The Orchard – Bible Study
The Book of Revelation
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- **The Purpose:** of the Book of Revelation is to reveal Jesus Christ and give hope to all believers, especially those who have suffered for their faith, by proclaiming Christ's final victory over evil and the reality of eternal life with Him.
  - Jesus Christ is coming again.
  - Evil will be judged.
  - The dead will be raised to eternal life or eternal destruction.

- **The Author:** The apostle John.
  - John is the only one of Jesus' original 12 disciples who was not killed for the faith. John also wrote the Gospel of John, I John, II John, and III John.
  - The Gospel of John was written that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). 1st, 2nd and 3rd John were written that we might know we have eternal life (John 5:13). So, John wrote his Gospel that we might believe, his epistles that we might be sure, and the Book of Revelation that we might be ready.
  - In 66, Jewish zealots led an uprising against Roman rule and successfully drove the Roman army out of Jerusalem. The emperor Nero sent Vespasian, and his son Titus to quell the revolt. Vespasian conquered Galilee in 67. In 68 he marched toward Jerusalem but withdrew to Caesarea after learning that Nero committed suicide on June 9. He proclaimed himself emperor in 69 and turned the war over to Titus.
  - Titus laid siege against Jerusalem for 143 days before finally breaking through the walls and decimating the city and the Temple. The conquest was complete on September 2, 70, thus fulfilling the prophecy Jesus made to his disciples that before his crucifixion that the Temple in Jerusalem would be so completely destroyed that not one stone would be left on another (Matthew 24:2).
  - After the fall of Jerusalem in 70, the remaining Jewish soldiers fled with their wives and children to the rock fortress on the mountain of Masada, near the Dead Sea. 960 people found refuge there. They repelled the Roman army for 3 years. In 73, as the Roman army scaled a ramp that they had built on the side of the mountain, the Jews knew they could no longer fend off the enemy. As their fortress burned around them, the Jews committed mass suicide rather than face enslavement under the Romans.
  - Domitian became Caesar after his older brother, Titus, died at the age of 42 in 81. Domitian, age 21, declared himself "lord and god" and demanded to be worshipped. Those refusing to acknowledge his deity were persecuted, including all classes of Christians (Roman citizens, noncitizens, male, female, slave and free). During this time, John, who had been living in Ephesus, was exiled to the island of Patmos for "preaching the word of God and speaking about Jesus" (Revelation 1:9).
  - In the Roman Empire, prisoners were commonly exiled to islands. Patmos was a desolate volcanic island 10 miles long and 6 miles wide, 37 miles off the coast in the Mediterranean Sea. There, in about 95, John received 4 visions described in the book of Revelation:
    1. Revelation 1:9 – 3:22
    2. Revelation 4:1 – 16:21
    3. Revelation 17:1 – 21:8
    4. Revelation 21:9 – 22:17
  - Domitian's behavior became so intolerable to others, including his wife, that he was assassinated on September 18, 96, at the age of 44. Nerva, the next Caesar, recalled all of Domitian's exiles in 96, and John returned to Ephesus. In the first vision, the Son of God sends letters to 7 churches in Asia Minor (Turkey), revealing the blessings that will come to them if they are faithful, and the judgements that will come if they are unfaithful. The rest of the book (visions 2 – 4) gives details of these blessings and judgments.

- **Outline of Revelation:** Revelation is the only Book of the Bible with its own divine outline *("Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen."* Revelation 1:19).
  - **Chapter 1: "What you have seen" – The reality of the Resurrected Jesus.**
  - **Chapters 2 – 3: "The things that are now happening" – Jesus gives 7 messages to 7 churches.** This encompasses the chronology of church history from the beginning of the early church to the present.
  - **Chapters 4 – 22: "The things that will happen."**
    - Chapters 4 – 5: The church is raptured and taken to heaven for a 7 year "honeymoon" with our Lord.
    - Chapters 6 – 19: The Tribulation occurs on earth as God pours out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting world.
    - Chapter 20: The Millennium – a 1,000-year period of peace and prosperity as our Lord rules and reigns from Jerusalem. At the end of the Millennium, Satan is loosed. A final rebellion ensues before Satan is permanently cast into hell.
    - Chapters 21 – 22: A new heaven and new earth are created where we will live forever.

- **Key Verse:** *"3 God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near."* (Revelation 1:3). Note: The Greek word translated "*reads*" literally means "*to read out loud*."

- **Definitions:** interpreting the Book of Revelation:
  - **Preterist View**: John is writing to encourage Christians in his own day who are experiencing persecution from the Roman Empire.
  - **Futurist View**: Except for the first 3 chapters, John is describing things that will occur at the end of history.
  - **Historicist View**: The Book of Revelation is a presentation of history from John's day until the second coming of Jesus Christ and beyond.
  - **Idealist View**: The Book of Revelation is a symbolic representation of the continual struggle of good and evil. It doesn't refer to any particular historical events.
  - **Premillennialism**: The hallmark of premillennial eschatology is the literal interpretation of prophecy. Premillennial theologians teach that there will be a series of key events that occur before the millennial rule of Christ on earth. These events include the rapture of the church, a seven-year time of tribulation and the return of Christ to establish a thousand-year rule on earth.
  - **Postmillennialism**: Postmillennial theology teaches that the Church will be triumphant as a result of the Church Christianizing the world. After this, Christ will then return, upon which believers will enter the eternal state. Postmillennialists, therefore, apply a more allegorical approach (idealist view) to their interpretation of the book of Revelation.
  - **Amillennialism**: Amillennialism theology can be deciphered by its title. "A" preceding millennium means this view teaches there is no future millennial earthly rule of Christ sitting on David's throne. This stance also employs an allegorical interpretation and non-literal approach to prophecy. The events mentioned in the book of Revelation is being played out presently in the church age. Revelation reveals that the situation in the world will worsen before Christ returns. According to the amillennialists' beliefs, Christ will one day return not to establish a millennial rule on earth but to usher in the eternal state.

- **The Rapture:** Jesus' Promise to us (John 14:1-3).
  - **Pre-Tribulation View**: Christ comes in fulfillment of His own promise (Revelation 3:10).
  - **Mid-Tribulation View**: Christ raptures His church in the middle of the Tribulation (Revelation 11).
  - **Post-Tribulation View**: Christ will come at the end of the Tribulation, which means the church will go through the tribulation and be raptured before the Second Coming.
  - **How the Pre-Tribulation View conforms to Scripture:**
    1. The anger that should have been poured out on us was absorbed by Jesus Christ on the Cross of Calvary. *"9For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. 10 Christ died for us*

so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing" (I Thessalonians 5:9 – 11).

2. Jesus told us to pray that we would be raptured before the Tribulation. How can we be *"strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand"* before our Lord? Only one way. Because of what Jesus did for us on the Cross of Calvary. *"36 Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man"* (Luke 21:36).
3. Jesus Christ promised to deliver us. *10 "Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. 11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown"* (Revelation 3:10).
4. The Bible says that God will "not pour out his anger on us." *"9 For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. 10 Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing"* (I Thessalonians 5:9).
5. This doctrine is a comforting one. The belief that the Rapture happens after or in the middle of the Tribulation isn't comforting, because it means believers must endure unbelievable agony before they're taken to heaven. *"13 And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and was raised to life again, we also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him the believers who have died. 15 We tell you this directly from the Lord: We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 18 So encourage each other with these words"* (I Thessalonians 4:13 – 18).
6. Rapture before the Tribulation is illustrated in Genesis 19, where angels delivered Lot and his family before the destruction of Sodom. Peter refers to this in II Peter 2:9. *"9 So you see, the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials, even while keeping the wicked under punishment until the day of final judgment"* (II Peter 2:9).
7. Rapture before the Tribulation is illustrated in Enoch, who was taken to heaven prior to the flood. *"23 Enoch lived 365 years, 24 walking in close fellowship with God. Then one day he disappeared, because God took him"* (Genesis 5:23-24).
8. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture makes sense historically and scripturally. In keeping with Jewish custom, before a man would marry, he would add a room on to his father's house for himself and his bride. When the addition was complete, and when the father gave his approval, a trumpet would sound, and the bridegroom would go meet his bride. Following the wedding ceremony, the bride groom would take his bride to his father's house, where they would celebrate their "honeymoon" for 7 days in their newly completed "bridal suite." At the end of 7 days, they would join the community. That's exactly what's going to happen with us. Jesus is preparing a place for us in heaven. At the appointed time, only known by the Father, a trumpet will sound, and Jesus will meet us in the air to take us to the "Bridal Suite" He has prepared for us. We will remain with Him in heaven for 7 years before we are presented to the world, where we'll rule and reign with Him. *"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? 3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am"* (John 14:1 – 3).
9. The Pre-Tribulation Rapture follows the Book of Revelation. If you don't embrace a Pre-Tribulation view, you have to put chapters 4 – 5 after chapter 11 (if you embrace a Mid-Tribulation view); or after chapter 19 (if

you embrace a post-Tribulation view). Only a Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture allows for a consistent flow of the Book of Revelation.

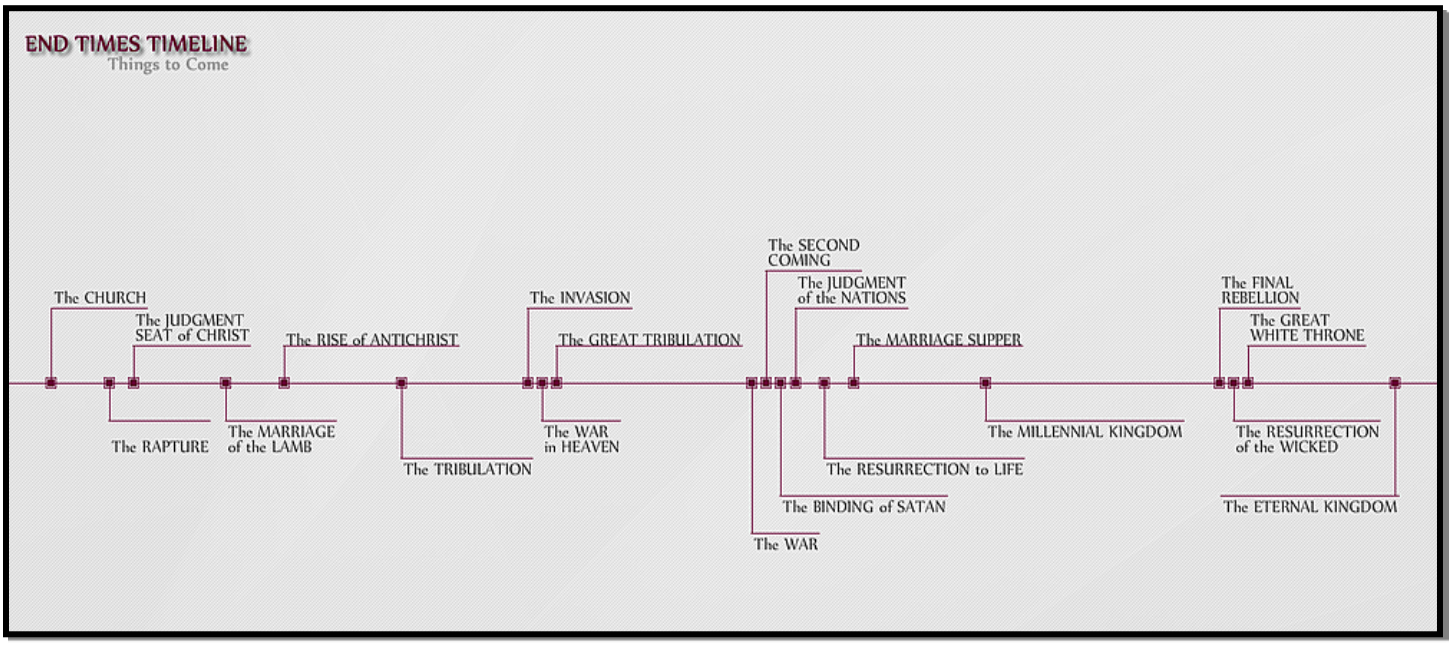
10. Jesus warned the church at Thyatira that if they didn't repent, they would experience "great tribulation" (Revelation 2:22). If the rapture won't occur until after the Tribulation, what would be the reason for this warning?
11. The Pre-Tribulation View is the only view that conforms to the many admonitions in Scripture to watch and be ready for Jesus to call us to meet Him in the air at any moment. *"2 For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night"* (I Thessalonians 5:2); *"36 No one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows"* (Matthew 24:36).
12. The Bible tells us that Jesus will deliver the church "from the terrors of the coming judgment." *"10 And they speak of how you are looking forward to the coming of God's Son from heaven—Jesus, whom God raised from the dead. He is the one who has rescued us from the terrors of the coming judgment."* (I Thessalonians 1:10).
13. The Tribulation is unnecessary for the church. Referred to as "the time of Jacob's trouble," Israel will be awakened and at last see Jesus as Messiah. God will make Himself known to them, and they shall be saved. *30 "In the distant future, when you are suffering all these things, you will finally return to the Lord your God and listen to what he tells you. 31 For the Lord your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon you or destroy you or forget the solemn covenant he made with your ancestors"* (Deuteronomy 4:30-31).
14. The Book of Daniel confirms a Pre-Tribulation prophecy. It's clear from Daniel 9 that the 69 weeks refer to the time between the commandment to rebuild the temple, given in 445 by Artaxerxes, and the coming of the Messiah, fulfilled perfectly on Palm Sunday when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. But Daniel was also told *"Seventy weeks are determined for your people …"* (Daniel 9:24). The 70th week of Daniel refers to the Tribulation. The 70 weeks of Daniel refer to Israel. The church wasn't present for the first 69 weeks. And the 70th week doesn't begin until after the church is raptured.
15. The church is never mentioned in the Bible during the events of the Tribulation (Revelation 4-18).

- **Events of the Rapture:**
    1. Jesus Christ will descend from Heaven – where He is preparing a place for us (John 14:1-3).
    2. Our Lord will shout as He descends, "in the twinkling of an eye" (I Corinthians 15:52).
    3. He will resurrect Christians who have already died (I Thessalonians 4:16-17).
    4. We will hear the voice of the archangel (I Thessalonians 4:16).
    5. We will hear the trumpet call of God (I Thessalonians 4:16).
    6. We who are alive will be changed by having our bodies made "immortal" (I Corinthians 15:51-53).
    7. We will be caught up (raptured) in the clouds, to be reunited with believers who had earlier died in a glorious reunion. We will meet our Lord in the air. (I Thessalonians 4:17).
    8. Christ will take us to "the Father's house" (John 14:3).
    9. We will always be with the Lord (I Thessalonians 4:17).

- **The Most Significant Truth in Biblical Prophecy:** The Return of Jesus Christ.
    - Mentioned 329 times in the Bible.
    - The second most frequently mentioned doctrine in all of Scripture (only the subject of salvation is mentioned more frequently).
    - The 216 chapters of the New Testament contain 318 references to the second coming of Jesus Christ (one verse out of every 30).
    - All but four of the New Testament books contain teachings on the second coming of Jesus Christ.

- **The Olivet Discourse:** The Most Important single passage of prophecy in the entire Bible.

- Found in Matthew 24 – 25, Mark 13, and Luke 21.
- When studied in relation to Daniel 2, 7, 8 – 9, and Revelation 2 – 20, the Olivet Discourse gives more information about future events than in the writings of any world religion.



- **Overview of Sequence of Coming Events:** According to God's Word.

  1. **The Rapture.**
  2. **The Judgment Seat of Christ.**
  3. **The Marriage of the Lamb.**
  4. **The Rise of the Antichrist.**
  5. **The Tribulation.**
  6. **The Great Tribulation.**
  7. **The Battle of Armageddon.**
  8. **The Second Coming of Jesus Christ.**
  9. **The Binding of Satan.**
  10. **The Marriage Supper.**
  11. **The Millennial Kingdom.**
  12. **The Final Rebellion.**
  13. **The Resurrection of the Wicked.**
  14. **The Great White Throne Judgment.**
  15. **The Eternal Kingdom.**

- **Chapter 1: "What you have seen" – The reality of the Resurrected Jesus.**
  - **Revelation 1:1 – 2:** "*This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place. He sent an angel to present this revelation to his servant John, ² who faithfully reported everything he saw. This is his report of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ.*"
  - This book is the revelation of Jesus Christ (not St. John the Divine). The Father gave revelation to the Son. The Son gave revelation to John. And John gave revelation to us. An angel was sent by God.
    - 34 (of 66) books in the Bible refer to angels.
    - Jesus taught referred to angels (Matthew 8:10; 24:31; 26:53; etc.).

- Angels were created by God (Psalm 148:2 -5; Colossians 1:16; etc.).
- Angels were created before the world (Job 38:6-7; etc.).
- Angels were created holy (Ezekiel 28:15; Jude 6).
- They have intellect (Matthew 28:5; I Peter 1:12).
- They have emotions (Job 38:7; Luke 2:13; 15:10).
- They have will (Jude 6).
- Angels exist as spirits – not with material bodies (Hebrews 1:14).
- An angel can be in only one place at a time (Daniel 9:21-23; 10:10-14).
- Although they are spirit beings, they can appear in human form in dreams (Matthew 1:20); in natural sight with human functions (Genesis 18:1-8; 22:19:1); and seen by some and not others (I Kings 6:15-17).
- Angels cannot reproduce (Mark 12:25).
- They do not die (Luke 20:36).
- Angels have more knowledge than humans (Matthew 24:31; Luke 1:13-16) but less than God (Matthew 24:36).
- They have more power than humans (II Peter 2:11; Acts 5:19) but less than God.
- Angels are organized and ranked. Michael is named as an "archangel" (Jude 9). There are also "chief princes" (Daniel 10:13), "seraphim" (Isaiah 6:1-3) and "cherubim" (Genesis 3:22-24).
- Angels are continually involved in praising God (Revelation 4:6-11) through describing His attributes (Isaiah 6:3) and singing His praises (Revelation 5:8-9).
- Angels announced the birth of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:26-33; 2:13); protected Him (Matthew 2:13); strengthened Him (Matthew 4:11; Luke 22:43); and explained to humans His resurrection (Matthew 28:6) and ascension (Acts 1:10-11).
- Angels carry out God's government. They are God's servants (Psalm 103:20; Hebrews 1:7) and messengers (Luke 1:19; 2:8-14).
- They can be involved in controlling nature (Revelation 7:1; 16:3-9), nations (II Kings 19:35), Satan and demons (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1).
- Angels will perform future judgement for God (Matthew 13:3; Revelation 15:1; 16:1-21).
- Angels protect God's people. They are sent to serve believers (Hebrews 1:14). They protect the godly (Psalm 34:7; Daniel 6:20-23) and oppose our enemies (Psalm 35:4-5).
- Angels are specifically assigned as guardians of individuals (Matthew 18:10).
- They are God's agents in answering prayer (Acts 12:27), even bringing physical provisions (Genesis 21:17-20; I Kings 19:5-7).
- They assist believers at death (Luke 16:22; Jude 9).

- **Revelation 1:3:** *"3 God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near."* (Revelation 1:3).
- Note: The Greek word translated "*reads*" literally means "*to read out loud*."
- **Revelation 1:4 – 6:** *"4 This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia. Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before his throne; 5 and from Jesus Christ. He is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. 6 He has made us a Kingdom of priests for God his Father. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen."*
- Asia refers to present-day Turkey.
- "Grace" (charis – Greek) and "Peace" (shalom – Hebrew) combined is a powerful greeting because we can't have peace until we understand 'love of God through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- "The one who is, and always was, and is still to come" (Verse 4) refers to God the Father.

- "The sevenfold Spirit" refers to the seven-fold ministry of the Holy Spirit as seen in Isaiah 11:2 *("And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord"* Isaiah 11:2).
- "Jesus Christ" completes the Holy Trinity found in this passage.
- **Revelation 1:7 – 8:** *"7 Look! He comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see him – even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the world will mourn for him. Yes! Amen! 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One."*
- In the original text, John writes out the word "Alpha" under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet. But he only uses the first letter of "Omega." Perhaps it's because the Lord is the beginning, and without end. We'll spend eternity exploring His nature.
- **Revelation 1:9 – 11:** *"9 I, John, am your brother and your partner in suffering and in God's Kingdom and in the patient endurance to which Jesus calls us. I was exiled to the island of Patmos for preaching the word of God and for my testimony about Jesus. 10 It was the Lord's Day, and I was worshiping in the Spirit. Suddenly, I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet blast. 11 It said, "Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."*
- John is writing as a pastor of the 7 churches under his care. These people are being tortured, persecuted and slaughtered. He was with them. He was their friend. Although he was alone, but he didn't forsake worshiping in the Spirit. How do you worship in the Spirit when you're all alone?
- **Revelation 1:12 – 16:** *"12 When I turned to see who was speaking to me, I saw seven gold lampstands. 13 And standing in the middle of the lampstands was someone like the Son of Man. He was wearing a long robe with a gold sash across his chest. 14 His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow. And his eyes were like flames of fire. 15 His feet were like polished bronze refined in a furnace, and his voice thundered like mighty ocean waves. 16 He held seven stars in his right hand, and a sharp two-edged sword came from his mouth. And his face was like the sun in all its brilliance."*
- The 7 gold lampstands are the 7 churches in Asia (Revelation 1:11; 20), and Jesus stands among them. The 7 gold lampstands refer to the golden lampstand of Exodus 25 (3 lamps on each side of a main stem) speak both of John 15 (Jesus said, *"I am the vine and you are the branches"*) and of John 8 (Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world"*). We're told in Matthew 5 to let our light shine, too. That can only happen as we stay connected to the stem of the candlestick, the true vine – Jesus Christ.
- Verse 12 mentions the candlestick is made of gold, which represents His divinity.
- In Verse 13, we read the term Jesus used most often to speak of Himself – "*the Son of Man*." Daniel 7:13 describes "*the Son of Man*" coming in the clouds of heaven.
- In this passage, John recognized Jesus because he lived with Him for 3 years and had seen Him as the Son of Man as the Galilean preacher, and as the glorified Son of God at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8).
- His white hair represents his wisdom and divine nature (Daniel 7:9). His bright eyes represent judgement of all evil. The gold sash across His chest reveals Him as the High Priest, who goes into God's presence to obtain forgiveness of sin. The sword in His mouth represents the power of His message. His word is as sharp as any sword (Isaiah 49:2; Hebrews 4:12).
- **Revelation 1:17 – 20:** *"17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead. But he laid his right hand on me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the living one. I died, but look—I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and the grave. 19 "Write down what you have seen – both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen. 20 This is the meaning of the mystery of the seven stars you saw in my right hand and the seven gold lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches."*
- *"The keys of death and the grave"* (Verse 18) are not to lock people up – but to set people free. Jesus says, "I can save you from hell eternally, if you'll receive me. My desire is to set you free" (Luke 4:18).

- Who are the *"angels of the seven churches"*? Why are they likened to stars? According to Daniel 12, those who turn many to righteousness will shine as stars forever.

- **Chapter 2 – 3: "The things that are now happening" – Jesus gives 7 messages to 7 churches.**

The message to the church in Ephesus

- **Revelation 2:1 - 7:** *"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands: 2 "I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. 3 You have patiently suffered for me without quitting. 4 "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! 5 Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. 6 But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do. 7 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God."*
- Chapters 2 – 3 comprise the second section of the Book of Revelation. These chapters include "the things that are now happening" (Revelation 1:19). Jesus gives 7 messages to 7 churches. This encompasses the chronology of church history from the beginning of the early church to the present.
- These 7 messages have a 4-fold application:
  - **1st** – They are to be applied locally. The cities of the 7 churches are given in the order of the ancient Roman postal circuit.
  - **2nd** – They apply ecclesiastically. These letters address every problem and challenge facing the local church today, as well as when they were written in John's time.
  - **3rd** – They apply personally. They apply to us individually. How do I know? Because every letter ends with the words, *"anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."* So, if you have ears, listen to the Holy Spirit!
  - **4th** – They apply prophetically. When John wrote these letters at the beginning of the church age, these events had not yet taken place.
- The church at Ephesus refers to the period of church history from 33 – 100. Ephesus is 35 miles from Smyrna. It's the closest of Revelation's seven churches to the island of Patmos (where John wrote the Book of Revelation. Ephesus was the chief city of Asia Minor. It had an artificial harbor accessible to the largest ships. The city stood at the entrance of a valley that reached far into the province. It was also connected via highways to other important cities in the region. The ease of traveling to the city, either by land or sea, made it the most accessible populated destination in Asia.
- When John wrote this book, in 97, the church was experiencing multiple problems. The church had been compromised to such a degree that Jesus said, *"5 Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches"* (Revelation 2:5). Church history should not be our model, because the church has had problems from the beginning. However, the Book of Acts gives God's plan for how the church is to function. So, may the Bible be our guide regarding the local church.
- In Verse 1, *"the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands"* (the 7 churches) is Jesus (Revelation 1:11-13). He "*holds the seven stars in his right hand"* (messengers of the churches), demonstrating His power and authority over the churches and their leaders. Ephesus had become a very large and proud church. Jesus was reminding them that He alone is the head of the church.
- In Verses 2 – 3, Jesus commends the church at Ephesus for their "*hard work and patient endurance."* He commends them for examining "*the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not."* In other words, standing firm for the truth and identifying false teaching. This wasn't easy in a city known for deviant sexual

practices associated with the worship of the goddess Artemis. He commends them for not tolerating evil people. He commends them for working hard. We should do the same. But our motive for loving people must be our love for God. Jesus and John taught that our love for others is authentic proof of our love for God (John 13:34; I John 3:18-19).

- Paul once commended the church at Ephesus for their love for God and love for people (Ephesians 1:15), but many of the church founders had died, and many of the believers had lost their passion for God. They were a busy church. They did a lot to help the community. But they'd left their first love (Verse 4). Jesus didn't say they "lost" their first love. But He did say they "left" it. So, He tells the church, "*Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches"* (Verse 5). "Repent" means "change direction." He exhorts them to go back to what they were doing when they were passionate about the Lord. He encourages them to remember, repent, and return!
- A church may have lots of programs and lots of activities. A church may be doctrinally correct. But the Bible says Jesus will not stay in a church where there's not true love, because without true love, nothing else matters (Verse 5). *"2 If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing"* (I Corinthians 13:2).
- In Verse 6, Jesus commends the church hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. "Nicos" means "conquest" and "laity" means "people of the church." The Nicolaitans presented themselves as "spiritual leaders" and told the people who to marry, where to live, and what to do. This isn't what the Bible teaches. Paul said we don't *"want to dominate you by telling you how to put your faith into practice. We want to work together with you so you will be full of joy, for it is by your own faith that you stand firm."* (II Corinthians 1:26)
- Do you remember the 2 trees in the Garden of Eden? The tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:9)? Eating from the tree of life brought eternal life with God. Eating from the tree of knowledge brought the realization of good and evil. When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of knowledge, they disobeyed God's command. So, they were driven out of Eden and barred from eating from the tree of life. In the new earth, everyone will eat from the tree of life and live forever. So, what did the Ephesians lack? Love. What would they get if they changed their ways? The fruit of the tree of life.

The message to the church in Smyrna

- **Revelation 2:8 – 11:** *8 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Smyrna. This is the message from the one who is the First and the Last, who was dead but is now alive: 9 "I know about your suffering and your poverty—but you are rich! I know the blasphemy of those opposing you. They say they are Jews, but they are not, because their synagogue belongs to Satan. 10 Don't be afraid of what you are about to suffer. The devil will throw some of you into prison to test you. You will suffer for ten days. But if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life. 11 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. Whoever is victorious will not be harmed by the second death."*
- The church at Smyrna represents the period in church history from 100 – 312. Smyrna is 35 miles from Ephesus and 49 miles from Pergamum. It was considered to be the "Port of Asia" because of its excellent harbor on the Aegean Sea. The word "smyrna" comes from myrrh. This is a fragrance released only when crushed. And the believers in Smyrna were being crushed.
- Christians practicing communion were being accused of drinking blood and cannibalism by people who claimed to be Jews (Verse 9). But these people weren't Jews any more than the people who claimed to be Christians during the Crusades who slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Jews. Therefore, persecution of the Christians was rampant, from these "so-called" Jews and the Roman government.
- The pastor of the church at Smyrna was a man named Polycarp. He was the last man personally discipled by John. When he was 86 years old, he was ordered to burn incense at the altar of Caesar. He refused, so he was sentenced to burn at the stake. But, when the fire didn't burn him, a frustrated guard stabbed Polycarp, and Polycarp's blood put out the fire. Throughout history, we see fires of persecution extinguished by the blood of Christians.

- Between 100 – 312, there were 10 Roman emperors that correspond to the 10 days mentioned in Verse 10. They slaughtered about 7 million Christians during this time. But did you notice that Jesus didn't stop the persecution? He said, *"if you remain faithful even when facing death, I will give you the crown of life"* (Verse 10). The people of Smyrna understood the analogy, because Smyrna was also famous for its athletic games. Winners received a "crown" by the judges, made of leaves.
- The Bible says immediately after the rapture, every Christian will stand before Christ to be judged by Him. This has nothing to do with salvation, for only the saved will be there (I Corinthians 3:11-15). The Bible names five different crowns reserved for those who are obedient to His calling:
  - The **"Crown of Life"** (Martyr's Crown) – Given to those who have suffered much, yet endured with a sweet Christian spirit, even unto death (Revelation 2:10).
  - The **"Incorruptible Crown"** (Victor's Crown) – Given to those who forsake the pleasures of this world in order to serve Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 9:25).
  - The **"Crown of Glory"** (Elders Crown) – Given to those who have given their lives to the teaching of the Bible (I Peter 5:2-4).
  - The **"Crown of Righteousness"** – Given to those who look forward to the return of Jesus and live accordingly (II Timothy 4:8).
  - The **"Crown of Rejoicing"** (Soul Winners Crown) – Given to those who have given themselves to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 2:19-20).
- What is *"the second death"* (Verse 11)? Believers and unbelievers experience a physical death. But believers will be resurrected to eternal life with God, while unbelievers will be resurrected at the end of the Millennium, to stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne Judgement (Revelation 20). Their failure to believe on the Lord and refusal to accept God's payment for their sins will condemn them to hell. But for those who remain faithful, like the church at Smyrna, the second death will have no effect.

