Revelation, 236).”

Verse 20 tells us both the beast (the Antichrist) and false prophet are captured and thrown “*alive into the lake of fire.*” The phrase “*lake of fire*” is a reference to the final place of everlasting torment. Jesus Christ and other biblical writers described it, but this is the first time we actually read this title, “*the lake of fire*”. We will study this place later when we arrive at the end of Revelation chapter 20. The lake of fire will be mentioned four more times as Revelation comes to a conclusion. However, for now, we are told that the very first inhabitants of hell are the antichrist and the false prophet – the wonder-working, miracle-performing, deceiving duo who once deceived the majority of humankind. They become a horrifying prelude to the eternal wrath of God.

Revelation simply confirms the witness of Jesus (Matt. 13:40-42; 25:41-46; Mark 9:42-48), who said more about the reality of hell than anyone else in the Bible. Captured and condemned: those two words that describe the future of all who say no to God’s grace revealed in Jesus Christ.

Three closing thoughts:

1. If you don't know Christ, now is the time of salvation.
2. Ponder the fact that in verse 12 Jesus has a name written on Him that only He knows. Eagerly anticipate the education we will receive in Heaven. Amazing Grace stanza, "When we've been there 10,000 years, bright, shining as the sun..." we will still have things to learn about Jesus.
3. Let us, as believers, be ready for the Second Coming. He has not told us exactly when it will happen. We must be ready for Him to come back all the time, to be busy doing what He wants us to do. To know Christ and make Him known by warning people who are not ready for His glorious return.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What does John see and how is the rider described? How is this similar and different to Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in Matthew 21:1-11?
2. Verse 11 gives a few names to Christ, referring to Him as True, Faithful, and Righteous; and then proceeds to say that He will judge and wage war. What is the significance of these titles? How can they encourage and embolden you in your faith?
3. Verse 14 talks about the armies which are in heaven that are clothed with fine linen, white and clean; and yet, Christ has blood on His robe. What is the significance of this blood? (see Isaiah 63:1-6) 8-21-22
4. Verse 16 says that the Lord will have a name on His robe and His thigh that says "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS." List the people in your life who don't know Christ as King and Lord. What are some practical ways that you can minister to them and share the gospel with them?
5. Read Revelation 19:14-16. Who is following Jesus and how are they pictured? (see 19:8) What is the significance of the order of verses 11-16 with what comes next in 17- 21?
6. What will happen to the beast and false prophet? What does this war and its outcome teach us about the nature of God?
7. Though the Battle of Armageddon is yet future, you are involved in a real spiritual battle in the present (Ephesians 6). How can you be victorious today

CHAPTER 32
“The Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ”
Revelation 20:1-10

¹ “ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time. ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. ⁷ When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, ⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. ⁹ And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. ¹⁰ And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

Ever since Adam and Eve were evicted from the Garden of Eden, the human race has yearned to get back to a place where there is a perfect world, including a perfect government with a perfect economy with perfect human relationships, no war, perfect prosperity and peace, harmony with nature, perfect beauty.

People have been dreaming and writing about this for a long time. In 380 B.C., Plato wrote a book entitled *The Republic* in which city states were ruled by philosopher kings bringing in a perfect society. In the 19th century and following, as America expanded westward, more and more attempts toward creating idealized societies popped up all over the landscape, especially after the Second Great Awakening (religious revivalism from 1795 to 1835). In 1905, H.G Wells wrote a book called *A Modern Utopia*. He created the ideal setting on another planet, but with a portal, a doorway in a valley in the Swiss Alps through which one could enter the perfect world. In 1913 Edward Gardner Lewis, a successful magazine publisher from the East, founded the community of Atascadero, California as a utopian, planned colony. And for those of us who live here in Atascadero, as much as we love our city, we know that Lewis’ utopian fantasy has never become reality.

But in Acts chapter 1, just before Jesus ascended, He was asked by His disciples in verse 6, “*Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom?*” The kingdom about which they were asking, the kingdom in which Jesus Christ will be universally acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords, is that kingdom which is discussed in Revelation 20. It is the millennial kingdom, the perfect environment in the 1000-year reign of Christ on the earth.

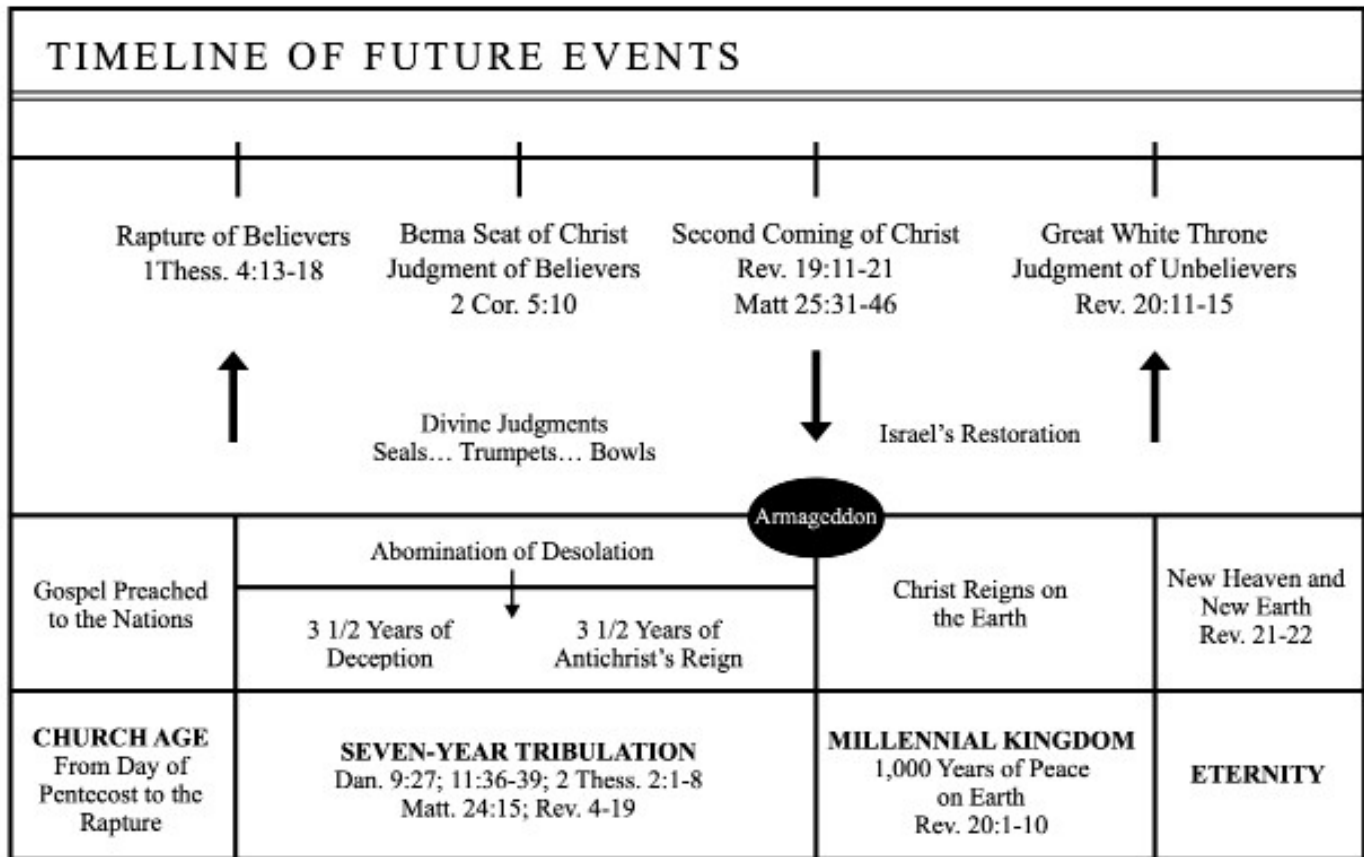
Main point: This passage reveals four essential truths about the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The Removal of Satan, 20:1-3 The Reign of the Saints, 20:4-6
The Return of Satan, 20:7 The Revolt of Society, 20:8-10

I. Introduction

By way of introduction, look at the following chart

Timeline of Future Events...



Notice at the bottom in the capital bold letters it says Church Age. Pentecost in Acts chapter 2 marks the birth of the church when the promised Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles and other followers of Jesus Christ while they were in Jerusalem. From that day until the rapture of the church, the mission of the church age is to preach the gospel to the nations.

The rapture is that glorious event in which the dead in Christ will be resurrected, living Christians will be instantly translated into their resurrection bodies, and both groups will be caught up to meet Christ in the air and taken back to heaven (John 14:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:51-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

The Bible offers several clues that the rapture will take place prior to the tribulation period. This means the church will not go through the judgments prophesied in Revelation 4–19.

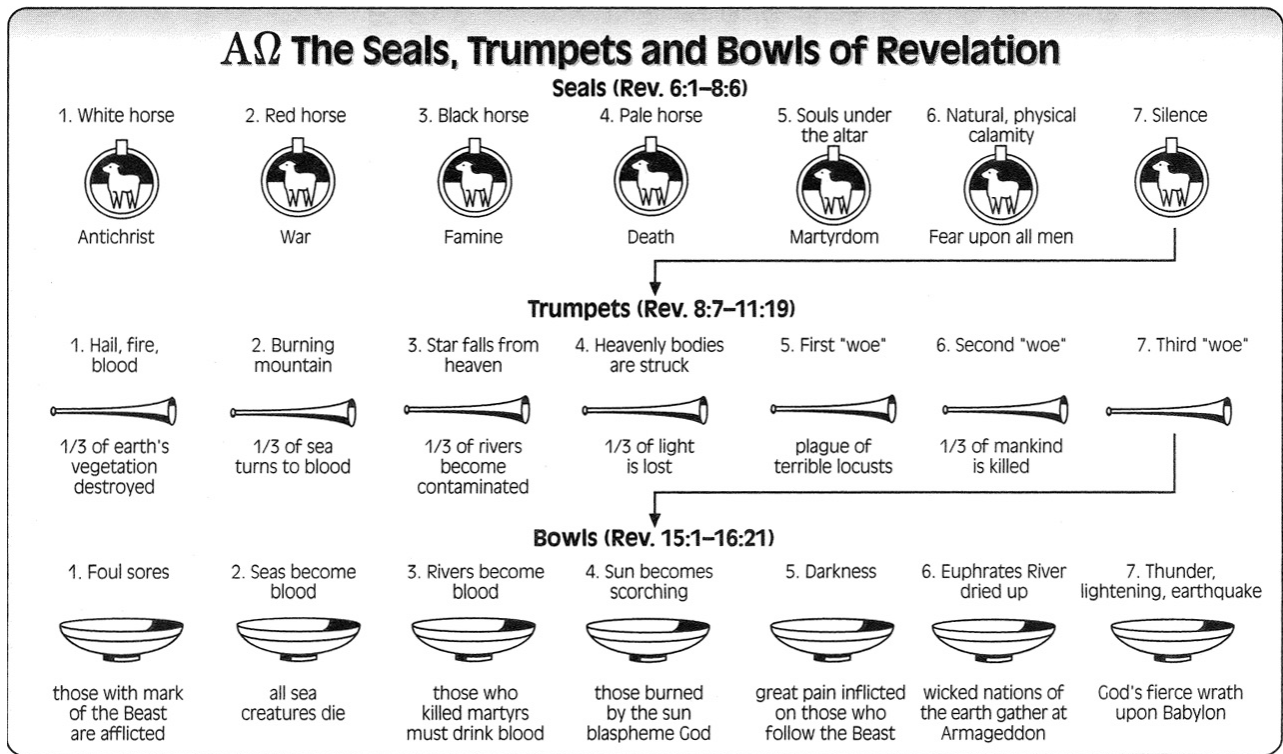
In Revelation 3:10, for example, Jesus promises the church in Philadelphia, “*I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth.*” Notice the definite article (the) before

the word hour in this verse. This indicates that a specific and distinctive time period is in view, not just any “hour of trial” in church history. The context clearly points to the future seven-year tribulation, which is described in detail in Revelation 4–19. The church is never mentioned during the seven-year tribulation and I believe it is because the church has been raptured to be with the Lord.

Scripture reveals that the single event that starts the tribulation period is the antichrist’s signing of a covenant with Israel. Daniel 9:27 indicates that this Satan-inspired individual will rise to prominence in the tribulation period, initially making a peace treaty with Israel. In his desire to dominate the world, Revelation 13 tells us he will double-cross and then seek to destroy the Jews, persecute believers, and set up his own kingdom. In Revelation 13:11-12 we saw that the antichrist’s assistant, the false prophet, will seek to make the world worship the antichrist. The false prophet will control the global economy by forcing people around the world to receive the mark of the antichrist to buy or sell (Revelation 13:16-17). However, to receive this mark ensures one of being the recipient of God’s wrath.

The antichrist starts out as Israel’s protector but becomes Israel’s persecutor. In the midpoint of the seven-year tribulation period the antichrist will tolerate the worship of no one and nothing but himself. He will set himself up on God’s throne in the inner sanctuary of God’s rebuilt temple in Jerusalem proclaiming himself to be God. This is called the Abomination of Desolation. The antichrist truly is anti-Christ, putting himself in Christ’s place.

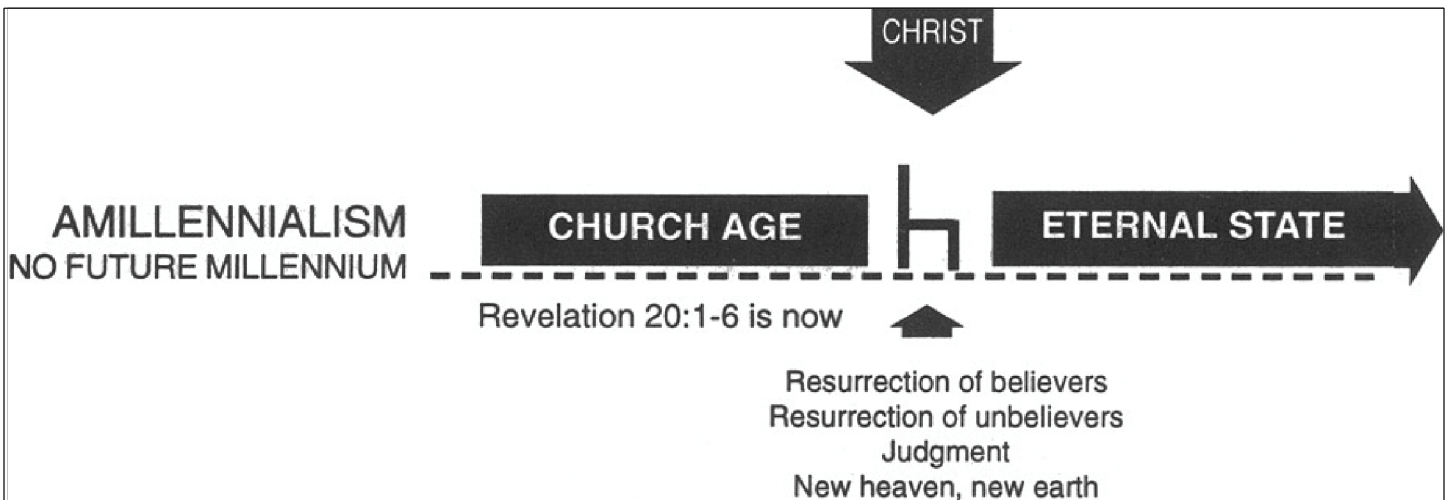
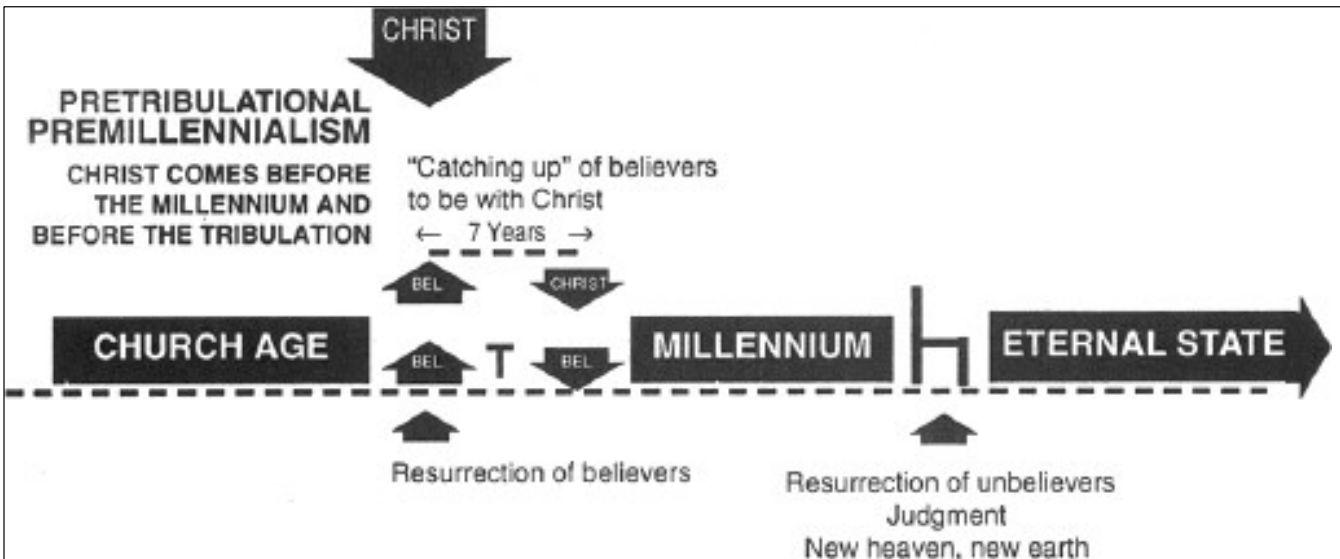
In the next chart we can see the divine judgments of seven seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls.

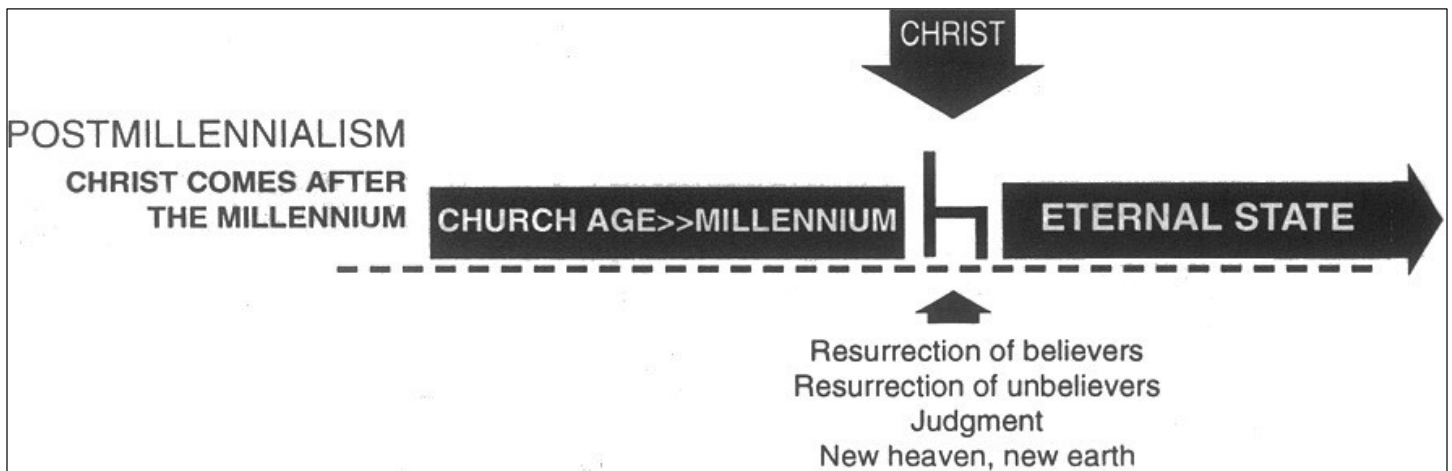


The seventh seal judgment marks the beginning of the seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet introduces the seven bowls. At the end of the seven-year tribulation, we saw last week that Revelation 19:11-21 describes Christ and the armies of heaven descending toward the earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords and decimating the

wicked armies of the world at the battle of Armageddon and consigning the Beast (the antichrist) and the False Prophet to the lake of fire. So, when we get to chapter 20, last end-time figure remaining on the scene is Satan—the great dragon. And this leads us to our text, Revelation 20:1-10 and the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ. The word “*millennium*” comes from the Latin word that means “one thousand years,” and—in biblical and theological contexts—it refers to the thousand-year period spoken of in Revelation 20. One of the most significant theological questions concerning the millennium is when it will occur in relation to the Second Coming of Christ. Three primary theological positions have arisen to answer this question—amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism.

Notice the three images that represent the three prominent views of the millennium.





Amillennialism (sometimes called “realized” millennialism) The prefix “a” means “no,” and thus amillennialism holds that there will be no literal reign of Christ on earth for 1,000 years.

The basic tenets of amillennialism are:

1. The millennium or kingdom reign of Christ and His saints is in existence for the period of time between Christ’s 1st and 2nd coming. In other words, the amillennial view says we are in the millennium right now.
2. There will be no future reign of Christ on the earth prior to the New Heaven and New Earth of Revelation 2122, and the word “thousand” in Revelation 20 is a symbolic number indicating a long period of time.
3. God’s promises to Israel were conditional and have been transferred to the church because Israel did not meet the condition of obedience.
4. Christ is ruling now in heaven where He is seated on the throne of David, and Satan is presently bound between Christ’s two advents. This binding relates primarily to Satan’s inability to stop the preaching and spread of the gospel to the nations.

Some Scriptures that are cited to support this view include:

Matthew 12:29, Jesus said, “*Or how can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.*”

Luke 10:17-19, “*The seventy returned with joy, saying to Jesus, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.’*”

Colossians 2:15, “*When God had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Christ.*”

Who has held this view? Amillennialism has been held by Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, Zwingli, and several in the more modern era including B.B. Warfield, Louis Berkhof, R.C. Sproul, Greg Beale and Mark Dever.

Another view is Postmillennialism. The prefix “post” means “after” and thus postmillennialism means that Christ’s second coming will occur after the millennium. The tenets of this view are these:

1. The church is not the kingdom but it will bring in the kingdom (a Christianized world) to the earth by preaching the gospel.
2. Christ will not be on the earth during the kingdom. He will rule in the hearts of His people, and He will return to the earth after the millennium.
3. The millennium will not last necessarily for a literal 1,000 years. The 1,000 is symbolic of a long period of time. This is similar to amillennialism.
4. The church, not Israel, will receive the fulfillment of the promises to Abraham and David in a spiritual sense.

Some Scriptures that are cited to support this view include:

Matthew 13:31-33, Jesus said, *“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; and this is smaller than all other seeds, but when it is full grown, it is larger than the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR come and NEST IN ITS BRANCHES. He spoke another parable to them, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.’ ”*

In the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus calls his small flock to *“disciple the nations”* so that they might be baptized and learn to observe all things He teaches us. Only after the world has been reached for Christ will then He return. When Christ comes, he will not find His kingdom perfected, but he will find it ready.

Who has held this view? Postmillennialism was first taught by Daniel Whitby (1638-1725), and has been held by Jonathan Edwards, Charles Wesley, Augustus H. Strong, George Truett, Greg Bahnsen and Doug Wilson.

Premillennialism

The word “pre” before the word “millennialism” refers to the time of Christ’s second coming as it relates to the millennium, and thus the term “premillennialism” refers to the millennium (1,000-year period) being preceded by Christ’s return to the earth.

Premillennialism holds to the following points:

1. Christ will return at the end of this age, at the end of the Great Tribulation, with His saints to the earth to reign for 1,000 years as King.
2. In the millennium Israel will experience the blessings God promised to Abraham and David pertaining to Israel’s (a) land, (b) nationality (seed), and (c) king (throne). New Testament believers will likewise share in these covenant blessings having been engrafted into the one people of God (Romans 11).
3. The church today is not completely fulfilling these promises made to Israel.

4. The millennial kingdom is the 1,000-year period in which Jesus Christ rules over the earth as the promised Messiah, the seed of David (2 Samuel 7:14 and following). The millennium is an intermediate kingdom of 1,000 years between the end of the tribulation and the establishment of the eternal that we will see in chapters 21-22.

Who has held this view? Premillennialism was the dominant view in the early church held by Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, later Tyndale, John Wesley, Cotton Mather, and current exegetes like John MacArthur, Chuck Swindoll, David Jeremiah, Al Mohler, Wayne Grudem, and John Piper.

Now, before I defend my view let me again say I do not think this is a doctrine we should divide over. Discuss it? Yes. Debate it? Yes. Divide over it? No! Good, godly men and women who believe the Bible differ on this issue. I have close friends who are amillennialists and postmillennialists. I greatly love and respect them. Still, having said that, I do think premillennialism is the best position. Let's see why in our text:

II. The Removal of Satan

Verses 1-3...¹ *“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.”*

One of the key interpretive issues in Revelation 20 is the timing of Satan's binding in verses 1–3. Is Satan currently bound as recorded in this passage, or does the fulfillment of that vision await a future time? If Satan is presently bound, the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 is a present reality, but if Satan's binding is yet future, so is the millennial kingdom. Amillennialists and many postmillennialists believe it is present, and premillennialists believe it is future.

Notice verse 1 begins with an unnamed angel coming down from heaven with the key to the abyss and a great chain. In verses 2-3 After laying hold of Satan, the angel binds him with the chain and throws him into the abyss, shutting and sealing the abyss over him.

The fact that Satan is incarcerated and sealed in the abyss (verse 7 calls it a prison) is what most clearly indicates the complete cessation of his activity and influence on earth during the thousand years. In Luke 8:31, the demons possessing a man entreat Jesus not to command them to depart into the abyss, because they know that if He does, they will no longer be free to wreak havoc on the earth.

In Revelation 9, John sees a swarm of locusts (which are demons) coming up out of the bottomless pit. The harm caused by these pit locusts occurs only after they are released. The necessary implication is that their influence is not experienced by anyone as long as they are locked up in the pit.

In Revelation 11:7 the beast must first depart from the abyss before he is able to make war with the two witnesses on earth, and when Satan is released from the abyss in 20:7–8, the text says that *“he will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth.”*

Notice in verse two Satan is first called the dragon, a title given him twelve times in Revelation (cf. 12:3, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 17; 13:1, 2, 4; 16:13). It emphasizes his ferociousness, and oppressive cruelty. The title serpent of old harkens back to the Garden of Eden and Satan's temptation of Eve (Gen. 3:1–6; 2 Cor. 11:3).

Diabolos (devil) means “slanderer,” or “malicious gossip” (1 Tim. 3:11; 2 Tim. 3:3; Titus 2:3)—an appropriate title for him as Revelation 12:10 calls him the “*accuser of our brethren*.” The title Satan is used fifty-three times in Scripture. Both words mean “adversary,” since Satan opposes God, Christ, and all believers.

Verse 2 says the length of the period for which Satan will be bound is defined as a thousand years, the first of six references to the duration of the Millennium (verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 7). This is the only chapter in Revelation where a period of a thousand years is mentioned, and the fact that it is mentioned six times and is clearly described as a period of time before which and after which events take place leads to the conclusion that it means a literal thousand-year period.

Notice the four steps taken to bind and confine Satan for 1000 years: 1) verse 2 “*the angel bound him for a thousand years*,” 2) verse 3 he “*threw him into the abyss*” 3) “*shut it*” and 4) “*sealed it over him*.” Satan's activity, even his presence on earth, is completely curtailed and brought to a halt for the entire millennium. His deceptive work among the nations stopped for a thousand years! Only after the millennium is finished is he released, and then for only “a short time” (end of verse 3). This short-lived release from captivity is discussed in verses 7-10.

Hundreds of years before the first coming of Christ, Job 1:7 tells us Satan was found to be “*roaming about on the earth and walking around on it*” and today—two thousand years after the first coming of Christ—Satan still “*prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour*” 1 Peter 5:8. Simply stated, Satan is not currently bound and imprisoned in the abyss, and so the millennium of Revelation 20 has not yet begun.

III. The Reign of the Saints, 20:4-6

Verse 4 .. “*Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*”

John sees thrones, and “*seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed.*” Matthew 19:28 teaches that the 12 apostles will sit as judges over the 12 tribes of Israel. Revelation 2:26 says the saints will have authority over the nations.

And Revelation 5:10 teaches that the followers of the Lamb “*shall reign on the earth.*” Here we are told in verse 4 that John then sees a second group, martyred saints. These are described as those who 1) “*had been beheaded*” (“executed”) *for the testimony* (“witness”) *of Jesus and 2) for the word of God.*” Further, they had not 1) “*worshiped the beast or his image and 2) had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.*” These tribulation saints had remained faithful and true to the Lamb. Revelation 12:11 says, “*They loved not their lives even unto death.*”

These faithful believers were previously seen in chapters 6 and 13. They are now rewarded for their faithfulness as they are gloriously resurrected! They came to life in bodily resurrection and are also granted the privilege to reign with Christ as co-heirs “for a thousand years” (cf. Rom. 8:17). John calls this “*the first resurrection.*”

Verse 5... *“the rest of the dead,”* unbelieving humanity, are not resurrected until after the millennium when they will stand before God at the Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15).

Three additional blessings are bestowed on the redeemed: 1) over these *“the second death* (eternal and spiritual death) has not power,” 2) *“they will be priests of God and of Christ”* serving their great God during the millennium and for all eternity and a final blessing for the participants in the first resurrection is that they will reign with the Lord Jesus Christ for a thousand years, along with believers who survived the Tribulation. Politically and socially, the rule of Christ and His saints will be universal (Ps. 2:6-8; Dan. 2:35), absolute (Ps. 2:9; Isa. 11:4), and righteous (Isa. 11:3-5).

Spiritually, their rule will be a time when the believing remnant of Israel is converted (Jer. 30:5-8; Rom. 11:26) and the nation is restored to the land God promised to Abraham (Gen. 13:14-15; 15:18). It will be a time when the Gentile nations will also worship the King (Isa. 11:9; Mic. 4:2; Zech. 14:16).

The millennial rule of Christ and the saints will also be marked by the presence of righteousness and peace (Isa. 32:17) and joy (Isa. 12:3-4; 61:3, 7). Physically, it will be a time when the curse is lifted (Isa. 11:7-9; 30:23-24; 35:1-2, 7), when food will be plentiful (Joel 2:21-27), and when there will be physical health and well-being (Isa. 33:24, 35:5-6), leading to long life (Isa. 65:20).

Then we read in verse 7 .. *“When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,”*

IV. The Return of Satan, 20:7

At the close of the Millennium, Satan will be released from the pit and permitted to lead one last revolt against the Lord. Satan is not released until *“the thousand years were over,”* as we read in verse 3. This is evidence for the premillennial position, for it is clear Satan was not allowed to deceive the nations at all during that period. He is *“released from his prison”* on parole, and it is clear from 20:3 (*“must be set free”*) that this is part of the divine plan, allowing a final period of deception to prove the extent of human depravity.

There is no surprise of Satan’s intention, and that leads to point four:

V. The Revolt of Society, 20:8-10

Verse 8 .. *“and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand the seashore.”*

Who are these who will follow Satan? Those who survive the Tribulation will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies, and they will bear children and repopulate the earth (Isa. 65:18–25).

During the thousand-year reign the mortal survivors of the tribulation—Jews and Gentiles—will populate the earth by marrying and having children. By the end of the thousand years the world will be filled with numerous generations of their descendants, who will still have bodies of mortal flesh and, more importantly, will still struggle with sin and temptation as we now do. Those subjects of the kingdom will not be like the resurrected rulers, who will be immortal, glorified, and neither marrying nor giving in marriage (Matthew 22:30)

Under ideal circumstances in which all know about Jesus Christ, many will outwardly profess faith in Christ without actually placing faith in Him for salvation. The shallowness of their professions will become apparent

when Satan is released. The multitudes who follow Satan are evidently those who have never been born again in the millennial kingdom.

The question has been raised as to whether this war is the same one discussed in Ezekiel 38–39, where Gog and Magog are also mentioned. These are two different battles, for in the war of Ezekiel 38–39 the armies come primarily from the north and involve only a few nations of the earth. But the battle in Revelation 20:7–9 will involve all nations, so armies will come from all directions.

Furthermore, nothing in the context of Ezekiel 38–39 is like the battle in Revelation, as there is no mention of Satan or of millennial conditions. Why then is the expression “Gog and Magog” used by John? The Scriptures do not explain the expression. Maybe because in Ezekiel 38 Gog was the ruler and Magog was the people, and both were in rebellion against God and were enemies of Israel.

The end of verse 8 says those who follow Satan are like the sand on the seashore. It is tragic. They come across the breadth of the earth to the camp of the people that Jerusalem, to attack the people of God one more time. There is very little description of this, but it is obvious who wins.

Verse 9 says “..and fire came down from heaven and devoured them”, and that is that.

Verse 10 ..*“And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”*

There Satan will join the other two members of the unholy trinity, the beast and the false prophet, who by that time will have been in that place of torment for a thousand years (19:20). That those two humans are still there after that time refutes the false doctrine of annihilationism.

Hell is a place of both mental (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28) and physical torment (14:10–11; Matt. 25:41; Mark 9:43–44; Luke 16:23–24). Those sentenced to that terrible place will be tormented day and night. There will not be a moment’s relief forever and ever.

In closing, when we sin and disobey God, it’s easy to blame the world and the devil, letting our own fallen, depraved nature off the hook. The reality of Revelation 20:7–8, however, makes this “easy out” nothing but a copout. Even with Satan bound for a thousand years and the external world’s temptations removed, a host of secret rebels will be ripe for the picking when Satan is released from the abyss. In fact, the devil will find so many hard hearts at the end of the millennium that John says in verse 8 their number is *“like the sand of the seashore.”* How could this be? Because those countless men and women born and raised during the thousand-year reign of Christ will still have a sinful nature just like you and me today, and a person’s depravity is enough to bring them down. As Jeremiah 17:9 tell us, *“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick.”* A perfect environment cannot produce a perfect heart. So, turn to Jesus today in repentance and faith and may your heart be regenerated by Holy Spirit. And be a faithful witness to tell others how they too may be saved by faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What would make a place so attractive in the present world that you would want to move and live the rest of your life there?
2. In what ways will the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ be the golden age?
3. When Satan is locked in the abyss, what happens to his influence in the world? How is the abyss different than the lake of fire?
4. Who will enter the future millennium?
5. According to verse 4, who will reign with Christ? Will there be any corruption in the earthly governmental systems? 8-28-22?
6. How will Christ reign forever since the millennium is only 1,000 years long?
7. At the end of the millennium, why will people from all over the globe join Satan in opposing Jesus Christ?
8. Since our flesh is capable of extreme wickedness, how can you live today for the glory of God?

CHAPTER 33
“The Great White Throne Judgment”
Revelation 20:11-15

11 “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

This morning we come to the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:11-15. The throne is central throughout the book, representing God as sovereign Lord over His creation. The throne is the place where a king sits. The basis of Judgment Day is the kingship of God; we, His created beings, are His subjects. God is the Creator of the universe and of the ends of the earth. Because He made everything, He has the right to rule over everything.

Every king rules by law. God made laws that He wants us to obey. He gave us the Ten Commandments, which we are to obey: You shall have no other gods; You shall not make or worship any idols; You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy; Honor your father and mother; You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor; You shall not covet (deeply desire in your heart anything that belongs to your neighbor).

The law was presented mostly in the negative: “You shall not, not, not, not, not.” But Jesus turned it around, summarizing the law with the Two Great Commandments, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.*” Matthew 22:37-40.

That law exposes all of us as sinners. Every one of us has violated the Ten Commandments and the Two Great Commandments. The essence of sin is lawlessness or breaking of the law of God. If you do not understand the law or think it applies to you, you will think that you are sinless, that you do not have anything to fear from judgment before God. The law alone convicts the guilty. The Word of God does that. Evangelism must apply the Ten Commandments and the Two Commandments to the one receiving the Gospel. This is the King’s standard, and we have all violated it.

There is only one who was perfectly obedient to the law, and more than that He went to the cross as substitute for you and me. We are offered free and full forgiveness through the blood of Jesus. If we believe this, the New Testament teaches, enter the Kingdom of Heaven, God’s Kingdom. When we get there, we will find a King ruling on a throne forever. As believers, we do not have a problem with that. We are delighted in the kingship of God. But for unbelievers, those who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior, the throne will be a place of judgment. It is called the Great White Throne Judgment.