The message to the church in Pergamum

- **Revelation 2:12 – 17:** *12 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Pergamum. This is the message from the one with the sharp two-edged sword: 13 "I know that you live in the city where Satan has his throne, yet you have remained loyal to me. You refused to deny me even when Antipas, my faithful witness, was martyred among you there in Satan's city. 14 "But I have a few complaints against you. You tolerate some among you whose teaching is like that of Balaam, who showed Balak how to trip up the people of Israel. He taught them to sin by eating food offered to idols and by committing sexual sin. 15 In a similar way, you have some Nicolaitans among you who follow the same teaching. 16 Repent of your sin, or I will come to you suddenly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give some of the manna that has been hidden away in heaven. And I will give to each one a white stone, and on the stone will be engraved a new name that no one understands except the one who receives it."*
- The city of Pergamum was a sophisticated city, built on a hill over 1,000 feet above the surrounding countryside. Pergamum is located 49 miles from Smyrna and 38 miles from Thyatira. It was the center of Greek culture and education, with a 200,000-volume library. Pergamum and its library were so highly regarded that when Marc Antony married Cleopatra, he gave her the entire library as a present. The city's chief god was Asciepus, whose symbol was a serpent and considered the god of healing. People came from all over the world to be healed. According to Greek mythology, Pergamum was the birthplace of Zeus. "*Where Satan has his throne*" (Verse 13) is a reference to the 150' high structure dedicated to Zeus in the middle of the city. Antipas (Verse 13) was a Christian physician in Pergamum. Because he didn't recognize Asciepus (the serpent god of healing) and bow to Zeus, Antipas was fried to death.
- The Greek prefix "per" means "objectionable." "Gamum" means "marriage." So, "Pergamum" means "objectionable marriage." This aptly describes the next phase of church history, from 312 – 600. In 312, Emperor Constantine concluded that if he converted to Christianity, then the Christians would join his army. So, he issued

the "Edict of Toleration," which prohibited the persecution of Christians. Christianity became the official religion of Rome. All Roman babies were legally required to be baptized into the Christian faith. However, Constantine compromised with the pagan priests.

- This "objectionable marriage" between the pagans and Christians was illustrated by the legal coins which had Christian symbols on one side and pagan symbols on the other. From 313 to 600, the church and state worked together as a political power. As a result, the church began a downward spiral. History proves that the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is compromised when the church and politics get in bed together. We must keep our focus on the kingdom and our passion for Jesus.
- Do you remember the story of Balaam (Numbers 22)? When Balaam was asked by the Moabite King Balak to curse the people of Israel, God told Balaam not to go. But Balaam went anyway, and after a short discussion with a donkey, he ended up on a mountain overlooking the Israelites that King Balak wanted him to curse. Because Balaam failed to curse them, he came up with an alternate plan. He told King Balak, "If your women seduce the Israelite men, they can introduce idol worship to them which will bring a curse upon all of Israel" (Numbers 22). Just like Pergamum, an "objectionable marriage" with the world.
- Not only had the church in Pergamum embraced the marriage of church and state, but they embraced the Nicolaitans (the religious leaders who told the people who to marry, where to live, and what to do). (Verse 15) So, how do we know who's who or what's what in a world susceptible to what Pergamum embraced? Stay focused on the Bible, the Word of God. *"12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable"* (Hebrews 4:12-13).
- The Lord promised "hidden manna, a white stone and a new name" to those who don't compromise in an "objectionable marriage" with the world. The "*manna that has been hidden away in heaven*" (Verse 17) refers to the spiritual nourishment that the faithful believers will receive. Just as the Israelites received manna from heaven for their physical nourishment (Exodus 16:13-18), Jesus, the bread of life (John 6:51) provides spiritual nourishment that satisfies our deepest hunger.
- The secret ballot of John's day was a stone. A black stone meant "no." A white stone meant "yes." So, Jesus was saying, "If you don't compromise in an "objectionable marriage" with the world, I'll give you a white stone" (Verse 17) which means you're not guilty, you're righteous, you're free.
- Finally, in Verse 17, Jesus said He will give a "new name" to those who don't compromise in an "objectionable marriage" with the world. In the Bible, a person's name stood for his character. So, a new name means a new character. The new doesn't follow the old but takes its place and is different from the old. The Bible says: *"… you will be given a new name by the Lord's own mouth."* (Isaiah 62:2). The prophet also adds, *"… the Sovereign Lord will … call his true servants by another name"* (Isaiah 65:15). So, if we stay true to the Word, God will bless us with the manna of salvation, the white stone of acquittal and approval, and a new name written down in glory.

The message to the church in Thyatira

- **Revelation 2:18 – 29:** 18 *"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Thyatira. This is the message from the Son of God, whose eyes are like flames of fire, whose feet are like polished bronze: 19 "I know all the things you do. I have seen your love, your faith, your service, and your patient endurance. And I can see your constant improvement in all these things. 20 "But I have this complaint against you. You are permitting that woman—that Jezebel who calls herself a prophet—to lead my servants astray. She teaches them to commit sexual sin and to eat food offered to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she does not want to turn away from her immorality. 22 "Therefore, I will throw her on a bed of suffering, and those who commit adultery with her will suffer greatly unless they repent and turn away from her evil deeds. 23 I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am the one who searches out the thoughts and intentions of every person. And I will give to each of you whatever you deserve. 24 "But I also have a message for the rest of you in Thyatira who have not followed*

this false teaching ('deeper truths,' as they call them—depths of Satan, actually). I will ask nothing more of you ***25*** *except that you hold tightly to what you have until I come.* ***26*** *To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end, To them I will give authority over all the nations.* ***27*** *They will rule the nations with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.* ***28*** *They will have the same authority I received from my Father, and I will also give them the morning star!* ***29*** *"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."*

- The fourth period of time begins in 60 and continues through 1500. This includes the period of the Reformation (Martin Luther). Thyatira is 38 miles from Pergamos and 32 miles from Sardis. Thyatira was an important trading location on the Roman road from Pergamum to Laodicea. The pagan god Apollo (son of Zeus) was widely worshipped. The city was famous for its dyeing and was a center of the indigo trade. During his second missionary journey (Acts 16:13 - 15) the apostle Paul traveled to Philippi, where he met a woman named Lydia, from Thyatira, who was praying near a river. Lydia was a seller of purple (either of the dye or cloth dyed in this color). As she listened to Paul's preaching, she and her entire household, gave their lives to Christ and were baptized. When she returned to Thyatira, Lydia helped spread the gospel throughout the city.
- Born near Dumbarton, Scotland, Patrick (390 – 461) was captured by Irish pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. Escaping to Gaul (modern day France), he became a monk. He later returned home to his family, but sensed God calling him to return to Ireland as a missionary. So, he led a mission team to Ireland in 432. For the next 30 years, Patrick shared the Gospel, and several thousand people gave their lives to Jesus Christ. The churches he founded were independent of Rome. Irish monasteries became centers of learning. The Bible was the primary subject, and Latin was the language of education. The Irish monasteries sent missionaries throughout the world. Although the Roman Catholic hierarchy didn't approve of their work, this ministry remained a powerful influence in Western Europe until 950.
- Since "fire and polished bronze" refer to judgement, Verse 18 is the only place in the entire Book of Revelation where Jesus identifies Himself as the Son of God rather than the Son of Man. A woman in the church at Thyatira, named Jezebel, called herself a "prophetess". She encouraged promiscuous behavior, idolatry and eating meat offered to idols. In pagan temples, meat was often offered to idols. The meat that wasn't burned was sold to shoppers in the temple marketplace. Eating meat offered to idols wasn't wrong in itself but bothered weaker Christians. Jezebel was more concerned about her own selfish pleasure and freedom than about the concerns of fellow believers. Paul addressed this very matter in II Corinthians 8. He taught that although eating meat offered to idols isn't a sin against God, and although eating meat offered to idols won't affect us personally, it might affect those around us. So, we need to be willing to forgo "our rights" if they confuse or adversely impact our weaker brothers or sisters. This is what it means to truly "love God and love people."
- The "deeper truths" (Verse 24) were "secret insights" by so-called teachers "guaranteed" to promote deeper spiritual life. They were saying they alone knew certain "mysteries" and "deep things." Beware of these teachings that are not clearly found in scripture. "Until I come" (Verse 25) is the first promise of the return of Jesus Christ found in these letters to the 7 churches. This is how we know this church goes on to Jesus' second coming. The Old Testament image of Jesus Christ is the "Sun of Righteousness" (Malachi 4:2). In the New Testament, He's seen as the "Morning Star" (Revelation 22:16). A morning star appears just before dawn, when the night is the coldest and darkest. When the world is at its bleakest point, Jesus Christ will burst upon the scene, bringing His promised reward.

The message to the church in Sardis

- **Revelation 3:1 – 6:** *"Write this letter to the angel of the church in Sardis. This is the message from the one who has the sevenfold Spirit of God and the seven stars: "I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead.* ***2*** *Wake up! Strengthen what little remains, for even what is left is almost dead. I find that your actions do not meet the requirements of my God.* ***3*** *Go back to what you heard and believed at first; hold to it firmly. Repent and turn to me again. If you don't wake up, I will come to you suddenly, as unexpected as a thief.* ***4*** *"Yet there are some in the church in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes with evil.*

They will walk with me in white, for they are worthy. 5 All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine. 6 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."

- When Sergius III became Pope (904 – 967), he ushered in the "Rule of Harlots." Hs mistresses publicly accompanied him to the papal palace. His grandson, John X, continued this legacy until he was killed while committing adultery. Next came Benedict IX, who became pope when he was 12 years old. Benedict IX was so corrupt that the citizens of Rome drove him out of the city. So, King Henry III replaced him with Clement III. King Henry III wrote, "I appoint no one from Rome because no priest can be found in this city who is free from the pollution of fornication and simony" ("simony" was the practice of positions of leadership within the church to the highest bidder).
- John Wycliffe was born in England in 1330. He challenged papal control, church hierarchy and continual sacrifice, so he was excommunicated by the church. Believing that the people needed Scripture in their own language, he completed the first English translation of the New Testament in 1380. The English translation of the Old Testament was completed in 1382. Bible translators working with him, including John Hus and Hugh Latimer were burned at the stake by the church for their work. After his death, John Wycliffe's body was exhumed, burned, and his ashes were scattered.
- In 1483 Martin Luther was born in Saxon Germany. He enrolled in seminary and earned his Doctorate in Theology. To earn God's favor, he regularly beat himself, slept outside in freezing temperatures, and fasted for long periods of time. But he felt he could never become righteous enough to earn God's favor. One of his friends, a monk, urged Luther to read the Book of Habakkuk. Why Habakkuk? Because Habakkuk also wrestled with religious questions. When Luther read Habakkuk 2:4 *("Look at the proud! They trust in themselves, and their lives are crooked. But the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God")*. "That's it!" he cried. "If I'm going to be just, it's not because of what I do or who I am, but by faith in what God has done and who He is." So, in 1517, he nailed a parchment containing 95 theses to the university door in Wittenberg. When the church in Rome asked him to recant, Martin Luther replied, "Here I stand. I can do no other, so help me God." The Reformation swept across Europe and people turned to Jesus Christ and the Bible. By 1600, over 80% of the people living in Bohemia, Austria and Hungary were "Protest-ants". However, the worst bloodshed in history took place immediately following the Reformation. By 1602, over 70% of these Christians had been killed by the church. Even worse than the persecution of Christians under the Roman emperors and the holocaust of Nazi Germany under Hitler. Understanding this context of the Reformation is vital to understanding the message to the church in Sardis.
- Sardis, located at the foot of Mount Tumulus, is 32 miles from Pergamum and 27 miles) from Philadelphia (Alasehir). The word "Sardis" means "remnant." Built on a 1,000' high bluff, Sardis was an extremely wealthy city that seemed invincible. Gold was discovered along the banks of a nearby river. King Alyattes, who reigned from about 610 to 560 B.C., minted and distributed the world's first coins. Sardis was home to the temple of the pagan goddess Cybele, very similar to the pagan goddess Diana (Artemis) found at Ephesus. But, in 549, when Cyrus conquered the city of Babylon, he also conquered Sardis.
- The problem in the Sardis church wasn't heresy, but spiritual death. Jesus said although the church had a reputation for being alive, they were dead (Verse 1). The church in Sardis was infested with sin. Its deeds were evil. It looked good on the outside but was corrupt on the inside. Jesus said (Verse 3) "If you don't get back to basics, I'm going to come to you as a thief." To be "clothed in white" (Verse 5) means to be made pure. Jesus says every believer is eternally secure; *"28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me, 29 for my Father has given them to me, and he is more powerful than anyone else. No one can snatch them from the Father's hand"* (John 10:28-29). Paul writes nothing can separate us from the love of God; *"38 And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. 39 No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:38-39).

Here, Jesus said, "*5 All who are victorious will be clothed in white. I will never erase their names from the Book of Life, but I will announce before my Father and his angels that they are mine"* (Revelation 3:5).

The message to the church in Philadelphia

- **Revelation 3:7 – 13:** *"7 Write this letter to the angel of the church in Philadelphia. This is the message from the one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David. What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open: 8 "I know all the things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me. 9 Look, I will force those who belong to Satan's synagogue—those liars who say they are Jews but are not—to come and bow down at your feet. They will acknowledge that you are the ones I love. 10 "Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you from the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world. 11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown. 12 All who are victorious will become pillars in the Temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. And I will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name. 13 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."*
- The church in Philadelphia represents the modern missionary movement. The letter to Philadelphia is one of only two letters to the 7 churches in which Jesus has nothing critical to say. Why? Perhaps it is because the Philadelphians were involved in evangelism. They loved God and they loved people. And love covers a multitude of sins (I Peter 4:8). The ancient city of Philadelphia, 27 miles from Sardis and 48 miles from Laodicea. On one side of the city the land was fertile enough to grow grapes. The quality of wine produced by the fields of Philadelphia was such that the Roman poet Virgil wrote about its excellence. Philadelphia was founded in 189 B.C. by King Eumenes II. When he died, his younger brother, Attalus II, named buildings after his older brother, minted coins bearing his brother's image, and constantly talked about his brother. Consequently, the people of the town began to call this place "Philo-delphia" (the city of brotherly love).
- On May 30, 1792, a radical, young Christian man named William Carey, preached a shot sermon from Acts 1:8; *"8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* His theme was: "Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God." William said it was time for Christians to reach beyond their own borders. And bring the Gospel to a world that was dying. William had been working full-time, as a shoemaker, since he was 14. Although he never attended high school, by the time he was 20, he had taught himself Hebrew, Italian, Dutch, French and Greek. At the age of 22, he was invited to pastor the local Baptist Church. It was there that God gave William a vision of sailing across the ocean to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And an anointing to do just that. So, he said goodbye to his church, and set sail for India. Before he returned home from India, William Carey had not only shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but had planted churches, translated the entire Bible into Bengali (one of the main languages of India), built schools and hospitals, and supervised the start of India's first printing press, paper mill, and steam engine to run the mill. He wrote the first Bengali-English dictionary and founded the first Christian college in all of Asia. Before he returned home from India, William Carey had translated the complete Bible into 6 languages, and portions of the Bible into 29 additional languages. William Carey "expected great things from God and attempted great things for God" and God brought them to pass. Whenever God wants to do something wonderful, He gives that person a vision. The Bible teaches that God doesn't call the anointed; He anoints the called!
- We read in Revelation 1:18 that Jesus holds the "keys of death and the grave." To this missionary church in Philadelphia, He says He holds an additional key, the key of David (Verses 7-8). This key represents Christ's authority to open the door to His future Kingdom. After the door is opened, no one can close it. Salvation is assured. Once it is closed, no one can close it. Judgment is certain. Jesus is the One who opened the doors for William Carey in India; for Hudson Taylor in China; for The Orchard in Vanuatu and Afghanistan. But He also shuts

doors that can't be opened. Those continually saying "no" to the Holy Spirit of God convicting them of their need for a Savior, will be unable to say "yes" at the time they're locked in to eternal destruction.

- Although the church in Philadelphia has "little strength," it's a church that's returned to the Word, has a desire for the Word, and studies the Word (Verse 8). Who are these people "… *who belong to Satan's synagogue—those liars who say they are Jews but are not …"* (Verse 9)? In John's day, these would have been the Jews who persecuted the believers. In our day, the reference may be to the increasing number of people in the Christian community who say, "Because God is through with the Jew, we are Israel." It's interesting to note that 100 years prior to the deaths of 6 million Jew during World War II, preachers began to teach that God was through with the Jew. Anti-Semitism is always a sign of those who aren't reading the Bible. Scripture clearly teaches God is not through with Israel (Romans 9 – 11). There are three categories of people in the Bible – Jews, Gentiles and the church. Who is the church? Former Jews and former Gentiles. In fact, the reason for the Tribulation is that God isn't through with Israel. The Rapture is when Jesus comes to get us, but the Second Coming is when Jesus comes back to restore Israel.
- Jesus said to the church in Philadelphia, *10 "Because you have obeyed my command to persevere, I will protect you **from** the great time of testing that will come upon the whole world to test those who belong to this world"* (Verse 10). The Greek word "from" (Verse 10) is "ek" which means "out of." In other words, Jesus is saying "You of little strength, you've kept My Word and haven't denied My Name. You've gone through the open door, and you did not deny Me. Because of this, I will take you "out of" the time of testing that will come upon the ***whole world***." This "testing" is not simply a local persecution of the church in Philadelphia, but a time of testing that encompasses the entire globe. There's only one event that fits this description, the Tribulation.
- Jesus said, "I am coming soon" (Verse 11). The Greek word translated "quickly" is "tachu", which means "suddenly." Jesus Christ could come at any moment! It could be today! Therefore, Jesus tells us, "*Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown"* (Verse 11). What crown? The answer is found in I Thessalonians 2:19 – 20: *"19 After all, what gives us hope and joy, and what will be our proud reward and crown as we stand before our Lord Jesus when he returns? It is you! 20 Yes, you are our pride and joy."* Paul identifies the crown as our brothers and sisters in Christ. And, the Bible says Jesus "*will write on them the name of my God, and they will be citizens in the city of my God—the new Jerusalem that comes down from heaven from my God. And I will also write on them my new name"* (Verse 12). The Bible says you're not only going to have the glory of God emblazoned upon you, but you'll be a citizen of the new Jerusalem. Proverbs 25:2 says: *"It is God's privilege to conceal things and the king's privilege to discover them."* Because we're a nation of kings and priests (Revelation 1:6), we'll spending eternity exploring and enjoying incomprehensible aspects of God's majesty, and creativity. There will be ever increasing ecstasy as we explore His creation and being. Everything will be new, incredible and pure.
- So, may we have a heart for evangelism, a commitment to persevere, a love for God and a love for people as we look forward to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The message to the church in Laodicea

- **Revelation 3:14 – 22:** *"14 Write this letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea. This is the message from the one who is the Amen—the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's new creation: 15 "I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! 16 But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! 17 You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. 18 So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. 19 I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference. 20 "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. 21 Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my*

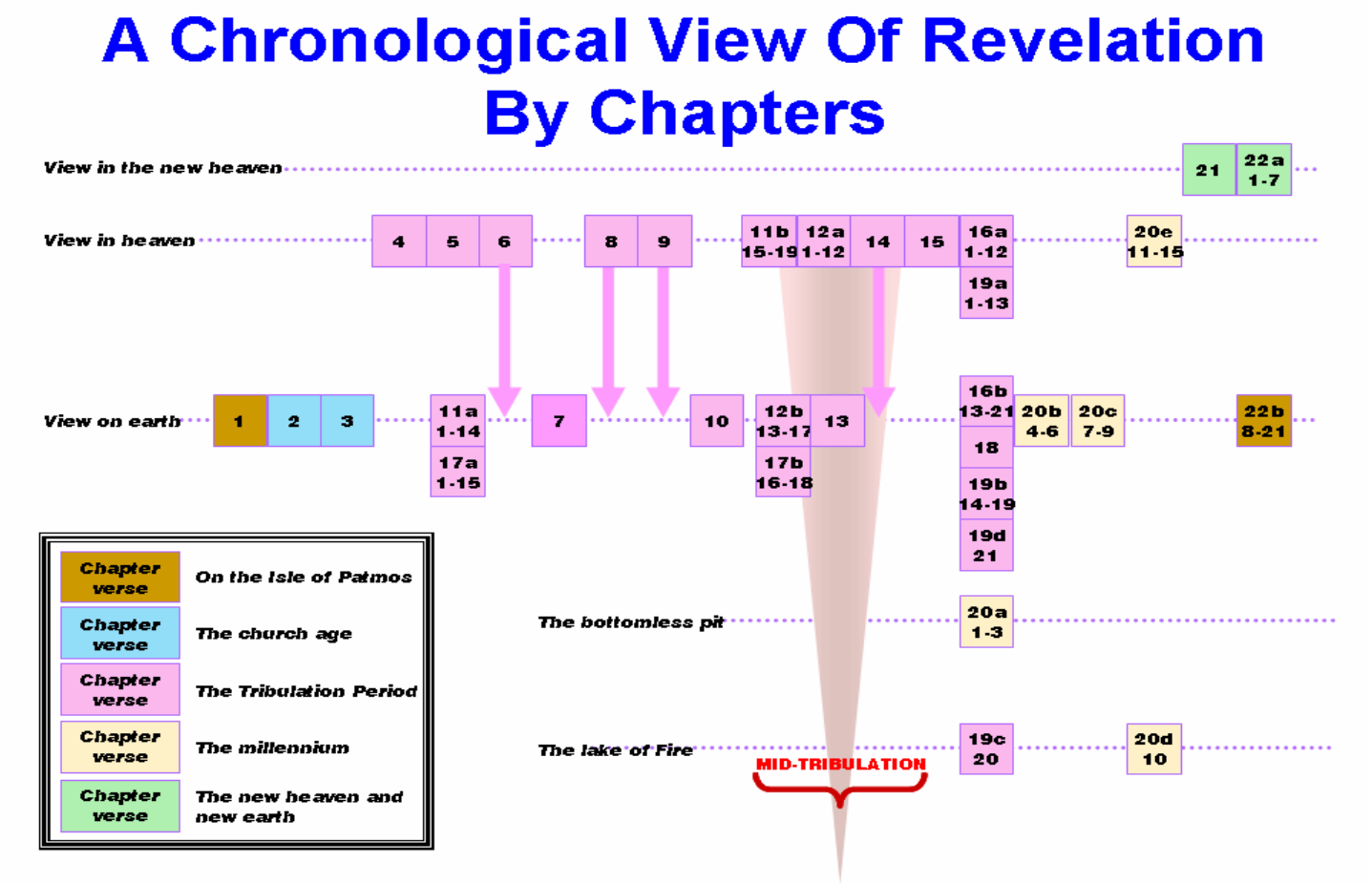
Father on his throne. **22** *"Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."*

- Laodicea, located at the junction of several important trade routes, is 48 miles from Philadelphia and 96 miles from Ephesus. A round trip visit to all the seven churches of Revelation, starting at Laodicea, would be 325 miles. The city, originally named Diospolis ('the city of Jupiter') was given the name "Laodicea" by King Antiochus II. The King, who named the city after his wife, rebuilt it and populated it with Syrians and Jews who migrated from Babylonia. It was the banking center of the region, so it had plenty of money to spend on entertainment, such as the 30,000-seat amphitheater (whose ruins still stand). The city minted coinage, which portrays the worship of the pagan deity Zeus. Laodicea also had a respected medical school. As Aristotle noted, Laodicea was known for the eye salve manufactured there. These things were referred to by Jesus. The Greek word "laos" means people (laity). The Greek word "diece" means "to rule." So, the church in Laodicea was ruled by the people, rather than guided by the Lord. The apostle Paul makes at least four references to Laodicea in his epistle to the Colossians. Interestingly, he references the city even though he had never visited it.
- Why does Jesus refer to Himself as "the Amen" (Verse 14)? Amen means "so be it." In other words, Jesus is saying "This is absolutely certain. I know." The word "witness" (Verse 1) is from the Greek word "martus," translated into the English word "martyr." The Bible says, *"…everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution"* (II Timothy 3:12). Is Verse 1 implying that Jesus was "created" by God, and therefore not equal with God "… *the beginning of God's new creation"* (Verse 1)? The Greek word translated "beginning" is "arche" which means "the origin." The Bible says God the Father created all things through the Son (Colossians 1:16) by the power of the Spirit (Genesis 1:2). In the last days, the question will be, "Who is the Creator"? Evolution is a part of the end-time deception.
- In the near-by city of Hierapolis were hot springs. So, an aqueduct was built to carry this hot water from Hierapolis through Laodicea and on to Colossae. It was a good idea, but by the time the water reached Laodicea, it was lukewarm. The Laodiceans knew hot water was useful, cold water was refreshing, but lukewarm water wasn't good for much. Jesus says the same thing about His people. "If you're hot, I can use you. If you're cold, I can deal with you. But, if you're lukewarm, you'll neither be hot enough to use, nor cold enough to correct (Verse 15). Consequently, He warned "… *I will spit you out of my mouth!"* (Verse 16). The literal translation of the word "spit" in Greek is "to vomit." So, this church that was satisfied to remain lukewarm rather than "on fire" was enough to make Jesus vomit.
- When this was written, smelters would take the gold brought in from the mines and melt it by fire, until the impurities were burned out. They would know the process was complete when the smelter could look into the pot of liquid gold and see the reflection of his own face. Because is the Master Smelter, He uses heat as well. So, to the people of the Laodicean church, who were impure, carnal, and lukewarm, He says, "Get into the fire. Engage yourself in the fire of ministry, like you once did." Not because God wants to watch you burn, but because He wants to warm your heart and get you going again (Verse 18).
- Throughout the Bible, "white garments" represent "the robe of righteousness" given to those who are in Christ (Isaiah 61:10). The Laodiceans were known for a unique kind of wool taken from black sheep. Yet, Jesus tells them, "You may have the most fashionable black garments, but you need garments of white, righteous garments, the covering of My grace" (Verse 18).
- In Verse 18, Jesus tells the Laodiceans to get "*ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see."* It was Jesus who put mud in the blind man's eyes (John 9). It was Jesus who allowed irritation to produce illumination. "You're seeing everything in a carnal way," He says, "and you need to humble yourself before Me and deal with the mud." David prayed, *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.* **24** *Point out anything in me that offends you and lead me along the path of everlasting life"* (Psalm 139:23-24). Confession precedes vision, just as irritation precedes illumination!
- Jesus is primarily speaking to the church in Verse 20. Tragically, some people go to church all their lives but never hear a message on repentance. Yet, to those who do open the door of their hearts to Jesus, He says, if you "*open*

the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends." Jesus is saying, "Open your heart to me, and I'll open heaven to you" (Verse 21).

- **Chapters 4 – 22: "The things that will happen."**

  - Revelation is the only Book of the Bible with its own divine outline, *"Write down what you have seen—both the things that are now happening and the things that will happen"* (Revelation 1:19).
  - **Chapter 1: "What you have seen" – The reality of the Resurrected Jesus.**
  - **Chapters 2 – 3: "The things that are now happening" – Jesus gives 7 messages to 7 churches.** This encompasses the chronology of church history from the beginning of the early church to the present.
  - **Chapters 4 – 22: "The things that will happen."**
    - **Chapters 4 – 5:** The church is raptured and taken to heaven for a 7 year "honeymoon" with our Lord.
    - **Chapters 6 – 19:** The Tribulation occurs on earth as God pours out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting world.
    - **Chapter 20:** The Millennium – a 1,000-year period of peace and prosperity as our Lord rules and reigns from Jerusalem. At the end of the Millennium, Satan is loosed. A final rebellion ensues before Satan is permanently cast into hell.
    - **Chapters 21 – 22:** A new heaven and new earth are created where we will live forever.