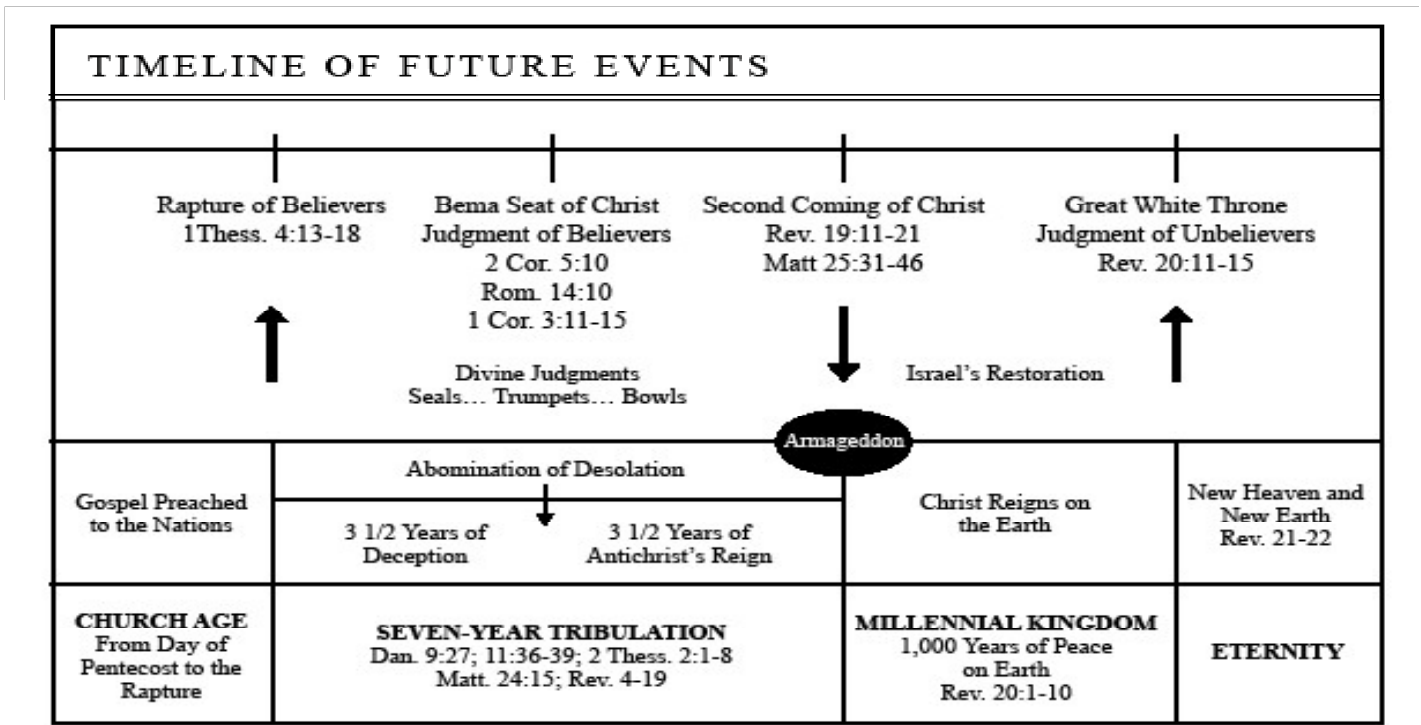
This passage describes the final sentencing of the lost and is the most serious, sobering, and tragic passage in the entire Bible.

Main point: This powerful text describes the terrifying reality of God’s final verdict and sentence on unrepentant sinners. We see three facets of judgment day:

- I. The Inescapable Judge (verse 11)
- II. The Incontestable Trial (verses 12–13)
- III. The Irreversible Sentence (verses 14–15)

In you are not a Christian, my prayer is that the truth of the Great White Throne judgment will lead you to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. If you are a believer, then the reality of Judgment Day should be the greatest motivation to share the gospel with the unsaved.

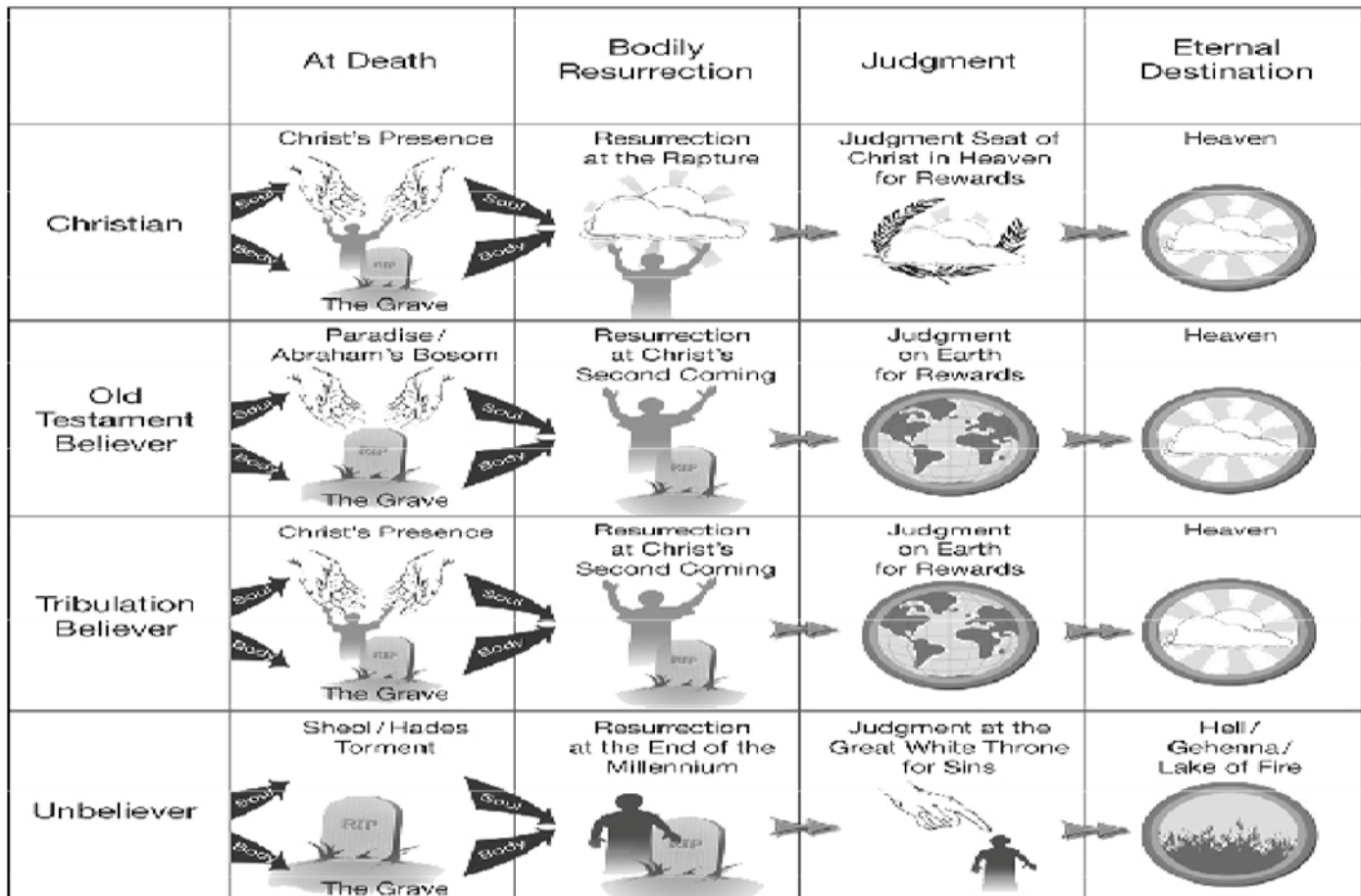
Now by way on introduction, look at the following Timeline of Future Events :



After Christ defeats all His enemies at Armageddon, after Satan is bound for a thousand years while Jesus reigns on the earth, and after evil’s last, desperate attempt to attack Christ and regain the world, and after Satan, the Antichrist, and his false prophet have been cast into the lake of fire. The final act of judgment in this world, before the new heaven and new earth, will be the Great White Throne Judgment.

Hebrews 9:27 .. “*And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,*”

So, what happens when to a person after death? Look at the following chart.



The Christian...

Once a believer has died, though his or her physical body remains on the earth and is buried, at the moment of death the soul (or spirit) of that believer goes immediately into Christ's presence with rejoicing. When Paul thinks about death, he says in 2 Corinthians 5:8, "*We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*"

The thief who was dying on the cross next to Jesus said in Luke 23:42, "*Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.*" Jesus said to him, "*Today you will be with me in Paradise.*"

The the Old Testament Believer...

Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar. In Luke 16:22 He says, "*Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.*"

So, the OT believer soul is in God's presence and the body of the OT believer is resurrected at Christ's second coming (which we studied last week). There is a judgment in the millennial kingdom on earth for rewards. Their eternal destination is heaven – which we will get to study next week. You can see the row for the person who becomes a believer during the seven-year tribulation.

Well, what happens when an unbeliever dies, he follows the Old Testament unbelievers to the torment of Sheol (OT term) and Hade (NT term). In our text today, Hades will be emptied before the Great White Throne, where its occupants will be judged prior to entering the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13–15).

Notice the next chart which contrasts the Bema Seat Judgment of Christ with the Great White Throne Judgment...

	Judgment Seat of Christ (The Bema Seat of Judgment)	Great White Throne Judgment
Persons Judged	Believers only who have the imputed righteousness of Christ	Unbelievers only who have only their own righteousness
Key Scriptures	Romans 14:10 I Corinthians 3:10-15 2 Corinthians 5:10	Revelation 20:11-15
Basis of the Judgment	Faithfulness in Christ and resultant good works	Rejection of Christ and thus one's own righteousness
Results	Rewards or loss of rewards but not salvation which is secure	Eternity in Hell, the "Lake of Fire"

2 Corinthians 5:10 says, *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."*

1 Corinthians 3:10-15 says, *"According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."*

All Christians will be evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ, which will follow the Rapture of the church. But salvation is not the issue here. One's eternal destiny will not be determined at the judgment seat of Christ. Salvation is by faith (Ephesians 2:8–9), but deeds issuing from that faith (1 Thessalonians 1:3) will be evaluated.

The Judgment Seat of Christ will be a place of reward and recognition for Christians. For those of us who have been faithful, it will be a time of rejoicing as we glorify the Lord by giving our rewards back to Him in worship and in praise.

What about the Great White Throne Judgment of the unbeliever? Well, that takes us back to our text and first:

I. The Inescapable Judge (verse 11)

There are really four questions we want to answer as we look at our text.

Who is the Judge?
 Who are the judged?
 How are they judged?
 What is their judgment?

First, who is the Judge?

Verse 11 .. *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.”*

The first thing John saw was a great white throne. It is called great not only because of its size as greater than the thrones mentioned in 20:4, but also because of its significance, majesty, and authority. That it is white symbolizes its purity, holiness, and justice. The verdict handed down from this throne will be absolutely equitable, righteous, and just.

Even more awe inspiring than the throne was the vision of *“Him who sat upon it”* as verse 11 says. The judge on the throne is none other than the eternal, almighty God (4:8–11). Sharing the throne with the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ. In Revelation 3:21 Jesus promised, *“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”*

Though the Father and the Son share the throne, it is the Son who is uniquely in view here, since Scripture teaches that He will judge sinners. John 5:22 says, the Father *“has given all judgment to the Son.”* John 5:27 says, the Father *“gave Jesus authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man.”* In Acts 10:42 Peter said, *“And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that Jesus is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.”*

Notice also verse 11 says .. *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.”*

This is an awesome reality. Revelation 21:1 reiterates it plainly... This present physical universe will depart; in some sense it will be no more. Everything will be destroyed. In this text, earth and sky are somewhat personified, running in terror from the presence of the One on the Great White Throne.

Donald Barnhouse writes, *“There is to be an end of the material heavens and earth which we know. It is not that they are to be purified and rehabilitated and restored, but the REVERSE OF CREATION is to take place. They are to be UNCREATED (spoken out of existence). As they came from nothingness at the word of God, they are to be sucked back into nothingness by this same word of God.”*

The details of God’s uncreation of the universe are what Adrian read in 2 Peter 3:10–13. With heaven and earth removed, God will deal with the last group of humans who have not yet been judged—the unsaved. They have no place to stand except before their Maker. We have seen The Inescapable Judge in verse 11; second we see:

II. The Incontestable Trial (verses 12–13)

First question: Who is the Judge? The Lord Almighty. Second question: Who are the judged?

Verse 12 .. *“And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.”*

The objects of judgment are referred to as *“the dead.”* This title refers to *“the rest of the dead”* in Revelation 20:5 and has reference to all the unbelievers of all time. In other words, the judgment of Revelation 20:11–15 is the judgment of unbelievers, not believers.

The objects of judgment are further described as *“the great and the small.”* This phrase emphasizes that no unbeliever—regardless of his status here on earth—will be exempt from the final judgment. This idea is emphasized further in verse 13b, where John says that *“every one of them”* is judged.

With heaven and earth dismissed from God’s all-consuming presence, the unsaved dead will have no place to hide from God Almighty. Scripture teaches that the physical bodies of unbelievers will one day be resurrected. Daniel 12:2 speaks of a resurrection *“to disgrace and everlasting contempt.”* John 5:29 speaks of *“a resurrection of judgment.”* Acts 24:15 speaks of *“a resurrection of ... the wicked.”*

Notice this resurrection is described in Revelation 20:13a.... *“The sea”* literally refers to the sea. Anyone who died and was buried at sea or sank into the sea. The victims of the Titanic will come up out of that to stand before the Great White Throne. Anyone who died of disease on a British man-of-war in the 19th century and was buried with honors with the cannonball wrapped around their sheeted body will arise. Everyone will be there.

“Hades” refers to the place of the dead (i.e., the grave). Most people die on land and are buried on land or cremated. Their bodies will come together in order to be judged and condemned. Death and the corruption of the grave will no longer be needed; their job will be finished. The idea, then, is that the sea, the grave, and death itself all release the dead bodies that they held captive, and the bodies are raised to stand before the Judge on the great white throne.

When Hitler committed suicide in a reinforced concrete bunker, he thought he was escaping Russia’s Red Army and its rage. He did not realize a far greater enemy was waiting for him on the other side. Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, *“Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

Imagine the different categories of people who will form that group of unsaved from all history:

- those who replaced the Creator with idols and false gods
- those who turned their backs on the free grace of God in favor of a works-based false religion
- those who repeatedly heard the gospel of Christ but rejected Him until too late
- those who concluded, based on logic, reason, and experience, that God doesn’t exist
- those who foolishly believed that their good deeds will outweigh their evil deeds

This brings us to the third question: How are they judged? What is the basis of their judgment?

Verse 12 says with all the dead gathered before the throne of God, *“books were opened.”* Books of what? The *“books”* are a written record of the deeds the unbelievers committed during their lives on earth. These include everything the individuals had ever done, said, thought, desired, or purposed in their hearts.

Revelation 2:23 says of Jesus, *“I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds.”* He looks at minds, hearts, intentions. 1 Corinthians 4:5 says, *“He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts.”* He will look at the motives behind everything. There will be no secrets on that day. Romans 2:16 says, *“...on the day when God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ ...”*

Luke 12:2-5 says, *“There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. What you have said in the dark will be heard in the daylight, and what you have whispered in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed from the roofs. I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”* Nothing will be kept secret on Judgment Day.

Can you imagine the details in those books? When I was in 6th grade my elementary school principal called a conference with my parents. I was such a misbehaving student, that there only last hope was to take turns telling my parents just how rude, selfish, disrespectful and disobedient I had been. The solution was for me to carry a blue spiral book for my teachers to sign at the end of each week. Then went I got home my parents were supposed to ask for the book. Well, I can tell you not much changed in my attitudes and actions until my junior year of high school when the Lord saved me and repented of my sin and trusted in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. The funny thing is my brother was the best man in my wedding and at the rehearsal dinner he announced that he had found the blue book!

Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, *“I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.”*

In a search, I found that on average, according to a team of linguists, people speak approximately 20,000 words a day. That means that over the course of 80 years of speaking, we will account for half a billion words. I have a hard time remembering what was said this morning before I started preaching this sermon. But God will remember every careless word we have spoken, and we will give an account for it all based on God’s perfect record. He misses nothing, whether a slight glance of the eye, a slight inclination of the heart, a little action, a little snide comment. It is all there; there is no escape.

You may think, *“I’m not such a bad person, I’ll take my chances with the book of deeds.”* But you forget one vital truth: to qualify for heaven, your entry in the book of deeds needs to be filled with all good deeds and absolutely no bad deeds. God’s standard is complete moral perfection. If He finds just one sin recorded there, no matter how small, the sentence will be an eternity of suffering in the lake of fire. No one except the Son of God has ever lived without sinning.

Notice in the middle of verse 12 it says another book was opened, the book of life. Thank God there is a Book of Life. Thank God there is a Savior and salvation for sinners like us. The Lamb’s Book of Life is the record of all of those who are born again through faith in Christ, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. They also were sinners. They violated the Ten Commandments and the Two Commandments, but there is an infinite difference. By the working of the Holy Spirit of God on them, they came to see their sins while they lived here on earth. They turned away from those sins in repentance and turned toward Jesus Christ, the crucified Savior,

for forgiveness and atonement for their sins. At that moment, their sins were all wiped away, and they received the gift of forgiveness.

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “*God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*”

God the Father sent His Son to fill up the books of actions, words, motives, and thoughts. Jesus says, “You can read all of My books, I have nothing to hide. Our sin is great, but His grace is greater. He says, “John Marc, we don’t need to open your books because I was already punished for all of them on the cross. In fact, it was your books of sin and unrighteous thoughts, words and actions that put me there and it is my book of perfect righteousness that is now applied to you. My righteousness is imputed to you.”

We have seen The Inescapable Judge in verse 11 and the The Incontestable Trial in verses 12–13. Third, we see:

III. The Irreversible Sentence (verses 14–15)

Verse 14 .. “*Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.*”

The casting of death and Hades into the lake of fire indicates the destruction of death itself. In other words, no longer will death and the grave (“Hades”) have power to take lives. This later serves as a comforting assurance to those who inherit the new heaven and the new earth in the eternal state. Look at Revelation 21:4, “*He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*” In other words, this marks the Lord’s victory over death itself.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:26, “*Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*”

Verse 14 .. “*Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.*”

C.S. Lewis said, “If you are born once, you die twice. If are born twice then you only die once – and you can live this life fearless, with confidence, joy and gratitude for all that Christ has done for you.”

Four questions:

Who is the Judge?

Who are the judged?

How are they judged?

What is their judgment?

Verse 15 .. “*And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire*”.

Unbelievers are here described as those whose names are not found written in the book of life. These are those individuals who have refused to take refuge in the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

The place of the sentence is said to be “*the lake of fire.*” This graphic title for hell is described elsewhere in the

New Testament. Jesus called hell the “*unquenchable fire*” (Matt 3:12), “*the fiery hell*” (Matt 5:22; 18:9; cf. James 3:6), “*the furnace of fire*” (Matt 13:42, 50), “*the eternal fire*” (Matt 18:8; 25:41). Jesus had more to save about hell than he did about the heaven in the gospels.

Language like this leaves no room for any form of universal salvation, an intermediate state of purgatory, a second chance, or annihilation of the wicked. This is the eternal infliction of punishment resulting in the physical and spiritual and mental misery mentioned by Jesus (Matthew 25:41, 46). The wicked will be tormented without rest, day and night, forever (Revelation 14:11). Remember, “*it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment*” (Hebrews 9:27). This day is coming, and it will be impossible to avoid it

There is no second chance. If you stand at the throne of God for judgment it is too late. How many procrastinate and think they can repent later? I don’t want that to be you.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. Hell is one of the most difficult and uncomfortable topics to consider. What was it like for you to consider the truths addressed in the Revelation 20:11-15 sermon?
2. How has this sermon changed your thinking about hell?
3. How do you think it should change your actions?
4. What are some popular misconceptions regarding hell?
5. If hell is not a reality, then why did Jesus go to the cross?
6. What does John mean when he says in verses 11 that “earth and heaven fled away from the presence of God?”
7. Jonathan Edwards purposed with one ear to hear the hallelujahs of heaven, and with the other ear he purposed to strain to hear the shrieks and groans of tormented souls in hell. What do you think he meant by this?
8. Verse 12 says the books were opened “and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books.” What books are to be opened as evidence?
9. Verse 15 says, “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” What is the book of life? How can you know if your name is written in it?