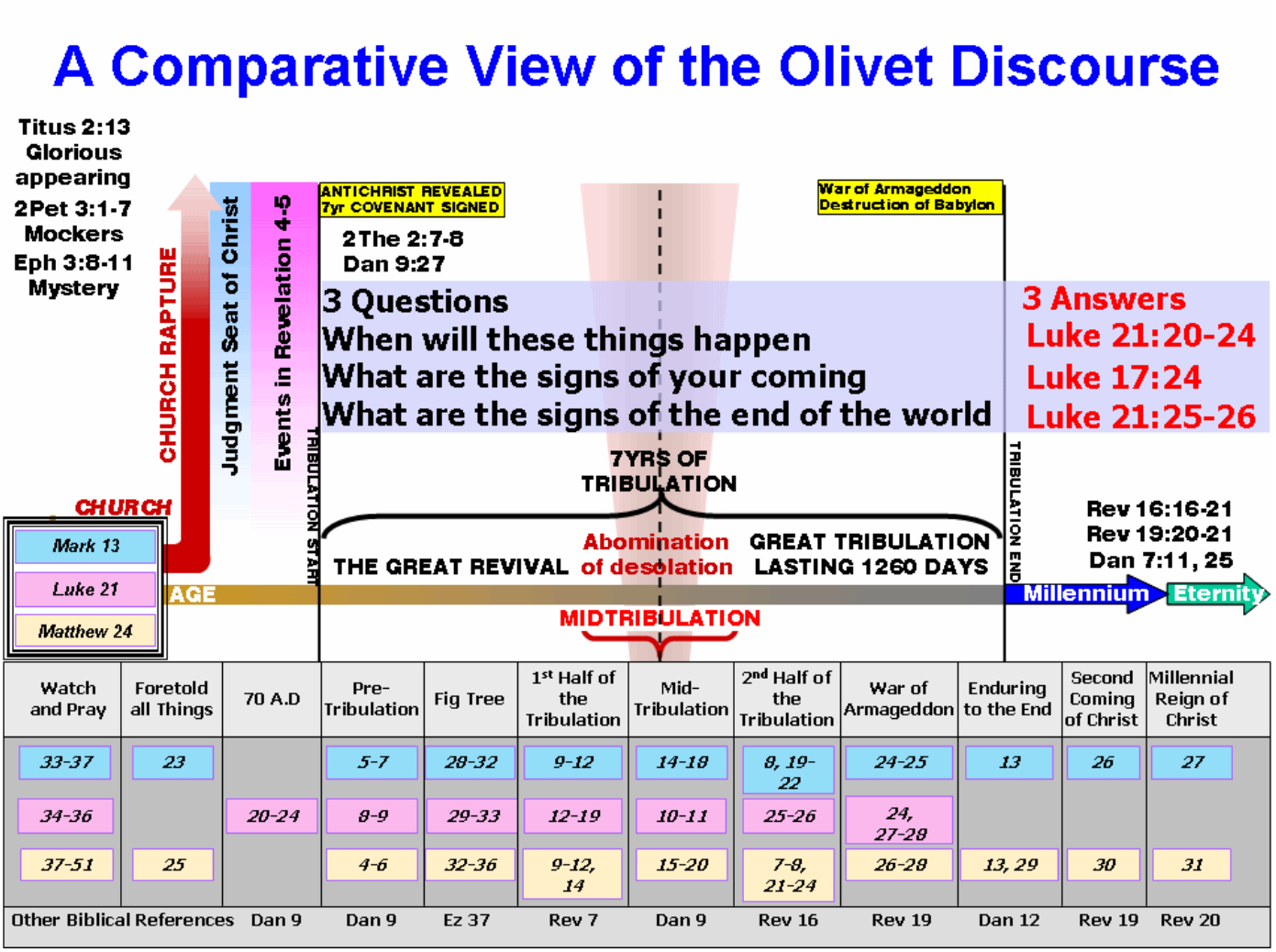


- **What happens if I die before the church is raptured?**
  - When the saved die, they go directly into the presence of the Lord. Jesus said to the thief on the cross, *"I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). At the moment of death, the believer passes immediately into the personal presence of Jesus Christ. Paul said, *"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body (that is, separated from the body by death) and at home with the Lord.'"* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

- The soul goes to be with the Lord in heaven, and the body is buried until the day of resurrection when Jesus returns to the earth. I Thessalonians 4:14 says, *"We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him."* Christians who die are said to be "with Jesus" (that's the soul in the conscious presence of the Lord) and "have fallen asleep in him" (that's the body which "sleeps" in the grave).
- Paul described that great reunion of body and soul: *"For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first"* (I Thessalonians 4:16). Here is a clear promise of future bodily resurrection for the believer. I Corinthians 15:51-55 adds that our bodies will be *"raised imperishable,"* with a body that is perfect in every way. Our new bodies will never decay, never wear out, never suffer injury, never grow old, never get sick, and never die.
- If you know Jesus, you are going from the land of dying to the land of the living. Christians have always faced death with confidence. The word "cemetery" comes from a Greek word meaning "sleeping-place," which refers to their confidence in the promise of the resurrection.
- Can God raise the dead if the body has been burned or lost or vaporized in some terrible explosion? If you can raise the dead, you can raise the dead. Resurrection is God's problem, not ours. We don't need to know "the how" of the resurrection as long as we know "the Who."
- Once our bodies are raised, we will be with the Lord forever. I Thessalonians 4:17 says, *"We will be with the Lord forever."* Speaking of his own return, Jesus said, *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am"* (John 14:2-3).

Chapters 4 – 5: The church is raptured and taken to heaven for a 7 year "honeymoon" with our Lord.

- **Revelation 4:1 – 11:** *"Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this." 2 And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it. 3 The one sitting on the throne was as brilliant as gemstones—like jasper and carnelian. And the glow of an emerald circled his throne like a rainbow. 4 Twenty-four thrones surrounded him, and twenty-four elders sat on them. They were all clothed in white and had gold crowns on their heads. 5 From the throne came flashes of lightning and the rumble of thunder. And in front of the throne were seven torches with burning flames. This is the sevenfold Spirit of God. 6 In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal. In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back. 7 The first of these living beings was like a lion; the second was like an ox; the third had a human face; and the fourth was like an eagle in flight. 8 Each of these living beings had six wings, and their wings were covered all over with eyes, inside and out. Day after day and night after night they keep on saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty — the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come." 9 Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever), 10 the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say, 11 "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased."*
- In the first 3 chapters of Revelation, the word "church" appears **19** times. From chapter 4 to the end of Revelation, the word "church" ***never*** appears. Why? Because in chapter 4, the church is taken out of this world and into heaven. After church history, when the last person gets saved, the bride of Christ will be complete. And we're going up! The rapture can happen at any moment (Luke 17:24-26; Luke 21:20-24 – "The Olivet Discourse").



Watch and Pray	Foretold all Things	70 A.D	Pre-Tribulation	Fig Tree	1st Half of the Tribulation	Mid-Tribulation	2nd Half of the Tribulation	War of Armageddon	Enduring to the End	Second Coming of Christ	Millennial Reign of Christ
33-37	23		5-7	28-32	9-12	14-18	8, 19-22	24-25	13	26	27
34-36		20-24	8-9	29-33	12-19	10-11	25-26	24, 27-28			
37-51	25		4-6	32-36	9-12, 14	15-20	7-8, 21-24	26-28	13, 29	30	31
Other Biblical References		Dan 9	Dan 9	Ez 37	Rev 7	Dan 9	Rev 16	Rev 19	Dan 12	Rev 19	Rev 20

- Chapter 4 give us a glimpse into heaven. God is on the throne. The world is ***not*** spinning out of control. The God of creation will carry out His plans in His perfect time. John is giving us a glimpse of heaven, before showing us what's going to take place on earth, so that we won't be frightened by future events.
- Verse 1 begins with, *"Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven …"* In Revelation 3:20, we saw Jesus knocking at the door. Everyone who opens the door of their heart to Jesus will have the door of heaven opened to them. The Bible says, John not only saw an open door, but he heard the clear invitation to *"come up here"* from Jesus.
- The *"voice … like a trumpet blast"* (Verse 1) refers to the Rapture; when our Lord appears in the clouds to take us, His bride, to heaven. The voice John heard, that sounded like a trumpet blast, was the voice of Christ (Revelation 1: 10 - 11). The Bible says, *"16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. 18 So encourage each other with these words"* (I Thessalonians 4:16 – 18).
- Verse 2 says John was *"in the Spirit, and … saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it."* Four times in the Book of Revelation, John says he was *"in the Spirit"* (Revelation 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). The Holy Spirit was giving John a vision, showing him things, he would otherwise never know.
- The "jasper" stone (Verse 3) was a clear stone, probably a diamond, and speaks of light. John describes this jasper *"as clear as crystal"* (Revelation 21:11). Because God is light, He's not in the dark about the heartaches or challenges we're experiencing. So, He's invited us to find healing, hope and perfect love through the ruby-red

blood of Christ as the nails pierced His hands, as the crown of thorns was clubbed into His head, and as the spear sliced into His side (Romans 5:8). This is represented by the carnelian stone (Verse 3). "Carnelian," also translated as "ruby," was one of the 12 stones on the breastplate of the high priest, one stone for each of the 12 tribes of Israel (Exodus 28). The first of the 12 sons of Jacob was Reuben, whose name means "behold a son." His stone was the "carnelian" (ruby) stone. The last of the 12 sons of Benjamin, whose name means "son of my right hand." Benjamin's stone was a "jasper" (diamond). Thus, this *"one sitting on the throne"* (Verse 3) is Jesus, "Behold, the Son of My right hand."

- The Bible says the throne of God is surrounded by a rainbow (Verse 3). The rainbow represents God's grace (Genesis 9:16). Christians are invited to come boldly unto His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), amazing grace.
- Around the main throne was a circle of 24 other thrones (Verse 4). Elders sat on these thrones, dressed in white and wearing crowns of gold. These 24 elders refer to the 12 patriarchs and the 12 apostles because each of the 12 gates into the New Jerusalem is the name of one of the patriarchs; and each of the foundations is the name of an apostle (Revelation 21). Thus, the 24 elders symbolize all of God's people; the patriarchs representing the Old Testament believers, the apostles representing the New Testament believers.
- Lightning and thunder appeared at Mount Sinai when God gave the people His laws (Exodus 19:16). Remember, John is writing to people who are going through terrible times. John is encouraging the believers that God is going to appear once again to pour out justice upon the earth (Verse 5). In reference to Isaiah 11:2, John describes "*seven torches with burning flames"* representing the sevenfold nature of God's Spirit (Verse 5). The 7 torches are equated with the Holy Spirit in Zechariah 4:2-6. Glass was very rare in New Testament times, and crystal-clear glass was virtually impossible to find (I Corinthians 13:12). The "*shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal"* represents the peace of God (Verse 6).
- The 4 living beings (Verse 6) are described in greater detail in Ezekiel 1:5-10 and Ezekiel 10. They are cherubim, a special class of angels, with 6 wings and covered with eyes (Verse 8). The cherubim were the angels carved into the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. After they sinned, God used cherubim with flaming sword to keep Adam and Eve from eating of the tree of life and living in their fallen condition (Genesis 3:24).
- The 4 faces of these cherubim correspond to the 4 Gospels (Verse 7). Matthew presents Jesus as King, represented by a lion. Mark presents Jesus as a Servant, represented by an ox. Luke presents Jesus in His humanity, represented by the face of a man. John presents Jesus as the Son of God, represented by an eagle. An eagle soars higher than any other creature. It's the only animal able to look directly into the sun, just as only the Son of God beholds the glory of the Father. These cherubim never stop singing, *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty — the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come"* (Verse 8). The word "holy" means "whole," without flaw in any way. These cherubim worship God in ecstasy and awe, not because they are "programmed" to do this, but because they are overwhelmed by His beauty and holiness, *"Honor the Lord, you heavenly beings; honor the Lord for his glory and strength. Honor the Lord for the glory of his name. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness"* Psalm 29:1-2).
- As the cherubim worship, the 24 elders join in (Verse 10). They cast their crowns before the throne. The Bible names five different crowns reserved for those who are obedient to His calling:
  - The **"Crown of Life"** (Martyr's Crown) – Given to those who have suffered much, yet endured with a sweet Christian spirit, even unto death (Revelation 2:10).
  - The **"Incorruptible Crown"** (Victor's Crown) – Given to those who forsake the pleasures of this world in order to serve Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 9:25).
  - The **"Crown of Glory"** (Elders Crown) – Given to those who have given their lives to the teaching of the Bible (I Peter 5:2-4).
  - The **"Crown of Righteousness"** – Given to those who look forward to the return of Jesus and live accordingly (II Timothy 4:8). A person who lives in constant expectation of Jesus' return is going to live righteously (I John 3:3).
  - The **"Crown of Rejoicing"** (Soul Winners Crown) – Given to those who have given themselves to sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ (I Thessalonians 2:19-20).

- The purpose of the crowns isn't to make a fashion statement. They're highly significant. This life is the only opportunity we have to get them. No wonder Paul tells us to run the race so we may win the prize (I Corinthians 9:24). Because it's the Lord who gives us the ability to witness, to love God and love people, to lay down our life in ministry, when we get to heaven, we'll say. "*"You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power"* (Verse 11). How do we worship? The Greek word for "*worship*" is "*proskuneo*" which means "*to turn and kiss*." So, true worship is a sincere expression intended for the Lord's pleasure. Worship is the program of heaven and the purpose of creation.

- In **Chapters 1 – 3** of the Book of Revelation, John "sets the stage" to record what's about to take place. In **Chapter 4**, the curtain rises, as he describes the throne room of the King. In **Chapter 5**, the drama begins.

- **Revelation 5:1 – 14:** *"Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. There was writing on the inside and the outside of the scroll, and it was sealed with seven seals.* ***2*** *And I saw a strong angel, who shouted with a loud voice: "Who is worthy to break the seals on this scroll and open it?"* ***3*** *But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read it.* ***4*** *Then I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and read it.* ***5*** *But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, "Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals."* ***6*** *Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which represent the sevenfold Spirit of God that is sent out into every part of the earth.* ***7*** *He stepped forward and took the scroll from the right hand of the one sitting on the throne.* ***8*** *And when he took the scroll, the four living beings and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people.* ***9*** *And they sang a new song with these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.* ***10*** *And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth."* ***11*** *Then I looked again, and I heard the voices of thousands and millions of angels around the throne and of the living beings and the elders.* ***12*** *And they sang in a mighty chorus: "Worthy is the Lamb who was slaughtered — to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing."* ***13*** *And then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea. They sang: "Blessing and honor and glory and power belong to the one sitting on the throne and to the Lamb forever and ever."* ***14*** *And the four living beings said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped the Lamb"* (Revelation 5:1 – 14).
- If the "scroll" John sees is similar to other scrolls in John's day, it was made of 8" X 10" sheets of papyrus, connected horizontally, and wound around a wooden handle (Verse 1). Letters the size of Jude, Philemon, and II and III John would all be written on one single piece of papyrus. The Book of Revelation would require a scroll about 15' long. This scroll was written on both sides and sealed with seven seals (Verse 1). These seals would usually be a design or name engraved into rock, metal or precious stone which was then pressed into clay or soft wax to harden. Seals were used to authenticate ownership, and to deny access to certain people (Jesus' tomb was sealed). The seals were located throughout the scroll, so that as each one was broken, more of the scroll could be read.
- In the days of John, only a particular type of document was written on both sides and sealed with seven seals: a title deed to a piece of property. Initially, a title deed would be written only on one side and sealed with a single seal (Jeremiah 32:6-29). But, if the owner became unable to meet his financial obligations, he would have to relinquish his title deed, and on the "back side" of the scroll, his debts would be listed. Then, seven seals would be placed. If at any time during the ensuing 7 years, the debts were paid, the seals would be broken, and the title deed returned. This explains the "*scroll in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. There was writing on the inside and the outside of the scroll, and it was sealed with seven seals"* (Verse 1). It's the title deed to planet earth.

- The title deed to this planet was originally given to Adam in the Garden of Eden when God told him to *"Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground"* (Genesis 1:28). But Adam forfeited his right to ownership when he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Romans 5:14). This explains why Paul called Satan the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4) and why Jesus referred to him as the prince of this world (John 12:31). So, when people say, "If God is so good, why are there wars, cancer, floods, pandemics, murder and injustice?" – They're blaming the wrong person. The planet God gave Adam and Eve was absolutely perfect. Man is to blame for turning the planet over to Satan. And he's the reason the people to whom John was writing were watching their loved ones fed to lions, crucified or tortured. Revelation was written to address the questions of the early church, and the questions people are still asking.
- So, the angel asks, *"Who is worthy to break the seals on this scroll and open it?"* (Verse 2). Notice he doesn't ask, "*Who is **willing**?*" Alexander the Great was willing. Genghis Khan was willing. Charlemagne was willing. Napoleon was willing. Hitler was willing. But the angel doesn't ask, "*Who is **willing**?*" but "*Who is **worthy**?*" When no one comes forward to reclaim earth's title deed, tears begin to flow (Verse 4). The Greek words "*weep bitterly"* actually means "*sobbed convulsively.*" John is overwhelmed with grief when he realizes the earth would remain in Satan's grasp forever (Verse 4). Although John was "sobbing convulsively," those around him knew something he didn't.
- ***5** But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, "Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals"* (Verse 5). This refers to Genesis 49, where Jacob calls his 12 sons together to pronounce a blessing upon them. As he comes to Judah, Jacob describes him as a "young lion," then says that power and authority would be his until the coming of the Messiah (Genesis 49).
- Jesus was born of the lineage of David. But, because Jesus preceded David by all eternity, He's the Root of David, as well as the Heir to David's throne (Verse 5). Because Jesus is from David's family line, He fulfills the promise of the Messiah (Genesis 49). So, the angel tells John not to weep, because this won't go on forever. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Heir to David's throne, has won the victory!
- So, John turns around and sees "… *a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders …"* (Verse 6). The Greek word translated "Lamb" (Verse 6) means a "pet lamb." The lamb John saw looked as if it had been slaughtered. According to Isaiah 52:14, "*His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man.*" It's not only that Jesus' beard was plucked out, His back was beaten, His side was pierced, and His wrists and feet were nailed. It's not only the psychological and spiritual stress He experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane that caused the blood vessels in His face to burst. Jesus experienced torture in ways we'll never understand until we see Him. However, the one thing that terrorized our Lord more than anything, was that He would drink from the cup of God's wrath, for the sins of the world (Mark 14:36, Luke 22:42). In the Old Testament, lambs were sacrificed to atone for sins. The Lamb of God was the final sacrifice for all sins (Isaiah 53:7; Hebrews 10:1-12).
- The "*seven horns*" represent perfect power (I Kings 22:11; Zechariah 1:18). Although Christ is a sacrificial lamb, He is not weak. He was killed, but now He lives in power and strength (Verse 6). The "*seven eyes*" represent His perfect sight (Verse 6). The "*seven eyes*" represent the Holy Spirit.
- The Bible says the 24 elders and 4 living beings "*held gold bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of God's people"* (Verse 8). Do you remember Zacharias? An angel appeared to him saying, "Your prayer is heard. Your wife, Elizabeth, is going to have a baby" (Luke 1:13). Zacharias hadn't prayed that prayer in decades. But God doesn't forget our prayers. Many of the blessings in our lives today are answers to prayers that we prayed long ago. Our prayers are kept in gold bowls. How full is yours?
- Who is the only group of people who can say, "*You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation"* (Verse 9)? Only the church! This means the church is in heaven in Revelation 5, ***before*** the

Tribulation begins in Revelation 6. People from every nation are praising God before His throne. Jesus has already paid the penalty for sin. He is now gathering us into His Kingdom and making us priests (I Peter 2:5-9). In the future we will reign with Him (Luke 22:29-30).

- Will there be dogs, cats and pets in heaven (Verse 13)? The Lord says: "*I will create a new heaven and a new earth .... The wolf and the lamb will feed together. They will not do what is evil or destroy on My entire holy mountain*" (Isaiah 65:17, 25). Although we don't know for certain, the Bible says a great deal about animals, portraying them as earth's second most important inhabitants. God entrusted animals to us, and our relationships with animals are a significant part of our lives. Scripture's descriptions of animals peacefully inhabiting the earth may have application to a millennial kingdom on the old earth, but their primary reference appears to be to God's eternal kingdom, where mankind and animals will together enjoy a redeemed earth. Many people want to know whether their pets might live again. Romans 8:20-23 sees animals as part of a suffering creation eagerly awaiting deliverance through humanity's resurrection. This seems to require that some animals that lived, suffered and died on the old earth must be made whole on the new earth. Would some of those animals be our pets? Wouldn't it be just like God to take animals entrusted to our care in the old world and allow us to enjoy with them the wonders of the new world?
- The Bible says "Amen" simply means "yes." *"For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory"* (II Corinthians 1:20). Because the Lamb that was slain has taken control of the Book (the scroll), the title deed to earth, continuous worship fills heaven. He is worthy!

- **The Judgment Seat of Christ.**
  - Immediately after the rapture, every Christian will stand before Christ to be judged by Him. This has nothing to do with salvation, for only the saved will be there (I Corinthians 3:11-15).
  - The Bible names five different crowns reserved for those who are obedient to His calling (see notes above on Revelation 4:10). Works with wrong motives (deeds done with the intention of impressing others) are worthless. They will not survive the test of fire (I Corinthians 3:9-15).

- **The Marriage of the Lamb.**
  - Through the Judgment Seat of Christ, the bride (Christians) will wear "bright and clean" linen, which is "the righteous acts of the saints" (Revelation 19:17).
  - At this point the Lamb (Jesus Christ) takes the bride (the Christians) for his wife, but the Marriage ***Supper*** of the Lamb does not take place until after the second coming of Christ (during the first part of the Millennium) when all believers throughout the ages will be present (Matthew 14:12-15).

- **The Rise of the Antichrist.**
  - The Tribulation period does not begin immediately after the rapture. It will begin with the Antichrist's signing of a covenant with Israel for seven years, a covenant that he breaks in the middle of the Tribulation (Daniel 9:27).
  - Following the rapture of the Christians (to meet her bridegroom – Jesus Christ), merely "religious" people will be left behind and help facilitate the great delusion of the Antichrist in the form of a world church (Revelation 17:1). This ecumenical church will pave the way for a one-world religion, which will include the worship of Antichrist (Revelation 13:16-18).
  - The "False Prophet" will be the head of the one-world church (Satan's harlot) during the Tribulation, and advocate receiving the "Mark of the Beast" (Revelation 13:11-18).

- **The Tribulation.**

Chapters 6 – 19: The Tribulation occurs on earth as God pours out His wrath on a Christ-rejecting world.

Opening of the Seven Seal Judgements – Chapters 6 – 8:5

- **Revelation 6: 1 – 17:** *"As I watched, the Lamb broke the first of the seven seals on the scroll. Then I heard one of the four living beings say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" **2** I looked up and saw a white horse standing there. Its rider carried a bow, and a crown was placed on his head. He rode out to win many battles and gain the victory. **3** When the Lamb broke the second seal, I heard the second living being say, "Come!" **4** Then another horse appeared, a red one. Its rider was given a mighty sword and the authority to take peace from the earth. And there was war and slaughter everywhere. **5** When the Lamb broke the third seal, I heard the third living being say, "Come!" I looked up and saw a black horse, and its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. **6** And I heard a voice from among the four living beings say, "A loaf of wheat bread or three loaves of barley will cost a day's pay. And don't waste the olive oil and wine." **7** When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living being say, "Come!" **8** I looked up and saw a horse whose color was pale green. Its rider was named Death, and his companion was the Grave. These two were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals. **9** When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony. **10** They shouted to the Lord and said, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?" **11** Then a white robe was given to each of them. And they were told to rest a little longer until the full number of their brothers and sisters — their fellow servants of Jesus who were to be martyred—had joined them. **12** I watched as the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became as dark as black cloth, and the moon became as red as blood. **13** Then the stars of the sky fell to the earth like green figs falling from a tree shaken by a strong wind. **14** The sky was rolled up like a scroll, and all of the mountains and islands were moved from their places. **15** Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. **16** And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. **17** For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to survive?"*

End Times Correlation Chart 1		
Matthew 24 and Luke 21 as they Relate to Revelation 6		
Conditions	Gospels	The Revelation
False Messiah and False Christs	Matthew 24:5, 11	Revelation 6:2
Wars and Rumors of Wars	Matthew 24:6-7	Revelation 6:2-4
International Discord	Matthew 24:7	Revelation 6:3-4
Famines	Matthew 24:7	Revelation 6:5-8
Pestilence	Luke 21:11	Revelation 6:9-11
Persecution / Martyrdom	Matthew 24:9	Revelation 6:8
Earthquakes	Matthew 24:7	Revelation 6:12
Cosmic Phenomena	Luke 21:11	Revelation 6:12-14

- From our study of Chapter 5, we know the scroll had a total of 7 seals (Revelation 5:1). Chapter 6 is a parallel to the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Luke 21). Chapters 6 – 19 describe the 7-year period of the Tribulation.
- There is more space allocated in the Bible to the Tribulation than any subject except salvation and the promise of Christ's second coming. It is mentioned over 49 times in the Old Testament, and over 15 times in the New Testament. The Tribulation will last seven years (Daniel 9:24-27). It will holocaust of major proportions, combining the wrath of God, the fury of Satan, and the evil nature of man run wild.
- Why does God allow the Tribulation?
  1. To bring time to an end (Daniel 9:24).
  2. To fulfill Israel's prophecies (Ezekiel 37 – 38).
  3. To shake people from their false sense of security.
  4. To force people to choose Christ or Antichrist (II Peter 3:9).
- The Tribulation is the result of the rebellion and sin. As each of the first 4 seals is opened, a rider on a horse appears. By their appearance, it's clear these guys aren't looking for a game of polo. These riders have come to be called the "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse."
- The first rider is on a white horse, which would normally be a symbol of victory (Verse 2). Although "*Its rider carried a bow, and a crown was placed on his head"* the rider on this white horse is not Jesus. The Greek word translated "crown" is "*stephanos*" (Verse 2). A "*diadem*" is a permanent crown. A "*stephanos*" is a wreath made of olive branches that only lasts for a short while.
- Verse 2 says the rider of this horse "*rode out to win many battles and gain the victory."* How will the rider of this white horse, carrying a bow, and wearing a crown of olive branches gain victory? He will be a "*master of intrigue … a master of deception.*" The Bible says, "***23*** *At the end of their rule, when their sin is at its height, a fierce king, a master of intrigue, will rise to power.* ***24*** *He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will cause a shocking amount of destruction and succeed in everything he does. He will destroy powerful leaders and devastate the holy people.* ***25*** *He will be a master of deception and will become arrogant; he will destroy many without warning. He will even take on the Prince of princes in battle, but he will be broken, though not by human*

power" (Daniel 8:23-25). That is exactly what Jesus prophesied, *"43 For I have come to you in my Father's name, and you have rejected me. Yet if others come in their own name, you gladly welcome them"* (John 5:43).

- The Antichrist will deceive unbelievers into thinking that he is a wonderful man with all the answers to the problems of mankind. The unbelievers on the earth will have little or no Biblical knowledge so they will buy into his lies. The Antichrist will be perceived as a good man of peace, represented by the white horse, but his peace will be a false peace.
- The Antichrist will rise to power very quickly and be turned lose with his evil schemes to do as he wills. There will be no restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit or help from God of any kind as the Holy Spirit was removed at the beginning of the Tribulation, along with the Church.
- It's important to remember that Jesus (The Lamb) is The One breaking the seals in heaven (Revelation 5:5). Each of the four living creatures summons one of the horsemen as each seal is broken. The Bible makes it clear that God is in control. God is in charge of even the worst that's about to happen.
- So, who does the Antichrist bring with him? *"Then another horse appeared, a red one. Its rider was given a mighty sword and the authority to take peace from the earth. And there was war and slaughter everywhere"* (Verse 4). This time the prophecy reveals him riding on a red horse, indicating blood. The red horse following the white horse of Antichrist is war. The Antichrist will be given the power to conquer by killing people and by causing war, murder and confusion.
- When Jesus was asked about the signs of the end of the age, He said, *"4 Don't let anyone mislead you, 5 for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah.' They will deceive many. 6 And you will hear of wars and threats of wars, but don't panic. Yes, these things must take place, but the end won't follow immediately. 7 Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in many parts of the world. 8 But all this is only the first of the birth pains, with more to come. 9 "Then you will be arrested, persecuted, and killed. You will be hated all over the world because you are my followers. 10 And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. 11 And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. 12 Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 And the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it; and then the end will come"* (Matthew 24:4-11).
- The rider of the first horse based his success on peace, but it's only temporary. The rider of the second horse brings war. Anyone who believes there are true political solutions to the world's problems is sadly mistaken. Politics is about gaining and maintaining power. Power always brings war. History bears this out. And war is always disguised to look acceptable, even patriotic. The Bible says, *"What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Don't they come from the evil desires at war within you? 2 You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can't get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it"* (James 4:1-2).
- Anyone (or church) that looks to the government for a solution to our world's problems will be disappointed. Jesus refused to be pulled into politics when the people wanted to make Him king (John 6:15). When Peter raised his sword to fight a "righteous war," Jesus said, "Put it away. That's not My way" (Matthew 26:52).
- The rider of the black horse symbolizes famine (Verse 5). Food shortages and starvation for all, except the wealthy. The Antichrist will need the assistance of the rich unbelievers to accomplish his goal of conquering the world. In addition, this prophesy reveals that he will be able to "tip the scales" in his favor. There will be an "imbalance" in nature.
- *"A loaf of wheat bread or three loaves of barley will cost a day's pay. And don't waste the olive oil and wine"* refers to a global economy so oppressive that masses of people will exist on rations. A full day's wage will only buy a little wheat or a little barley because the Antichrist's system that is based on the mark of the beast (Verse 6).
- *"… the olive oil and wine"* (Verse 6) represent luxury. The wealthy of the world somehow continue to get wealthier even in times of war and famine. History bears this out. For example, Alfred Nobel, of the Peace Prize fame, made his fortune manufacturing explosives. When his father, also named Alfred, died, an obituary

mistaking father for son stated that "he was a rich industrialist who made his fortune in war." Alfred was horrified, thinking that would be his legacy. So, from that day on, he set apart a substantial sum of money to fund prizes for peace, science, medicine and literature.

- The Bible says in Verses 7 – 8: ***7*** *When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the fourth living being say, "Come!"* ***8*** *I looked up and saw a horse whose color was pale green. Its rider was named Death, and his companion was the Grave. These two were given authority over one-fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and famine and disease and wild animals."* This "pale green" colored horse comes from the Greek word "*chloros*" from which we get the word "*chlorine*" (bleached) and "*chlorophyll*" (green).
- The Bible says power will be given to the Antichrist to kill one fourth of the world's population in the first twenty-one months of the tribulation (Verse 8). These will be people whose hearts have been hardened against God to the point where they cannot change. No amount of reason, discipline, common sense or judgment will change them. God will hand them over to the Antichrist. These unbelievers are the very people who thought the Antichrist was so wonderful in the beginning will be killed by his hand and sent to Hell. This is an illustration to the world that Satan has absolutely no mercy on anyone, not even his own followers.
- The words "wild animals" (Verse 8) is "*therion*" in the original Greek language. This word doesn't necessarily mean gigantic or monstrous. It means something frightful of any size. It could include viruses (coronaviruses, e-coli viruses, etc.). Each of the three preceding horsemen appeared in disguise. "Deception" appeared as a peacemaker on a white horse. "War" appeared as patriotism on a red horse. "Famine" appeared as luxury on a black horse. And this fourth horseman is no exception. What does it say about a culture (like ours) whose number one industry is healthcare? Those who boast in science and healthcare will blame the believers who come to Christ during the Tribulation the rampant sickness and disease. Many people will become believers during the tribulation and will be persecuted and martyred for their belief. They won't be allowed to buy or sell anything, and food will be in short supply.
- The Bible says, "***9*** *When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of all who had been martyred for the word of God and for being faithful in their testimony.* ***10*** *They shouted to the Lord and said, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you judge the people who belong to this world and avenge our blood for what they have done to us?"* ***11*** *Then a white robe was given to each of them. And they were told to rest a little longer until the full number of their brothers and sisters — their fellow servants of Jesus who were to be martyred—had joined them"* (Verses 9-11).
- Things are going badly. The bow of the horseman on the white horse is broken. Blood flows. Famine follows. Disease and sickness run rampant. So, the believers who come to Christ during the Tribulation are blamed and martyred. This isn't new. During the Black Plague, one out of every four people in Europe died. The one group of people spared was the Jews. Why? Because they simply followed the biblical principles of hygiene. But the political leaders blamed the Jews for the plague. So, the Jews were persecuted and slaughtered. The same will be true during the Tribulation. Amid sickness and blood, economic troubles and war, believers will be martyred. And this is where the Lord intervenes.
- Each judgment gets worse than the one before, because of God's magnificent love He is doing everything in his power to get people to turn to Christ. However, God will never force his will upon anyone. He knows how horrible it will be for individuals and he is doing everything possible to get unbelievers to accept the sacrifice of Christ. Many will still resist God, even after they see these things happening, so God still has sixteen judgments to go.
- The Bible says, "***12*** *I watched as the Lamb broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake. The sun became as dark as black cloth, and the moon became as red as blood.* ***13*** *Then the stars of the sky fell to the earth like green figs falling from a tree shaken by a strong wind.* ***14*** *The sky was rolled up like a scroll, and all of the mountains and islands were moved from their places"* (Revelation 6:12-14).
- The Bible says a cataclysmic shaking of the earth will take place. Some say this is the result of a nuclear war, in which the sun would be darkened, and tectonic plates would shift. But a simpler explanation is that God Himself will get involved when He sees His children being attacked. The Bible says, "*God, the Lord, created the heavens*

and stretched them out" (Isaiah 42:5). The Bible says, "*The heavens above will melt away and disappear like a rolled-up scroll*" (Isaiah 34:4). Skeptics laughed at this for years. Until now. Recent finding verify that the universe is expanding, but quantum physics and the findings of the Hubbell spacecraft verify that the universe is actually a "scroll-like" shape.

- The Bible says, "*15 Then everyone—the kings of the earth, the rulers, the generals, the wealthy, the powerful, and every slave and free person—all hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains. 16 And they cried to the mountains and the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of the one who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. 17 For the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to survive?"* (Revelation 6:15-17) So, refusing to call to the "Rock of Ages," people have no other choice but to cry to the rocks of the earth. So, "*who is able to survive*" (Verse 17)? We can. Because God hasn't appointed us to wrath, but to salvation. The Bible says, "*9 For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. 10 Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. 11 So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing*" (I Thessalonians 5:9-11).
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- **Revelation 7:1 – 17:** *Then I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds so they did not blow on the earth or the sea, or even on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel coming up from the east, carrying the seal of the living God. And he shouted to those four angels, who had been given power to harm land and sea, 3 "Wait! Don't harm the land or the sea or the trees until we have placed the seal of God on the foreheads of his servants." 4 And I heard how many were marked with the seal of God—144,000 were sealed from all the tribes of Israel: from Judah - 12,000; from Reuben - 12,000; from Gad - 12,000; from Asher - 12,000; from Naphtali - 12,000; from Manasseh - 12,000; from Simeon - 12,000; from Levi - 12,000; from Issachar - 12,000; from Zebulun - 12,000; from Joseph - 12,000; from Benjamin - 12,000. 9 After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. 10 And they were shouting with a great roar, "Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell before the throne with their faces to the ground and worshiped God. 12 They sang, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and ever! Amen." 13 Then one of the twenty-four elders asked me, "Who are these who are clothed in white? Where did they come from?" 14 And I said to him, "Sir, you are the one who knows." Then he said to me, "These are the ones who died in the great tribulation. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white. 15 "That is why they stand in front of God's throne and serve him day and night in his Temple. And he who sits on the throne will give them shelter. 16 They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun. 17 For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes."*
- The "four winds" (Verse 1) represent … the judgment of God (Jeremiah 49:36; 51:1, 16). The seals have been opened, and suddenly it is eerily quiet.
- The "seal of the living God" (Verse 2) was a concept well understood by the people of John's time. A carpenter would seal with wax the lumber he chose before it was shipped across the Aegean Sea. When it arrived at the port nearest him, the builder would carry away the lumber that had his seal upon them. Our "Master Carpenter," Jesus Christ, has chosen us to be the material of His eternal temple. So, He has "sealed" us with His Spirit. The Bible says, *"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God [but seek to please Him], by whom you were sealed and marked [branded as God's own] for the day of redemption [the final deliverance from the consequences of sin]"* (Ephesians 4:30).
- After he killed Abel, Cain feared for his own life. But God promised to protect him. The Bible says, *"… the Lord put an identifying mark on Cain as a warning not to kill him"* (Genesis 4:15). After six terrible seals, we find 144,000 good seals upon those marked by God as His servants during the Tribulation (Revelation 7:2-4). Every single one of these servants will survive the Tribulation to stand with the Lord (Revelation 14:1).

- So, who are these 144,000 servants? Jehovah Witnesses are one group claiming to be the 144,000. But they had to change their doctrine after their group grew to more than 144,000. Originally, the Mormons claimed to be the 144,000. So did the Seventh Day Adventists (Ellen G. White), and the Worldwide Church of God (Garner Ted Armstrong). Throughout history, people have attempted to take Israel out of end time prophecy. These people argue that all of God's promises to Israel were passed on to the church because the Jews rejected Jesus. That's why many Protestant pastors initially supported Adolph Hitler. But they were wrong. God is not through with His people. His promises to them are firmly rooted in the five covenants He made with them, including:
    - **The Abrahamic Covenant:** God promised to bless Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12:1-3). God established a covenant with Isaac (son of Abraham and Sarah), the grandfather of Judah, whose offspring now occupy the modern land of Israel. Ancient rivalry between Abraham's grandsons, Jacob and Esau (the twin sons of Isaac). Esau was the firstborn but sold his birthright to his younger brother Jacob. So, Esau hated Jacob (Genesis 27:41). Esau is also called Edom (Genesis 36). The Edomites intermarried with the Ishmaelites, beginning with Esau himself (Genesis 28:9). The leading tribe of Edom, the Amalekites, continually harassed Israel (Exodus 17). God said that He would have "war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Exodus 17:16). The Bible confirms both historically and prophetically that Edom, Ishmael and Amalek are joined in a confederacy against Israel (Psalm 83:4-8). Muslims acknowledge Ishmael (son of Abraham and Hagar) as the ancestor of the Arabs (Genesis 16:15-16). Arabs and Israelis have been at war since the modern state of Israel was established.
    - **The Palestinian Covenant:** God gave 300,000 square miles of land to the Jews, from the Euphrates River to the Nile River, even though at the height of their rule under Solomon, they only possessed 30,000 square miles (Genesis 13:14).
    - **The Mosaic Covenant:** Also known as "The Law," God promised to bless Israel if they followed His commandments (Deuteronomy 28). Of the five covenants, only the Mosaic Covenant is conditional.
    - **The Davidic Covenant:** God promised that an eternal King would come from David's lineage. This was fulfilled in Jesus (II Samuel 7).
    - **The New Covenant:** God promised to give Israel a new heart, upon which He would write His will (Jeremiah 31:31-33).
- So, God isn't through with the Jew. Because His promises to them are unconditional, they can't be forfeited. That's why in Romans 9-11, God says, "Look at Israel. I haven't turned My back on them. And I won't turn My back on you."
- Listed tribe by tribe, the 144,000 refer to 144,000 Jews who will preach throughout the world during the Tribulation (Verses 5-8). Note that Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, take the place of Joseph (Verse 8). But, if Joseph is replaced by two tribes, yet the number remains 12, a tribe must be missing. The missing tribe is Dan. Why? God specifically says that any tribe involved in idolatry, would be separated from the remaining tribes of Israel (Deuteronomy 29). That's exactly what happened to Dan. When they came into the Promised Land, the people of Dan were given coastal territory. But they weren't happy. So, they migrated to the area north of the Sea of Galilee, near the pagans. And they began to worship idols (Judges 18:30-31). So, Dan was eliminated as a tribe (Deuteronomy 29:21). But, when the Lord returns to establish His kingdom in Israel, Dan is the first tribe given their allotment (Ezekiel 48:1-3). This represents the incredible grace, mercy, and forgiveness of our Lord.
- This causes the angels, elders, and living creatures in heaven to burst forth in worship and give praise and glory to God (Verse 11). One of the elders gave John a pop quiz "Who are they, and where did they come from? John dodged the question by saying, "Why don't you tell me?" (Verses 13-14) That's exactly what any mature Christian is supposed to do. We shouldn't wait for someone to ask about our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Although they *may* ask, most likely they never will. We're not to wait for them to ask. We're to be like this elder and initiate a spiritual discussion.
- In Revelation 4 – 5, John recognized the church. Yet, he doesn't recognize the "*vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands"* (Revelation 7:9). Therefore, they can't be the

church. So, who are the people described in Verses 9-10? We know the angels were thrilled to see these people arrive in heaven (Verse 12). Jesus said that when just one lost person is saved, all of heaven rejoices. The Bible says, *"… there is joy in the presence of the angels of God when one sinner repents"* (Luke 15:10). So, these are people who were lost, but became followers of Jesus Christ during the Tribulation. However, they are not the church (the body of Christ). How do we know?

1. These people stand *before* the throne (Verse 9).
2. The bride of Christ sits *on* the throne (Revelation 3:21).
3. These people *serve* the Lord (Verse 15).
4. The bride of Christ is served by the Lord. The Bible says, *"The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! 38 He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn. But whenever he comes, he will reward the servants who are ready"* (Luke 12:37-38).

- The Bible says these people died of hunger, thirst and scorching heat (Verse 16). But, never again for eternity will they experience pain or discomfort. Not only will any physical needs be met, but their emotional and spiritual needs will be met as well (Verses 16-17).
- Therefore, be faithful in sharing the gospel, even if you're not seeing people respond. Why? Because the Bible says the greatest revival in world history will take place *after* the Rapture. We saw in Verse 9 a "*vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands"* (Revelation 7:9).
- The seventh seal begins a new series of judgements known as the seven trumpet judgements.
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- **Revelation 8:1 – 13:** *"When the Lamb broke the seventh seal on the scroll, there was silence throughout heaven for about half an hour. 2 I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and they were given seven trumpets. 3 Then another angel with a gold incense burner came and stood at the altar. And a great amount of incense was given to him to mix with the prayers of God's people as an offering on the gold altar before the throne. 4 The smoke of the incense, mixed with the prayers of God's holy people, ascended up to God from the altar where the angel had poured them out. 5 Then the angel filled the incense burner with fire from the altar and threw it down upon the earth; and thunder crashed, lightning flashed, and there was a terrible earthquake. 6 Then the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepared to blow their mighty blasts. 7 The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood were thrown down on the earth. One-third of the earth was set on fire, one-third of the trees were burned, and all the green grass was burned. 8 Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and a great mountain of fire was thrown into the sea. One-third of the water in the sea became blood, 9 one-third of all things living in the sea died, and one-third of all the ships on the sea were destroyed. 10 Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from the sky, burning like a torch. It fell on one-third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star was Bitterness. It made one-third of the water bitter, and many people died from drinking the bitter water. 12 Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and one-third of the sun was struck, and one-third of the moon, and one-third of the stars, and they became dark. And one-third of the day was dark, and also one-third of the night. 13 Then I looked, and I heard a single eagle crying loudly as it flew through the air, "Terror, terror, terror to all who belong to this world because of what will happen when the last three angels blow their trumpets."*

- As we've studied the Book of Revelation, we've read of ecstatic, exuberant, and exalting praise to God in heaven. But suddenly, at the opening of the seventh and final seal of the scroll, we witness "… *silence throughout heaven for about half an hour"* (Verse 1). The heavenly beings stopped their praises, stunned at what was about to happen. Most of what happens in the rest of the Book of Revelation is the result of the opening of this final seal. This is the calm before the storm. Yet, during this time, God is listening to the prayers of His children. He is giving

His undivided, complete and total attention to the prayers of those going through this Tribulation. He does the same thing today. Every time you pray, you have God's full attention. May we be a people who pray.

- We see the impact and power of answered prayer as the prayers of God's people are hurled back to earth (Verses 3-5). It's very possible that these trumpet judgements that include flowing blood, pelting hail, and consuming fire describe what would happen in a nuclear holocaust. History confirms that weapon systems have never been developed that haven't been used. Therefore, it would be an aberration of history if all of the nations of the world that presently have nuclear weapons failed to use them. This chapter may not refer to a nuclear holocaust, however the detonation of a nuclear warhead unleashes a firestorm of 250 mph winds. Upon striking the surface of water, a plume of water shoots up thousands of feet into the air, where it freezes and returns as hailstones as big as 75 pounds (Bikini Atoll nuclear tests) (Verses 6-7).

- *" … A great mountain of fire"* (Verse 8) does not refer to a literal mountain, but to something that looked like a mountain. It could be the mushrooming of a nuclear cloud. Water covers ¾ of the earth. The Atlantic Ocean contains 1/3 of the earth's water. It's also interesting that 1/3 of all ships afloat today are in the Atlantic region. So, this passage may refer to one specific site where the firing of weapons produces an ecological catastrophe (Verses 8-9). But can we take these judgements literally? Compare the trumpet judgements with the plagues that hit Egypt (Exodus 7 – 12). Were those plagues literal? Just ask Pharaoh!

- It's interesting that aboveground nuclear testing has been banned due to the discovery of Strontium 90 in fresh-water supplies surrounding the areas of detonation (Verse 10). It's interesting that the Russian word for "bitterness" (or "wormwood") is "cherynobyl" (Verse 11). The people to whom John was writing understood "wormwood." It's a plant that produces a bitter-flavored oil. Absinthe is derived from wormwood and is forbidden in many countries because it can cause mental problems or death.

- After the Israelites traveled through the wilderness for three days without water, they dove into the first pool of water they came upon. But it was bitter. So, the Bible says they called it "Mara" (bitter). So, God directed Moses to cast a nearby tree into the bitter water, and the water became sweet (Exodus 15:22-27). It was the tree that made the water sweet. The tree is always a picture of the Cross. When you add the Cross to the bitter water of your life, the result will be sweetness. But in Revelation 8, just the opposite occurs, when those who reject Christ's work on the Cross will drink the bitter water of the Tribulation (Verse 11).

- If a nuclear exchange took place in the summer, scientists project the high temperature in the western United States would be 15 degrees due to the debris shot into our atmosphere. Crops would not grow, and starvation would result. So, what we call a "nuclear winter" may be what is described in this passage (Verse 12).

- The Bible says a single eagle (or angel) will fly through the air crying, "*…Terror, terror, terror to all who belong to this world because of what will happen when the last three angels blow their trumpets"* (Verse 13). Habakkuk used the image of image of an eagle to symbolize swiftness and destruction (Habakkuk 1:8). In other words, the eagle (or angel) is saying, "The worst is yet to come because the last three trumpets are worse than the first four." The first four trumpets dealt with the natural. The last three trumpets deal with the supernatural, specifically demonic activity.

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- **Revelation 9:1 – 21:** *"Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen to earth from the sky, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit.* ***2*** *When he opened it, smoke poured out as though from a huge furnace, and the sunlight and air turned dark from the smoke.* ***3*** *Then locusts came from the smoke*

and descended on the earth, and they were given power to sting like scorpions. 4 They were told not to harm the grass or plants or trees, but only the people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They were told not to kill them but to torture them for five months with pain like the pain of a scorpion sting. 6 In those days people will seek death but will not find it. They will long to die, but death will flee from them! 7 The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. They had what looked like gold crowns on their heads, and their faces looked like human faces. 8 They had hair like women's hair and teeth like the teeth of a lion. 9 They wore armor made of iron, and their wings roared like an army of chariots rushing into battle. 10 They had tails that stung like scorpions, and for five months they had the power to torment people. 11 Their king is the angel from the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon—the Destroyer. 12 The first terror is past, but look, two more terrors are coming! 13 Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice speaking from the four horns of the gold altar that stands in the presence of God. 14 And the voice said to the sixth angel who held the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great Euphrates River." 15 Then the four angels who had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were turned loose to kill one-third of all the people on earth. 16 I heard the size of their army, which was 200 million mounted troops. 17 And in my vision, I saw the horses and the riders sitting on them. The riders wore armor that was fiery red and dark blue and yellow. The horses had heads like lions, and fire and smoke and burning sulfur billowed from their mouths. 18 One-third of all the people on earth were killed by these three plagues—by the fire and smoke and burning sulfur that came from the mouths of the horses. 19 Their power was in their mouths and in their tails. For their tails had heads like snakes, with the power to injure people. 20 But the people who did not die in these plagues still refused to repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that can neither see nor hear nor walk! 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their witchcraft or their sexual immorality or their thefts."

- The Bible says that when the fifth angel blew his trumpet, John "*saw a star that had fallen to earth from the sky, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit"* (Verse 1). This event is in the past tense *("had fallen to the earth"*). So, who is this "star"? It is Lucifer, or Satan, who is also called "Shining One." When Lucifer fell from heaven, 1/3 of the angels went with him and became demons (Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, Revelation 12).

- The Bible says the worst of these demons, who "*left the place where they belonged*" (Jude 6) had relationships with women, producing "Nephilim" (giants), seen in Genesis and Numbers. So, God cast these demons into the "abyssos" (bottomless pit). This isn't the first mention of the bottomless pit in the Bible. Do you remember when Jesus was teaching and healing people, and came upon a young man who was possessed by a number of evil spirits known as "Legion"? Jesus was going to cast these demons out of the man, and they begged Him not to order them to go to the "abyssos" (bottomless pit)? The bottomless pit is a place where even demons despise to go. Instead, they went into a large herd of pigs feeding nearby, and the entire herd ran into a lake and drowned (Luke 8:26-37).

- The Bible says demons are presently at work causing depression, emotional distress, and relational trauma. The Bible says, "*For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 6:12). The Bible says a number of horrible spirits are released, and the "star" (Satan) that had fallen to the earth, had a key and opened the bottomless pit (Verse 2). As he did, smoke rose that was sufficient to blot out the sunlight for a while. The bottomless pit is a type of holding cell for evil spirits. The Bible says, "*Then locusts came from the smoke and descended on the earth, and they were given power to sting like scorpions. 4 They were told not to harm the grass or plants or trees, but only the people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 They were told not to kill them but to torture them for five months with pain like the pain of a scorpion sting*" (Verses 3-5). Apparently, these demons take on the form of locusts. Regular locusts are grasshopper-like insects. Regular locusts were feared by most civilizations during Biblical times. One large swarm

could strip away most crops in a matter of minutes. Famine would almost certainly follow. In addition, female locusts would lay huge quantities of eggs deep in the soil that would hatch in the spring, resulting in larva that would eat whatever had grown back. But these locusts "*looked like horses prepared for battle. They had what looked like gold crowns on their heads, and their faces looked like human faces. 8 They had hair like women's hair and teeth like the teeth of a lion. 9 They wore armor made of iron, and their wings roared like an army of chariots rushing into battle. 10 They had tails that stung like scorpions, and for five months they had the power to torment people*" (Verses 7-10).

- Due to these scorpion-like locusts, people will try to take their own lives (Verse 6). Unlike regular locusts, these locusts have a king, "*the angel from the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon—the Destroyer*" (Verse 11). Satan's mission is to destroy. He wants to destroy everyone.

- Seven Old Testament books and every New Testament writer refer to Satan. Jesus referred to Satan (Matthew 13:39; Luke 10:18; Luke 11:1). He is called Satan (slanderer), Lucifer (son of the morning), Beelzebub (Lord of the flies – Matthew 12:24), Belial (lawless – II Corinthians 6:15), the evil one (I John 5:19), the tempter (I Thessalonians 3:5), the prince of this world (John 12:31), the god of this age (II Corinthians 4:4), the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2), the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10), angel of light (false light – II Corinthians 11:14), a serpent (Revelation 12:9), and a dragon (Revelation 12:3). Satan was created as a part of the angelic realm (Ephesians 6:11-12; Ezekiel 24:18) and had the highest rank of them all (Ezekiel 28:12-14). He is a murderer (John 8:44), a liar (John 8:44), an accuser (Revelation 12:10), and our adversary (I Peter 5:8). He is limited by God (Job 1:12). He is not God's equal (I John 4:4). He is not omniscient, omnipotent or infinite in any way. Believers, with God's help can resist him (James 4:7).

- The fall of Satan from heaven is described in Ezekiel 28 and Isaiah 14. Satan is seeking to oppose God's plan by promoting evil in every way possible. He works indirectly through the world (where he has great freedom and power – John 12:31; I John 5:19) and the flesh (Galatians 5:19-20). Satan works through the evil world system (I John 2:13-15) to exploit the fleshly nature that's still within us (Romans 7:18; Galatians 5:19-21). He works directly by deception, temptation, attack, and possession. He tempted Jesus Christ (Matthew 4:1-11). He attempted to thwart Christ's work (John 8:44; Matthew 16:23; Luke 22:31). He possessed Judas to accomplish the betrayal of Christ (John 13:27). Satan binds unbelievers' minds to hinder their understanding of the Gospel (II Corinthians 4:4). When the Gospel is heard, he tries to hinder its effect (Luke 8:12). Satan uses persecution (Revelation 2:10) and false religions to hinder the effect of the Gospel (Revelation 2:13).

- Satan tempts believers to pride (I Chronicles 21:1-8), to materialism (John 2:15; James 5:1-7), to immorality (I Corinthians 7:5), to lie (Acts 5:3), to discouragement (I Peter 5:6-10), and to be unforgiving (II Corinthians 2:10-11). He hinders the ministries of believers (I Thessalonians 2:18; Revelation 2:10). He promotes false teaching among believers (I John 4:1-4). He promotes anger, bitterness, and division (Ephesians 4:26-27; II Corinthians 2:5-11).

- The Bible says God created demons as part of the original angelic realm (Colossians 1:16). It's clear that Satan ("Prince of the demons") has a following of like beings (Matthew 12:24; Matthew 25:41). Demons are described throughout the Bible (Daniel 10:10-20; Matthew 10:1; Ephesians 6:12). At the fall of Satan, many angels followed him in that rebellion. One third of the angelic host fell with Satan (Revelation 12:14).

- Demons are morally wicked. They are called "unclean spirits (Matthew 10:1), "evil" (Luke 7:21), and "wickedness / darkness" (Ephesians 6:12). They are deceitful (I Timothy 4:1-3; II Corinthians 11:13-15). They are immoral (Genesis 6:4; Jude 6-7). Demons are invisible but can appear (Zechariah 3:1; Matthew 4:9-10; Revelation 9:7-10; Revelation 16:13-16). They know Christ's identity and power (Mark 1:14, 34; Mark 5:6-7). Demons know

their own future judgment (Matthew 8:28-29). They can attempt to predict the future (Acts 16:16). Their knowledge is not infinite. They have great strength (Mark 5:3; Acts 19:16; Revelation 9:1-11).

- Demons are involved in carrying out Satan's evil plans (II Corinthians 11:15). They promote idolatry (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17; Psalm 106:36-38). They are deliberate in hindering the spiritual progress of believers every way they can (Ephesians 6:10-12). They promote false teaching (I Timothy 4:1).

- Demons can possess and afflict unbelievers, causing dumbness (Matthew 9:32-33), blindness (Matthew 12:22), convulsions (Matthew 17:15-18; Mark 9:20), and self-injury (Mark 5:5; Mark 9:22). They can cause mental disorders, including withdrawal, nudity, filth, irrational behavior, and suicidal mania (Luke 8:27-29; Mark 9:22). They can inflict problems upon believers, if allowed by God (Job's troubles – Job 2:7-9; Paul's "thorn in the flesh" – II Corinthians 17:7). Demons promote selfishness and division in the church (James 3:13-16).

- A parallel passage to Revelation 9 is found in Joel 2. Historically, the prophecy of Joel 2 was fulfilled in Joel's day, when Israel was besieged with locusts. Symbolically, the prophecy was fulfilled in 722 when the Assyrians marched south and carried the 10 northern tribes into captivity. Prophetically, the locusts represent demons that will be released from the bottomless pit (Revelation 9:3-12). Yet, there is hope! A wonderful promise is given by the prophet Joel, "The Lord says, "*I will give you back what you lost to the swarming locusts, the hopping locusts, the stripping locusts, and the cutting locusts. It was I who sent this great destroying army against you.* ***26*** *Once again you will have all the food you want, and you will praise the Lord your God, who does these miracles for you. Never again will my people be disgraced*" (Joel 2:25-26). The Bible says, whenever we obey Scripture, sincerely repent, and turn to the Lord; He not only forgives us but makes up to us what was lost. God not only forgives us, He restores to us "what the locusts have taken" (Joel 2:25). Even if you're 60 or 70 years old, when you choose to humble yourself, and call out to the Lord, He'll make up for lost time.

- The "*gold altar that stands in the presence of God*" (Verse 13) had four projections, one at each corner, called "horns." The "four horns" on the alter in the tabernacle (Exodus 25-27) were used to tie the sacrifice to the alter. This was the place where sacrifices would be made, where blood would be shed, and it represents the Cross. Jesus Christ was tied to the alter of the Cross, not by the spikes that pierced His hands and feet, but by the bands of love for you and me. The Bible says, "*The leading priests and teachers of religious law also mocked Jesus. "He saved others," they scoffed, "but he can't save himself!* ***32*** *Let this Messiah, this King of Israel, come down from the cross so we can see it and believe him!" Even the men who were crucified with Jesus ridiculed him*" (Mark 15:31-32). They failed to understand, and were unable to comprehend, that if He saved Himself, He couldn't save them.

- The Euphrates River (Verse 14) was part of the original boundary of the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:14). It also marked the east boundary of the Promised Land God deeded to Abraham (Genesis 15:18). The "*the four angels who are bound at the great Euphrates River*" are fallen angels (demons) (Verse 14). These unidentified demons will be exceedingly evil and destructive. Although these "*four angels … had been prepared for this hour and day and month and year were turned loose to kill one-third of all the people on earth*" (Verses 14-15), they didn't have the power to release themselves and do their evil work on earth. They are held back by God and released at a specific time, doing only what He allows them to do. With God, nothing is random or out of control. But, when they are loosed, they will kill 1/3 of humanity. Added to the ¼ of the world's population already killed (Revelation 6:7-8), 50% of humanity will be dead. How will this happen? Read on.

- There's a correlation with the release of the four demons and war on earth. The Bible says an army of 200 million mounted troops will be led by the four demons (Verse 16). John makes it clear that he heard this exact number (Verse 16). As you know, China boasted an army of 200 million soldiers as early as 1965. The description of fire,

smoke, and sulfur leads some people to believe that John is giving his best description of modern war machines (guns, tanks, missiles, etc.). But, because this army is set in motion by the four fallen angels (Verse 15), it's comprised of much more than military generals or political coalitions. The demons are stinging. The armies are marching. So, what's the response of the people? Read on.

- The Bible says, "*But the people who did not die in these plagues still refused to repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. They continued to worship demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—idols that can neither see nor hear nor walk!"* (Verse 20). How does this apply to us today? Do we have "*idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood*?" You be the judge.

- The word "witchcraft" (Verse 21) is "pharmakos" in Greek, from which we get our word "pharmacy." Drugs can affect both body and soul. During tax time, we sometimes hear people "justifying" not paying their taxes for a variety of reasons. That's theft (Verse 21). Perhaps that's why many people are experiencing "tribulation" in their personal lives. Is giving Satan access to your world worth a few dollars?

- Although it's true demons *cannot possess* a believer, because "*the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world*" (I John 4:4), there is such a thing as demon *oppression*. Your life will be oppressed if you allow demons entry points through drugs, sexual immorality, or theft (Verse 21). The majority of those still alive on earth, at this time, are involved in idolatry, murder, occult practices, stealing, and sexual immorality. They refuse to repent or stop what they're doing. Most of those still alive adopt the motto of "everyone for himself."

- So far, John has described the four living creatures (angels) standing around God's throne, and how 10,000 times 10,000 other angels gather around to sing His praises. He described an angel slinging a fiery censer to earth, and seven others playing trumpets. It seems everywhere John looks, angels are performing magnificent feats. Yet now John sees a "mighty" angel.

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- **Revelation 10:1 – 11:** "*Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, surrounded by a cloud, with a rainbow over his head. His face shone like the sun, and his feet were like pillars of fire.* ***2*** *And in his hand was a small scroll that had been opened. He stood with his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.* ***3*** *And he gave a great shout like the roar of a lion. And when he shouted, the seven thunders answered.* ***4*** *When the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write. But I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Keep secret what the seven thunders said, and do not write it down."* ***5*** *Then the angel I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand toward heaven.* ***6*** *He swore an oath in the name of the one who lives forever and ever, who created the heavens and everything in them, the earth and everything in it, and the sea and everything in it. He said, "There will be no more delay.* ***7*** *When the seventh angel blows his trumpet, God's mysterious plan will be fulfilled. It will happen just as he announced it to his servants the prophets."* ***8*** *Then the voice from heaven spoke to me again: "Go and take the open scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."* ***9*** *So I went to the angel and told him to give me the small scroll. "Yes, take it and eat it," he said. "It will be sweet as honey in your mouth, but it will turn sour in your stomach!"* ***10*** *So I took the small scroll from the hand of the angel, and I ate it! It was sweet in my mouth, but when I swallowed it, it turned sour in my stomach.* ***11*** *Then I was told, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings*."

- In contrast to Chapter 9, which is dark and dismal, Chapter 10 is bright and uplifting. After the darkness comes the light, in the form of an awesome angel, an ambassador from heaven (Verse 1). This is an angel who takes on characteristics of Jesus Christ, because he's in the presence of Jesus Christ. The same is true for us. If we spend time with our Lord, we begin to sound like Him, look like Him, and act like Him a little more each day.