Chapter 34

“The New Heaven and The New Earth”

Revelation 21:1-8

¹ “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, ⁴ and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.” ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.” ⁶ Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son. ⁸ But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

In 2010, Tyndale House published a book that took our nation by storm, called *The Boy Who Came Back From Heaven: A True Story*. It related the story of Alex Malarkey’s experience when he was six years old, after a terrible traffic accident in 2004. He states he was carried by an angel through the gates of Heaven, which he described as tall, to be met by Jesus, who appeared out of a hole in Heaven. After he regained consciousness, he told his family this account and his father helped him write down his near-death experience. Tyndale House published it, promoting it as “a supernatural encounter that will give you new insights into heaven, angels and hearing the voice of God.”

The book sold over a million copies, which shows the intense interest that people have about Heaven. Unfortunately, despite the title of *A True Story*, it was not true at all. In the year 2012, Alex described his own book as one of the most deceptive books ever published. Alex wrote in a confession of sorts, “I did not die. I did not go to heaven. I said I went to heaven because I thought it would get me attention. When I made the claims that I did, I had never read the Bible. People have profited from lies and they continue to profit from lies. They should read the Bible, which is enough. The Bible is the only source of truth. Anything written by man cannot be infallible.”

That is why the last two chapters of the Bible that we are studying are so powerful. Revelation 21 and 22 contain the final visions that God gave to John on the island of Patmos (and the final visions of the Bible), visions of the heavenly world to which Christians are going. God commanded John to write down those visions for us to read. Verse 5 says, *And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”*

The words committed to the apostle John are trustworthy; they are words on which we can build our lives, the hopes of our souls. They are trustworthy and true — not lies, not deceptions. Rather than simply living by experience and listening to personal accounts, we can have a hope based on scriptural truth. John was commanded through the Holy Spirit to write them down for the generations, twenty centuries of Christians who would read these accounts.

We have now come full circle now in the Bible. Genesis 1:1 says, *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”*

Revelation 21-22 brings us to the end of the Apocalypse and to the end of the Bible. It is a fitting conclusion to the historical drama of redemption that began in Genesis 1-3. In fact, it is interesting to compare the beginning of Genesis with the end of Revelation. Parallels and differences are too important to ignore.

Look at the chart that compares Genesis with Revelation...

Genesis	Revelation
Heaven and earth, 1:1	New heavens and earth recreated, 21:1
Sun created, 1:16	No need of sun, 21:23
The night established, 1:5	No night there, 22:5
The seas created, 1:10	No more seas, 21:1
The curse announced, 3:14-17	No more curse, 22:3
Death enters history, 3:19	Death exits history, 21:4
Man driven from paradise, 3:24	Man restored to paradise, 22:14
Sorrow and pain begin, 3:17	Sorrow, tears, and pain end, 21:4
The devil appears, 3:1	The devil disappears, 20:10

What will eternity be like? We will enjoy a new heaven and a new earth. These first eight verses unfold six features of the new heaven and the new earth.

I. The Appearance

Verse 1, *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.”*

It is important to note that “heaven comes to earth” only through God’s miraculous intervention and re-creation. No amount of human effort, as noble as it may be in some cases, will ever be able to create “heaven on earth.” We cannot manufacture a utopia.

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we have access to God and experience freedom from many of the effects of sin, but we still only have a glimpse of what is yet to come. The new heavens and earth are the eternal home for the believer. The new earth and the new heavens are referred to as the “eternal state.”

The phrase *“I saw”* is used throughout Revelation to indicate chronological progression. It has introduced each of the climactic events beginning with the return of Christ in 19:11. As this chapter opens, all the sinners of all the ages, as well as Satan and his demons, have been sentenced to the lake of fire (20:10–15). With all ungodly men and angels banished forever and the present universe destroyed as we saw last week in 20:11, God will create a new realm for the redeemed and the holy angels to dwell in forever.

The phrase “*a new heaven and a new earth*” derives from two passages in Isaiah. In Isaiah 65:17 God declared, “*For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.*” In Isaiah 66:22 He added, “*For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘so your offspring and your name will endure.’*” What Isaiah predicted 700 years before Jesus is now a reality in John’s vision.

The new heaven and new earth will not be new merely in a chronological sense—as we talk about a “new day,” for example. Rather, John describes qualitative newness. To use a film metaphor, this is not a sequel; it’s a completely new and different production. It isn’t simply a reedited version, enhanced with clearer sound, brighter colors, and digitally enhanced special effects. This is a totally new creation!

The Greek word *kainos* (“new”) means “different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value or attraction.” In Revelation 20:11 John had watched as the first heaven and earth “fled away” along with all the associated contaminations of sin. In this next vision John saw heaven and earth return—but this time a new heaven and a new earth, uncontaminated and unaffected by sin (21:1). Created by a perfect God who does perfect work, this will be a perfect environment. Death, darkness, deprivation, threat, conflict, and rebellion against God are replaced by life, light, provision, security, community, and intimacy with God.

Notice the end of verse 1 gives us the first hint of what the new heaven and new earth will be like comes in John’s observation that there will no longer be any sea. That will be a startling change from the present earth, nearly 71% of the earth is covered by water. The sea is emblematic of the present water-based environment. All life on earth is dependent on water for its survival.

But believers’ glorified bodies will not require water (unlike our present human bodies, whose blood is 90 percent water). The new heaven and the new earth will be based on a completely different life principle. There will be a river in heaven, not of water of the seas, but of the “water of life” (22:1, 17). Without a sea, there can be no hydrological cycle, so that every feature of life and climate will be dramatically different.

In 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, Paul affirms the resurrection body which will require a physical resurrected world in which to live. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. We must have resurrection bodies to live in that perfect world. He described it in this way: “*The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*” Imperishable, glorious, powerful, spiritual. That describes the resurrection body and the resurrected world. We will enjoy walking in our resurrection bodies on this resurrected earth, feeling the resurrected soil with our resurrected feet.

I remember the first time Paula and I and our children visited Yosemite and we drove the Wawona Tunnel on Highway 41 and came to the breath taking vista where you see El Capitan, Half Dome, and Bridalveil Fall – it is simply breathtaking. But it will appear as an ant hill compared to the creation of the new heaven and new earth.

Randy Alcorn, in his book *Heaven*, speculates, using his imagination based in Scripture, on what that new world will be like. It will be familiar, like home, like what we have known in this world, only different, better. He cites Revelation 21:10 ..” *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,*”

John is taken to a lofty, glorious mountain and later is shown a river flowing through the center of the city, clear as crystal. Then, Alcorn’s imagination takes flight. Alcorn writes: “Everything God tells us suggests we will look

back at the present earth and conclude, creatively speaking, God was just warming up and getting started with this present earth.”

Consider the natural wonders God has created in this universe. On Mars, the volcano Olympus Mons rises 79,000 feet from the surface of Mars, almost three times taller than Mount Everest, which is 29,000 feet. The base of Olympus Mons is 370 miles across and would cover the entire state of Nebraska. That is a big mountain. The Valles Marineris is a vast canyon on the surface of Mars, stretching one-sixth of the way around the planet, 2800 miles long — about the distance from the Atlantic to the Pacific across the United States — 370 miles wide, 4 1/2 miles deep. Hundreds of our Grand Canyons would fit inside that canyon.

Alcorn is pointing to what God has done in this present universe and speculating that the new earth may have far more spectacular features than that. We may find rock formations more spectacular than those in Yosemite or the Swiss Alps, and forests deeper and richer than the Pacific Northwest or the Amazonian rainforest. The new waterfalls may dwarf Niagara Falls. There will be no bondage, suffering, or decay that the present nature has, so there will be no natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanic eruptions, mudslides, floods, droughts, or anything that would torment the earth and destroy the beauty, harmony, and peacefulness of the future world. Whatever God makes will be spectacular, majestic, beautiful and breathtaking and we will be like Lewis and Clark and get to explore it. And with no more seas which currently cover 71% of the earth, there is going to be a lot of land to explore!

So, first we read about the appearance of the new heaven and new earth.

II. The Capital

Verse 2 .. *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”*

John moves from a description of the new heaven and the new earth in general to a description of the capital city of the eternal state. Since the text plainly identifies it as such, there is no reason to doubt that the “new Jerusalem” is an actual city.

We will see its dimensions next week. It will be the third city named Jerusalem in redemptive history. The first is the historic Jerusalem, the City of David, which currently exists in Palestine. The second Jerusalem will be the restored Jerusalem where Christ will rule during the millennial kingdom. But the new Jerusalem does not belong to the first creation, so it is neither the historic city nor the millennial city. It is an altogether new eternal city.

Notice in verse 2 that the new Jerusalem is called the holy city because everyone in it is holy, without sin. The concept of a city includes relationships, activity, responsibility, unity, socialization, communion, and cooperation. Unlike the evil cities of the present earth, the people in the new Jerusalem will live together in perfect harmony. This city represents the final state of redeemed mankind, forever in fellowship with God.

In his vision, John saw the *“new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”* The implication is that it already exists (Hebrews 12:22–23). All of heaven is currently contained in the new Jerusalem. It is separate from the present universe. Believers who die go to the “heavenly Jerusalem,” where Jesus has gone before them to prepare a place for them as He described John 14:1–3. But when God creates the new heaven and the new earth, the new Jerusalem will descend into the midst of that holy new universe (21:10) and serve as the dwelling place of the redeemed for all eternity. This will literally be heaven on earth.

John then notes that it was “*made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*” The city is pictured as a bride because it contains the bride, the church, and takes on her character. John saw the bride adorned for her husband because it was time for the consummation—the eternal state for believers. By this point in Revelation, the bride concept expands to include not only the church, but also all the rest of the redeemed from all the ages who live forever in that eternal city.

When you go to a wedding everyone stands when the bride walks down the aisle and focus on her. I always enjoy looking at the groom when he first sees the bride walking down the aisle – it is common to see the groom started to cry tears of joy. I remember when I was the groom and I first saw Paula. I was struck by her beauty but also by the fact that she was my bride and that we would spend life together as husband and wife, as best friends! I don’t know if I cried, but I remember my cheeks being sore the next day because I was smiling so much.

Verse 2 .. “*And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.*”

The word “*adorned*” is the Greek word “*cosmeo*.” We get our English word “*cosmetics*” from this. It refers to the bride who has put on her cosmetics. The word means “*to adorn, to decorate, to make beautiful*”.

Throughout the Bible, the beloved of God is referred to as a bride. Israel is called the bride of Jehovah; the church is called the bride of Christ. As John describes for us the permanent relocation of the city, the focus is on the beauty of the bride. John effectively says, “*Here comes the bride – beautifully adorned and readied for her beloved.*” He will know us by name, for we will have trusted in His name alone. Even now, we are members of this everlasting bridal party as the bride of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

We have seen the appearance and the capital, next we see:

III. The Presence of God

Verse 3 .. “*And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,” .*”

This is one of the most wonderful promises in the Bible. In a real sense this is what the Bible has been pointing toward throughout its 66 books. Again, John hears “*a loud voice*” something we hear 20 plus times in Revelation. This voice comes with divine authority and power for it comes from God’s throne.

What is the announcement? God’s dwelling place or tabernacle is with man! God will permanently and forever pitch His tent among His redeemed people. His “*shekinah glory*” will make its home in and among His peoples.

Think of what Revelation 21:3 tells us—God will relocate His people and come down from Heaven to the New Earth to live with them: “*God himself will be with them.*” Rather than our going up to live in God’s home forever, God will come down to live in our home forever. Simply put, though the present Heaven is “*up there,*” the future, eternal Heaven will be “*down here.*”

God and mankind will live together forever in the same home—the New Earth.

God declares this truth in Scripture. Leviticus 26:11-12 the Lord says, “*I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people.*”

Adrian read Ezekiel 37:27, “*My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people.*”

2 Corinthians 6:16 says, “*I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.*”

Nothing will separate us from God, and nothing will separate Earth and Heaven. Once God and mankind dwell together, there will be no difference between Heaven and Earth. Earth will become Heaven—and it will truly be Heaven on Earth.

The purpose of God as stated in Ephesians 1:10 will at last be achieved: “*To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*”

God’s tabernacle is His people. He tabernacles among His peoples. And the great promise verse 3 gets only better, “God himself will be with them as their God.” God himself is emphatic. Our great God will be with us, in our midst, as our God.

Matthew 5:8 says, “*Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.*” That great promise is now fulfilled. It becomes reality in the fullest measure.

We have seen the appearance, the capital, the presence of God, and fourth:

IV. The Changes

Verses 4-6a ..⁴ “*and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.*”⁵ *And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”*⁶ *Then He said to me, “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end....”*

Life in heaven will be dramatically different from anything we know in the present world. The first change from our earthly life is that “*God will wipe away every tear from their eyes*” (Revelation 7:17; Isaiah 25:8).

John is saying that God is going to wipe out disappointment; He is going to wipe out sadness and not one tear will fall – the Greek language emphasizes – because the context of sadness and pain will be forever gone. There will be no tears of misfortune, tears over lost love, tears of remorse, or tears of regret.

Notice that John specifically mentions four “no mores”. The first mentioned is, no more death. When Adam and Eve fell in the garden, the first intrusion into a fallen world was death. At the outset of fallen humanity and to this very day, the promise of God has been kept – You sin and you will surely die. (Genesis 2:17b) In heaven there will be no more death.

Death is the final enemy. 1 Corinthians 15:26 says, “*The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*” All the destruction and sorrow and fear and anxiety and intense loss and pain caused by death will end, and we will live forever. We will not die. Our relationships will be eternal. We will never say goodbye again. We will not age. We will not reach our prime after 10,000 years, followed by a long, slow, eternal decline. The body will be raised in power and in glory — no decline, no death, no funerals.

John says in verse 4 that there will be no more mourning — psychological, emotional, mental anguish — and no more crying, the physical action that flows from pain because he says there will be more pain.

Overwhelmed by all that he had seen, John seems to have lost his concentration. Verse 5 .. *“And He who sits on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” And He *said, “Write, for these words are faithful and true.”*

The One who sits on the throne is qualified to declare the end of redemptive history, because He is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the beginning and the end (Isaiah 44:6; 48:12). God started history, He will end it, and all of it has unfolded according to His sovereign plan.

We have seen the appearance, the capital, the presence of God, the changes, and fifth:

V. The Residents

Look at verses 6b-7 .. *“I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. ⁷ He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.”*

Two descriptive phrases reveal who will live in the new heaven and new earth. First, a citizen of heaven is described as *“one who thirsts.”* That phrase signifies those who *“hunger and thirst for righteousness”* (Matthew 5:6). Those who will be redeemed and enter heaven are those who are dissatisfied with their hopeless, lost condition and crave God’s righteousness with every part of their being. To the soul of the psalmist who panted after God in Psalm 42:1 *“as a deer pants after water and to all earnest seekers, the promise is that their thirst will be satisfied. God “will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost”* (Isaiah 55:1–2)

The only condition: you must come knowing that you cannot pay for it. This is an amazing offer, to come to Jesus – you must be thirsty and you cannot bring anything. You must come with empty hands.

Second, heaven belongs to *“he who overcomes.”* An overcomer, according to 1 John 5:4–5, is one who exercises saving faith in Christ.

The most wonderful promise to the one who overcomes and who thirsts for righteousness, is God’s promise in verse 7 *“I will be his God.”* Equally amazing is God’s promise that the one who overcomes *“will be My son.”* Even in this life it is the believer’s privilege to be the adopted son of the God of the universe (John 1:12; Romans 8:14–17). Only in heaven will that adoption be fully realized (Romans 8:23).

Finally, we see in verse 8 the outcasts.

VI. The Outcasts

Verse 8 .. *“But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”*

John concludes his overview of the new heaven and the new earth with a serious warning. He distinguishes those who will be excluded from participation in the blessings of heaven—all unforgiven and unredeemed sinners. The first group includes *“the cowardly.”* They fell away when their faith was challenged or opposed, because their faith was not genuine.

Because they are unbelieving, their disloyalty excludes them from heaven. They are also abominable, murderers, immoral persons, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars. Those whose lives are characterized by such things give evidence that they are not saved and will never enter the heavenly city. *“Their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”* In contrast to the eternal bliss of the righteous in heaven, the wicked will suffer eternal torment in hell.

Honestly, if it were not for the grace of God, we all can find ourselves in verse 8. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 says, *“Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”*

We come to Christ empty-handed. We can take no credit for salvation: *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast”* (Ephesians 2:8-9).

This gift cannot be worked for, earned, or achieved in any sense. It’s not dependent on our merit or effort but solely on Christ’s generous and sufficient sacrifice on our behalf. Ultimately, God’s greatest gift is Himself. We don’t just need salvation; we need Jesus the Savior. It is the person, God, who graciously gives us the place, Heaven.

Let me close with two thoughts:

1. You are made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place. They are a package—you cannot get Heaven without Jesus or Jesus without Heaven. Will you seek the Lord now and embrace Him as your wonderful Lord and Savior?
2. Find your joy in Christ and think often about heaven.

Most people do not find their joy in Christ and heaven. In fact, many people find no joy at all when they think about heaven.

Jonathan Edwards, the great Puritan preacher, often spoke of heaven. He said, *“It becomes us to spend this life only as a journey toward heaven . . . to which we should subordinate all other concerns of life. Why should we labor for or set our hearts on anything else, but that which is our proper end and true happiness?”*

In his early twenties, Edwards composed a set of life resolutions. One read, *“Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can.”*

Nineteenth-century British theologian J. C. Ryle said, *“I pity the man who never thinks about heaven.”*

By God’s grace, may we obey Colossians 3:2-4 which tell us to, *“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”*

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. We have all probably heard the statement: “That person is so heavenly-minded that he is no earthly good.” What do you think about that statement? According to Matthew 6:9-21, Philippians 3:20, and Colossians 3:1-4, where should our hearts and minds be focused?
2. If you faithfully look forward to heaven, what conflicts, arguments, worries, anxieties, or concerns of this week may have been handled differently or even been non-existent?
3. Where will God’s presence be in the new heaven and the new earth? How is this so different from the rest of redemptive history?
4. What is the significance of the New Jerusalem in verse 3? How does it relate to John 14:1-3?
5. Why is the new Jerusalem described as a bride made ready for her husband?
6. According to verse 4, how will life in heaven be dramatically different from anything we have known in the present world?
7. According to verses 6-7, what will characterize the inhabitants of heaven?
8. How will the hope of the new heaven and the new earth make a difference in your life this week?

CHAPTER 35
“The Glory of the New Jerusalem”
Revelation 21:9 – 22:5

⁹“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”¹⁰ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,¹¹ having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. ¹² It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. ¹³ There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. ¹⁴ And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵ The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. ¹⁶ The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷ And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. ¹⁸ The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹ The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; ²⁰ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoptase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. ²² I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵ In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶ The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. ²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life..

¹Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, ² in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; . ³ There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him. ⁴ they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.” .

When Paula and I were in England visiting Jenn, Jake and our grandchildren we took a tour of a house in their neighborhood. 1547 was the number on the chimney, and I thought it was the address. 1547 was actually the year the house was built!

A lot has changed a lot over the past 500 years. Most of us cannot really imagine just how different things were then, though there are some interesting reminders that give us a clue!

Here are some facts about the 1500s:

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of going first and enjoying the nice clean water, then came the sons, then the wife and then the daughters - last of all the babies. By

then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it - hence the saying, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.”

Most houses had thatched roofs - - thick straw, piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the dogs, cats and other small animals (mice, rats and bugs included!) lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery, and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off or out the roof - - hence the saying, “It’s raining cats and dogs.”

Yes, things have changed quite a bit in 500 years. But these changes pale in comparison to the way things are now, and the way things will be in the new heaven, the new earth and the New Jerusalem. In 21:1-8 John gave us a glimpse of the glory of eternal life. Now in 21:9 – 22:5 the apostle is given a magnificent vision of heaven’s capital, the New Jerusalem.

Main point: This wonderful text explains seven features of the new Jerusalem that believers will enjoy forever.

I. Perfect Sanctification	21:9-10
II. Perfect Representation	21:11-14
III. Perfect Dimension	21:15-21
IV. Perfect Illumination	21:22-26
V. Perfect Redemption	21:27
VI. Perfect Restoration	22:1-3
VII. Perfect Satisfaction	22:4-5

My prayer is that you will find your greatest satisfaction in God today, tomorrow and for all eternity.

I. Perfect Sanctification

21 Verses 9-10 .. ⁹“*Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.”*¹⁰ *And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,”*

The last appearance of an angel was one thousand years earlier at the beginning of the Millennium in Revelation 20:1. Angels play a significant role in Revelation, and this angel was involved in the Tribulation judgments. Those judgments unfolded in three telescoping series: the seal, trumpet, and, climactically, the bowl judgments. We are told here that this angel was one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues.

Inaugurating John’s personal tour of heaven’s capital city, the angel came and spoke with the apostle, saying, “*Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.*” As we saw last week in 21:2, the New Jerusalem is described as a bride because it draws its character from its occupants. Those occupants consist of the bride of the Lamb, a title originally given to the church (19:7), but now enlarged to encompass all the redeemed of all the ages, who live there forever. The New Jerusalem is likened to a bride because the redeemed are forever united to God and the Lamb.

21 Verse 10... “*And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,”*

The word *sanctification* is related to the word *saint*; both words have to do with holiness. To “sanctify” something is to set it apart for special use; to “sanctify” a person is to make him holy. In the past God granted us justification, a once-for-all, positional holiness in Christ. Now in our present life God guides us to maturity, a practical,

progressive holiness. In the future, God will give us glorification, a permanent, ultimate holiness. These three phases of sanctification separate the believer from the penalty of sin (justification), the power of sin (maturity), and the presence of sin (glorification).

The glory of the New Jerusalem is a great city, a holy city, a heavenly city, the Lamb's city. We will enjoy a city of perfect sanctification, perfect holiness. Second, we will enjoy a city of perfect representation.

II. Perfect Representation

21 Verse 11 .. *“having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper”*.

This radiant glory illuminates everything in the New Jerusalem. The materials of the city are all translucent or transparent to shine the light through, so everything shimmers and glows and radiates with the light of God. All the precious stones in the foundation of the wall would be totally dark, were it not for the glory of God. They would have no light to show themselves. The streets of gold, which are mysteriously called transparent as glass, would be black and dead, were it not for the glory of God.

The gate of the city is the way by which one enters and leaves. It is the place where official business was transacted in that ancient near eastern setting. People went to the city gates to be honored to do business.

In John's vision, there is not only one gate, but twelve. Verses 12-13... ¹² *“It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.* ¹³ *There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.”*

Each gate is labeled with one of the sons of Jacob, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. This shows a continuity of God's covenant work. God made a promise to Abraham that through his offspring, all peoples on earth would be blessed. Abraham is called therefore the father of many nations. We who have repented and believed in Jesus, though we are from many different ethnic backgrounds, are counted sons and daughters of Abraham through faith in Christ. Galatians 3:7 says, *“Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.”* These names honor the grace shown to Israel and through them, grace shown to us — sinners saved by grace.

Why the points of the compass? Jesus said in Matthew 8:11, *“I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”* The four points of the compass indicate that this gospel has spread to the ends of the earth, and people have come from all over the world to enter this new Jerusalem.

Verse 14 says, *“The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”* This gives a feeling of massive stability. It is not moving; there is no concern for earthquakes or plate movement; it is eternal and permanent. Ephesians 2:20 tells us that the household of God is *“built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”*

Old Testament and New Testament saints, all believers of every age are represented in this perfect city. As one people they now enjoy the blessings of God's great heavenly city we will enjoy perfect representation. Third, we enjoy a city of:

III. Perfect Dimension

The dimensions of the holy city are described in verses 15-17...¹⁵ “*The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.*” ¹⁶ *The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.* ¹⁷ *And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements”.*

We see a little bit of the layout of the city here. Urban planning is a major science. When leaders build or extend a city, they turn to civil engineers and urban planners who know how to lay out a city. For example, Washington DC, was laid out scientifically and mathematically according to President Washington’s instructions for a capital city. He contracted a Frenchman named Pierre Charles L’Enfant in 1791, who made the Washington Mall the center of its egalitarian vision of human government. My father worked in Washington D.C. next to the Mall at a location known as L’Enfant Plaza.

In Revelation, this eternal city, the new Jerusalem, the capital city, has been very well planned by the ultimate urban planner, the ultimate architect, God Himself. We do not know much about the streets, but there is one wide main street, going right down the center of the city.

The dimensions of the city are mind-boggling. The city is laid out as a perfect square in its footprint, but it is also massive in scope. No city in human history comes close. 1,500 miles along each wall!

If I placed a corner in Los Angeles, it would extend north to Northern British Columbia, 1500 miles east to Hudson Bay north of Ontario, Canada and south to El Dorado, Arkansas and back west to Los Angeles.

The footprint would take up effectively over half of the Western Continental United States. This is just one city. That is massive. Even more amazing, John tells us, is that it is a perfect cube. Length, width, and height are 1500 miles.

The height is incomprehensible. The International Space Station orbits the Earth 150 miles above the surface of the earth. This city rises about ten times higher than that, way out into outer space. At ten feet per floor, a skyscraper this tall would be 700,000 stories. An elevator taking you to the top floor would take a long time. Imagine the buttons. The fastest elevator in the world is in Shanghai, traveling at 67 ft per second or 46 miles per hour, borderline uncomfortable. Imagine traveling 1500 miles at 46 miles an hour – it would take about 35 hours. They’d better have some good elevator music!

Critics are correct that this massive city could never fit on the *present* earth, but it will be perfectly proportionate to the *new earth*, which God will fashion for the eternal state (21:1). We are never told how large the new earth will be, but we already know that it will be geographically different from the present earth, having no sea (21:1). Furthermore, when we realize that this is the capital city of God’s new creation and that its origin is from God Himself, we should not be surprised at its incredible size. It will be the eternal dwelling place of countless saints and innumerable angels.

The building materials of the city in verses 18-21 depict the radiant glory of the people of God.

Everything here, all this precious valuable material, has as its essence translucence or transparency. It is all about the glory of God in us.

The preciousness and variety of these building materials symbolize the great diversity of people who will dwell within the city’s walls. In Revelation 5:9 the 24 elders sang a new song that through His shed blood Christ

purchased “*men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation*” and made them “*a kingdom and priests to our God.*”

Consider the astonishing pearly gates in verse 21. Pearl is made of one of the most precious substances in the ancient world. It results from some particulate, like a grain of sand, getting inside an oyster. The oyster protects itself by covering it, layer by layer, with a shimmering hard substance called conchiolin, like the rings of a tree. It testifies to the suffering that has gone into building the Kingdom of God.

First and foremost, Jesus suffered, but Paul said in Colossians 1:24, “*Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions...*” The blood of martyrs is seed for the church. There have been all kinds of labor and suffering that have gone into building the place. Every time we walk by those massive pearly gates, we will be reminded of the beauty that came from suffering.

Verse 21 tells us the streets of the city will be made of pure gold (21:21). Imagine that! In the new Jerusalem the materials we adore the most in this world will be put to common use. No vanity. No materialism. No envy or greed. Best of all, no one will be poor in a place that paves its streets with gold. We will enjoy a city of perfect dimension.

IV. Perfect Illuminated City

21 Verse 22 ..“*I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple*”.

The earthly temple will be filled with heavenly worship. Here, the history of the tabernacle and the temple, and of what God intended for those structures, reaches its destination and fulfillment.

God’s atoning work through Jesus is fulfilled and we are perfectly cleansed of all of our sins, so there is no need for sacrifices any longer. Furthermore, God will be so present everywhere that we will not need a special place. Every place will be special, an encounter with the radiant glory of God. It will be impossible to look any direction north, south, east or west and not see the glory of God. We will have an immediate experience with the glory of God. There is no need for a special place to assemble. It is the fulfillment of the vision Jesus gave to the Samaritan woman in John — we do not worship God in a place, but together, intimately connected with God by the Spirit.

21 Verse 23 ..“*And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.*”

When God created the heavens and the earth, the first thing he said after that statement was Genesis 1:3: “*And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.*” The sun and moon and stars were not required on the first and the second and the third day of creation — they did not exist. God does light very well. He did not need the sun or the moon or the stars. He delegated the job of light to them on the fourth day, and now He will take the job back.

21 Verse 24 ..“*The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.*”

Who are these nations and kings of the earth? They are all of the redeemed from the earth, from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Revelation 7). They are recognized by their expressions of amoral ethnic cultural diversity. They will be identified as trophies of God’s grace from every tribe and language and people and nation.

I have worshipped with believers in Korea in Japan in Hong Kong in Mexico in El Salvador in Curacao in Bermuda in Spain in the United Arab Emirates and in Russia.

In the New Heaven and New Earth, we will see all of that cultural diversity in some marvelous way. They will bring their riches and treasures into the New Jerusalem, so we can at least simply say that they themselves are converted and they bring their uniqueness into worship Jesus.

Verses 25-27...²⁵ *“In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶ and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; ²⁷ and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life”.*

This is speaking about the exclusion of people kept outside the city. Look ahead in Revelation 22:15: *“Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”* These are all the wicked, the sinners. God will weed all of them out, as well as all the dangers of the night which now prowl around.

God called the day good, He did not say anything about the night. Though there is a beauty to a star-spangled night sky and a softer gleam of the moon, there is no beauty in pure darkness, so darkness is frequently used as a metaphor for evil. 1 John 1:5 says, *“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”* Or John 3:19: *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”* In John 8:12, *“Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.’”*

This happened the night that Jesus was arrested. He predicted that one of his disciples would betray him. It was the one who took the bread that Jesus dipped, took it out of his hand. In John’s Gospel, Jesus dipped the bread and handed it to Judas, and Judas took it. When he took it, Satan entered him. John 13:30 says, *“As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.”* That is not an accident. Jesus said to his arresters and his persecutors in Luke 22:53, *“...this is your hour — when darkness reigns.”* So darkness is an image of rebellion against God.

In the new universe, there will be no darkness at all. There will be a universal light of the glory of God. There will be no shadows in the New Jerusalem, like a stage lit by brilliant spotlights in every direction — no shadows anywhere.

Furthermore, it says the gates will never be shut. In the ancient world, gates were shut to keep the dangers on the outside — wild beasts, marauding invading armies. All the wicked, rebellious people and all the demons and Satan will be in the Lake of Fire, so the gates will stand open all the time.

21 Verse 26 ..*“The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.”*

This is the light of the new world — the new Jerusalem, the New Heaven, the New Earth — a pervasive brilliant, beautiful light of the glory of God. We will enjoy a city of perfect illumination.

V. Perfect Redemption

21 Verse 27 ..*“ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.”.*

Imagine landing by plane at night at JFK. You can see the beautiful, spectacular side of New York City in all the lights — the Brooklyn Bridge, the Statue of Liberty, other landmarks; the headlights and tail lights of the traffic like diamonds and rubies and jewels. But once on foot in the city, you need to be careful all the time and especially at night, when your life may be in danger.

In the New Jerusalem, all of that is gone. There will be no impurity. Best of all, our impurity will be gone. Our hearts will be purified, we will be glorified, we will perfectly love righteousness and perfectly hate wickedness forever. We will have our robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, and we will have the right to enter the city and eat from the Tree of Life.

Only those whose names were written in the Lamb's Book of Life from before the foundation of the world will be allowed to enter. That is election, or predestination. Every single one of those named by name before the foundation of the world will most certainly be in there. Each one of those elect has ratified it, confirmed in space and time when they heard the Gospel of their salvation. Having believed, they were marked in Him with a seal and crossed over from death to life. But their names were known before they responded, before the foundation of the world, they were called and summoned to follow Christ, and they will enter. We will enjoy a city of perfect redemption.

VI. Perfect Restoration

22:1-2...¹ *“Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,² in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”*

We will depend on the river of the Water of Life flowing from the throne forever. We will not cut the tie with God and His throne. Our eternal life is dependent on Him, and it is a continual choice on His part that we should continue to live in Him. We are made in His image; thus, we are forever dependent on Him.

The source of the water is the throne of God. He is a mighty king, seated on His throne, and life flows from His kingly rule. The water is created right from the sovereign power of the King of the Universe. In the same way that He created the universe — *ex nihilo*, Latin for “out of nothing,” by the word of His power — He continually and infinitely creates this water. It represents God as the source of all life, happiness, joy, and refreshment forever.

It also shows the nature of His kingship. Human rulers use their authority to dominate and oppress others, to fleece them and strip them and shred them of life and possessions and dignity. Not God. He uses his dominion to give life and blessing to all his subjects. Those around the throne are not running from it, as rebels, but running to the throne to receive refreshment and to delight in God and His good gifts.

...the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” We have already learned in Revelation 21:4 that *“There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain...”* Death is finished. Why would there be need for healing for the nations? It is like saying the hospitals in the New Jerusalem will be top notch, or the funeral homes will be the best seen. That is not the gist of what is being described. Rather, as our lives depend on God, so our vitality, our healthfulness, our power in our resurrection bodies are also dependent on Him. We will derive endless strength and potency from eating from this tree.

22 Verse 3 tells us another incredible benefit of the New Jerusalem is that there will *“No longer ... be any curse.”* The book of Genesis tells us that in the beginning God created the earth to be perfectly suited for human life: security without locks, food without famine, work without toil, crops without weeds, relationships without conflict. All of that changed when the first man and woman introduced sin into the world in Genesis 3:14–19. As a direct result, they were expelled from the garden of Eden, unable to access the tree of life and thus live forever (3:22–23). From that moment on, humanity began to decline into disharmony, disease, and eventual death. In the midst of the new Jerusalem, however, all of the redeemed will have complete access to the tree of life, planted in rows on either side of the river of life flowing from the throne of God and Christ (22:1–2). The complete reversal of the fall and its curse finally will have been accomplished.

In the New Jerusalem, the earth will not be cursed, and we will not be cursed with death. We will work but it will not be in cursed labor — we will have satisfying projects using our amazing resurrection brains and bodies to do amazing things.

In the New Jerusalem, when she descends out of heaven from God prepared as a bride, the throne of God and the Lamb will be right there in the midst of the people, in the midst of the city, no gap, no separation.

22 Verse 3 .. *“There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him.”*

God is a mighty king, worthy of our full obedience. In Adam, we joined Satan in rebellion fighting against the King of the Universe. We have been redeemed from all that, and we will be delighted to take the king’s yoke upon us. We will not be fighting the yoke anymore; we will be glad to have a mighty king to rule over us, commanding us and we will joyfully serve Him forever.

Finally, we will enjoy a city of:

VII. Perfect Satisfaction

22 Verse 4 .. *“they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads”*

His name sums up His being, and having His name on our foreheads means we will glow with His glory. Moses’ face, after beholding the trailing hindquarters of God, was shining radiantly. God’s glory reflected on Moses’ face faded, as in the Old Covenant, but we will look into the face of God and our whole bodies will glow forever.

God will stamp his name on your forehead, saying, *“You are mine. I bought you with a price; you are my adopted sons and daughters.”* He will claim His absolute ownership. The forehead also gives a sense of the complete transformation of the mind to love and honor the name of God. He will be our perfect Father, and we will be his children.

22 Verse 5 says .. *“And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.”*

We saw this in chapter 21 ; it is repeated here. Night can be a dangerous time — wild animals, predators, criminals, wicked people approaching by stealth to do harm, all depend on the cover of darkness.

22 Verse 5 ends with, *“And they will reign for ever and ever.”* God will be our King — Jesus will be our King of kings and Lord of lords. This will be the fulfillment of Christ’s promise in 3:21: *“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”* “If we endure,” Paul wrote to Timothy, *“we will also reign with Him”* 2 Timothy 2:12.

In closing, if you are a non-Christian, you are on the outside of all this looking in. God has given you something called “today.” You do not know that you will have tomorrow. Yesterday is gone; you cannot do anything about what is past. You have today, right now. The center piece of the Gospel is this: God sent Jesus to die on the cross under His wrath for sinners like you and me. All you need to do to have a place in this marvelous New Jerusalem is believe in Jesus, trust in him. Repent of your sins, turn away from sin, and believe in Christ. Say to him, Oh Lord Jesus, I want you to be my Savior. Your blood is sufficient for all of my sins. I trust in you. Come to Christ so you can join with all of the redeemed in celebrating this kind of life.

Second, ask the Holy Spirit to work in you a sense of the glories of Heaven. Take this text home and lift out the treasures yourself and look at them one at a time.

Ask God to give you a foretaste of what it will be like to see His face. Worship Him more. Sing to Him Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Speak Psalms to Him. Thank Him for all that He has done for you. Worship him longer. Make yourself happy in His presence every morning, based on these truths.

Finally, share the Gospel. Talk to others about the glories of the place to which we are going, and the even greater glories of the redeeming work of God that will get sinners like us there.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. What is The New Jerusalem? Why is it so glorious?
2. What is significant about the 12 gates and 12 foundations?
3. What grows along the river in Revelation 22:2? What is its significance? How does it relate to the original Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:22-24?
4. How are God's people described in Revelation 22:3? What blessings do they enjoy in 22:4-5?
5. Read 1 Peter 1:3-9. According to 1 Peter 1:3-9 how firm is the security of the believer's inheritance that is described in Revelation 21? How should a firm grasp of this truth change your level of courage this week?
6. If your closest friends and family were asked to describe your level of joy throughout the average day, what do you think they would say?
7. Based on our study of The New Jerusalem and our look at 1 Peter 1:3-9, why do you think it is important to change your current level and expression of joy in Christ?
8. Read Hebrews 11:1-2. How do these verses relate to the application of Revelation 21:9-22:5?

CHAPTER 36
“Our Response to Revelation”
Revelation 22:6-12

6 “And he said to me, “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.⁷ “And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.”⁸ I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.⁹ But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”¹⁰ And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.¹¹ Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”¹² “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done”.

“What shall we do?” That’s the question.

There are many times in the Bible in which individuals were cut to the heart when they heard the Word of God and asked that question, “What shall we do?” or “What must we do?”

In Luke chapter 3, many came to John the Baptist asking that question. He would answer appropriately for their office or station in life – whether the crowds, the tax collectors, or the soldiers.