- The purpose of this mighty angel is clear; to announce the final judgments on earth. His right foot on the sea and his left foot on land represent that his words deal with all creation, not just a limited part, as did the seal and trumpet judgments (Verses 1-2). The Bible says the angel was holding "*a small scroll*" (Verse 2). This isn't a sealed scroll. The Bible says seven thunderous voices roar in response to the angel (Verse 3). What did they say? We don't know. John was about to record what this angel said, but for the first time he was forbidden to do so (Verse 4).

- Why is the message of the seven thunderous voices hidden? Why is it even mentioned? It's a very simple, but significant reminder, placed in the middle of this book, that there are some things we're simply not going to know until we get to heaven. The Bible says, "*The Lord our God has secrets known to no one*" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Why? First, not knowing keeps us humble. When we think we have all the answers, in any area, we can become puffed up and self-sufficient. But, not knowing the answers, not having the solutions, produces in us a humility that ultimately makes us very happy because it takes all the pressure off. David wrote, "*Lord, I have given up my pride and turned away from my arrogance. I am not concerned with great matters or with subjects too difficult for me. ² Instead, I am content and at peace. As a child lies quietly in its mother's arms, so my heart is quiet within me*" (Psalm 131:1-2).

- Second, not knowing keeps us stable. The Bible says, "*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 4:6-7). You won't find a single verse in the Bible that promises we'll understand everything. If we think we have to know why things happen, or don't happen, we'll go up and down like a roller coaster. We may not know "how" or "why," but "*we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them*" (Romans 8:28). Paul didn't write, "we see all things work together for good," because we may not see that happen this side of eternity. But, when we get to heaven, we'll say, "Thank You, Lord, for your goodness and grace in allowing that trial. I thought it was a tragedy. But now I see that righteous and true are Your judgments, O Lord."

- The Greek word translated "delay" is "chronos" (Verse 6). Sometimes we pray, "Thy kingdom come, but where are You, Lord?" The Bible gives us the reason. The Bible says "*The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent*" (II Peter 3:9). God is longsuffering. He's waiting for people to give their lives to Jesus. But the day is coming when there will be no more delay. Because John's readers were seeing family members tortured, and terrible things taking place, he writes, "There's coming a time when all of the questions you've had, and all the pain you're experiencing will come to an end (Verse 7).

- Like the book the angel gave John to eat (Verse 9), so is the Word of God. Sweeter than honey. The Bible says, "*How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey*" (Psalm 119:103). Since John was beginning to see not only God's plan, but His timing, this was a sweet treat. But, as the full effect of what he was seeing began to sink in, the facts were unsettling. The good news was that God had a definite plan and was about to take action. The bad news was that God had a definite plan and was about to take action. Even today, some people read the Book of Revelation with dread, fear, and trembling. It gives them indigestion. Others "eat it up" as a promise of a final countdown to a time when every injustice will be made right. But, if the sweet Word we take in through devotions or Bible study doesn't create a sour taste, something's wrong. The fact that we're saved is sweet. But the fact that people we love are going to hell is bitter. After Ezekiel ate the book that was sweet to his mouth, but bitter to his belly, he shared God's Word boldly to people that he had previously been afraid (Ezekiel 3:3, 14). The bitterness in his belly motivated Ezekiel to share the truth.

- Finally, John was told, *"You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings*" (Verse 11). The idea of "must" (Verse 11) isn't a command. It's a statement of what will happen when we take in the Word of God. So, how will we know when we've really heard the Word of God? When we have compassion for the unsaved and conviction of our own sin. When we love God, and love people. Devouring and digesting the Word of God, bitter portions as well as the sweet, will empower us to impact the world for the kingdom. So, after dining on a fine fillet of scroll, John was given a task to do. God never assigns anyone a task without also giving them the tools to accomplish it. So, along with the job assignment, John was handed a measuring rod and told to measure the temple. Read on.

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- **Revelation 11:1 – 19:** "*Then I was given a measuring stick, and I was told, "Go and measure the Temple of God and the altar, and count the number of worshipers. 2 But do not measure the outer courtyard, for it has been turned over to the nations. They will trample the holy city for 42 months. 3 And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will be clothed in burlap and will prophesy during those 1,260 days." 4 These two prophets are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of all the earth. 5 If anyone tries to harm them, fire flashes from their mouths and consumes their enemies. This is how anyone who tries to harm them must die. 6 They have power to shut the sky so that no rain will fall for as long as they prophesy. And they have the power to turn the rivers and oceans into blood, and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they wish. 7 When they complete their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit will declare war against them, and he will conquer them and kill them. 8 And their bodies will lie in the main street of Jerusalem, the city that is figuratively called "Sodom" and "Egypt," the city where their Lord was crucified. 9 And for three and a half days, all peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will stare at their bodies. No one will be allowed to bury them. 10 All the people who belong to this world will gloat over them and give presents to each other to celebrate the death of the two prophets who had tormented them. 11 But after three and a half days, God breathed life into them, and they stood up! Terror struck all who were staring at them. 12 Then a loud voice from heaven called to the two prophets, "Come up here!" And they rose to heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched. 13 At the same time there was a terrible earthquake that destroyed a tenth of the city. Seven thousand people died in that earthquake, and everyone else was terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. 14 The second terror is past, but look, the third terror is coming quickly. 15 Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices shouting in heaven: "The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." 16 The twenty-four elders sitting on their thrones before God fell with their faces to the ground and worshiped him. 17 And they said, "We give thanks to you, Lord God, the Almighty, the one who is and who always was, for now you have assumed your great power and have begun to reign. 18 The nations were filled with wrath, but now the time of your wrath has come. It is time to judge the dead and reward your servants the prophets, as well as your holy people, and all who fear your name, from the least to the greatest. It is time to destroy all who have caused destruction on the earth." 19 Then, in heaven, the Temple of God was opened and the Ark of his covenant could be seen inside the Temple. Lightning flashed, thunder crashed and roared, and there was an earthquake and a terrible hailstorm.*"

- A "measuring stick" in John's day would be approximately 10' high (Verse 1).

- So, midway through the Tribulation, John is told to measure the temple. Therefore, there appears to be a functioning temple at this time. The temple is an important part of God's plan throughout the Bible. Solomon built the first temple on Mount Moriah (Jerusalem) in 1050 B.C. About 400 years later, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar began a siege of Jerusalem that continued for many months. At the height of the famine that resulted in Jerusalem, the Babylonian army broke through the walls and slaughtered many of the surviving

inhabitants of the city. Then, they burned and destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. The city laid in ruins until the rebuilding effort led by Nehemiah (II Kings 24:1-25:21; II Chronicles 36:1-21).

- During this time, Ezekiel encouraged his fellow exiles with prophecies of restoration of the temple, both in the immediate future, and in the distant future. Israel was without a temple for the first time since Solomon's reign. The temple represented God's presence. In 573 B.C. Ezekiel received a vision of the glorious temple to come. That vision represented the hope of the restoration of God's presence among His people (Ezekiel 10:1-22; Ezekiel 33:21-40).

- When King Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon, he issued a decree allowing the Israelites to return to Jerusalem. Ezra records that more than 40,000 Jews returned to Jerusalem. So, about 70 years after Babylon's first invasion of Israel, Zerubbabel began rebuilding the temple in 536 B.C. However, construction stopped when opposition arose from neighboring nations. It wasn't until God used Haggai and Zechariah to lead the Israelites in 516 B.C. that the project was completed (Ezra 1:1-6:15). However, the temple was much smaller than Solomon's temple.

- This temple remained standing for about 500 years, longer than Solomon's temple. In an effort to gain the favor of the Jewish people, King Herod enlarged and expanded the temple in 20 B.C. This project took decades to complete. The temple grounds were expanded to 36 acres. This was the temple that served during the time of Jesus. Many scholars consider this temple to be simply an expansion of the "second" temple. Jesus referred to this temple, when He said, "*Do you see all these buildings? I tell you the truth, they will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!*" (Matthew 24:2)

- 40 years after Jesus' resurrection, His prophecy was fulfilled. Jewish zealots led an uprising against the Roman rule in 66, and successfully drove the Roman army out of Jerusalem. So, Emperor Nero sent his son, General Titus to quell the revolt. Titus conquered almost all of Judea, and laid siege to Jerusalem for 143 days before breaking through the walls. While decimating the city and the temple, a Roman soldier disobeyed the orders of General Titus and threw a torch into the temple. The ensuing fire was so hot that it caused the gold to melt and run down the temple walls into the cracks of the 100-ton stones. The soldiers pulled down every stone from the walls to get the gold. This fulfilled Jesus' prophecy to the letter!

- But the Bible says there's a third temple yet to be built. At the Temple Institute in Jerusalem, you can see preparations for this third temple being made. All instruments needed for temple worship, according to Old Testament regulations are completed (https://templeinstitute.org). Two "yeshivas" (schools) are currently training young men with the last name of "Cohen" (priest) to sacrifice animals in the temple tradition. Why? Because the Orthodox Jewish community understands that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiving of sin (Leviticus 17:11; Hebrews 9:22). And, since they don't believe Jesus is the Messiah who died for their sins, they realize they must make sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins.

- In recent months, full dress reenactments have taken place related to the original daily Tamid service, the water libation, the Passover offering, the Shavuot, the First Fruits, various other special Temple services, and all the rest of the Jewish annual feast day celebrations. The Temple Institute has even set up training classes to carefully teach the priests (Kohanim) how to precisely perform each Temple worship activity. The Kohanim are being prepared for the day that the new Tabernacle or Temple is dedicated on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

- According to prophecy, the Temple must be rebuilt to fulfill the predictions concerning the Antichrist's desecration of it near the midpoint of the final seven years. In an ultimate act of defiance against the one true God, the Antichrist is predicted to stop the sacrifices and worship and then proclaim himself to be God in the Temple. Other Biblical prophecies also indicate that the Temple must be rebuilt to fulfill the predictions of the

Lord's Return, as He is predicted to descend in glory upon the Mount of Olives and suddenly come to his Temple through the East Gate (Ezekiel 43:1-4; Acts 1:9-11).

- Many Jews strongly believe that they will again have a place of worship in Jerusalem upon the Temple Mount, possibly as soon as within the next few years. The Levitical priests are preparing for that day, and for the first time in nearly 2,000 years they are training the Levites in how to carry out the worship of God according to the Laws of Moses.

- The rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem will be a significant prophetic fulfillment. It will put in place one of the key prophecies related to the final seven-year period before the Second Coming occurs. It will also signal that the final events of the End Times have truly come upon us. There can be no doubt; we are definitely getting closer to that day when we will see the Lord return in great power and glory! Does this mean we'll see the temple rebuilt before the Rapture? Not necessarily. Why? Because there's a large obstacle in the way. A mosque known as the Dome of the Rock.

- In the late 600's, Omar built a mosque on 35 acres over the rock believed to be the site of the Holy of Holies. This made it impossible to rebuild the temple on this site, because the Muslims would immediately invade Israel if anything happened to the mosque. But in 1983, after spending 16 years studying the temple mount area, Dr. Asher Kauffman, a physicist and archaeologist at the Hebrew University, concluded that while the Mosque of Omar was thought to sit on the Holy of Holies site, the true location is actually 100 meters (109 yards) north. So, what's 100 meters north of the Dome of the Rock? A very small gazebo. Underneath the gazebo the original bedrock of the temple is exposed. The only other place the original bedrock is exposed is the jagged rock within the Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar). The stone 100 meters north (under the gazebo) is flat – a much more likely setting for the Ark of the Covenant within the Holy of Holies.

- In addition to being a more logical site, this site is more historically accurate. According to the Mishna (the reliable book of Jewish oral tradition), when the priest stood in the Holy of Holies on the day of Atonement, he could look through the veil, through the door, and see the Eastern Gate directly in front of him. In 1970, a secret excavation confirmed that the original Eastern Gate is directly below the present Eastern Gate of Jerusalem. And, if you stand 100 meters north of the Dome of the Rock, the Eastern Gate is in plain view!

- In addition, when the Muslims built the small gazebo in 6 A.D., they gave it two names: The Dome of the Spirit, and the Dome of the Tablets. Even Islam recognized this site as the spot where the tablets (the Ten Commandments within the Ark of the Covenant) and the Holy Spirit ("Shekinah" or "Chabod" – the glory of God over the Ark of the Covenant) had been. Therefore, according to most Biblical scholars, the temple could be rebuilt, and the Dome of the Rock would remain standing. But the Dome of the Rock would be in the outer courtyard of the temple (Verse 2).

- During the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel recaptured the city of Jerusalem. General Moshe Dayan let the Muslims keep control of the 35-acre parcel of the Dome of the Rock. He could never explain why he did. So, to this day the outer court of the temple remains "*turned over to the nations*" (Verse 2).

- Jesus said, "*And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will be clothed in burlap and will prophesy during those 1,260 days"* (Verse 3). Why are there two witnesses? Because the Bible says, "*The facts of every case must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses*" (II Corinthians 13:1). Do you remember Joshua sent in two spies into the Promised Land (Joshua 2:1)? There were two angels in the tomb on Easter morning (John 20:12)? Jesus sent out His disciples "two by two" (Mark 6:7)?

- The two witnesses are compared to the two olive trees (Zechariah 4:3-6) that provided a never-ending supply of oil and represent the Holy Spirit's anointing in ministry (Verse 4). Olive oil was the common fuel of the time, so the association with the lampstand was logical. Olive oil was the fuel that fired the lampstand in the temple (Exodus 27:20-21). Before olives yielded their oil, they were beaten off the trees with long sticks and then crushed. What happens to the olives to produce oil represented what would happen to these two "olive trees."

- So, who are these men mentioned in Zechariah 4 and clothed in burlap (Verse 3), with power to bring about drought and scorch anyone who hassles them (Verses 5-6)? The Bible says Elijah called down fire from heaven that destroyed 100 soldiers (II Kings 2:1). Elijah prayed, and there was no rain for 3 ½ years (James 5:17). Elijah never died and rode to heaven in a fiery chariot (II Kings 2:11). The Bible promises Elijah will return (Malachi 4:5). It seems that Elijah is one of these two witnesses.

- Do you remember when Moses commanded darkness, frogs, death and the water in the Nile to turn to blood (Exodus 7-12)? Moses, representing the law, also appeared with Elijah on the Mont of Transfiguration (Matthew 17). Do you remember the account of Satan and Michael the archangel arguing over the body of Moses, possible to prevent his resurrection as the second witness (Jude 9)? Therefore, Moses is possibly the other witness.

- The Bible says these witnesses are killed after 3 ½ years of preaching, they will be killed by the "*beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit"* (Verse 7). Not only are the two witnesses killed, but they are also denied a decent burial as their bodies lie in the street. Jerusalem, the only city God calls His own, the city over which Jesus wept compassionately, is now likened to Egypt and Sodom, because of rejecting Jesus Christ (Verse 8). The Bible says, "*for three and a half days, all peoples, tribes, languages, and nations will stare at their bodies"* (Verse 9). This verse confounded Biblical scholars for hundreds of years, until the advent of satellite news. There could very possibly be a "live-cam" on the two bodies, and possibly a website.

- The only time the people rejoice during the Tribulation is over the death of these two witnesses; a global holiday complete with gift-giving (Verse 10). But, in a surprise twist to this celebration, after 3 ½ days the party stops as people around the world watch on their cellphones, computers, and big-screen TV's rise from the dead, then keep rising up to heaven (Verses 11-12). These witnesses are examples to how we should be living. We're to be sharing the gospel with people. We may be beat up emotionally and verbally. But we'll rise again. Witnessing is the best way to see our faith revived and renewed.

- The Bible says, "*At the same time there was a terrible earthquake that destroyed a tenth of the city. Seven thousand people died in that earthquake, and everyone else was terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven"* (Verse 13). Not only is the world shaken up emotionally by the resurrection of the two witnesses, but it's shaken physically by a great earthquake. This earthquake may originate in the fault of the Rift Valley that runs through Israel to North Africa.

- The last of the 7 trumpets is sounded by an angel, announcing, *"The world has now become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever"* (Verse 15). There is no turning back. So, how did the people respond? Did the people repent? No. The Bible says the nations were angry (Verse 18). The Bible says, "*Then, in heaven, the Temple of God was opened and the Ark of his covenant could be seen inside the Temple"* (Verse 19). The Ark of the Covenant was the least-seen item in the temple. It represented the presence of God. Not even the priests had access to the ark. Once a year the high priest was allowed to enter and make a blood sacrifice on behalf of the people. Otherwise, anyone entering the Holy of Holies would die (Exodus 26:30-34; Leviticus 16:2). The "terrible hailstorm" (Verse 19) sets the stage for what John is about to witness in Chapter 12.

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- **Revelation 12: 1 – 18:** *"Then I witnessed in heaven an event of great significance. I saw a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon beneath her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. 2 She was pregnant, and she cried out because of her labor pains and the agony of giving birth. 3 Then I witnessed in heaven another significant event. I saw a large red dragon with seven heads and ten horns, with seven crowns on his heads. 4 His tail swept away one-third of the stars in the sky, and he threw them to the earth. He stood in front of the woman as she was about to give birth, ready to devour her baby as soon as it was born. 5 She gave birth to a son who was to rule all nations with an iron rod. And her child was snatched away from the dragon and was caught up to God and to his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where God had prepared a place to care for her for 1,260 days. 7 Then there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels. 8 And the dragon lost the battle, and he and his angels were forced out of heaven. 9 This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels. 10 Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, "It has come at last— salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters has been thrown down to earth—the one who accuses them before our God day and night. 11 And they have defeated him by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony. And they did not love their lives so much that they were afraid to die. 12 Therefore, rejoice, O heavens! And you who live in the heavens, rejoice! But terror will come on the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you in great anger, knowing that he has little time." 13 When the dragon realized that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. 14 But she was given two wings like those of a great eagle so she could fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness. There she would be cared for and protected from the dragon for a time, times, and half a time. 15 Then the dragon tried to drown the woman with a flood of water that flowed from his mouth. 16 But the earth helped her by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that gushed out from the mouth of the dragon. 17 And the dragon was angry at the woman and declared war against the rest of her children—all who keep God's commandments and maintain their testimony for Jesus. 18 Then the dragon took his stand on the shore beside the sea."*
- So, who is this woman (Verse 1)? The only contextual and theological answer regarding the identity of this woman is Israel. Contextually, while the church is the bride of Christ, Isaiah and Hosea identify Israel as the wife of Jehovah. Theologically, if we apply the "principle of first mention" (when a particular term is first mentioned in the Bible), the sun, moon, and stars are first mentioned in a dream that Joseph had as a young man. The Bible gives the interpretation that the sun represented Joseph's father, Jacob (Israel). The moon represented his mother (Rebekah). The stars represented his 11 brothers (Genesis 37:9-11).
- Throughout the remainder of the Book of Revelation, the "dragon" (Verse 3) represents Satan, as do other references in the Bible (Isaiah 27:1; 51:9). The "seven heads" (Verse 3) refer to the city where the Antichrist will reign – the city referred to throughout history as the "City of Seven Hills" – Rome. The "seven heads" refer to a geographical place, and the "ten horns" (Verse 3) refer to Satan's political base. The horns, like the ten toes of Daniel 2, represent the ten-nation confederation that will emerge from the old Roman Empire. God used the prophet Daniel to reveal the rise and fall of great empires, even down to our modern times.
- Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar that God had made him a king of kings, and described the image envisioned by the king (Daniel 2:28). A great statue had a head of gold. Daniel told King Nebuchadnezzar: "You are this head of gold" (v. 38). The remaining elements of the great image symbolized the great empires to follow after the Babylonian empire.
- The prophet Daniel reveals that there will also be an end-time Roman Empire, which will play a crucial role in end-time conflicts in the Middle East. All reputable Bible scholars agree on their identity and their prophetic fulfillment.
- The head of gold represented the Babylonian Empire from 625 to 539 BC.
- Next came the Medo-Persian Empire, from 558 to 330 BC, represented by the chest and arms of silver.
- The belly and thighs of bronze represented the Greco-Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great from 333 to 31 BC.



- The two legs of iron represent the Roman Empire from 31bc to 476 BC.
- Finally, the ten toes on two feet of iron mixed with ceramic clay represent a future revival of the Roman Empire.
- How do we know that the feet of the image will continue into our modern times? Daniel describes a great stone that smashes the image on its feet. He also describes the stone's meaning: *"During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever.* **45** *That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain."* (Daniel 2:44-45). The end-time power that will eventually dominate the Middle East, will be a revived Roman Empire, also symbolized in the prophecies of Revelation and Daniel as a beast (Revelation 13:1-18; Daniel 7:17–18; Revelation 17:9–14).
- Lucifer was the chief of all created beings in heaven. When he rebelled against God, 1/3 of the "stars in the sky" (Verse 4), representing angels, were cast out of heaven with him (Luke 10:18). Satan's attempt to annihilate Israel is a fundamental theme of Biblical and secular history. Whether it be through Cain or Pharaoh, Herod or Hitler, Satan has been relentless to destroy God's people. So, why have the Jews been perpetually persecuted? The answer is found in Revelation 12. The dragon is determined to devour the child (Jesus) of the woman (Israel). If there is no Jerusalem, or Israel, or Jewish people, how could Jesus fulfill the prophecies of His return to rule and reign His people in Jerusalem?
- Therefore, the plan of the dragon is to keep Messiah from returning to Israel by annihilating the Jews (Verse 4). The "*son who was to rule all nations*" and ascended to heaven is Jesus (Verse 5). Although Satan was cast out of heaven, he still has access if God allows (Job 1). Remember, the very word "Satan" means "accuser" in Hebrew. In order for him to accuse people, he has limited access to God.
- When the Antichrist enters the temple and demands to be worshiped, the great Tribulation Jesus spoke about in Matthew 24 begins. And the 1,260 days (3 ½ years) of unparalleled hostility against the Jews will begin (Verse 6). That's why Jesus told the Jews to flee to the wilderness during this time (Matthew 24:25). Isaiah tells us exactly where this wilderness is: "Send lambs from Sela as tribute to the ruler of the land. Send them through the desert to the mountain of beautiful Zion. The women of Moab are left like homeless birds at the shallow crossings of the Arnon River. **3** "*Help us," they cry. "Defend us against our enemies. Protect us from their relentless attack. Do not betray us now that we have escaped.* **4** *Let our refugees stay among you. Hide them from our enemies until the terror is past*" (Isaiah 16:1-4). "Sela" means "Rock" or "Petra" (Greek). Petra is located in Moab (present day Jordan). This city is carved in stone and has stood for centuries. It's preserved largely because the only entrance is a passageway only 12' wide.

- When rewards are given to believers at the Judgement Seat of Christ (Revelation 4), Satan (the "accuser") says, "Why are they getting rewards?" And the same thing occurs on earth. Satan whispers in your ear, "You're not worthy to be blessed. You're not good enough to be used." Remember, there's a difference between condemnation (which is from Satan), and conviction (which is from the Holy Spirit). The condemning work of Satan will always push you away from God. The conviction of the Holy Spirit will always draw you closer to God. The condemnation of Satan is always about self (not measuring up, hopelessness).
- The conviction of the Holy Spirit is always about forgiveness, about moving forward, about God's glory and grace (Verse 10). The Judgement Seat of Christ is not where we'll be judged for our sin, because our sin was completely forgiven (past, present, future) through the finished work on the Cross. The Judgement Seat of Christ is the place where rewards are given; crowns that will determine our ministry and position in eternity. That's why we love God and love people.
- Satan was "*defeated … by the blood of the Lamb and by their testimony*" (Verse 11). He was defeated in heaven. And he can be defeated on earth the same way. First, through the blood of the lamb. When the blood was applied to the door in the shape of a Cross that saved the firstborn as the angel of death flew over Egypt (Exodus 12), so God will bless your home and family, not on the basis of how much you've prayed or how good you've been, but on your understanding of the blood of Calvary. It's not about anything I do, or don't do. It's all about what the Lamb of God has done for us. It's all about the blood. Second, the accuser is silenced when the blood is applied, and the testimony of grace is shared. If you're trying to impress God with anything you do (or don't do), the accuser will beat you every time. It's when we say, "The word of my testimony is simply grace, amazing grace" that the accuser will be silenced.
- So, what are the "*two wings like those of a great eagle so she could fly to the place prepared for her in the wilderness"*? (Verse 14) Although we don't know the identity of the two wings of the eagle, we do know God has used this terminology before. *"…I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself"* (Exodus 19:4); "*For the people of Israel belong to the Lord; Jacob is his special possession.* ***10*** *He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as he would guard his own eyes.* ***11*** *Like an eagle that rouses her chicks and hovers over her young, so he spread his wings to take them up and carried them safely on his pinions"* (Deuteronomy 32:9-11).
- The Bible says the Antichrist will chase after the Jews like a flood (Verse 15). How many Jews will survive? The Bible says two out of three will die (Zechariah 13:9). But 1/3 of Israel will finally give their lives to Jesus Christ and will enter the kingdom and the Millennium. Finally, the Bible says the earth will swallow the army of the Antichrist attempting to annihilate the Jews (Verse 16). Our God reigns!
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- **Revelation 13: 1 – 18:** "*Then I saw a beast rising up out of the sea. It had seven heads and ten horns, with ten crowns on its horns. And written on each head were names that blasphemed God.* [2] *This beast looked like a leopard, but it had the feet of a bear and the mouth of a lion! And the dragon gave the beast his own power and throne and great authority.* [3] *I saw that one of the heads of the beast seemed wounded beyond recovery—but the fatal wound was healed! The whole world marveled at this miracle and gave allegiance to the beast.* [4] *They worshiped the dragon for giving the beast such power, and they also worshiped the beast. "Who is as great as the beast?" they exclaimed. "Who is able to fight against him?"* [5] *Then the beast was allowed to speak great blasphemies against God. And he was given authority to do whatever he wanted for forty-two months.* [6] *And he spoke terrible words of blasphemy against God, slandering his name and his dwelling—that is, those who dwell in heaven.* [7] *And the beast was allowed to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them. And he was given authority to rule over every tribe and people and language and nation.* [8] *And all the people who belong to this world worshiped the beast. They are the ones whose names were not written in the Book of Life that belongs to the Lamb who was slaughtered before the world was made.* [9] *Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.* [10] *Anyone who is destined for prison will be taken to prison. Anyone destined to die by the sword will die by the sword. This means that God's holy people must endure persecution patiently and remain faithful.*

11 Then I saw another beast come up out of the earth. He had two horns like those of a lamb, but he spoke with the voice of a dragon. 12 He exercised all the authority of the first beast. And he required all the earth and its people to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. 13 He did astounding miracles, even making fire flash down to earth from the sky while everyone was watching. 14 And with all the miracles he was allowed to perform on behalf of the first beast, he deceived all the people who belong to this world. He ordered the people to make a great statue of the first beast, who was fatally wounded and then came back to life. 15 He was then permitted to give life to this statue so that it could speak. Then the statue of the beast commanded that anyone refusing to worship it must die. 16 He required everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to be given a mark on the right hand or on the forehead. 17 And no one could buy or sell anything without that mark, which was either the name of the beast or the number representing his name. 18 Wisdom is needed here. Let the one with understanding solve the meaning of the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. His number is 666."

- By 29 B.C., the worship of Caesar had been instituted throughout the Roman Empire. By the end of the first century, Caesar Nero actually believed he was a god. So, beginning with his reign, everyone in the Roman Empire was required to go to one of the pagan temples every year, stand before a priest, and confess that Caesar was Lord. Most people simply complied with this annoying order, giving it little thought. But not the Christians. Thus, over six million Christians were martyred in ten waves of persecution.
- So, what John writes here isn't only for us, but also for those Christians who were suffering so terribly under the Roman persecution. The "beast" that John sees in this passage is the Antichrist (Verse 1). "Antichrist" means "in place of Christ." John wrote that there are "many" antichrists; "*Dear children, the last hour is here. You have heard that the Antichrist is coming, and already many such antichrists have appeared. From this we know that the last hour has come. 19 These people left our churches, but they never really belonged with us; otherwise they would have stayed with us. When they left, it proved that they did not belong with us*" (I John 2:18-19). However, in Revelation 13, the reference is to "the" Antichrist.
- "The sea" (Verse 1) refers to Gentile nations. This is true throughout the Bible. "The land" refers to Israel. From this passage (Verse 1) will not come from Israel. Revelation 17 says the beast will come from the 10 Gentile nations that stem from the old Roman Empire (that will make up the last world empire). However, this doesn't necessarily mean the Antichrist will be a Gentile. He could be a Jew from Europe. Revelation 17 identifies the "*seven heads*" (Verse 1) as the seven mountains of Rome. Therefore, the Antichrist's government will be initially based in the city of Rome.
- There are 10 crowns, but there are only 7 heads (Verse 1). Why? Because when the Antichrist comes to power, he will immediately take control of 3 of the 10-nation confederation (Daniel 2, Daniel 7). Throughout history, various men tried to revive the Roman Empire, but it will not happen until the Antichrist comes on the scene. The Bible says, "*on each head were names that blasphemed God*" (Verse 1). This image is blasphemous and hideous. And this is who he is; the devil incarnate.
- The four empires that ruled during the time Israel was a nation are described as a "glorious" statue in Daniel, Chapter 2. But that is man's perspective. God's perspective is described in Daniel, Chapter 7, as a series of monstrous beasts – the same beasts described in this passage (Verse 2). However, these beasts are listed in the inverse order. The leopard represents Alexander the Great's ability to pounce. The bear represents the Medes and the Persians. The lion represents Babylon. Why is the order inversed? Because Daniel is looking ahead, while John is looking back.
- At this point in the Tribulation, the Antichrist appears to be mortally wounded (Verse 3). According to Zechariah 11:17, there will be an assassination attempt on the Antichrist (Verse 3). Because the Antichrist is a false messiah, a counterfeit of Christ, he will stage a false resurrection (Verse 4). People will follow and worship him because they will be awed by his power and miracles (Verses 3-4). However, some Bible scholars believe that he truly will die and descend to hell (Revelation 17: 8). Just as Jesus Christ comes from heaven and is God, so the Antichrist will be the incarnation of the dragon (Satan). People are impressed by power and will follow those

who display power (Verse 4). But the power given to the beast (Antichrist) will be limited by God for exactly 1,260 days (3 ½ years) (Verse 5). Even while the beast in in power, God will still be in control (Revelation 11:15; Revelation 12:10-12).