People asked Peter the same question when he preached the Gospel to those who were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. At that point, Christ had died and risen and ascended to Heaven, and the Holy Spirit had been poured out. Peter preached the Gospel boldly and clearly, and the ones listening were cut to the heart. Acts 2:37 tells us, *“When they heard Peter’s message, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”*

The Philippian jailer in Acts chapter 16 asked the same question. As he brought Paul and Silas out of the Philippian jail, he fell down before them and asked, *“What must I do to be saved?”*

I want you to think about that question as we come to our text today. What shall I do? What must I do?

In a few weeks, we will finish the book of Revelation and then on October 16th I will try to answer your questions – there is a handout in your bulletin with room for you to write your questions and submit them in the black boxes on the wall by October 9th. Or you can email your question to info@cornerstoneca.org.

The big question for us today is: What shall we do? How shall we put into practice the things that we have learned?

Normally in our study of Revelation I save the application points to the end of my message, but today the points of application are built into each point of our text.

What shall we do? How shall we put into practice the things that we have learned?

Main Point: This text provides the response every believer should have to the promised return of the Lord Jesus Christ. The reality of our Lord's imminent return calls for four responses on the part of every believer:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| I. Obedience | 22:6-7 |
| II. Worship | 22:8-9 |
| III. Proclamation | 22:10-11 |
| IV. Service | 22:12 |

My prayer is that this text will provide you with an unquestionably clear answer to the question: What shall I do? What must I do?

With this final section, we have come full circle in Revelation. There are clear parallels between the verbiage in today's passage and the beginning of the book. That is completely intentional. If you keep your hand in Revelation 22 and turn back to Revelation 1 we can make some comparisons. For example, Revelation 1:1 says, "*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel*" and Revelation 22:6: "*God sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place.*" They are almost the same.

Or look at Revelation 1:3 says, "*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.*" Revelation 22:7, 10 says, "*Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book. ...for the time is near.*"

Revelation 1:8, 17 says, "*I am the Alpha, and the Omega,' says the Lord God. ...the First and the Last.*" Revelation 22:13 says, "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.*" In Revelation 1:9, 17, John writes, "*I John... When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead.*" Revelation 22:8 says, "*I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and saw, I fell down.*"

We have come full circle, back to where we started. God wants to press in on our hearts now the application of the things that we have learned. The question is: how, then, shall we live? Now that we have taken in all of this truth, how should it affect our lives? This closing section sums up how we should respond. We are not merely to be astounded, amazed, overwhelmed, perplexed, and then return to life as it was before. Still less are we supposed to shrug and act as though the words of Revelation are not significant. John did not make all of this up in his mind or have some weird dreams or hallucinations.

We must take this book as a revelation of Jesus Christ, an unveiling from Almighty God of something He wants us to see and know. When it comes to application, think of these questions: What should we understand? What should we believe? Who should we be? What should we do? Understand, believe, be and do.

Revelation 22:6-12 answers those questions. It begins with:

I. Obedience

In verse 6, the angel told John that the words of this book are faithful and true, they are trustworthy. Trustworthy means if you base your life on these words, you will not be disappointed. They will not fail you, they are faithful. True means that in the end when we get to Heaven we will look back and see that all of the prophecies came true.

God will let none of them fall to the ground but will do everything that He has predicted that He would do. His word is faithful and true, it is trustworthy – you can depend on it.

Last week I saw someone fall thru the church roof...It gave way when they walked on it. Don't worry, it was only Minor (Bruce Minor). Thankfully they caught themselves before they dropped all the way thru, and the church roof has been repaired.

But the Word of God will not give way when we step out on it. These words are trustworthy. In Matthew chapter 7 Jesus likened it to building a house on a rock. When the storms of life attack, it will be solid and secure. Everything built on this book of Revelation is stable and trustworthy. It is worthy of your trust and obedience.

The word “soon” at the end of Revelation 22:6 means “*quickly come to pass.*” The church has expected Christ to return since the days of the Apostles, and He has not yet come; but when John’s prophecies begin to be fulfilled in the future, they will happen very quickly. There will be no delay.

The early church had a sense of urgency about the imminent return of Christ. We see this repeatedly in the Epistles. In Philippians 3:20-21, Paul says, “*Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.*” We eagerly await the Second Coming of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:7 says, “*Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.*” Paul told the believers in Thessalonica that they are a model to believers everywhere. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 says, “*For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.*”

We serve while we wait for Christ to return.

Verse 7 ..“*And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.*”

Jesus says in verse 7 He is coming quickly. The word “*quickly*” gives us a sense of urgency and expectancy. The Lord does not look at time the way we do. 2 Peter 3:8 says, “*With the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, a thousand years is like one day.*”

How do we live out this sense of urgency, knowing that Jesus is coming soon? In the book of Revelation, God has given details of events that will occur before the Second Coming. None of those things has happened yet - the seven trumpet judgments, the seven bowl judgments, the Antichrist rising up to rule over the whole earth, the man of sin setting up the abomination of desolation. These are future events. Jesus is saying, “*I am coming soon. You do not know the day or the hour. You need to be vigilant, watchful, and energetically, and actively serving me.*”

How then shall we live? How do we apply this in practical terms? Even if the Lord does not return for a long period of time, still there is a sense of immediacy. If today you hear His voice, do not harden your heart. Instead, put into practice what God wants you to do. And what does He want you to do?

Verse 7 tells us He wants us to obey His commandments. Verse 7 .. “*And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book.*”

The word “*heed*” in a simple way means to guard, protect, keep sacred. Believers are called to guard or protect the book of Revelation from those who would rather avoid it or try to denigrate it.

But believers are called not only to guard Scripture, but also to obey it. “*Heed*” is commonly translated “obey”. Jesus said, John 14:15, “*If you love Me, you will obey what I command.*” Jesus, our Lord, measures love by obedience. Whoever has His commands and obeys them is the one who loves Him.

However, Revelation is not filled with many commands. There are far more commands in an average epistle — Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians. But we must take the Bible as a whole. This is the last chapter of the last book. It sums up all of God’s commands that are binding on the hearts of Christians.

The purpose of Revelation is not to provide entertainment or speculation, but to provide motivation for godly living. God inspired Revelation to reveal the glory of His Son and call believers to live godly, obedient lives considering His soon return.

Peter also taught that believers’ knowledge of end-time events should cause them to live holy lives. In a passage describing the future Day of the Lord, the destruction of the present universe, and the coming of the new heaven and the new earth, Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:11-12, “*Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God*” and in verse 14, “*Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless*”

The glorious future realities described in Revelation compel a commitment on the part of believers to lead holy lives. Christ’s imminent return demands immediate obedience.

We are actually traveling two journeys at the same time. The internal, infinite journey of sanctification - live a holy and godly life, put sin to death by the power of the Spirit, be pure as you wait for the day when the Lord will return.

And the external journey of evangelism - we look forward to the day of God and speed its coming by preaching the Gospel, because the kingdom will not come until every tribe and language and people and nation has had this Gospel preached to it. The overarching commands are to be holy and be a witness.

What shall we do? First, our response must be obedience to the Word of God. Second:

II. Worship

Look at verses 8-9...⁸“*I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.*”⁹ *But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”*

Isn’t it amazing how honest the Bible is about its heroes? It is a proof that this is the book of truth. We are all sinners. For the second time, John falls down to worship an angel. Look at Revelation 19:10 .. “*At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Don’t do that! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers and sisters who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For it is the Spirit of prophecy who bears testimony to Jesus.”*”

And now John does the same thing in Revelation 22:8-9 .. ⁸*“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things. ⁹ But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. Worship God.”*”

This brings us to the fundamental issue of worship - false worship versus true worship. The central problem of the human race, of us in our sin, is idolatry. Paul gives a clear definition of idolatry in Romans 1:25: *“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.”*

The essence of idolatry is to fall down and give homage and total dedication to a creature, a created thing. Satan’s basic temptation is to call us away from worship of the true God into worship an idol. He tempted Jesus with that. He showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and all the beauty of creation. Matthew 4:8-10 says, *“...the devil (a creature) took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said, ‘if You will bow down and worship me.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.”*”

But how do we know if we are committing idolatry? Your affections are a good indicator of your idols. Follow the path of how you spend your time, money, your words, thoughts and effort and it will lead to the objects and people that consume your life. If you are willing to sin to get what you want, or you sin when you don’t get what you want – then you are pursuing and worshipping something or someone in the place of God. Anger, anxiety or discontent are often negative reactions when a person’s idol is threatened.

Revelation chapter 13 and following details the worst organized idolatry of the human race, which is yet to come. The Antichrist will do signs and wonders, seeming to be assassinated and then come back to life. He is backed by the hidden power of the dragon — the devil. He will demand worship from all people on planet Earth. The false prophet will set up an idol and give it life supernaturally. He will compel people under pain of death to worship the idol and to receive a mark of the beast. Those who do not receive it cannot buy or sell, and probably will be executed. Those who do receive it will spend eternity in hell. Misplaced worship leads to the wrong eternal destination. No wonder John ended his letter of 1 John with *“Keep yourselves from idols.”* Don’t worship someone or something in the place of God.

Conversely, there is also no book of the Bible that depicts true holy righteous worship more clearly than the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 1 details the image of the resurrected glorified Christ, moving through seven golden lamp stands. In Revelation 4, we see the image of the throne of Almighty God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. All in Heaven are worshipping God, the Creator of all things. In Revelation 5, the Lamb appears on the throne, all in Heaven continue to celebrate God the Creator and Christ the Redeemer. They are organized in concentric circles around the throne of God, giving Him glory. There is no book of the Bible that gives you a better picture of healthy worship of the true, triune God.

The practical application for us is to worship God. Attack any idols in your heart. Is there any created thing that has a hold on you, that you are living for, that has become too important, that you are pursuing blindly, that is dominating your life? It could be the approval of others, it could be the success of your children, it could be money, power, sex, sensual pleasures, entertainment. Repent from worshipping that idol and worship God your Creator, and Christ your Redeemer.”

Our response to Revelation is obedience, worship, and third:

III. Proclamation

Verses 10-11...¹⁰“*And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.*”¹¹ *Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.*” God said, “*Do not seal up the words*” in direct contrast to the end of Daniel chapter 12, where Daniel is told twice to seal up the scroll because it concerned a distant time. Here John is told, “*Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.*”

Sealing the words gave the sense that they could not be entrusted to the common people, who would not be able to understand them. They would read them and be confused by them. But Jesus tells John, “*Do not seal them up.*” That implies that these words are clear enough to be understood by all. Therefore, we would do well to proclaim the truths of that are recorded here in God’s Word.

In a sermon that Charles Spurgeon preached on January 2, 1888. He said, “The Word of God can take care of itself, and will do so if we proclaim it, and cease defending it. The Word of God is a lion. Why have you tried to cage him for his preservation; shut him up behind iron bars to secure him from his foes! See how a band of armed men have gathered to protect the lion. What a clatter they make with their swords and spears! These mighty men are intent upon defending a lion. O fools, and slow of heart! Open that door! Let the lord of the forest come forth free. Who will dare to encounter him? What does he want with your guardian care? Proclaim the gospel in all its lion-like majesty, and it will soon clear its own way and ease itself of its adversaries.”

I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. I was born the same time that Vatican II convened and the Roman Catholic church decided to convert the Catholic Mass from Latin to the vernacular, the local language that can be understood. Most of the Roman Catholic world did not understand a word that was spoken in the Mass when it was in Latin. I learned that over the centuries, it was a consistent pattern that people who translated the Bible into the vernacular would be hunted down like criminals and executed, like William Tyndale and others who translated the Bible into English. His translations were collected and burned by the Roman Catholic authorities.

Why? In 1199, Pope Innocent III wrote to a bishop of Metz, saying, “The mysteries of the sacraments of faith should not be explained everywhere to everyone, since they cannot be understood everywhere by everyone, but only to those who can conceive of them by their faithful intellect. Because of this the Apostle Paul said to the simpler people: ‘*As unto little ones in Christ I gave you milk to drink, not meat.*’ For ‘*strong meat is for the perfect*’, as he said to others: ‘*we speak wisdom among the perfect;*’ ... Such is the profundity of divine Scripture, that not only simple and illiterate men, but even prudent and learned men do not fully suffice to investigate its wisdom. ... For it is written: ‘*seek not the things that are too high for thee.*’” Essentially the Pope said, “This book is too hard for you to understand, do not read it. As a matter of fact, it is best not to translate it into your language because you will never understand it.”

But the angel in Revelation 22 told John, “*Do not seal up the words of this prophecy, publish them broadly and widely, drink them in and read them.*” Why? God’s Word does not return void. Isaiah 55:10-11 says, “*As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*”

Everywhere the Word of God goes out, it achieves what God sent it out to do.

If that is the case, why are there so many unbelievers? Why do so many people hear the Gospel and not repent and believe? We need to understand that God is not sending out the word to do the same thing in every case. He is hardening some by the Word and saving others by that same Word.

Revelation 22:11 says .. *“Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”*

The parallelism is interesting, that he who does wrong will continue to do wrong, and he who does right will continue to do right. It is a division of the wicked and the righteous. They will be confirmed in this by the Word of God.

Ultimately in Heaven and Hell, these words in verse 11 will finally be true for the righteous and the wicked. Those who are confirmed in their righteousness by the ministry of the Word of God will spend eternity being righteous. There will be no future fall from Heaven, but forever they will continue to be righteous and do righteously. But for the wicked, at some point, this will be spoken as a decree of judgment over them. It is a final verdict.

In the meantime, we have the hope of the Gospel. One can cross over from death to life from darkness to light. A wicked Saul of Tarsus in the morning can become a transformed apostle Paul in the evening. That radical transformation can happen to the thief on the cross in an instant. He can suddenly see who Jesus is and believe in Him and hear the promise from Jesus, *“Today, you will be with Me in paradise.”*

Our hearts are burdened and we long for and year for the unrighteous and unbelieving to repent of their sins and cross over. Revelation 22:14 gives us hope: *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city.”*

That means all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. All have violated God’s commandments and laws. None have kept His Ten Commandments or His Two Commandments to love God and to love our neighbor. Our robes are soiled. God sent His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who lived a sinless life and died in the place of sinners. He shed His cleansing atoning blood for sinners like you and me. By faith in Him, you can wash your robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. I would urge you while there is time to do it.

Look at Revelation 22:17, *“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say, ‘Come!’ Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”*

That is the message that I am proclaiming to you right now: If you came in here thirsty and guilty and condemned, Jesus can forgive you and cleanse you. He can pour the living water of life down your parched throat and you will live forever. You must only turn from your sins, repent of your selfishness and sins and turn to Christ, and He will forgive you. We get to proclaim that message every day this week, to share that with somebody at our workplace or in the neighborhood or in school or at a store or at a park. That is what we are called on to do.

So, our response to Revelation includes obedience, worship, proclamation, and fourth:

IV. Service

Verse 12 .. *“Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.”*

“*My reward is with Me*” implies that God is mindful of our sufferings and our service, and nothing will ever be done in vain if it is done for Him. At the Judgment Seat of Christ, believers will be judged according to their works; and rewards will be given to those who have been faithful.

You don’t need to wait. Get busy immediately serving His kingdom. Be faithful to serve Him, whatever your calling, whatever your spiritual gifts, whatever good works he has prepared for you to do.

Friends, the end of Revelation is not an event but a Person. The central focus of eternal life will be God and the Lamb in the midst of their peoples. God is the one who planned our redemption and accomplished it through Jesus, and the chief blessedness of the new Jerusalem will be to enjoy face-to-face communion with God as we saw in verses 3-4a, “*There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face.*”

More blessed than the lavish surroundings or abundant provision in the new Jerusalem will be the presence of the Lord God among His people. We will serve Him gladly for all eternity, and that service begins now when we trust Him and put to use the gifts and abilities He has given us for His glory. The knowledge that Jesus could return at any moment should not lead us to a life of idle waiting for His coming, but it should produce in us diligent, obedient, worshipful service to God and urgent proclamation of the gospel to unbelievers.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. D.L. Moody said, “The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, it was given to change our lives.” How has God changed your thinking and your life through our study of the book of Revelation?
2. The Bible is clear that there is no specific date and time that Christ is returning. Yet, in Revelation 22:6 the Lord wants us to live with a sense of urgency, expectancy, and confidence of His return. What things in life detract from this expectation?
3. What four responses does Revelation 22:6-12 call for? Which area(s) do you think you need the most growth?
4. What mistake did John repeat in 22:8,9? Where else had he done this? What should we learn from this? 9-25-22.
5. If God’s Word is faithful and true (22:6) and will not return void (Isaiah 55:10-11), then why are we hesitant to proclaim it to unbelievers? How can you grow in the faithful proclamation of God’s truth?
6. What promise is repeated in 22:12? Where else is it stated? How should this promise influence our service?
7. Are you regularly in service for Christ in His church? How can you get started or improve your ministry?

CHAPTER 37
“Christ’s Final Reminders”
Revelation 22:13-21

¹³“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. ¹⁴ “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. ¹⁶ “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you^[a] this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star.” ¹⁷ The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life. ¹⁸ I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. ¹⁹ And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll. ²⁰ He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon. ”Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. ²¹ The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.”

Last words are important words. Indeed, last words are intended to be lasting words, words that make an impression, they expose the purpose, the anguish, the peace, the rage, the pride, and the joy of those who utter them. A person’s last words most often will stay with the listener or the reader.

This morning we come to the last words in the book of Revelation, and the last words of the Bible. God’s written Word comes to an end, and so what we find here is of utmost importance to God. It also should be of utmost importance to us. Christ final words are important words, and The Revelation of Jesus Christ ends with five glorious reminders of the Lord’s character, His work and His plan.

Main point: Christ ends Revelation with five glorious reminders of His character, His glorious work, and His wonderful plan.

Christ’s Control is Absolute	22:13, 16
Christ’s Cleansing is Essential	22:14-15
Christ’s Invitation is Free	22:17
Christ’s Word is Complete	22:18-19
Christ’s Return is Certain	22:20-21

My prayer is that you will satisfy your thirst in Jesus Christ, that He will be the first love of your life, and you will believe all His promises, and joyfully be a faithful messenger to others.

I. Christ’s Control is Absolute

Verse 13 .. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.”

Jesus identifies Himself first as the Alpha and the Omega. In the Greek alphabet Alpha is the first letter and Omega is the last. Notice that is what Jesus says next, that He is “*the first and the last*” and He is “*the beginning* (the source of all things) and the end” (the goal of all things). This threefold description describes the completeness, timelessness, and sovereign authority and absolute control of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ's terms Alpha and Omega, first and last, and beginning and end are also reminders that history is His Story and it is linear. By linear I mean that there is order and sequence: first, one, then two, then three, or A, then B, then C, or in the Greek alphabet Alpha, Beta, Gamma, all the way to the Omega. It is a linear, sequential unfolding of a story. Eastern religions like Buddhism and Hinduism, follow a cyclical view of history going on and on in a perpetual cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, or reincarnation. They may get this from looking at the cycles of nature, the cycle of seasons — spring, summer, fall, winter, and then back around to spring — around and around.

Linear history has a purpose, moving us to a destination, which is Jesus Christ. He says in our text He is coming soon. We have to hear that with the truth of eternity that is coming to all of us, whether spent in Heaven or Hell. This life that we are living right now is a mist, a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes. After that comes eternity.

James Joyce tries to capture eternity when he writes, “You have often seen the sand on the seashore. How fine are its tiny grains! And how many of those tiny little grains of sand go to make up the small handful which a child grasps in its play. Imagine a mountain of that sand, a million miles high, reaching from the earth to the farthest heavens, and a million miles broad, extending to remotest space, and a million miles in thickness; and imagine such an enormous mass of countless particles of sand multiplied as often as there are drops of water in the mighty ocean, or atoms in the vast expanse of the air: and imagine that at the end of every million years a little bird came to that mountain and carried away in its beak a tiny grain of that sand. How many millions upon millions of centuries would pass before that bird had carried away even a square foot of that mountain, how many eons upon eons of ages before it had carried away all? Yet at the end of that immense stretch of time not even one instant of eternity could be said to have ended. At the end of all those billions and trillions of years eternity would have scarcely begun.”

It is chilling to read that and think about people spending eternity in hell. That is the very thing that God sent His Son Jesus to deliver us from, to bring us over from death to life, from darkness to light, from an eternity in hell into an eternity of heaven. Jesus is coming soon to execute wrath and judgment on His unbelieving enemies and to reward His redeemed saints. It is the final act of linear history that God planned from before the foundation of the world.

Christ was the Alpha, the first day of history. John 1:3 tells us through Jesus, all things were made, and without Him, nothing was made that has been made. Through Jesus, God spoke the universe into existence. Jesus is also the middle day of history. The cross of Christ is at the center of human history to divide time into BC — before Christ — and AD — after the death of our Lord. He will be the final day when His Second Coming ends human history. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. His control is absolute.

Christ further identifies Himself in His own words in verse 16. In Revelation 22:16...“*I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.*”

Jesus makes it clear that it is not the apostle John but Jesus Himself who is the real author of Revelation. The expression “*I, Jesus*” appears only here in the Bible. And in an astounding, seemingly paradoxical statement, Jesus declares Himself to be both the root (ancestor) and the descendant of David. Jesus is the eternal one. In His deity, Christ is David's root (He is David's creator); in His humanity, He is David's descendant.

In verse 16, Jesus describes Himself as “*the bright morning star.*” To call someone a star was in biblical times (as it is today) to exalt him. Numbers 24:17 says, “*A star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel*”

(Num. 24:17). Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:19 *“the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.”* In Revelation 2:28 Jesus promised to give the overcomers at Thyatira the *“morning star”* - that is, Himself.

As the morning star announces dawn’s soon arrival, so Jesus’ coming will herald the end of the darkness of man’s night, and the glorious dawn of His kingdom.

Christ’s first reminder is that He is in absolute control. His second final reminder is:

II. Christ’s Cleansing is Essential

Verses 14 .. *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

The cleansing that Jesus worked by his blood is essential. Without it, we would have no right to enter the city. The washing of the robes represents salvation through Christ’s atoning blood. Sin pollutes and defiles us; it makes us dirty in the sight of God. The soiled garment is a symbol of a sinful lifestyle, the actual deeds done in violation of our consciences and of God’s law.

Because of God’s holiness, Habakkuk 1:13 says, *“Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You cannot look on wickedness with favor.”*

God cannot look at us clothed in our filthy sin-covered garments. Our polluted robes must be washed by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. This represents our salvation, our cleansing, our justification in the sight of God, our forgiveness of sins through simple faith in Jesus. The multitude from every tribe, language, people, and nation in Revelation 7:14 has done this: *“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.”* Christians stand in radiant robes of righteousness given as a gift through faith in Christ. God sees us that way — not guilty, but holy.

This is like the beautiful statement to husbands in Ephesians 5:25-27, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”* That is what Jesus did for His bride the church. By living and dying for her, He has cleansed her; by the gift of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, He has washed her and made her righteous and clean.

Verse 14 .. *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.”*

We have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, so we have the right to eat from the tree and to go through the gates of the New Jerusalem. Jesus has won for us rights and privileges that were not ours. The Greek word *“the right”* refers to authority, a legal right to act in a certain way. When Adam ate from the tree, in him we all sinned. God said in Genesis 3:22-24, *“He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever.’ So the LORD God banished Adam from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. Man was not permitted to go back in the garden to eat. “*

But those who have experienced the washing from sin that marks salvation in Christ will forever have the right to the tree of life – praise the Lord! As it says in Romans 5:1-2, “...since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.” We have access, we have the right to go into God’s presence. We have the right to be called children of God, as John 1:12 says: “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, he gave the right to become children of God.” We have the right of adoption, to be called God’s heirs. God has graciously given us the right to the tree.

Colossians 1:12-14 says it beautifully: “giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

We are qualified for heaven. Isn’t that exciting?! To be qualified for heaven is so much better than being prequalified for a loan! In Jesus Christ, you are qualified to go through the gates and reach out your hand and take and eat from the Tree of Life, and live forever. Is that not incredible? Jesus paid for that.

But outside are the dogs. Revelation 22:15 says ..“Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”

Dogs in those days were not pleasant, domesticated animals that are members of the family, beloved and grieved when they die. The term refers to wild, junk-yard-type dogs, rabid, prowling around, like wild boars. I remember a missions trip to Mexico where the most scary threats were the wild dogs on the streets. Who are the dogs in verse 15? Those who are sorcerers. The Greek word is pharmakeia — the corruption of drugs and black magic, and the dependency on drugs to try to satisfy our thirst for pain free life. But medication and drugs by themselves do not address the heart and the underlying emotions which trouble the mind and spirit. That is why biblical counseling is so important, as Jesus said in John 8:31, to know the truth of God and the truth will set you free.

Also on the outside: the immoral. The Greek word is pornea, from which we get our word pornography. We live in a corrupt age with countless sexual perversions. Again, trying to satisfy one’s thirst and hunger by pursuing sexual immorality will lead to a fruitless life and ultimately spiritual death. Next he says murderers: Jesus said it is not enough to not physically murder somebody, but if you are angry with them in your heart, you are in danger of the fire of Hell. Idolaters: anyone who sets a created thing above God, and lives for that created thing, rather than God who made them. Those who love and practice lying. All of these are excluded.

We need to be aware, to know, to understand these words. We need to take heed we are not being deceived in pursuing those things, but also warn those who are living this kind of life that they are in great danger and they need to repent and worship and follow Christ.

So, we saw in verses 13 and 16, Christ’s Control is Absolute. Second in verses 14-15, we saw in Christ’s Cleansing is Essential. Third,

III. Christ’s Invitation Is Free

Revelation 22:17 says ..“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let the one who hears say, “Come!” Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life.”

This is the great invitation of Revelation. It could be said to be the great invitation of the Bible. It is a fourfold invitation to all persons of the world to come and be saved. - The Holy Spirit says come! - The Bride, the Church

of Jesus, says come! - The one who hears is told to come! - The one who is thirsty is invited to come. All who desire the eternal living water of life are invited to come and be saved without price because Jesus has already paid it all.

This is Jesus' final invitation. He is pleading with thirsty sinners to come to Himself and be satisfied in salvation.

And did you notice that it is not just Jesus who gives the invitation. Verse 17a... *“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’”*

The Holy Spirit is in partnership with the bride — the church. Together we have a role, to invite thirsty sinners to find salvation in Christ.

Three Scriptures come to mind related to this invitation. John 7:37-38 says, *“On the last and greatest day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice [with thousands of Jews around], ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’”* Jesus called on thirsty sinners to come to Him, to believe in Him and find eternal refreshment, to find life. It is an invitation for anyone who is thirsty to take the gift of the water of life freely — without money.

Isaiah 55:1-3 says, *“Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live.”*

Matthew 11:28 says, *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* To come to Jesus is to believe in Him. If you do, you will rest and never be hungry. You will never be thirsty. To come to the waters is to believe in Jesus, to trust in Him for the forgiveness of your sins and the granting of His righteousness.

Sin makes us thirsty. Being spiritually dead but still physically alive is a thirsty place to be. You violated God's laws and your conscience, which leaves you on the outside. The sin is not satisfying but only makes you thirstier, like drinking salt water. You need Jesus Christ. You need forgiveness, His grace and His Word. If you are on the outside, you are in danger; John 3:36 says you are under the wrath of God. If you die in that condition, you will go to Hell forever, but He is inviting you to come, drink, and He will satisfy you forever.

Believers, those who have already come to Christ, we are to participate in the invitation, to be inviting others. As Jesus said, we are to be fishers of men. Some of you love fishing, whether trout fishing, bass fishing, or deep-sea fishing. Others of you do not like either the process or the product.

But the Lord's kind of fishing is different. And with our culture getting darker and darker, we are positioned like Esther, *“for such a time as this,”* to be a light for Jesus and share the gospel.

But evangelism is hard for Christians. I have struggled to faithfully share the gospel my entire Christian life. It is a challenge. But we can pray and spur one another on in our mission to know Christ and to make Him known. Being part of a Community Group is a great way to encourage each other and help each other to be faithful witness for Christ.

In our flight to Washington D.C. last week, I had the aisle seat, Paula the middle seat, and a gal named Nichole had the window seat. Paula introduced herself and found out that Nichole was a defense contractor working with

inertial navigation and GPS systems. So, Paula was not quite sure how to start the conversation about Christ. So she said, “navigation systems are designed to get us to a destination. True north will always point us to God and to His Son. For Jesus said in John 14:6, *“I am the way, the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through Me.”*”

They talked the entire flight, but Nicole was not that interested in spiritual things,

On our flights back to CA we had a two-hour layover in Memphis. We met a young lady from Malaysia named Francine and when we started talking about Christ, she told us that she is a believer and when she told us her amazing testimony, all three of us were in tears.

Then a gentleman named Richard came and sat next to us, and I thought oh good now all three of us can team up and share Christ with him! Turns out Richard was a Christian too.

When we landed in Dallas, Paula and I sat down to get a bite to eat, and a flight attendant named Mellissa sat next to us. We started talking with her about Christ and she too was a believer. At the end of the conversation, she cried and thanked us for being an example of a witness for Christ.

Friends, we are simply tools in the hand of God to be used where and how He sees fit. We are strategically positioned and poised to invite thirsty people to come and drink, to find deep, rich, full satisfaction without money, without cost. Christ’s invitation is free.

IV. Christ’s Word is Complete

Christ’s Word is complete. Revelation 22:18-19 says... ¹⁸*“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. ¹⁹And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.”*

This is the very end of the Bible. These words go beyond the book of Revelation. God intended that Revelation would be the capstone of written Scripture, His final word, the end of what He has to say.

The apostle John — the same person who wrote Revelation — said at the end of his Gospel, in John 20:30-31, *“Jesus also performed many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”*

No one comes to faith in Christ apart from the ministry of the Word of God. You do not think or reason your way to Jesus; you hear the Gospel proclaimed from the Scripture.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 says that the Bible is given to make us *“...wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work [holiness, evangelism, ministry].”* Scripture is given to bring us to faith in Christ and then to make us fruitful.

Revelation 22:18 warns us - referring not only to the book of Revelation but to the whole Bible - not to add to it nor take away from it. Verse 18 warns *“If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written*

in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city.” The Word is perfect, sufficient to save our souls and give us a fruitful life for the glory of God. We do not need anything more.

This is an ancient warning. Deuteronomy 4:2 says, “*Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.*” Proverbs 30:5-6 says, “*Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.*”

Satan always seeks to interfere with the Word of God. He said to Eve, as though simply raising an innocent question, a topic for discussion, “*Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden?’*” ... You will not certainly die [a lie]. For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil [the truth].” Satan is behind all cults, constantly mixing truth and error together, creating one big mess.

We preach verse by verse, book by book because we want to teach all Scripture. Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, “*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*” It is a lifetime work to become proficient in the Word of God. It contains milk and meat. Harmonizing all these Scriptures, line after line after line, into a system of truth, is hard to do. But that is your lifetime work.

Christ’s Control is Absolute	22:13, 16
Christ’s Cleansing is Essential	22:14-15
Christ’s Invitation is Free	22:17
Christ’s Word is Complete	22:18-19

V. Christ’s Return is Certain

Verse 20 .. “*He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon. ’Amen. Come, Lord Jesus’.*”

For the last time in this book, Christ tells us that He is coming soon. We do not know when He is coming. We need to be vigilant. He is coming soon. We need to be aware that our lives are brief.

James 4:14 says, “*What is your life? You are a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes.*” Isaiah 40:6-8 says, “*All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.*”

Knowing our lives are brief, and we will die soon, we are to be vigilant and active, growing in holiness, sharing the Gospel with lost people, until God takes us out of this world or Jesus returns. Psalm 130:6 says it well: “*My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.*” We are to be expecting Christ in that way, with ready anticipation.

As we wait and as we work, we echo John’s agreement when Jesus says in verse 20, “*I am coming quickly,*” John agrees, “*Amen. Come, Lord, Jesus.*” He may not return this afternoon. All of us who are in Christ would be delighted, but it may be a while, so we are to work for the glory of God until then.

What will keep you faithful in Christ between now and the day you die, or the day Christ returns? Only the grace of God. He says very plainly in verse 21 .. “*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen.*”

Every epistle ends this way. We are not independent of the vine, we are branches. He is the vine, and as we abide in Jesus through the ministry of the Word and the Spirit, we will stay alive in him. That is grace will keep flowing, and by that grace, we will keep walking with Him for the rest of our lives.

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

Let me close with some applications:

For anyone here today in an unconverted state, this is an opportunity for you to come to Christ and cross over from death to life. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "*In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you. 'I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.'*" Repent of your sin and come to faith in Christ.

For us who are already in Christ, reach out with the Gospel. First, we need to give ourselves to prayer for this, to ask God to help us with our evangelistic endeavors.

Ask of God, "What do You want me to do? How can I live today? What can I do for Your glory and to serve You today? How can I feed on Your word to be strong for Your glory?"

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. D.L. Moody said, "The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, it was given to change our lives." How has God changed your thinking and your life through our study of the book of Revelation?
2. The Bible is clear that there is no specific date and time that Christ is returning. Yet, in Revelation 22:6 the Lord wants us to live with a sense of urgency, expectancy, and confidence of His return. What things in life detract from this expectation?
3. What four responses does Revelation 22:6-12 call for? Which area(s) do you think you need the most growth?
4. What mistake did John repeat in 22:8,9? Where else had he done this? What should we learn from this?
5. If God's Word is faithful and true (22:6) and will not return void (Isaiah 55:10-11), then why are we hesitant to proclaim it to unbelievers? How can you grow in the faithful proclamation of God's truth?
6. What promise is repeated in 22:12? Where else is it stated? How should this promise influence our service?
7. Are you regularly in service for Christ in His church? How can you get started or improve your ministry?

CHAPTER 38

“Revelation Question and Answer”

Various Scriptures

1st-3rd grade Sunday School class question:

1. Why is God making a new heaven and new earth? If heaven is already perfect, why would God make a new one?

Revelation 21:1-4 says... ¹ *“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.”* ² *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”* ³ *And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,”* ⁴ *and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*

As Christians, when we die we immediately go into Christ’s presence, free of sin and suffering and enjoying great happiness. Psalm 16:11 says, *“in your presence there is fullness of joy.”* But Christians are still looking forward to their bodily resurrection and permanent relocation to the New Earth. So if a believer dies today while their body goes into the ground, in the grave, their soul goes to heaven – but is not the final heaven.

As Christians we often talk about living with God ‘in heaven’ forever. But in fact the biblical teaching is richer than that: it tells us that there will be new heavens and a new earth—an entirely new creation—and we will live with God there.

A major feature of the new earth will be the city called the New Jerusalem. John calls it in Revelation 21:2 ..*“the Holy City . . . coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”* This glorious city, with its streets of gold and pearly gates, is situated on a new, glorious earth. Revelation 22:2 tells us the tree of life will be there. This city represents the final state of redeemed mankind, forever in fellowship with God. Revelation 21:3 *“God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. . .”* Revelation 22:3-4 tells us *“His servants will serve Him. They will see His face.”*

Instead of us going up to God’s place to live forever, in the new heaven and new earth God will come down to live with us in our place, literally bringing Heaven to Earth! God’s children are destined for life as resurrected beings on a resurrected Earth. That is our true final destination, our ultimate home.

Peter writes in 2 Peter 3:13, *“according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”*

In the new heavens and new earth, Scripture says, there are seven things notable for their absence—seven things that are “no more”:

- ✓ No more sea in Revelation 21:1 ...*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.”*

- ✓ No more death in 21:4 ..*“and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*
- ✓ No more mourning in 21:4 ..*“and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*
- ✓ No more weeping 21:4 ..*“and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*
- ✓ No more pain 21:4 ..*“and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”*
- ✓ No more curse in 22:5 ..*“And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.*
- ✓ No more night in 22:5 ..*“And there will no longer be any night; and they ^[a]will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.*

This event comes after the tribulation, after the Lord’s second coming, after the millennial kingdom, after the final rebellion, after the final judgment of Satan, and after the Great White Throne Judgment. The brief description of the new heavens and new earth is the last glimpse into eternity that the Bible gives.

2. Is the gospel complete without Revelation?

Revelation 14:6 ..*“And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;”*

This is the only place in the Bible where the gospel is described as the *“eternal gospel.”*

The word gospel refers to the good news that Jesus Christ suffered death on the cross to obtain salvation for mankind and that He rose to life again, was exalted to the right hand of God in heaven and awaits His return in majesty to consummate God’s kingdom. The fact that this message is “eternal” is significant.

The gospel is *“eternal”* in that is an eternally unchanging message. False doctrines come and go, and new teachings are like wind and waves that toss the unsuspecting every which way (Ephesians 4:14). Especially chaotic and dangerous is the doctrine of the Antichrist and his false prophet in Revelation 13. Countering the lies and false teaching of the beast is the everlasting gospel in Revelation 14. The message of salvation through faith in Christ is eternal truth; it is as solid and unchanging as God Himself, and those who believe the gospel will reap everlasting benefits.

I put a full page insert in your bulletin shows the beginning and end of God’s redemptive story. In Genesis 3, the earth’s first radical transition (mankind’s fall and first judgment) can be seen as one bookend of human history. In Revelation 20, we see the second bookend in the earth’s last radical transition (Christ’s return and last judgment), creating a picture of great symmetry.

In Genesis, God plants the Garden on Earth; in Revelation, he brings down the New Jerusalem, with a garden at its center, to the New Earth. In Eden, there’s no sin, death, or curse; on the New Earth, there’s no more sin, death,

or curse. In Genesis, the Redeemer is promised, in Revelation, the Redeemer returns. Genesis tells the story of Paradise lost; Revelation tells the story of Paradise regained. In Genesis, humanity's stewardship is squandered; in Revelation, humanity's stewardship is triumphant, empowered by the human and divine King Jesus.

These parallels are too remarkable to be anything but deliberate. These mirror images demonstrate the perfect symmetry of God's plan. We live in the in-between time, hearing echoes of Eden and the approaching creation of the New Earth. So, Revelation shows us the completeness of the gospel.

3. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in heaven?