- The Bible says, "*the beast was allowed to wage war against God's holy people and to conquer them"* (Verse 7). It's important to remember that there are three groups of people in the Bible referred to as "God's holy people" (saints). In the Old Testament, this refers to Israel. In the New Testament, this refers to the church. After the church is raptured, it refers to those who are saved during the Tribulation. Since Jesus said, "I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it" (Matthew 16:18), the church will not be conquered. Therefore, this passage is not a reference to the church, but to those who are saved during the Tribulation (Verse 7).
- The "Book of Life" includes the names of those who get saved during the Tribulation (Verse 8). The Bible says the "Book of Life" "*belongs to the Lamb who was slaughtered before the world was made"* (Verse 8). Only heaven will allow us to fully comprehend what Jesus did for us. His sacrifice was far greater than Jesus hanging on the cross for six hours. His sacrifice began "*before the world was made*" (Verse 8). That's why we'll worship Him with an intensity and explosion of praise never before experienced.
- John writes to the first century believers who were experiencing terrible persecution, as well as to believers today who are in a difficult marriage, fighting illness, or undergoing financial pressures, that one day it will all be solved. The beast, the persecution, and the problems will soon be done away with (Verse 9). That's why we need to read the Book of Revelation over and over. It's not about figuring out the mark of the Beast. It's not about figuring out who the false prophet or the Antichrist is. It's written to give us hope, and to remind us that life is short. God is in control. We're going to heaven.
- No sooner does the first beast come on the scene, than he is followed by a second one (Verse 11). They are definitely two different creatures, yet they're completely united in purpose and strategy. The first beast came out of the sea (Verse 1). The second beast came out of the earth (Verse 11). When Jesus ascended to heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity (John 14: 16). The other beast described in this passage is the false prophet (Revelation 16:13; Revelation 19:20). The false prophet is to the Antichrist, what the Holy Spirit is to Jesus Christ. He is a counterfeit of the Holy Spirit. Unlike the Antichrist, the false prophet comes across like a lamb. He seems to be so humble and gentle. But his purpose is to deceive. The Antichrist is the political leader; the false prophet is the religious leader who will unify the world religion as the public relations man for the Antichrist. Who is the "*first beast*" (Verse 12)? The Antichrist. It's important to remember, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to put the focus on Jesus Christ. The ministry of the false prophet is to put the focus on the Antichrist.
- Although the false prophet will appear to be as gentle as a lamb (Verse 11), he will have the ability to make "*making fire flash down to earth from the sky*" (Verse 13). Here we see counterfeit "miracles" performed to deceive. Do you remember Pharaoh's magicians, who duplicated Moses' signs in Egypt? They could only mimic the miracles God did through Moses. Because God is the only Creator, the best Satan can do is to copy.
- In addition to his fire-from-the-sky trick, the false prophet builds a statue of the Antichrist that appears to come to life; not only speaking, but killing those who refuse to bow to it. But, the Bible says, "*he deceived all the people who belong to this world*" (Verse 14). This false prophet orders the people to worship a statue of the Antichrist (Verse 14), a direct violation of the second commandment (Exodus 20: 4-6). The Bible says, "*He was then permitted to give life to this statue so that it could speak. Then the statue of the beast commanded that anyone refusing to worship it must die"* (Verse 15).
- So, what is this statue erected in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem? A possible answer may be found in computer chips. Although computer chips are currently based on silicon, new computer chips will be based on living matter (protein). When these protein-based computer chips finally get perfected, the computing power will immediately increase 50,000 times. This image may be a sophisticated automaton. Or it could be a demonically powered. Whatever it is, it will appear to have life. Throughout history, humans have been suckers for signs and so-called "miracles." Based on the eagerness of the general population to put faith in anything extraordinary, it

wouldn't take long for such an image to accumulate a large following.

- Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet are counterfeits of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, it's not surprising that the mark of the beast is worn on the head and arm; a counterfeit of the "Shema." (Verse 16). The Bible says the beast (Antichrist) "*required everyone—small and great, rich and poor, free and slave—to be given a mark on the right hand or on the forehead. 17 And no one could buy or sell anything without that mark, which was either the name of the beast or the number representing his name*" (Verses 16-17). The "Shema" is so essential to Jewish belief that it's placed in phylacteries and worn on the head and arms of Orthodox Jews even today. "*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. 6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.*" Deuteronomy 6:4-8). The mark of the beast is designed to mock the seal that God places on His disciples (Revelation 7:2-3). Just as God marks His people to save them, Satan marks his people to save them from the persecution that he will inflict upon those people who gave their lives to Christ during the Tribulation.
- It's important to remember that John wrote the Book of Revelation while on an isolated island, when the highest form of technology was a mule, and when the world's economy was primarily based on bartering. One of the things that make this passage so intriguing is that John describes precisely what the world is currently experiencing economically and culturally. For example, the banking industry has been promoting a cashless society for many decades. Banks have a financial interest in moving toward an electronic funds transfer system. So do small business owners. Small businesses lose millions of dollars annually due to employees who steal cash. In addition, the IRS is in favor of a cashless society. The government loses over one trillion dollars a year in the "underground" economy, where employees are paid in cash in order to avoid paying taxes. An increasing number of people are in favor of a cashless society. Why? Criminal activities involving theft of cash. The elimination of cash would result in a reduction of crime. The drug culture is based on "cash deals." One effective tool to curb drug trafficking would be to get rid of all cash. Tax evasion often involves dealing in large amounts of unreported cash transactions. The elimination of cash would restore greater equity in our tax system.
- Today, there are nearly 600 million open credit card accounts in the US (not including debit cards). According to the American Bankers Association, the number of debit card payments exceeds 61 billion yearly. The value of credit card debt in the US is over 800 billion dollars. In addition, the Multi-technology Automated Reader Card (MARC Card) has been issued to thousands of US military personnel. In addition to tracking financial transactions, it contains all health records, weapons qualifications, personal and family history, and electronically tracks the card-holder anywhere in the world by GPS. However, it can be lost or stolen. Therefore, the proposed solution is biometrics, including reading the iris of the subjects' eyes. But this can be problematic due to something as simple as contact lenses. Therefore, the best solution confirms what John prophesied over 2,000 years ago. He wrote the Antichrist will require everyone a mark on his right hand or forehead (Verse 16). Already, over two million animals have had computer chips embedded in them containing identification information, owner information, medical and vaccination records, etc. So have thousands of humans in over 16 nations. Many parents welcome this technology for their children due to the increasing threat of kidnappings.
- But there's a problem. The Bible says the mark of the beast will seal the fate of those who accept it. The acceptance of his number represents total allegiance to the Antichrist. That's why John, the two prophets in Jerusalem, the 144,000 Jewish Billy Graham's spanning the globe, and an angel flying across the sky warns people everywhere, "Don't take the mark." But most will. It will be considered "patriotic" and the "right thing" to do. Most people will say, "This really makes sense. I'd be foolish not to."
- So, what does this number "666" refer to? The best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. The Bible describes someone who was marked with "*the number of man*." The Bible says, "*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, "I have acquired a man from the Lord."* (Genesis 4:1). A more literal translation from the Hebrew language is, "*I have gotten a man, even Jehovah, the Lord*." Why would Eve say this?

Because after she and Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, God promised that her seed would crush the head of Satan (Genesis 3:15). Therefore, when Cain was born, she believed he was the one who would free them from the power of Satan. However, she soon realized Cain was not the deliverer. So, she named her second son "Abel," which means "*hopeless*." Do you remember the story? After Cain's self-sufficient sacrifice was rejected by God, Cain killed Abel. So, Cain was banished to the wilderness, with a mark to protect him. Abel was considered to be "*hopeless*" and unimportant. Cain was thought to be the promised one. But Cain represented the Antichrist (in place of Christ); while Abel is a picture of Christ.

- Abel was a shepherd (Genesis 4:2). Jesus is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11).
- Abel brought a lamb to sacrifice to sacrifice to God (Genesis 4:4). Jesus offered Himself as the Lamb of God (John 1:29).
- Abel was hated by his brother (Genesis 4:5). Jesus came to His own and his own received Him not (John 1:11).
- Abel was slain by his brother (Genesis 4:8). Jesus was crucified by his brethren (John 19:6).
- The blood of Abel cried out to God (Genesis 4:10). The blood of Jesus speaks to better things (Hebrews 12:24).
- Abel submitted to the directions of the Father (Hebrews 11:4). Jesus does what pleases the Father (John 8:29).

- Throughout the Bible, the number "6" represents the flesh. The spirit of Cain says, "I'm a good person. I'm a hard worker. I'm a faithful friend and do good things." The spirit of Cain says, "I don't need to be in church; it's uncomfortable. I believe in Jesus, but I don't have to be His disciple. I'm putting together a nice basket of fruit, but I'm uncomfortable with all the bloody stuff." The spirit of Abel says, "I'm a sinner. Without Him, I can do nothing. Jesus Christ is the Lord of my life." The spirit of Abel says, "I need to be in church. I need regular Bible study, worship, and communion." Our eternal destiny depends upon whether we're of the spirit of Cain, who is dependent upon good works, or the spirit of Abel, who is utterly dependent upon God.
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- **Revelation 14: 1 – 20:** "*Then I saw the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of mighty ocean waves or the rolling of loud thunder. It was like the sound of many harpists playing together. 3 This great choir sang a wonderful new song in front of the throne of God and before the four living beings and the twenty-four elders. No one could learn this song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 They have kept themselves as pure as virgins, following the Lamb wherever he goes. They have been purchased from among the people on the earth as a special offering to God and to the Lamb. 5 They have told no lies; they are without blame. 6 And I saw another angel flying through the sky, carrying the eternal Good News to proclaim to the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language, and people. 7 "Fear God," he shouted. "Give glory to him. For the time has come when he will sit as judge. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all the springs of water." 8 Then another angel followed him through the sky, shouting, "Babylon is fallen —that great city is fallen—because she made all the nations of the world drink the wine of her passionate immorality." 9 Then a third angel followed them, shouting, "Anyone who worships the beast and his statue or who accepts his mark on the forehead or on the hand 10 must drink the wine of God's anger. It has been poured full strength into God's cup of wrath. And they will be tormented with fire and burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and the Lamb. 11 The smoke of their torment will rise forever and ever, and they will have no relief day or night, for they have worshiped the beast and his statue and have accepted the mark of his name." 12 This means that God's holy people must endure persecution patiently, obeying his commands and maintaining their faith in Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this down: Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from their hard work; for their good deeds follow them!" 14 Then I saw a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was someone like the Son of Man. He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 Then another angel came from the Temple and shouted to the one sitting on the cloud, "Swing the sickle, for the time of harvest has come; the crop on earth is*

ripe." 16 So the one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the whole earth was harvested. 17 After that, another angel came from the Temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. 18 Then another angel, who had power to destroy with fire, came from the altar. He shouted to the angel with the sharp sickle, "Swing your sickle now to gather the clusters of grapes from the vines of the earth, for they are ripe for judgment." 19 So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and loaded the grapes into the great winepress of God's wrath. 20 The grapes were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress in a stream about 180 miles long and as high as a horse's bridle."

- The very last statement in Revelation 13 is, "*His number is 666*," referring to the mark of the beast on the right hands or foreheads of all those pledging loyalty to the Antichrist. Yet, here in Revelation 14, John sees the Lamb of God, standing with a group of 144,000 (Verse 1). And they also have a mark on their foreheads. But it's definitely not the same mark. These people "*had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads"* (Verse 1).
- In Revelation 7, we read of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes of Israel who will go throughout the world preaching the gospel. Although the Antichrist will target them for persecution, they are all still alive. And these 144,000 believers are singing "*a wonderful new song in front of the throne of God and before the four living beings and the twenty-four elders. No one could learn this song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth*" (Verse 3). The sound is something like rushing water and thunder, yet like harpists playing their instruments (Verse 2). Why could no one else sing the song of the 144,000? Because they alone went through testing and Tribulation yet maintained their integrity. Therefore, they were able to sing about what the Lord did for them during their tribulation. God's intent is to give us a "new song" as we experience times of tribulation. The Bible says Paul and Silas sang from their damp and dark dungeon at their darkest hour, simply because the Lord was with them (Acts 16:25). We can always go through hard times with a song in our heart, because the Lord has promised to strengthen us (Isaiah 41:10), and to walk with us through our hard times (Matthew 28:20).
- These 144,000 are blessed. They are described as "*pure as virgins, following the Lamb wherever he goes"* (Verse 4). In the Old Testament, idolatry was often portrayed as spiritual adultery (Book of Hosea). In other words, these people didn't get involved with the pagan world system. They remained faithful to Christ. The Bible says, "*They have been purchased from among the people on the earth as a special offering to God and to the Lamb"* (Verse 4). A more literal translation of "*special offering*" is "*first fruit*." This term would be very meaningful to the first century Jews. As the crops came in each year, they offered back to God a portion of the fruit that ripened first (Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 23:9-14). This group represents the first wave of people redeemed by God during the dark days of the Tribulation.
- We, too, are living in dark days. The temptations are intense. In this passage, John gives us six reasons how we can remain faithful.
    - **FIRST:** Keep your mind on the Lord. The Bible says, "*with him were 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads"* (Verse 1). When the Lord is continually on our mind, we'll be at peace. The Bible says the Lord "*will keep in perfect peace all who trust in (Him), all whose thoughts are fixed on (Him)* (Isaiah 26:3).
    - **SECOND:** Keep integrity in your speech. The Bible says the voices of the 144,000 were "*like the roar of mighty ocean waves or the rolling of loud thunder"* (Verse 2). Thunder represents authority. Integrity and authority are linked together. Even if people don't know your story, they can sense in your voice, see in your face, and discern in their hearts whether or not you're a person of integrity. That's why the voices of the 144,000 were like "*the rolling of loud thunder*" (Verse 2).
    - **THIRD:** Keep a song in your heart. The Bible says, "*this great choir sang a wonderful new song …"* (Verse 3). In the Bible, a new song represents rejoicing or happiness. The Bible says, "*You love justice and hate evil. Therefore, O God, your God has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else*" (Hebrews 1:9). In other words, the happiest Man in history, was the One who hated sin." The Bible says, "Joyful indeed are those whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15).
    - **FOURTH:** Keep the Lamb in your sight. The Bible says, "*They have kept themselves as pure as*

virgins, following the Lamb wherever he goes" (Verse 4). Wherever the Lamb goes, the 144,000 follow. They follow Him easily, because their purity allows them to see Him clearly.

- **FIFTH:** Keep truth on your lips. The Bible says, "*They have told no lies; they are without blame.*" (Verse 5). The Bible links purity with speech, because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34). That's why the mouth of the 144,000 were filled with truth.
- **SIXTH:** Produce fruit for your Lord. The Bible says, "*They have been purchased from among the people on the earth as a special offering to God and to the Lamb*" (Verse 4). John's admonition to the church in the first century is as applicable to us as it will be to those in the Tribulation. Choose holiness. The result of holiness will be Christ on your mind, integrity in your speech, a song in your heart, Jesus in your sight, truth on your lips, and your life will produce fruit for your Lord. But, even if you fail, and we all have, if your name is in the Book of Life, God will still find you faultless. Where? Before the throne (Verse 5). Why? Because the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our failings (I John 1:7). So, choose holiness. Why? You'll be happy presently and blessed eternally.

- The Bible says, "*And I saw another angel flying through the sky, carrying the eternal Good News to proclaim to the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language, and people*" (Verse 6). The 144,000 have been the infantry. Now, here comes the air support, angels.
- Jesus said that the end of the world will come after the gospel of the kingdom is preached to the entire world (Verse 6). God may speak through His creation, a miracle, or through you. In addition, it's important to remember that the Bible says the angels will preach the gospel to every nation, every tongue, every tribe and every people. At the end of time, no one will be able to say that he/she didn't have an opportunity to hear the gospel. The Bible says, "*In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He existed in the beginning with God. 3 God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. 4 The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it*" (John 1:1-5).
- Two "Babylons" are mentioned in the Book of Revelation. The religious Babylon and the commercial Babylon; the false religious system, and the oppressive economic system. The second angel declares both to be powerless (Verse 8). The third angel says, "Don't take the mark of the Beast" (Verse 9). Even so, almost everyone in the world will think this diabolical plan of the Antichrist is a good plan.
- People who don't believe that hell isn't a literal place, or that it won't last for eternity haven't read the Bible. Jesus taught on the subject of hell more than He did on the subject of heaven (Verses 10-11). That's why this angel cries with a loud voice, warning people to reject the mark of the Beast.
- To the people who become Christians during the Tribulation, they are told to "be patient" (Verse 12). As a result of the 144,000 witnesses, the message of the angels, and the powerful testimony of the two witnesses in Jerusalem, many people will come to the Lord. Notice that the voice saying "*Blessed are those who die in the Lord from now on. Yes, says the Spirit, they are blessed indeed, for they will rest from their hard work; for their good deeds follow them!"* wouldn't be necessary if the church were to go through the Tribulation (Verse 13). If that were case, the word wouldn't be "blessed are you if you die," but "blessed are you if you hang on to the end, because the Rapture is about to occur."
- Clouds are significant throughout the Bible. They represent the presence of God (Verse 14). Do you remember, when the law was first given, a cloud covered the mountain (Exodus 19:16)? Do you remember, when the law was given the second time, a cloud appeared again (Exodus 40:34)? Whenever the Israelites broke camp on their journey to the Promised Land, a cloud led the way (Numbers 9:17). When the temple was dedicated, a cloud filled the holy of holies (I Kings 8:10). The cloud reappears in Israel when Jesus was on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5). The cloud appears when Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9).
- The Bible says, "*seated on the cloud was someone like the Son of Man. He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand"* (Verse 14). So, no sooner had the three angels flown by making their announcements, than John saw another heavenly figure. He describes this heavenly figure "*like the Son of Man"* (Verse 14). Do you remember, Jesus recently appeared as "the Lamb" (Verse 1)? But the "*Son of Man*" was one of Jesus'

favorite descriptions for Himself when He was teaching on earth. It was also the term John used in his initial description of Jesus at the beginning of Revelation (Revelation 1:13). Daniel described a figure "like a son of man" approaching a powerful heavenly figure called "the Ancient of Days." The Bible says, *"13 As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence. 14 He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world, so that people of every race and nation and language would obey him. His rule is eternal—it will never end. His kingdom will never be destroyed"* (Daniel 7:13-14). This passage in Daniel is clearly a messianic prophecy. The Bible says, "*He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 Then another angel came from the Temple and shouted to the one sitting on the cloud, "Swing the sickle, for the time of harvest has come; the crop on earth is ripe." 16 So the one sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the whole earth was harvested"* (Verses 14-16). Sowing and reaping were prominent themes in Jesus' teaching (Mark 4:26-29; Matthew 13:24-30).

- According to this passage, there comes a point in the Tribulation when salvation is no longer possible (Verses 14-16). The 144,000 witnesses have been called to heaven. The angels have made their proclamation. Now, there's a separation between those who become Christians in the Tribulation and those who don't. The Bible says, "*After that, another angel came from the Temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. 18 Then another angel, who had power to destroy with fire, came from the altar. He shouted to the angel with the sharp sickle, "Swing your sickle now to gather the clusters of grapes from the vines of the earth, for they are ripe for judgment." 19 So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and loaded the grapes into the great winepress of God's wrath"* (Verses 17-19).
- The previous passage spoke of harvest of grain (Verses 14-16). This passage speaks of a harvest of grapes (Verses 17-19). A winepress is a large vat where grapes were collected and then crushed. The juice flowed out of a duct that led into a large holding vat. In the Bible, the winepress represents God's wrath and judgement against sin (Isaiah 63:3-6; Lamentations 1:15; Joel 3:12-13). The grapes that were harvested are said to be "*ripe for judgment"* (Verse 18). But the original Greek word implies "overripe, beginning to wither." The Bible says these grapes were thrown "*into the great winepress of God's wrath* (Verse 19). Grapes would only be tossed into a winepress to have all the living juices squeezed out of them. In this passage, the fluid is not grape juice, but blood.
- The Bible says, "*The grapes were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress in a stream about 180 miles long and as high as a horse's bridle*" (Verse 20). So, the harvest of separation has begun, and the end of the world is at hand (Revelation 16:12-16). "The city" always refers to Jerusalem (Verse 20). Notice that the grapes are trampled "outside the city," and that the "True Vine, Jesus Christ" was pressed to the Cross "outside the city" for our sin (John 19:17). This blood from the second (and last) harvest will flow from the valley of Armageddon, down Jordan's rift Valley, past Jerusalem, for 180 miles (distance of the length of Palestine). This fulfills Isaiah's prophecy, "*Who is this who comes from Edom, from the city of Bozrah, with his clothing stained red? Who is this in royal robes, marching in his great strength? "It is I, the Lord, announcing your salvation! It is I, the Lord, who has the power to save!" 2 Why are your clothes so red, as if you have been treading out grapes? 3 "I have been treading the winepress alone; no one was there to help me. In my anger I have trampled my enemies as if they were grapes. In my fury I have trampled my foes. Their blood has stained my clothes. 4 For the time has come for me to avenge my people, to ransom them from their oppressors. 5 I was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So I myself stepped in to save them with my strong arm, and my wrath sustained me. 6 I crushed the nations in my anger and made them stagger and fall to the ground, spilling their blood upon the earth*" (Isaiah 63:1-6). So, we have two options, either drown in the horrible bloodbath of Armageddon, or bathe in the gracious Blood of the Lamb. The greatest bloodshed in all of history didn't take place in any war, but when Jesus Christ died on the cross in order to wash us in His blood.
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- **Revelation 15: 1 – 8:** "*Then I saw in heaven another marvelous event of great significance. Seven angels were*

holding the seven last plagues, which would bring God's wrath to completion. ***2*** *I saw before me what seemed to be a glass sea mixed with fire. And on it stood all the people who had been victorious over the beast and his statue and the number representing his name. They were all holding harps that God had given them.* ***3*** *And they were singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations.* ***4*** *Who will not fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed."* ***5*** *Then I looked and saw that the Temple in heaven, God's Tabernacle, was thrown wide open.* ***6*** *The seven angels who were holding the seven plagues came out of the Temple. They were clothed in spotless white linen with gold sashes across their chests.* ***7*** *Then one of the four living beings handed each of the seven angels a gold bowl filled with the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.* ***8*** *The Temple was filled with smoke from God's glory and power. No one could enter the Temple until the seven angels had completed pouring out the seven plagues.*"

- In Revelation 15, God pours out His wrath on the world that rejected His payment for their sin. God is incredibly patient, but don't mistake patience for apathy, impotence, or approval of sin. Although the wheels of God's judgement turn slowly, they do grind thoroughly. In addition to seeing the seven angels about to pour out the fullness of God's wrath, John sees "*what seemed to be a glass sea mixed with fire"* (Verses 1-2). Glass was very rare in New Testament times, and crystal-clear glass was virtually impossible to find (I Corinthians 13:12). Because the actual tabernacle represents the reality of heaven (Hebrews 8 – 9), the "*glass sea"* may be a literal body of water, since the "laver" (brass basin) in the temple was filled with water to provide restoration, refreshment, renewal and revival (Exodus 30:18). The water was the Word of God (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26).
- Those who lose their lives in the Tribulation because they choose to listen to the message of the 144,000 witnesses and believe God, rather than take the mark of the Beast are not seen "around" the sea, but "on" the sea of glass. Why? Do you remember Peter? He was experiencing a personal "tribulation" on the Sea of Galilee, when the wind was blowing, and the waves were rolling. But then Peter saw Jesus walking toward him, and he cried out, "Lord, if it's really you, tell me to come to you, walking on the water." And Peter did just that (Matthew 14:28). So, those who choose to listen to the message of the 144,000 witnesses and believe God, rather than take the mark of the Beast were seen as "losers," but in heaven, they're "water-walkers" (Verse 2).
- The song of Moses is the first song in the Bible (Exodus 15). With their backs to the Red Sea, 3 million Jews looked up to see Pharaoh's army barreling down on them. But, after God parted the sea, and they were safely on the other side, they sang, "The Lord has triumphed gloriously." The song of Moses was sung near the Red Sea. The song of the Lamb is sung near the glassy sea. The song of Moses dealt with rescue. The song of the Lamb deals with the Rapture. The song of Moses was sung by those brought out of Egypt. The song of the Lamb is sung by those brought into heaven (Verse 3).
- "*… the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations.* ***4*** *Who will not fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed"* (Verses 3-4) is a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, "*In the end, the enemies of Jerusalem who survive the plague will go up to Jerusalem each year to worship the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies, and to celebrate the Festival of Shelters*" (Zechariah 14:16). The Bible says, when our Lord returns, the Feast of Shelters (Tabernacles) will be reinstated. This is a week-long celebration when the Jews remember how God brought them through the wilderness. However, instead of commemorating how God brought His people through the wilderness, it will celebrate how He brought His people through the world. Everyone will be invited, but not everyone will come. The Bible says, "*Any nation in the world that refuses to come to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of Heaven's Armies, will have no rain*" (Zechariah 14:17). The Bible says those who don't come will experience drought. The Lord says the same thing to us. If we don't come to worship, to dig into His Word, to fellowship with other believers, and to partake in communion, will experience spiritual drought and lack of fruit. Be forewarned, so you'll forearmed; prepared, so you'll be preserved.
- The "*spotless white linen with gold sashes across the chests*" of the seven angels represent their hearts of gold.

Judgement is about come to earth, not from cruelty, but from love (Verse 6). Knowing that sin burns His children (Romans 6:23), God sends His team of angels with gold bowls filled with judgement to deal with the sin that destroys humanity (Verses 7-8). The image of "*the Temple filled with smoke from God's glory and power"* is a reminder of the time of the Exodus in the wilderness, when the Ark of the Covenant (the symbol of God's presence among His people) resided in the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35). The smoke that fills the Temple represents God's glory and power (Verse 8). When God met Moses atop Mount Sinai, smoke billowed up like smoke from a furnace (Exodus 19:18). There is no escape from this judgement.

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- **Revelation 16: 1 – 21:** "*Then I heard a mighty voice from the Temple say to the seven angels, "Go your ways and pour out on the earth the seven bowls containing God's wrath." 2 So the first angel left the Temple and poured out his bowl on the earth, and horrible, malignant sores broke out on everyone who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. 3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse. And everything in the sea died. 4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel who had authority over all water saying, "You are just, O Holy One, who is and who always was, because you have sent these judgments. 6 Since they shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is their just reward." 7 And I heard a voice from the altar, saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just." 8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, causing it to scorch everyone with its fire. 9 Everyone was burned by this blast of heat, and they cursed the name of God, who had control over all these plagues. They did not repent of their sins and turn to God and give him glory. 10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. His subjects ground their teeth in anguish, 11 and they cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they did not repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. 12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and it dried up so that the kings from the east could march their armies toward the west without hindrance. 13 And I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs leap from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. 14 They are demonic spirits who work miracles and go out to all the rulers of the world to gather them for battle against the Lord on that great judgment day of God the Almighty. 15 "Look, I will come as unexpectedly as a thief! Blessed are all who are watching for me, who keep their clothing ready so they will not have to walk around naked and ashamed." 16 And the demonic spirits gathered all the rulers and their armies to a place with the Hebrew name Armageddon. 17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. And a mighty shout came from the throne in the Temple, saying, "It is finished!" 18 Then the thunder crashed and rolled, and lightning flashed. And a great earthquake struck—the worst since people were placed on the earth. 19 The great city of Babylon split into three sections, and the cities of many nations fell into heaps of rubble. So God remembered all of Babylon's sins, and he made her drink the cup that was filled with the wine of his fierce wrath. 20 And every island disappeared, and all the mountains were leveled. 21 There was a terrible hailstorm, and hailstones weighing as much as seventy-five pounds fell from the sky onto the people below. They cursed God because of the terrible plague of the hailstorm.*"
- This final series of judgements come rapidly. Why? Because God is dealing with the cancer of carnality, the plague of perversion, and the sickness of sin. So, the first bowl of God's wrath is poured out upon the earth. The Bible says "*horrible, malignant sores broke out on everyone who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue"* (Verse 2). Initially, taking the mark of the Beast seemed so logical and technologically sophisticated. Why deal with credit cards that can be stolen? Checks that can be forged? Cash that can be lost? With this new, "state of the art" technology, you can buy and sell simply with a number. But the angels cry as they fly across the sky, "Don't take this number," and the 144,000 Jewish evangelists will preach on the streets. But most will not listen, and their refusal to listen will bring pain. That's the way it always is with sin. The Bible says, "Your wickedness will bring its own punishment. Your turning from me will shame you. You will see what an evil, bitter thing it is to abandon the Lord your God and not to fear him. I, the Lord, the Lord of Heaven's Armies, have spoken!" (Jeremiah 2:19).