Since the Holy Spirit is a member of the triune God, He will be present for all eternity, no doubt taking an active role in the creation and among God's people. However, the Bible doesn't specifically answer the question of exactly what His role will be.

Both God the Father and God the Son are portrayed as reigning on thrones in Heaven. We can surmise that the Holy Spirit will be involved in creating the new heavens and New Earth. He may continue to indwell believers. He'll empower us to rule wisely with Christ.

Jesus told His disciples in John 15:26, ..*"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me."* The Holy Spirit testifies about Christ, He points us to Jesus and the Lord Jesus testifies about His Father and directs us to Him. Jesus said in Matthew 6:9-10, when you pray do so like this, *"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."*

So, when we get to heaven, the Holy Spirit will move our hearts to glorify and worship the Father and the Son – and there won't be any corrupting or competing influence as we experience now in this broken and fallen world. Look at Revelation 19:6-7... *⁶"Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. ⁷Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His ^[a]bride has made herself ready. "Again, first and foremost, the Holy Spirit will continue forever with Father and Son the Triune Godhead. Every time we worship God, in all that we do, we will be bringing praise to Father, Son and Holy Spirit."*

4. Do all Christians live in the New Jerusalem?

Read Revelation 21:10-27... *¹⁰"And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ¹¹having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. ¹²It had a great and high wall, ¹with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. ¹³There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. ¹⁴And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. ¹⁵The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. ¹⁶The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. ¹⁷And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements. ¹⁸The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. ¹⁹The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire;*

the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; ²⁰ the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. ²¹ And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.²² I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵ In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶ and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; ²⁷ and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

The dimensions of the city are mind-boggling. The city is laid out as a perfect square in its footprint, but it is also massive in scope. No city in human history comes close. 1,500 miles along each wall!

If I placed a corner in Los Angeles, it would extend north to Northern British Columbia, 1500 miles east to Hudson Bay north of Ontario, Canada and south to El Dorado, Arkansas and back west to Los Angeles.

The footprint would take up effectively over half of the Western Continental United States. This is just one city. That is massive. Even more amazing, John tells us, is that it is a perfect cube. Length, width, and height are 1500 miles.

The height is incomprehensible. The International Space Station orbits the Earth 150 miles above the surface of the earth. This city rises about ten times higher than that, way out into outer space. At ten feet per floor, a skyscraper this tall would be 700,000 stories. An elevator taking you to the top floor would take a long time. Imagine the buttons. The fastest elevator in the world is in Shanghai, traveling at 67 ft per second or 46 miles per hour, borderline uncomfortable. Imagine traveling 1500 miles at 46 miles an hour – it would take about 35 hours.

Critics are correct that this massive city could never fit on the present earth, but it will be perfectly proportionate to the new earth, which God will fashion for the eternal state (Revelation 21:1). We are never told how large the new earth will be, but we already know that it will be geographically different from the present earth, having no sea (21:1). Furthermore, when we realize that this is the capital city of God's new creation and that its origin is from God Himself, we should not be surprised at its incredible size. It will be the eternal dwelling place of countless saints and innumerable angels – some estimate the New Jerusalem can have up to 40 billion people.

Will every believer live in the New Jerusalem? Not necessarily, notice Revelation 21:22-27 tells us...²² *"I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. ²⁵ In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed; ²⁶ and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; ²⁷ and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life"*.

Kings and nations are scattered on the new earth and perhaps Christians live out where the nations and kings live and come into the city but not necessarily live there as the gates are always open.

5. Will there be a shared language in heaven?

Revelation 7:9-10 says, *“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”*

“They cry out in a loud voice.” This singular *“voice”* implies a shared language. This could be a trade language, Heaven’s equivalent to English, second languages that many know in addition to their native languages, allowing them to communicate. Or the common language could be our primary one. It may be a universal language God grants us without our having to learn it. If he wishes, God could allow us to understand all languages even if we can’t speak them.

Back in Genesis 11:1 tells us at one time all the people of the world spoke the same language and used the same words. . . . Then they said, *“Come, let’s build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky. This will make us famous and keep us from being scattered all over the world.”* But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. *“Look!”* He said. *“The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them! Come, let’s go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won’t be able to understand each other.”*

The Babel account of Genesis 11 offers clues to the importance of shared language in an ideal society. God confused the language of the people and dispersed them, so their great city went unfinished. Notice that all people originally shared one language, which empowered them to cooperate in great achievements. But because they were united in self-glorification rather than God-glorification, they embraced a false unity that would’ve empowered further rebellion and self-destruction. Because the people were not united around their God-designed purpose to rule the earth for His glory, God removed a source of their destructive unity and power—He removed their shared language.

But in Revelation we see that once mankind is made righteous and entrusted with stewarding the New Earth, God will likely restore a common language.

6. Is the Antichrist alive now?

Revelation 13:4-8 *..⁴“they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”⁵ There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.⁶ And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.⁷ It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.⁸ All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.*

The antichrist in the book of Revelation is introduced to us as the *“beast”*. The word translated *“beast”* is from a Greek word which can be translated *“monster”*. This is the monstrous person who becomes the world ruler in the last half of the seven-year tribulation.

We know from Revelation chapter 6 and Daniel chapter 9 that the Antichrist began his career as a peacemaker and even “settled” the Arab-Israeli problem by making a covenant with the Jews to protect them for seven years. This protection would permit the nation to rebuild the temple and reinstitute religious rituals (Daniel 9:27; Revelation 11:1). But in the middle of the seven-year period (the time we studied in Revelation chapters 10–14) the Antichrist will break that covenant, stop the ceremonies, and set up himself as god in the temple (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12).

The beast becomes a worldwide ruler, for his authority extends over every tribe, people, language, and nation. As predicted in Daniel 7:23, he does “devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it.”

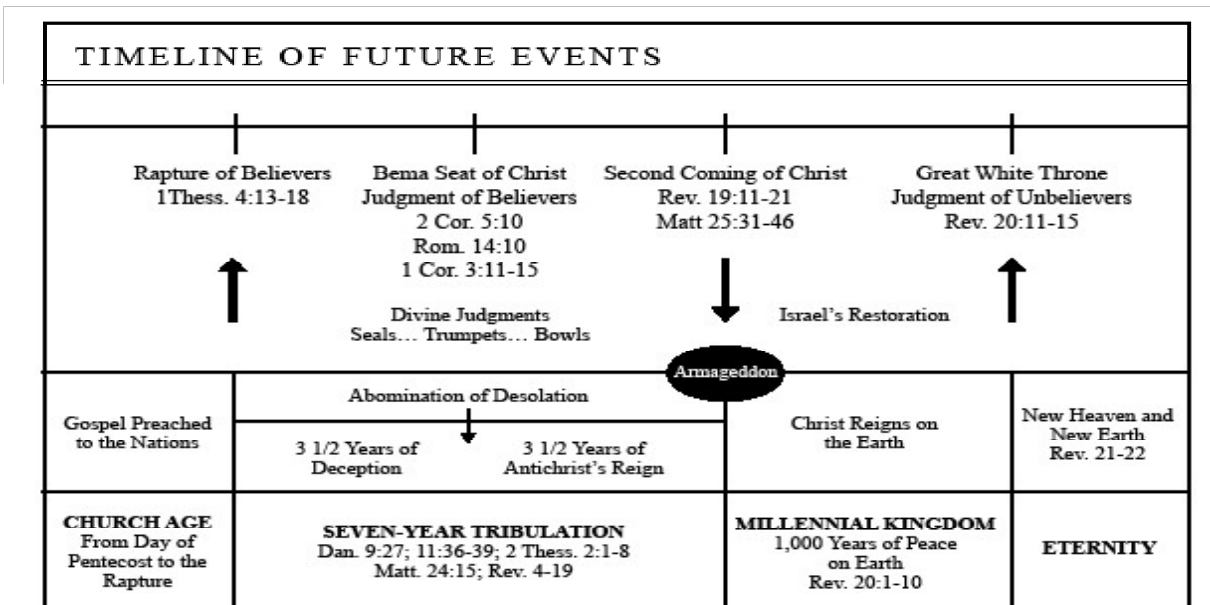
In addition to achieving political domination over the entire world, he also abolishes all other religions and demands that everyone worship him. All inhabitants of the earth worship the beast, the Antichrist, except for those whose names are recorded in the book of life.

Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4... ³“Let no one deceive you in any way. For unless the apostasy comes first and the lawless one is revealed^l the one doomed to perdition, ⁴who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god and object of worship, so as to seat himself in the temple of God^l claiming that he is a god.”

Paul uses a tense for the verb “is revealed” in verse 3 which indicates that this revelation will be an unmistakable, decisive act that will take place at a definite moment in history.

This man is further described as the adversary of God. Anti – not only means against Christ, but also in place of Christ. The Antichrist will seek to replace the worship of the true God and all false gods with the worship of himself and will proclaim himself to be God. The beast will tolerate the worship of no one or nothing but himself (cf. Rev. 13:5–8). He will set himself up on God’s throne in the inner sanctuary of God’s temple in Jerusalem.

Is the Antichrist alive now? Possibly, as a child. But we won’t know for sure until we see the signs that Scripture tells us. And remember, I have taught that the Scriptures teach that the church (all believers in the world) will be raptured at the very beginning of the seven year tribulation. **You can see the timeline:**



Jesus Christ's return will occur in two stages. First, He will call all believers to join Him in heaven. Then, He will return with His church to defeat the Antichrist and rule the earth in righteousness seven years later.

I believe 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 3:10 explain the rapture.

Revelation 19:11-21 and Matthew 25:31-46 describe His second coming.

At the Rapture, Jesus will return for His saints.

At the Second Coming, He will return with His saints.

At the Rapture, Jesus will not descend to earth.

At the Second Coming, He will descend to the Mount of Olives as a prelude to His earthly reign.

At the Rapture, Jesus will bring a blessing for His saints.

At the Second Coming, He will bring judgment for those who have rejected Him.

The Rapture could occur at any moment.

The Second Coming will occur seven years later.

7. Revelation 21 and 22 refers to those outside the New Jerusalem. They are characterized as those with sin. Aren't they in the Lake of Fire because their sin was not covered by Christ and their names are not in the Book of Life?

Revelation 21:25-27...²⁵“*In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed;*”²⁶ *and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it;*”²⁷ *and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.”*

There will be saved people on the New Earth who are outside the city gates and will be entering the city gates and that is why they are opened. It is saved people who have come into the gates of the New Jerusalem and will depart from and go through the gates to the New Earth.

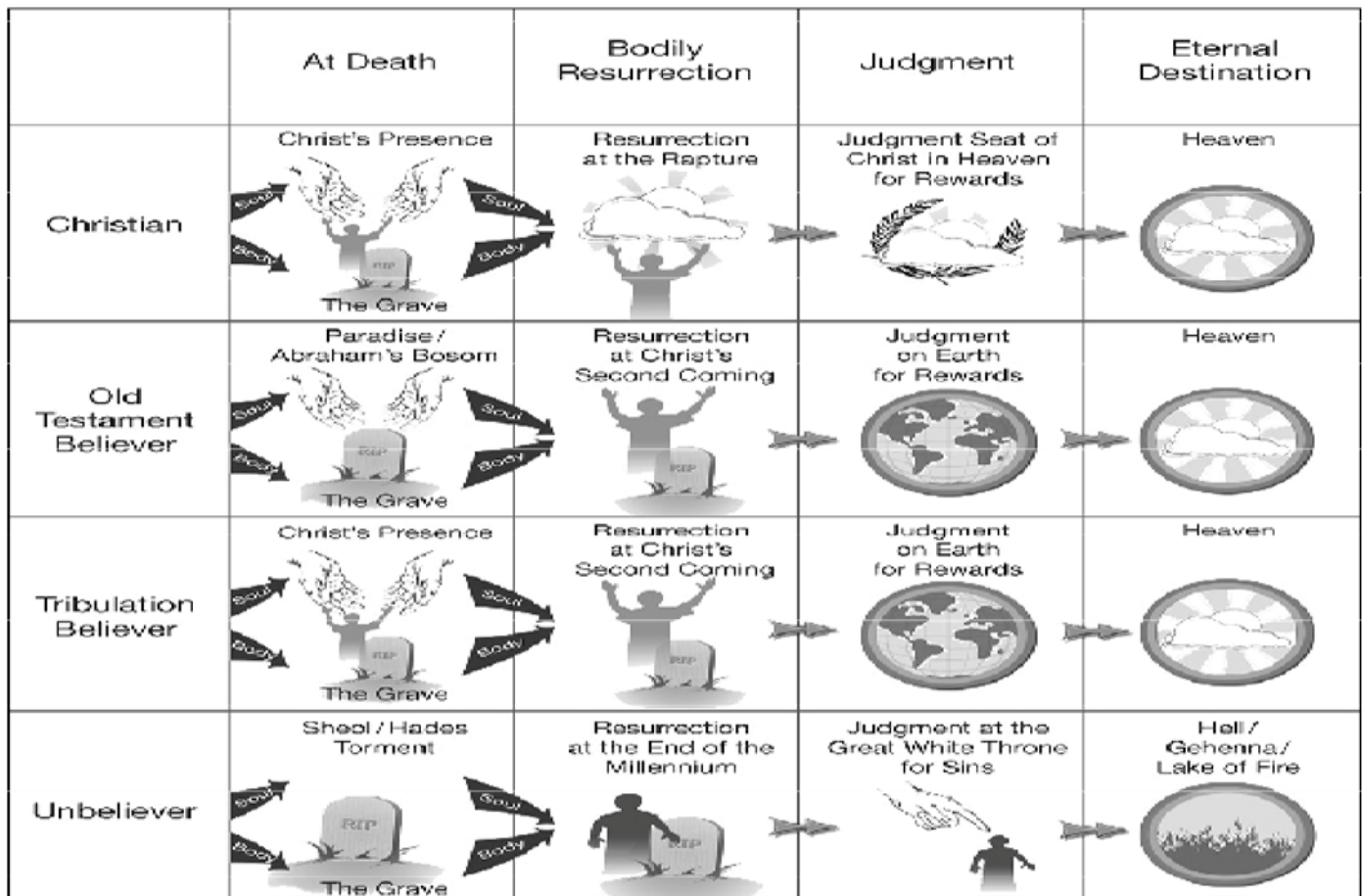
Revelation 22:14-15 says...¹⁴“*But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality.*”¹⁵ *So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans”.*

In Revelation 22, those who are outside the city mean those who are outside the city in Hell. It doesn't mean they are sitting peering into the gates of the city, and somehow real close to it. It doesn't say immediately outside. It just a way of saying they have no access to heaven.

8. What is the difference between Sheol, Hades, Hell, the lake of fire, Paradise, and Abraham's bosom?

Many terms are used in reference to heaven and hell in the Bible. These terms can often be confusing, yet each provides important information about these locations in the afterlife.

Refer to the chart below : **What Happens to a Person After Death?**



In the first row, the Christian...

Once a believer has died, though his or her physical body remains on the earth and is buried, at the moment of death the soul (or spirit) of that believer goes immediately into Christ's presence with rejoicing. When Paul thinks about death he says in 2 Corinthians 5:8, *"We would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord."*

The second row down on the chart shows the Old Testament Believer...

Jesus tells the parable of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar. In Luke 16:22 He says, *"Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom."* This reference to being at Abraham's side clearly indicates Lazarus was with God. Why? Abraham was known as a friend of God. Referring to Abraham was about the strongest evidence a Jewish teacher could give to claim a person was in the presence of the Lord. Abraham's bosom was used in the Talmud (oral traditions that explained the Law) as a synonym for heaven.

Sheol is a Hebrew term used in the Old Testament to describe the realm or location of the dead. It is sometimes used more specifically in a negative manner as a place of judgment.

Hades is a Greek term used in the New Testament as a rough equivalent to the Hebrew word sheol and also describes the grave or location of the dead.

Gehenna is a Greek word used in the New Testament that referred to the Valley of Hinnom, an actual valley outside of Jerusalem known as a burning rubbish pile. When used as a term for the dead, it denotes hell.

The lake of fire is mentioned in Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14-15 as the destination of Satan and unbelievers at the end of time. Though not the current dwelling place of Satan or unbelievers, it will be the place of eternal punishment for all unrepentant rebels, both angelic and human.

9. In light of what we learned from the book of Revelation, how should we live today?

The book of Revelation is the only book of the Bible that distinctly begins (1:3) and ends (22:7) with the promise that there is a special blessing for everyone who reads and heeds the prophecy of this book.

There are five other blessings in the book:

- ✓ Revelation 14:13, “ *‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them’* ”
- ✓ Revelation 16:15, “*Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes on, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.*”
- ✓ Revelation 19:9, “*blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.*”
- ✓ Revelation 20:6, “*blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection.*”
- ✓ Revelation 22:14, “*Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and may enter by the gates into the city.*”

Reading, hearing, and obeying the truths taught in the book of Revelation (and in the rest of Scripture) are to be a way of life for believers.

The purpose of Revelation is not to stir our imagination to wild speculative interpretations. It is to inspire and motivate us to faithfulness and obedience.

John wants us to read, hear and take heed to what is written in Revelation. Why? Because 1) we will be blessed and 2) the time is near. What we hear we need to obey. What we believe we need to live. The nearness of the Lord’s return is meant to challenge us to live faithful lives. Will you do that? Will you live decisively and completely for God?

Revelation 21-22 promises God will come down from Heaven and dwell with us on the New Earth, which will have nations and rulers and cultures and dwelling places, where people will do exactly what God commanded the first man and woman to do on a perfect earth—rule it to God’s glory.

Friends, the end of Revelation is not an event but a Person. The central focus of eternal life will be God and the Lamb in the midst of their peoples. God is the one who planned our redemption and accomplished it through

Jesus, and the chief blessedness of the new Jerusalem will be to enjoy face-to-face communion with God as we saw in Revelation 3-4a, *“There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; they will see His face.”*

It you do not have a living relationship with the risen Christ, it is not too late for your repent and believe in Him. Revelation 22:17 says, *“The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” And let the one who hears say, “Come.” And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.”*

Being spiritually dead but still physically alive is a thirsty place to be. You violated God’s laws and your conscience, which leaves you on the outside. The sin is not satisfying but only makes you thirstier, like drinking salt water. You need Jesus Christ. You need forgiveness, His grace and His Word. If you are on the outside, you are in danger; John 3:36 says you are under the wrath of God. If you die in that condition, you will go to Hell forever, but He is inviting you to come, drink, and He will satisfy you forever.

The gift of eternal life (here in Revelation 22 called the water of life) is free. It has been paid for by the death of Christ on the cross and is extended to all who are willing to receive it in simple faith.

Have you come to faith in Christ? Is He your true love? Do not wait for the day of God’s wrath. I beg you to repent and place your faith in Christ. Now is the day of salvation.

Questions for Review and Reflection

1. How does your life reflect a belief in Christ’s promise of Revelation 22:12?
2. What are some things you can and should be doing (or not doing) today in light of the doctrine of eternal rewards (see 22:12; 1 Cor. 3:10–15; 4:1–5; and 2 Cor. 5:10)?
3. What is the most comforting and encouraging truth that you learned from Revelation? 4. In what specific ways do you want your life to be different because of our study of Revelation?