- Do you remember from the previous judgements that a significant portion of the sea life had died? This time, nothing is left alive (Verse 3). Then, the Bible says, "*Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs, and they became blood* (Verse 4). As hard as it is to imagine, every creek, lake and river will turn to blood. Every faucet and hose will run blood instead of water. How ironic! The vast majority of the people still alive celebrated the shedding of blood of the people that became Christians during this time, so God gives them blood to drink. Lots of blood (Verses 5-7). The angel says that the turning of the water to blood is an act of justice (Verse 5). As Jesus hung on the Cross, praying for forgiveness for those who put Him there, water and blood flowed from His side (John 19:34). Medically indicative of a broken heart, the water and blood meant nothing to the crown at Golgotha who turned their backs on Him. So, here in Revelation, the water is turned back to blood physically, because people rejected the blood that flowed with water redemptively.
- The Bible says, "*Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, causing it to scorch everyone with its fire*" (Verse 8). This could possibly be a supernova. Just before a star dies, it becomes intensely hot. Whatever the cause, because people turned their backs on the Son, they will experience the burning of the sun. The lack of pure water will probably add to this problem. The Bible says that although people around the world are plagued with blistered bodies, stinking seas, rivers of blood, and a scorching sun, they refuse to repent (Verse 9). Jesus taught about the reality of hell and everlasting fire (Mathew 25:41). He taught about eternal suffering in hell (Mark 9:43-45). Why? Because people are eternally "justifying" their behavior and refusal to give their lives to Him.
- The Bible says, "*Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. His subjects ground their teeth in anguish, **11** and they cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they did not repent of their evil deeds and turn to God"* (Verses 10-11). The seat of the Antichrist's government is Babylon – the city constructed on the same site as the tower of Babel. The people of that day said, "We'll build a tower and study the stars. We don't need God." Do you remember that at the tower of Babel, people's mouths were affected so they no longer spoke the same language? Well, people's mouths will be affected again, as they "grind their teeth in anguish" (Verse 10). Even though they can barely speak because of their pain, people will still refuse to turn to God (Verse11).
- The Bible says, "*Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and it dried up so that the kings from the east could march their armies toward the west without hindrance*" (Verse 12). The Euphrates River is referred to 25 times in the Bible. It was the northern boundary of the land promised to Abraham in Genesis 15. The Nile River formed the southern boundary. The Euphrates River is 1,800 miles long and an average of 30' deep. It's 300 – 1,200' wide. The Bible says, the Euphrates River will dry up, so the kings of the east can cross it. People used to ask, "How could this mighty river ever dry out? Then, in 1994, the manager of the Ataturk Dam (located at the headwaters of the Euphrates River) stated to the media, "We can stop the flow of water into Syria and Iraq for up to 8 months in order to regulate their political behavior." The "*kings of the east*" literally means the "*kings of the rising sun*" (Verse 12). The "land of the rising sun" traditionally and historically refers to both Japan and China. The technology of Japan and the manpower of China could easily produce a 200-million-man army prophesied in Revelation 9:14-16.
- As the Tribulation nears its end, three "frog-like" demons croak, "GoToMegiddo! GoToMegiddo!" into the ears of world leaders. Satan is actually orchestrating the entire scenario (Verses 13-16). Just 60 miles north of Jerusalem, at the foot of Mount Megiddo is the Valley of Jezreel. This valley has been the place of numerous wars. Deborah, the warrior woman during the time of the judges, won a victory here, when she defeated Sisera. So did Gideon, with his 300 men, waging war against the Midianites (Judges 5:19-20; Judges 6:33). King Saul, who had gone his own way rather than listen to God, lost his life in battle here (I Samuel 31; II Samuel 4:4). Do you remember when Samson battled the Philistines? It was right here, in this valley. King Ahaziah and King Josiah were also killed in battle in the Valley of Jezreel (II Kings 9:27; II Kings 23:29-30). Egyptian pharaohs fought here almost 1,500 years before Christ. Napoleon and his army were defeated by the Egyptians, after passing through this valley. In fact, Napoleon said, as he passed through this valley, "If there is ever a place on earth where the last war must be fought, it is here." In 1917 the British defeated the Turks here. The Turks, Muslims, Syrians,

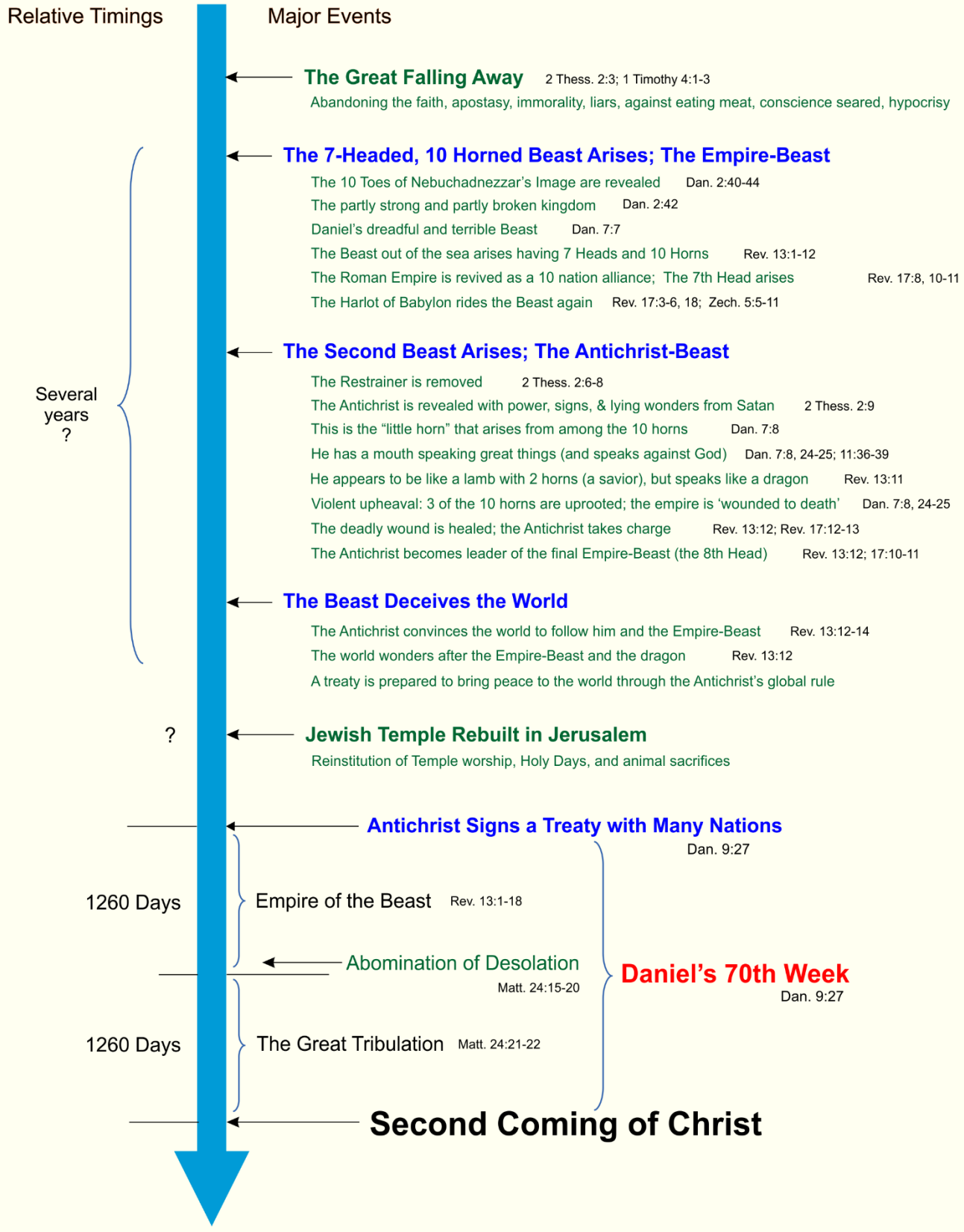
Egyptians, and Europeans have all waged war in this valley. Note that this is the only mention of Armageddon in the Bible (Verse 16). The bloody battle described in Revelation 14:19-20 is associated with this massive gathering of armies at Armageddon.

- Do you remember how certain demons were released from the "abyssos" (bottomless pit) to torment people (Revelation 9)? Now they're coming out of the mouths of the unholy trinity, to unite the leaders of the world for the battle against God. They will give verbal enticements and propaganda that will draw millions of people to their evil cause. Because true Christians follow scripture, we know what's ahead. We're looking for the Rapture. But those left behind, who become Christians during the Tribulation, receive an encouragement, "*Look, I will come as unexpectedly as a thief! Blessed are all who are watching for me, who keep their clothing ready so they will not have to walk around naked and ashamed"* (Verse 15). The mention of the return of Jesus "as a thief" occurs several times in the Bible. Jesus told parables that called for the watchfulness of his disciples, using the illustration of a thief (Luke 12:35-40). Paul was even more direct, saying that, "*For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night*" (I Thessalonians 5:2).
- So, the armies of the world will gather at Armageddon. The Antichrist, the false prophet, and Satan himself will meet them here (Verse 16). Why? First, to devour Israel. If Satan can destroy Israel, Bible prophecy will fail, for how can Jesus rule and reign from Israel if Israel ceases to exist? Second, to destroy believers. Once Israel is destroyed, Satan can destroy all who oppose him. Third, to determine who will rule. Satan knows he will ultimately encounter God at Megiddo.
- The Bible outlines the actual strategy that will be used in this final battle. While the Antichrist is headquartered at Babylon, the king of the south (Egypt and the northern African nations) will launch an insurrection against him. At the same time, the king of the north (Russia) will come south in order to assist the Egyptians and other northern African nations in their rebellion against the Antichrist. But the Russians will fool the king of the south, continue on to Egypt, and carry off the treasures of Egypt. So, Egypt comes north; Russia comes south; the Antichrist comes from the east; and they all converge in Megiddo. How do we know? The Bible tells us so (Daniel 11:40-47).
- **The Eight Stages of Armageddon:**
    1. The armies assemble (Revelation 16:12-16). The armies joining the Antichrist are described in the Bible (Daniel 7:2-27; Revelation 17: 12-13). The initial goal will be the final destruction of the Jews (Revelation 16:12-16)
    2. The destruction of Babylon (Revelation 17 – 18). The goal shifts from destroying the Jews to the destruction of Babylon. While the Antichrist is with his armies in Armageddon, his capitol will be attacked and defeated (Revelation 17).
    3. The fall of Jerusalem (Zechariah 12 – 14). Even though the Antichrist's capitol is destroyed, his forces will be strong. The Antichrist will move south against Jerusalem, and Jerusalem will fall (Zechariah 12:1-9; Zechariah 14:1-2; Micah 4:11 – 5:1).
    4. The Antichrist moves south against the Jews. The campaign will shift into the desert and mountains, about 80 miles south of Jerusalem, to the area of Petra, Jordan. One third of the Jews will make it safely out of Jerusalem and flee to Petra (Zechariah 13:8; Daniel 9:27; Isaiah 33:13-16; Jeremiah 49:13-14; Micah 2:12; Matthew 24:15-31; Revelation 12:6, 14).
    5. The regeneration of Israel (Isaiah 64:1-12). The Bible says before Christ returns, there will be a confession of Israel's national sin and a pleading for the Messiah to return. This will happen when the armies of the Antichrist are poised to destroy the Jews in the wilderness. Living in the rocks, caves, and graves around Petra, the nation of Israel will confess their sin and receive Jesus as their Messiah and Savior. The Bible says, *"In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike.*
    30 *And I will cause wonders in the heavens and on the earth— blood and fire and columns of smoke.*
    31 *The sun will become dark, and the moon will turn blood red before that great and terrible day of the Lord arrives.* ***32*** *But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, for some on Mount Zion in Jerusalem will escape, just as the Lord has said. These will be among the survivors whom the Lord has*

called" (Joel 2:29-32). Also read Deuteronomy 4:29-31; Deuteronomy 36:6-8; Jeremiah 3:11-18; Hosea 5:15; Zechariah 12:10; Matthew 23:37-39; Isaiah 53:1-9; Romans 1:25-27; Joel 2:28-32.

6. The second coming of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 34:1-7; Revelation 19:11-16; Jude 14-15).
7. The Final Battle in the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Jeremiah 49:20-22). The Antichrist will be slain by the true Christ. Beginning in Petra, and moving back to Jerusalem and the Kidron Valley (also known as the Valley of Jehoshaphat), Jesus will miraculously destroy the Antichrist's armies (Habakkuk 3:13; II Thessalonians 2:8; Joel 3:12-13; Zechariah 14:12-15; Revelation 14:19-20).
8. Christ's ascent upon the Mount of Olives (Revelation 19:11-21). After the destruction of the Antichrist and his forces, Jesus will stand on the Mount of Olives. When this happens, a great earthquake will split Jerusalem into three areas (Revelation 16:17-21).

Events Signaling the End



- The Bible says there will be several significant events signaling the End of the Age. These events will occur just prior to the beginning of a period called "Daniel's 70th Week" They will serve to alert everyone that the final days have come upon the world. Daniel's prophecy of the 70 Weeks is an incredible prediction of the Lord's future dealings with the nation of Israel. The angel Gabriel gave this prophecy to Daniel over 2,500 years ago (Dan. 9:24-27). The word translated "week" in this prophecy is actually the Hebrew word "shabua", which means a period of 7 days or 7 years. In the context of this prophecy, it means 7 years. So, according to Daniel, there are 70×7 or 490 years that encompass the entire prophecy. The last 7-year period, called Daniel's 70th Week, was separated from the prior 69 Weeks due to the rejection of Jesus by the Jews after He revealed himself as the Messiah. The 70th Week is predicted to begin in the Last Days with the rise of a global government under the Antichrist and end in the fiery destruction of this world in the Great Tribulation and the Battle of Armageddon.
- The Bible outlines the events that precede the rise of the final world empire. **Daniel's 70th Week will occur in the following stages:**

1) The Great Falling Away

- The Apostle Paul warns us that the Antichrist won't be revealed until there's a falling away from the faith. This will involve conditions arising in the world where people are "religious," while at the same time neglecting to "devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to the Lord's Supper, and to prayer" (Acts 2:42). These very conditions are arising to an extreme in our generation, especially over the last few decades.

2) The rise of the 7-headed, 10-horned beast (the revived Roman Empire)

- The beast rising out of the sea in Revelation 13:1 will consist of a 10-nation alliance out of the same region over which the Roman Empire originally reigned. At this point, the empire will be characterized as "partly strong and partly broken", which perfectly correlates with Nebuchadnezzar's image of the 4th world power—described by Daniel at the end of its reign as having feet and toes of iron mixed with miry clay (see your notes of Revelation 12). The head of gold represented the Babylonian Empire from 625 to 539 BC. The Medo-Persian Empire, from 558 to 330 BC, represented by the chest and arms of silver. The belly and thighs of bronze represented the Greco-Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great from 333 to 31 BC. The two legs of iron represent the Roman Empire from 31 – 476 BC. Finally, the ten toes on two feet of iron mixed with ceramic clay represent a future revival of the Roman Empire.
- How do we know that the feet of the image will continue into our modern times? Daniel describes a great stone that smashes the image on its feet. He also describes the stone's meaning: "*"During the reigns of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed or conquered. It will crush all these kingdoms into nothingness, and it will stand forever.* ***45*** *That is the meaning of the rock cut from the mountain, though not by human hands, that crushed to pieces the statue of iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold. The great God was showing the king what will happen in the future. The dream is true, and its meaning is certain"* (Daniel 2:44). The end-time power that will eventually dominate the Middle East, will be a revived Roman Empire, also symbolized in the prophecies of Revelation and Daniel as a beast (Daniel 7:17–18; Revelation 17:9–14; Revelation 13:1–18).
- In Daniel 11, we find two antagonists: the king of the North and the king of the South. In ancient times, Syria was considered to be the king of the North. But the Roman Empire conquered Syria, which became a province of Rome in 64 BC. Bible prophecy shows that by the time of the end, the king of the North will be identified with the revived Roman Empire. *"Then at the time of the end, the king of the south will attack the king of the north. The king of the north will storm out with chariots, charioteers, and a vast navy. He will invade various lands and sweep through them like a flood.* ***41*** *He will enter the glorious land of Israel, and many nations will fall, but Moab, Edom, and the best part of Ammon will escape.* ***42*** *He will conquer many countries, and even Egypt will not escape*" (Daniel 11:40–42).

- Notice that the king of the North enters into the "Glorious Land"—the location of the modern state of Israel. The fact that Ammon (which Bible scholars identify as modern-day Jordan) escapes out of his hand, along with Edom and Moab, leads many to believe that Jordan will be allied with the European power. Psalm 83 identifies those peoples who will be confederate with Assyria against Israel. That alliance includes Moab, Ammon and Edom.
- Daniel 11:43 identifies those nations allied with the king of the South. These are the peoples of North Africa. Verse 40 states that the king of the South attacks the king of the North. So, what will provoke this attack? Will it be the passion of Islamic fundamentalists? Will it be a sudden interruption of oil flow to Europe?

3) The rise of the Antichrist

- The beast that arises out of the earth in Revelation 13:11 is the Antichrist. The Bible says that just before the Antichrist is revealed, the Holy Spirit will be taken out of the way, because He has been inhibiting his rise till now (2 Thessalonians 2:6-8). The Antichrist will become the dynamic leader of the revived Roman Empire. At first, he will arise among the 10 nations of the Empire-Beast as a prominent figure having a "mouth speaking great things". He will then be elevated to power over the entire empire during a violent event within the 10-nation alliance, which uproots 3 of the initial 10 leaders or nations. At the end of these events, the Antichrist becomes the undisputed leader of the Empire-Beast.

4) The beast deceives the world (the Antichrist's ascent to power)

- Once the Antichrist consolidates power over the empire, he will move to become the ruler of the world. He convinces all nations to follow and "wonder after" the Beast. At this time, he prepares a treaty with all nations, which will last for 7 years (Daniel 9:27).

5) The Jewish Temple is rebuilt in Jerusalem

- One of the final events signaling the end is the rebuilding of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. It must be built and operational before the mid-point of the final 7 years, because precisely at 30 days before the 3½ year mark, the Antichrist is predicted to stop the sacrifices and go into the rebuilt Temple and declare himself to be God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; Daniel 12:11; Matthew 24:15-21). The rebuilding of the Temple is close to the start of the final 7 years, but it could occur earlier.
- Jesus compared this period to the days of Noah immediately before the flood. People were going about their lives right up until the very moment that Noah entered the ark (Matthew 24:37-39), and then they were trapped in the floodwaters. Likewise, these prophecies are a warning for the entire world. And just like in the days of Noah, the people then living will be left with only one ark or life raft to save them from the storms of the end—Jesus Christ. These prophecies also signal the End of the Age and the return of Christ.
- Daniel's 70th Week doesn't actually begin until after the Antichrist has appeared and risen to power over the empire. After he consolidates power over the 10-nation alliance, he makes a treaty establishing a one-world government, which is signed by many nations. That treaty is the key event which begins the final 7-year period before the Return of Christ (Daniel 9:27). This treaty may include a peace agreement involving Israel and its Middle Eastern enemies, because Russia's attack on Israel at the start of the Great Tribulation is prophesied to occur against a Jewish nation living in peace (Ezekiel 38:8). It's during this period that the world will become enamored by the allure of the Antichrist and the wonder and power of the Beast. The Bible says God will send "strong delusion" throughout the world so that the people who did not believe in the love and truth of Christ will be enticed to fall for the deception of the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:11). The Bible says that everyone who become followers of the Antichrist and his empire will suffer the wrath of God poured out in the final days (Revelation 14:9-12).

- One of the most overlooked events signaling the end is a great falling away from the faith, as predicted by Paul to occur in the End Times. He writes in 2 Thessalonians that the Antichrist won't be revealed until there is a falling away from the truth of Christ. He wrote this prophecy because many Christians at Thessalonica had believed that the end was at hand and the Antichrist was about to arise. Some even believed that the Roman Emperor was the Antichrist. This was because of the terrible persecutions that Christians endured as they lived in the Roman Empire during the First Century. The Bible says, "*3 Don't be fooled by what they say. For that day will not come until there is a great rebellion against God and the man of lawlessness is revealed—the one who brings destruction. 4 He will exalt himself and defy everything that people call god and every object of worship. He will even sit in the temple of God, claiming that he himself is God"* (II Thessalonians 2:3-4). Paul wrote there will be a falling away from the truth before the Antichrist could arise. Paul also wrote about some of the traits that will become prevalent as a result of this falling away, *"Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons. 2 These people are hypocrites and liars, and their consciences are dead. 3 They will say it is wrong to be married and wrong to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be eaten with thanks by faithful people who know the truth"* (I Timothy 4:1-3). Paul wrote to Timothy, *"You should know this, Timothy, that in the last days there will be very difficult times. 2 For people will love only themselves and their money. They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. 3 They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control. They will be cruel and hate what is good. 4 They will betray their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with pride, and love pleasure rather than God. 5 They will act religious, but they will reject the power that could make them godly. Stay away from people like that!"* (II Timothy 3:1-5).
- Today, we see a great falling away occurring in society, online, and in the news. Attacks against the truth and against the followers of Christ are growing daily. Christians are often viewed as purveyors of "hate speech." As the world turns farther away from God, it's getting primed for the rise of the final world empire and its leader, the Antichrist.

- The Bible says, "*Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. And a mighty shout came from the throne in the Temple, saying, "It is finished!"* (Verse 17). Consider two mountains found in the Bible. Both deal with the wrath of God as He pours out His wrath on men at Megiddo, and upon His Son at Calvary. Both deal with the rebellion of man as they blaspheme God at Megiddo, and His Son at Calvary. Both are bloodbaths as blood flows to the horses' mane at Megiddo, and from the Son's veins at Calvary. Both are completions, as "It is done" cries a voice from heaven at Mount Megiddo, while "It is finished" cries a voice from Mount Calvary.
- The Bible says, "*Then the thunder crashed and rolled, and lightning flashed. And a great earthquake struck—the worst since people were placed on the earth. 19 The great city of Babylon split into three sections, and the cities of many nations fell into heaps of rubble. So God remembered all of Babylon's sins, and he made her drink the cup that was filled with the wine of his fierce wrath. 20 And every island disappeared, and all the mountains were leveled. 21 There was a terrible hailstorm, and hailstones weighing as much as seventy-five pounds fell from the sky onto the people below. They cursed God because of the terrible plague of the hailstorm*" (Verses 18-21). The armies gather. The earth shakes. The blood flows. The earth's topography changes. These are consistent with the effects of a nuclear holocaust. History confirms that weapon systems have never been developed that haven't been used. Therefore, it would be an aberration of history if all of the nations of the world that presently have nuclear weapons failed to use them. This chapter may not refer to a nuclear holocaust, however the detonation of a nuclear warhead unleashes a firestorm of 250 mph winds. Upon striking the surface of water, a plume of water shoots up thousands of feet into the air, where it freezes and returns as hailstones as big as 75 pounds (Bikini Atoll nuclear tests). What was the Old Testament punishment for blasphemy? Stoning (Leviticus 24:16). What's happening here? Stoning by 75-pound hailstones.
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- **Revelation 17: 1 – 18:** "*One of the seven angels who had poured out the seven bowls came over and spoke to me. "Come with me," he said, "and I will show you the judgment that is going to come on the great prostitute, who rules over many waters.* ***2*** *The kings of the world have committed adultery with her, and the people who belong to this world have been made drunk by the wine of her immorality."* ***3*** *So the angel took me in the Spirit into the wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that had seven heads and ten horns, and blasphemies against God were written all over it.* ***4*** *The woman wore purple and scarlet clothing and beautiful jewelry made of gold and precious gems and pearls. In her hand she held a gold goblet full of obscenities and the impurities of her immorality.* ***5*** *A mysterious name was written on her forehead: "Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World."* ***6*** *I could see that she was drunk—drunk with the blood of God's holy people who were witnesses for Jesus. I stared at her in complete amazement.* ***7*** *"Why are you so amazed?" the angel asked. "I will tell you the mystery of this woman and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns on which she sits.* ***8*** *The beast you saw was once alive but isn't now. And yet he will soon come up out of the bottomless pit and go to eternal destruction. And the people who belong to this world, whose names were not written in the Book of Life before the world was made, will be amazed at the reappearance of this beast who had died.* ***9*** *"This calls for a mind with understanding: The seven heads of the beast represent the seven hills where the woman rules. They also represent seven kings.* ***10*** *Five kings have already fallen, the sixth now reigns, and the seventh is yet to come, but his reign will be brief.* ***11*** *"The scarlet beast that was, but is no longer, is the eighth king. He is like the other seven, and he, too, is headed for destruction.* ***12*** *The ten horns of the beast are ten kings who have not yet risen to power. They will be appointed to their kingdoms for one brief moment to reign with the beast.* ***13*** *They will all agree to give him their power and authority.* ***14*** *Together they will go to war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will defeat them because he is Lord of all lords and King of all kings. And his called and chosen and faithful ones will be with him."* ***15*** *Then the angel said to me, "The waters where the prostitute is ruling represent masses of people of every nation and language.* ***16*** *The scarlet beast and his ten horns all hate the prostitute. They will strip her naked, eat her flesh, and burn her remains with fire.* ***17*** *For God has put a plan into their minds, a plan that will carry out his purposes. They will agree to give their authority to the scarlet beast, and so the words of God will be fulfilled.* ***18*** *And this woman you saw in your vision represents the great city that rules over the kings of the world*."
- At this point in Revelation, the church is in heaven. But the religious system and structures are still on earth. This is referred to as "great prostitute" (Verses 1-2). Religion is defined as "humankind reaching up towards a god." True Christianity is "God reaching down to redeem humankind." This false religious system will be respected and have many followers. It will also have political clout. The leaders of this worldly religious system will have "a relationship" with the political leaders of "many waters" (many nations) of the world (Revelation 17:15).
- Did you notice the "great prostitute" is portrayed as "*sitting on a scarlet beast*" (Verse 3)? So, who is leading? Who's in charge? All true disciples of Christ are in heaven. But the "religious" people are left behind. So, the "religious system" is riding the Antichrist (Revelation 13:1). The Bible says, "*The woman wore purple and scarlet clothing and beautiful jewelry made of gold and precious gems and pearls. In her hand she held a gold goblet …*" (Verse 4). Did you notice the prosperity of the false religious system? The Bible says, "*In her hand she held a gold goblet full of obscenities and the impurities of her immorality*" (Verse 4). The contents of this "*gold goblet*" represent religious fornication. On her forehead was written, "*"Babylon the Great, Mother of All Prostitutes and Obscenities in the World"* (Verse 5). This woman represents Babylon, "*Mother of All Prostitutes.*"
- The Bible cold be called, "The Tale of Two Cities." From Genesis through Revelation, two cities are mentioned numerous times. One is Jerusalem, the city of God. The other is Babylon, the city of rebellion. Babylon is mentioned over 300 times in the Bible. Babylon was founded on the plain of Shinar, near the Euphrates River, by Nimrod. That site is about 50 miles south of modern Bagdad. Nimrod's name literally means "we will rebel." Babylon was centered around the tower of Babel, a ziggurat used for the practice of astrology. Under Nebuchadnezzar (605 – 562 BC), it was the world's greatest city in size and splendor. The city spread out over 200 miles and boasted over 50 elaborate temples devoted to various gods and goddesses. Its leaders wore fish-head-shaped crowns to honor their fish god. Nebuchadnezzar's hanging gardens (one of the 7 wonders of the

ancient world) was his attempt to please his new wife who came from a mountainous country. From a worldly perspective, Babylon was a great and glorious metropolis. But, from a spiritual perspective, the city was a prostitute, associating with any and every religion that came along.

- It's important to remember that John at the time John wrote the Book of Revelation, true disciples of Jesus Christ were in the middle of 10 waves of persecution that would ultimately claim the lives of over 6 million Christians. In Verse 3, the woman was ***riding*** the Beast (Antichrist). Here, John describes this prostitute as "*drunk with the blood of God's holy people who were witnesses for Jesus"* (Verse 6). As we've already learned, the beast (Antichrist) is in league with the dragon (Satan) (Revelation 13:1-4). The Bible says, "*The beast you saw was once alive but isn't now. And yet he will soon come up out of the bottomless pit and go to eternal destruction. And the people who belong to this world, whose names were not written in the Book of Life before the world was made, will be amazed at the reappearance of this beast who had died"* (Verse 8). From our study of Revelation 13, we learned the beast was apparently alive, died, and then came back to life. The beast's resurrection represents the persistence of evil. This resurgence of evil power will convince many to join forces with the beast. The names of all believers are written in the Book of Life (Revelation 3:5).
- The Bible says, "*The seven heads of the beast represent the seven hills where the woman rules"* (Verse 9). Only one city in history is known as "The City of Seven Hills" – Rome (Verse 9). At the time John wrote this, there had been seven Roman emperors: Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, and Domitian. The Bible says, "*Five kings have already fallen"* (Verse 10). Of the original emperors, five were already dead. Julius Caesar was assassinated. Tiberius was poisoned. Caligula was stabbed. Claudius was smothered. Nero committed suicide. The Bible says, "*the sixth now reigns"* (Verse 10). When John wrote this book, Domitian was on the throne. Verse 10 concludes, "*the seventh is yet to come, but his reign will be brief."* This is a reference to the Antichrist. The "*the seventh is yet to come …is like the other seven, and he, too, is headed for destruction* (Verses 10 – 11).
- The Bible says, "***12*** *The ten horns of the beast are ten kings who have not yet risen to power. They will be appointed to their kingdoms for one brief moment to reign with the beast.* ***13*** *They will all agree to give him their power and authority"* (Verses 12 – 13). The Bible says the ten horns of the beast represent the ten nations of the revived Roman Empire (Daniel 7). Since the Rapture has already happened at this point, the Antichrist and this ten-nation federation will be of one mind. The bottom line, the only goal, the one objective of the Antichrist, is to destroy Jesus (Verse 14). Because Jesus "*is Lord of all lords and King of all kings"* the Antichrist will be unsuccessful in his attempted coup (Verse 14).
- The Bible says once the Beast has used the false religious system to gain power, he will turn against this false religious system (Verses 15 – 16). In a dramatic turn of events, the great prostitute's allies turn on her and destroy her. This is how evil operates. An unholy alliance is an uneasy alliance, because each partner puts its own interests first. In the same way, we will be disgraced, denuded, and devoured by any sin we attempt to control rather than confess. Like the "great prostitute," we can "ride the sin" for a season, arrayed in pearls, precious stones, and purple robes of confidence, but eventually, like the "great prostitute," we'll be burned and eaten up by the very sin we thought we controlled. The Bible says, "*The scarlet beast and his ten horns all hate the prostitute. They will strip her naked, eat her flesh, and burn her remains with fire"* (Verse 16). The language in this verse is purposely horrific, because the wages of sin is everlasting torment in Hell (Romans 3:23). According to His own will, God will use the Beast to destroy the false world system (Verse 17).
- Revelation 17 focuses on the "religious system" of the world being united by the power of Rome. However, we must not equate Rome with Catholicism. There are many wonderful Christian brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church. But, after these brothers and sisters are raptured, the remaining power and prestige of the church in Rome will be manipulated by the Antichrist. Although the Roman Church will think she's in control, she'll inevitably suffer the same fate as the "great prostitute." The Bible says, "*They will agree to give their authority to the scarlet beast, and so the words of God will be fulfilled.* ***18*** *And this woman you saw in your vision represents the great city that rules over the kings of the world*" (Verses 17 – 18).
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- **Revelation 18: 1 – 24:** *"After all this I saw another angel come down from heaven with great authority, and the earth grew bright with his splendor.* ***2*** *He gave a mighty shout: "Babylon is fallen—that great city is fallen! She has become a home for demons. She is a hideout for every foul spirit, a hideout for every foul vulture and every foul and dreadful animal.* ***3*** *For all the nations have fallen because of the wine of her passionate immorality. The kings of the world have committed adultery with her. Because of her desires for extravagant luxury, the merchants of the world have grown rich."* ***4*** *Then I heard another voice calling from heaven, "Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her.* ***5*** *For her sins are piled as high as heaven, and God remembers her evil deeds.* ***6*** *Do to her as she has done to others. Double her penalty for all her evil deeds. She brewed a cup of terror for others, so brew twice as much for her.* ***7*** *She glorified herself and lived in luxury, so match it now with torment and sorrow. She boasted in her heart, 'I am queen on my throne. I am no helpless widow, and I have no reason to mourn.'* ***8*** *Therefore, these plagues will overtake her in a single day – death and mourning and famine. She will be completely consumed by fire, for the Lord God who judges her is mighty."* ***9*** *And the kings of the world who committed adultery with her and enjoyed her great luxury will mourn for her as they see the smoke rising from her charred remains.* ***10*** *They will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will cry out, "How terrible, how terrible for you, O Babylon, you great city! In a single moment God's judgment came on you."* ***11*** *The merchants of the world will weep and mourn for her, for there is no one left to buy their goods.* ***12*** *She bought great quantities of gold, silver, jewels, and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet cloth; things made of fragrant thyine wood, ivory goods, and objects made of expensive wood; and bronze, iron, and marble.* ***13*** *She also bought cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle, sheep, horses, wagons, and bodies – that is, human slaves.* ***14*** *"The fancy things you loved so much are gone," they cry. "All your luxuries and splendor are gone forever, never to be yours again."* ***15*** *The merchants who became wealthy by selling her these things will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will weep and cry out,* ***16*** *"How terrible, how terrible for that great city! She was clothed in finest purple and scarlet linens, decked out with gold and precious stones and pearls!* ***17*** *In a single moment all the wealth of the city is gone!" And all the captains of the merchant ships and their passengers and sailors and crews will stand at a distance.* ***18*** *They will cry out as they watch the smoke ascend, and they will say, "Where is there another city as great as this?"* ***19*** *And they will weep and throw dust on their heads to show their grief. And they will cry out, "How terrible, how terrible for that great city! The ship-owners became wealthy by transporting her great wealth on the seas. In a single moment it is all gone."* ***20*** *Rejoice over her fate, O heaven and people of God and apostles and prophets! For at last God has judged her for your sakes.* ***21*** *Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a huge millstone. He threw it into the ocean and shouted, "Just like this, the great city Babylon will be thrown down with violence and will never be found again.* ***22*** *The sound of harps, singers, flutes, and trumpets will never be heard in you again. No craftsmen and no trades will ever be found in you again. The sound of the mill will never be heard in you again.* ***23*** *The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The happy voices of brides and grooms will never be heard in you again. For your merchants were the greatest in the world, and you deceived the nations with your sorceries.* ***24*** *In your streets flowed the blood of the prophets and of God's holy people and the blood of people slaughtered all over the world"* (Revelation 18:1-24).
- Revelation 17 focuses on the "religious system" of the world being united by the power of Rome. However, we must not equate Rome with Catholicism. There are many wonderful Christian brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church. But, after these brothers and sisters are raptured, the remaining power and prestige of the church in Rome will be manipulated by the Antichrist. Although the Roman Church will think she's in control, she'll inevitably suffer the same fate as the "great prostitute." The Bible says, "*They will agree to give their authority to the scarlet beast, and so the words of God will be fulfilled.* ***18*** *And this woman you saw in your vision represents the great city that rules over the kings of the world*" (Revelation 17: 17 – 18).
- After the destruction of Babylon (Revelation 17:15), what is left of the one-world religious system will join with Antichrist and the 10-nation confederation of Europe. The religious system will initially work with the Antichrist and the European Union (the revived Roman Empire). The religious system based in Rome will appear to control the European coalition of the revived Roman Empire. But this won't last long.

- The Bible says the "kings of the world" will ultimately use Rome to gain political control of the world. In a dramatic turn of events, the great prostitute's allies turn on her and destroy her. This is how evil operates. An unholy alliance is an uneasy alliance, because each partner puts its own interests first. In the same way, we will be disgraced, denuded, and devoured by any sin we attempt to control rather than confess. Like the "great prostitute," we can "ride the sin" for a season, arrayed in pearls, precious stones, and purple robes of confidence, but eventually, like the "great prostitute," we'll be burned and eaten up by the very sin we thought we controlled. The Bible says, "*The scarlet beast and his ten horns all hate the prostitute. They will strip her naked, eat her flesh, and burn her remains with fire"* (Revelation 17:16). The language in this verse is purposely horrific, because the wages of sin is everlasting torment in Hell (Romans 3:23). According to His own will, God will use the Beast to destroy the false world system (Revelation 17: 17). Then they will trash Rome. That's why Babylon is called a prostitute in Chapter 17. The "politically correct" religious system is used, abused, and thrown away.
- So, why is Babylon referred to in Revelation 18, after seeing her destroyed in Revelation 17? Because Revelation 17 refers to the false religious system Babylon represents. Revelation 18 refers to the literal city of Babylon. Chapter 17 refers to religious Babylon. Chapter 18 refers to political and economic Babylon.
- The prophet Jeremiah foretold the total destruction of Babylon. In addition, the prophet Isaiah wrote: *"19 Babylon, the most glorious of kingdoms, the flower of Chaldean pride, will be devastated like Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed them. 20 Babylon will never be inhabited again. It will remain empty for generation after generation. Nomads will refuse to camp there, and shepherds will not bed down their sheep. 21 Desert animals will move into the ruined city, and the houses will be haunted by howling creatures. Owls will live among the ruins, and wild goats will go there to dance. 22 Hyenas will howl in its fortresses, and jackals will make dens in its luxurious palaces. Babylon's days are numbered; its time of destruction will soon arrive"* (Isaiah 13:19-23).
- Although Babylon was destroyed by Alexander the Great in 830 BC, there have always been small communities of inhabitants. However, Isaiah prophesied that not even shepherds and their flocks would not stay in Babylon. Only wild animals would inhabit Babylon. Therefore, Isaiah's prophecy refers to a future destruction (found in Revelation 18).
- Verse 3 refers to global commercial interaction with Babylon. Because every nation has commercial interaction with Babylon, every nation is affected by Babylon. The Bible says, "*all the nations have fallen because of the wine of her passionate immorality"* (Verse 3).
- The warning to "my people" refers to those who have become believers during the Tribulation (Verse 4). The church is already in heaven, but the Lord will still save a large number of people who finally understand the Gospel and give their lives to Christ. It's to these people that a voice cries from heaven, "*Come away from her, my people. Do not take part in her sins, or you will be punished with her"* (Verse 4). While Christians are called to love God and love people, we are also cautioned to be careful about getting too involved with secular practices and lifestyles. Christians are called to *"come out from them and be separate"* (II Corinthians 6:11-18).
- Verse 5 is a reference to the "Tower of Babel." The initial goal of the builders of this tower is Babylon, was to *"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"* (Genesis 11:4). However, the only thing that reached to the sky were their sins. Therefore, Babylon is about to receive twice the penalty for all her evil deeds and terror ever perpetrated by her (Verse 6).
- Notice in Verse 7 how "*She boasted in her heart, 'I am queen on my throne. I am no helpless widow, and I have no reason to mourn."* Babylon boasts that because of her interaction with all nations, she has "*no reason to mourn"* (Verse 7). That doesn't mean that Babylon won't experience sorrow, but that she refuses to see it! Babylon is so absorbed in herself, her own materialism and her own economy that she doesn't see the sorrow of people even within her own boundaries.
- Therefore, the Bible says, "*these plagues will overtake her in a single day – death and mourning and famine. She will be completely consumed by fire"* (Verse 8). Babylon claims to be a queen and sees no reason to mourn, but

God sees her differently and is going to judge her thoroughly (Verse 8).

- So, not wanting to be tormented, the Bible says her leaders will flee to a safe place. The Bible says, "*The kings of the world who committed adultery with her and enjoyed her great luxury will mourn for her as they see the smoke rising from her charred remains. 10 They will stand at a distance, terrified by her great torment. They will cry out, "How terrible, how terrible for you, O Babylon, you great city! In a single moment God's judgment came on you"* (Verses 9-10). This utter destruction within *"a single moment"* could very likely be the result of a nuclear exchange. The fallout would explain why *"the kings of the world … will stand at a distance"* (Verses 9-10).
- Did you notice that no one was mourning the huge loss of life in Babylon, but rather "*the merchants of the world will weep and mourn for her, for there is no one left to buy their goods"* (Verse 11)? Verses 12-13 list the jewelry (*gold, silver and pearls*); clothing (*fine linen, purple, silk, and scarlet cloth*); home furnishings (*fragrant thyine wood, ivory goods, and objects made of expensive wood; and bronze, iron, and marble*); cosmetics (*cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense*); food court (*wine, olive oil, fine flour, wheat*); livery (*cattle, sheep, horses, wagons*); and human trafficking (*bodies – that is, human slaves*). Note that every one of these items are luxuries. Babylon specializes in materialism gone mad. Babylon is the city that drives the world economy. Everyone who exported from or imported to her is questioning how they will now be to buy or sell (Verses 14-17). The people's response to the destruction of Babylon is to weep and wail. But heaven's response is to rejoice (Verses 17-20).
- The Bible says the entire life of the city comes to a complete halt in the aftermath of what likely is a nuclear exchange (Verses 17-20). It's at this time an angel hurls a huge millstone into the ocean as an illustration of the swiftness of Babylon's judgment (Verse 21).
- Did you notice that Babylon's *"merchants were the greatest in the world, and deceived the nations with sorceries"* (Verse 23)? The word translated "sorceries" is "pharmakeia," or "drugs." Did you notice that Babylon has caught the entire world in her web of drug trafficking (Verse 23)? Did you notice the Bible says, *"in your streets flowed the blood of the prophets and of God's holy people and the blood of people slaughtered all over the world"* (Verse 24)? Since 1900, an average of 250,000 evangelical Christians have been martyred every year. The greatest number of those persecuted has taken place in China. But rather than taking a stand against this bloodshed, our country continues to grant China "Most Favored Nation" status in order that her 3 billion people can buy our cars, electronics and other goods. The Bible says Babylon will become the center of world commerce during the Tribulation. Although we simply don't know where the Babylon of Revelation is located, we do know the revived Roman Empire, a restored Russia, a Chinese-Asian coalition and Israel are all clearly seen in the end times. But America is strangely absent. This could be explained by a devastating nuclear exchange described in Revelation in Revelation 18. It could also be explained by the fact that due to the large percentage of Christians in our nation, America is disabled as a result of the void they leave after the rapture. We'll soon find out!
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- **Revelation 19:1 - 21:** *"After this, I heard what sounded like a vast crowd in heaven shouting, "Praise the LORD! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God. 2 His judgments are true and just. He has punished the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality. He has avenged the murder of his servants." 3 And again their voices rang out: "Praise the LORD! The smoke from that city ascends forever and ever!" 4 Then the twenty-four elders and the four living beings fell down and worshiped God, who was sitting on the throne. They cried out, "Amen! Praise the LORD!" 5 And from the throne came a voice that said, "Praise our God, all his servants, all who fear him, from the least to the greatest." 6 Then I heard again what sounded like the shout of a vast crowd or the roar of mighty ocean waves or the crash of loud thunder: "Praise the LORD! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself. 8 She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear." For the fine linen represents the good deeds of God's holy people. 9 And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb." And he added, "These are true words that come from God." 10 Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said, "No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God,*

just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus. Worship only God. For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness for Jesus." **11** *Then I saw heaven opened, and a white horse was standing there. Its rider was named Faithful and True, for he judges fairly and wages a righteous war.* **12** *His eyes were like flames of fire, and on his head were many crowns. A name was written on him that no one understood except himself.* **13** *He wore a robe dipped in blood, and his title was the Word of God.* **14** *The armies of heaven, dressed in the finest of pure white linen, followed him on white horses.* **15** *From his mouth came a sharp sword to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron rod. He will release the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty, like juice flowing from a winepress.* **16** *On his robe at his thigh was written this title: King of all kings and Lord of all lords.* **17** *Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, shouting to the vultures flying high in the sky: "Come! Gather together for the great banquet God has prepared.* **18** *Come and eat the flesh of kings, generals, and strong warriors; of horses and their riders; and of all humanity, both free and slave, small and great."* **19** *Then I saw the beast and the kings of the world and their armies gathered together to fight against the one sitting on the horse and his army.* **20** *And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who did mighty miracles on behalf of the beast—miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.* **21** *Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came from the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And the vultures all gorged themselves on the dead bodies."*

- Revelation 19 takes place after the destruction of Babylon (the political and commercial epicenter of the world). The people left alive on planet earth will be mourning the destruction of Babylon. But heaven rejoices (Verses 1-2). Why? Because that which seemed to be so terrible on planet earth will be righteous and perfect from the vantage of heaven. The same is true in our own lives. Why doesn't God simply show us His whole plan now? Because He's teaching us to walk by faith and not by sight. Why? Because He knows that developing faith is us is absolutely necessary in light of what we'll be doing throughout eternity.
- "Amen" means "so be it" (Verse 4). "Alleluia" means "praise the Lord" (Verses 1-4). Did you know that "Amen" and "Alleluia" are the only universally known words? They are understood in every language, by every culture. The elders are those who say, "So be it. Praise the Lord" (Verses 1-4).
- Handel's inspired "Hallelujah Chorus" is drawn from Verses 5-6). "Alleluia" in Hebrew is "Hallelu Yah" = "Praise Jehovah." The only place "Alleluia" is used in the New Testament is in Revelation 19.
- The Bible says "*7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honor to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself.* 8 *She has been given the finest of pure white linen to wear." For the fine linen represents the righteousness of God's holy people"* (Verses 7-8). In the Book of Isaiah, we find what "*the righteousness of God's holy people"* is. The Bible says, *"I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding or a bride with her jewels"* (Isaiah 61:10). It's not "my" righteousness that saves me. The Bible says "my" righteousness is as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). It's the robe of righteousness the Lord places around me that enables me to enter into the Marriage Feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10).
- The Apostle John is so blown away by seeing the bride, he falls at the feet of the angel (Verse 10). But the angel says, "Don't worship me. I'm just a fellow servant." Yet, Jesus never says, "Don't worship Me. I'm just an angel." Therefore, Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses belief that Jesus is nothing more than an angel is completely erroneous. Jesus deserves worship because He is more than an angel. He is God.
- In Verse 11 the door of heaven opens. In Revelation 4:1, the door is opened for the entrance of the raptured church. In Revelation 19:11, the door is opened for the exit of the church 7 years later when the church returns to planet earth with Jesus at His second coming.
- Perhaps the "*many crowns*" on His head signify all the denominations within the church who crown Jesus Lord (Verse 12). The leaders of some churches wear big hats and sprinkle water on people. The leaders of other churches wear fancy suits and shiny hair. The leaders of other churches wear baseball hats and jeans. But God has His children in the congregations of every one as He breaks through barriers that divide them and makes

Himself known. In addition, the Bible speaks of "*a name written on him that no one understood except himself"* (Verse 12). Names have meaning. They reveal a person's character. Verse 12 suggests that there's a part of the character of Jesus that's not understood by any but Himself. We'll be amazed when we see Jesus, because none of us know Him now the way we'll know Him eventually. We'll spend eternity exploring His character, astounded by His beauty, awed by His holiness, and amazed by His love. The Bible says we only see "*through a glass darkly*" this side of heaven (I Corinthians 13:12).

- The Bible says it's His blood that cleanses me from me from my impurity and washes me from my stupidity. I'm pure not because of my efforts, but because Jesus shed His blood for me. The door in heaven is opened. Clothed in "*the finest of pure white linen"* we come with our Lord. Not to fight, but to marvel as He secures the victory (Verses 13-14).
- The Bible says from the mouth of Jesus, "C*ame a sharp sword to strike down the nations"* (Verse 15). The "*sharp sword*" refers to the Word of God. The Bible says, *"12 For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before his eyes, and he is the one to whom we are accountable"* (Hebrews 4:12-13).
- The Bible says the armies of the world will gather in the plain of Jezreel, the valley in northern Israel called the Valley of Megiddo. This is the place called Armageddon. 200 million warriors have come from the East. The Antichrist is moving into Jerusalem to secure his power base. According to Daniel 11, the South (Pan African nations and Arab states) join forces and move towards Israel. At the same time, the Northern armies come down from Europe. It's at Armageddon that they converge to fight one another. But as the battle begins, everyone looks up and sees Jesus Christ. His eyes are like fire. He's crowned with many crowns and riding a white horse. Jesus is leading a huge army. Suddenly, all of the weapons of all earth's armies are turned upon Him. This was Satan's plan all along (Verses 16-19).
- The Bible says, "*20 And the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who did mighty miracles on behalf of the beast—miracles that deceived all who had accepted the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue. Both the beast and his false prophet were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 21 Their entire army was killed by the sharp sword that came from the mouth of the one riding the white horse. And the vultures all gorged themselves on the dead bodies"* (Revelation 19:20-21).
- Chapters 6 – 18 of Revelation are all about the Tribulation. During this course, we've studied the 7 seals, 7 trumpets and 7 bowl judgements. We've studied plagues, pests and problems. We've examined suffering, scorching and sorrow. We've read about heartache, earthquakes and death. Now, we come to Chapter 19, the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Yet only one chapter of Revelation is devoted to this climax of this book. Why?
- Because this book was written by a real pastor named John who ministered to the people of 7 real churches. And these people were being fed to lions, sawn in half lengthwise and crucified upside down. At least 6 million believers would die before the persecution ended. Therefore, John confirms to his flock that life is brutal, painful and bloody. Why? Because when Adam and Eve fell, the whole world fell with them.
- John was warning his people that even in the midst of their own tribulations, if they ate of the marriage feast (Revelation 19:1-9), they would be able to face trials and tribulations to come. David said the same thing when he said, *"You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies"* (Psalm 23:5). The way to salvation is through spiritual intimacy. This is most clearly illustrated when we partake of communion. This is the most intimate kind of worship possible. Being one with Jesus in communion will prepare us for any tribulations in the future. Jesus will return, and there will be no more battles. In the meantime, He prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies.
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- **Revelation 20:1 - 15:** *"Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. 2 He seized the dragon—that old serpent, who is the devil, Satan—and bound him in*

chains for a thousand years. [3] The angel threw him into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished. Afterward he must be released for a little while. [4] Then I saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for proclaiming the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They all came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years. [5] This is the first resurrection. (The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years had ended.) [6] Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. For them the second death holds no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him a thousand years. [7] When the thousand years come to an end, Satan will be let out of his prison. [8] He will go out to deceive the nations—called Gog and Magog—in every corner of the earth. He will gather them together for battle—a mighty army, as numberless as sand along the seashore. [9] And I saw them as they went up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded God's people and the beloved city. But fire from heaven came down on the attacking armies and consumed them. [10] Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. [11] And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide. [12] I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. [13] The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds. [14] Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death. [15] And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire."

- The beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet have already been thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20). In Revelation 20:1 the Bible says Satan himself is now bound by a single unarmed angel. Not by the Lord, not by a host of angels, not even by Michael the archangel. But by a single unnamed angel. Satan was formerly known as the archangel Lucifer. He was created by God. He is not the evil counterpart of God. It only takes one hand of a single angel to capture and dispose of Satan (Verses 1-2).
- The Bible says this angel cast Satan "*into the bottomless pit, which he then shut and locked so Satan could not deceive the nations anymore until the thousand years were finished"* (Verse 3). The bottomless pit ("*abussos*") is the place where the worst demons are presently incarcerated. This place is so terrible the demons of Matthew 8 begged to be cast into a herd of pigs, rather than be sent to the bottomless pit. The Bible says Satan will be in this bottomless pit for 1,000 years (Verse 3). The Bible says it is during this time that "*everyone will live in peace and prosperity, enjoying their own grapevines and fig trees, for there will be nothing to fear. The Lord of Heaven's Armies has made this promise*" (Micah 4:4). The Bible says it's during this time that "*No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young! [21] In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards. [22] Unlike the past, invaders will not take their houses and confiscate their vineyards. For my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains. [23] They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune. For they are people blessed by the Lord, and their children, too, will be blessed. [24] I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers! [25] The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. But the snakes will eat dust.*
  In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the Lord, have spoken" (Isaiah 65:20-25). The Bible says the Millennium will be a fantastic time of unparalleled peace and prosperity. Why? Because Satan will be bound in the bottomless pit. Did you notice that Satan *wasn't* cast into the lake of fire (Gehenna)? Instead, he was imprisoned in the "abussos" (bottomless pit) for 1,000 years. Why? Because God still has a job for him to do, as we'll see in Verse 7.
- The Bible says John "*saw thrones, and the people sitting on them had been given the authority to judge. And I*

saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony about Jesus and for proclaiming the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his statue, nor accepted his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They all came to life again, and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Verse 4). It's important to remember that 1/3 of the nation of Israel didn't die in the Tribulation (Matthew 25). The Bible says when Jesus returns at His Second Coming, these people will ask Him, "Where did you get those wounds?" Jesus will reply, "In the house of My friends" (Zechariah 13:6). The Bible says, at that moment Israel will at last acknowledge Him as her Messiah, and all the remaining Jews will be saved (Zechariah 13:9). The Bible says although those living in the Millennium won't be influenced by Satan, they'll still have their human nature to deal with. The Bible says these are the people we (the Bride of Christ) will judge (Luke 19:15-19). It will be a righteous judgement that governs the Millennial kingdom that results in a glorious time of peace on earth.

- The "first resurrection" (Verse 5) begins with the resurrection of Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15:20-23). It includes all who became committed believers but died before the Rapture (I Thessalonians 4:14), Christians who are alive at the time of the Rapture (I Thessalonians 4:17), people who are martyred in the Tribulation for refusing to take the mark of the beast (Revelation 20:4), and the Old Testament saints who believed in God, but didn't have the opportunity to be a part of the church because they died before Jesus came. So, the "first resurrection" refers to *everyone* who accepts and commits their life to God's wonderful plan of salvation (Verse 5). So, even if nothing else in your life goes right, you're extremely blessed to be a part of the "first resurrection" Why? Because you are going to heaven (Verse 6)!
- The "first death" is physical. The "second death" is eternal (Verse 6). We will all certainly die physically unless our Lord Jesus Christ raptures us first. But the "second death" is for those who are damned eternally. In other words, those who are born only once (physical birth) will die twice (physical death and eternal death); but those who are born twice (physical birth and spiritual birth) will die only once (physical death but eternal life). The "second death" has no power over believers (Verse 6).
- People born in the Millennium will live during a time of "enforced" righteousness and peace. These people never had the opportunity to decide whether or not to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. As Christians, you and I have made the conscious decision to commit our lives to Jesus Christ as His disciples. In other words, we've "chosen to be chosen." We've "selected to be elected." So, the Bible says those born during the Millennium are also given this choice. Somehow, Satan will deceive many people, "*as numberless as sand along the seashore"* to rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ (Verses 7-8).
- How can Satan deceive so many people? How can he convince so many people to rebel against Jesus Christ, who will have done nothing but good for them and given them a perfect environment of peace, prosperity and perfection? When I consider how the Lord gave His own life for me; how He provides for me, walks with me and blesses me, even when I turn my back on Him, fail to learn of Him, and fail to talk to Him, then I understand how Satan will be able to deceive people living in the Millennium to echo the selfish demand of the people of Jerusalem, *"We will not have this Man to reign over us"* (Luke 19:14). So, why will the Lord allow this to happen? Because God is love, and love requires a choice. So, God lets Satan loose for a while in order to give people a choice (Verses 7-8).
- The Bible says, "*He will go out to deceive the nations—called Gog and Magog—in every corner of the earth. He will gather them together for battle—a mighty army, as numberless as sand along the seashore* (Verse 8). It's important to remember, at this point in Revelation, Russia has already been defeated on the hills of Israel (Ezekiel 38 – 39). "Gog and Magog" refers to the cataclysmic battle in which Satan attempts a final rebellion with "*a mighty army, as numberless as sand along the seashore"* (Verse 8). The Bible says this army of Satan encircles the city of Jerusalem in a desperate attempt to defeat our Lord Jesus Christ who is ruling from Jerusalem (Verse 9).
- The Bible says, *"fire from heaven came down on the attacking armies and consumed them. **10** Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever"* (Verses 9-10). Satan is thrown into the lake of fire to join the beast and the false prophet. In addition to being called a lake of fire, the Bible says hell is called a

place of *"outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matthew 8:12). The torment in this place is so dark even the flames of burning sulfur don't shed any light. This torment is exceeded only by the inner torment people feel throughout eternity, as they recall opportunities they had to be forgiven and live forever with Jesus Christ in heaven.

- Jesus specifically taught that hell wasn't created for people, but for Satan and his demons (Matthew 25:41). Peter said that God isn't willing that any should perish (II Peter 3:9). However, those who don't walk in the light of God, will spend eternity in darkness. Those who don't give their lives to the Great Physician, will spend eternity in pain. Those who turn away from our Heavenly Father, will spend eternity in isolation. But God says, "I would rather die, than live without you." And He did just that when He died on the cross in order that our sins would be forgiven, and that we may live with Him forever.
- The Bible says, "***11*** *And I saw a great white throne and the one sitting on it. The earth and sky fled from his presence, but they found no place to hide.* ***12*** *I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne. And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books"* (Verses 11-12). Will Christians stand before God's throne to be judged? No. This judgement doesn't apply to Christians. Why? Because we were judged when Christ was on another throne. Not this throne, but a wooden one; when He didn't wear a crown of gold, but a crown of thorns. As a disciple of Jesus Christ, your name is written in "The Book of Life" (Revelation 3:5, Revelation 13:8). The Bible says, *"****14*** *He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross"* (Colossians 2:14). In other words, the pages and pages containing our sins are illegible because they're covered by the blood of Jesus.
- The Bible says, "***13*** *The sea gave up its dead, and death and the grave gave up their dead. And all were judged according to their deeds.* ***14*** *Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is the second death.* ***15*** *And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire"* (Verses 13-15). Remember, the Book of Revelation was written to a group of people facing far greater problems than we'll ever face. However, this book is as vital for us as it was to them. It's not over yet. Satan and death will be thrown into the lake of fire. They … lose. All whose names are written in the Book of Life … win! To God be the glory!
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- **Revelation 21:1 - 27:** "*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.* [2] *And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.* [3] *I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.* [4] *He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."* [5] *And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true."* [6] *And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life.* [7] *All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.* [8] *"But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—their fate is in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."* [9] *Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."* [10] *So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.* [11] *It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal.* [12] *The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates.* [13] *There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west.* [14] *The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.* [15] *The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.* [16] *When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles.* [17] *Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human*

standard used by the angel). [18] The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass. [19] The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, [20] the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. [21] The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass. [22] I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. [23] And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. [24] The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. [25] Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. [26] And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. [27] Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

- The final two chapters of Revelation focus on heaven. Since the beginning of time, people have stared into the heavens with a sense of wonder. Recent polls suggest that nearly 80% of all Americans believe in a heaven. Not only do they believe in a heaven, most expect to go there when they die. But what they think heaven is like, isn't always true. For starters, heaven is not populated with tiny, chubby angels floating around on clouds and playing harps. Heaven is not some altered state of enhanced enlightenment. Heaven is a real place. Populated by real people.
- The night before Jesus was crucified, He said, *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. [2] My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? [3] And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."* (John 14:1-3).
- Twice, in 3 verses, Jesus calls heaven a place. Heaven is as real as the place you call home. Only much better. That's why the Bible sometimes compares heaven to a mansion with many rooms. (John 14:1-3). But where is heaven? What's heaven really like? Will we know each other in heaven? What will we do in heaven? How can I be sure I'm going to heaven? These are great questions and they're answered in the Bible.
- 700 years before Jesus was crucified Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would die in the midst of sinners (Isaiah 53:12). Just as Isaiah prophesied, He died between two criminals on either side of Him, hanging on crosses above the cursing and shouting of the crowd. They were close enough to talk with Jesus. One of them looked to Jesus and said, "Get me down." The other looked to Jesus and said, "Lord, take me up." The Bible says that Jesus looked that criminal in the eye, and said "I assure you, today you will be with Me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Can you imagine how this man's heart must have felt, even though his body was in excruciating pain? That very day he'd be with Jesus in paradise! Three times in the New Testament we're told of a place called "paradise." So, what is "paradise"?
- The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians how he was taken up to the "third heaven." Paul defined the "third heaven" as "paradise" (II Corinthians 12:2-4). The Book of Revelation describes paradise (Revelation 2). We read about the "tree of life," and the "paradise" that was lost in the Garden of Eden. We studied about how it's been regained through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. But, if "paradise" is the "third heaven," does that mean there are two other "heavens"?
- The Bible says, "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, …" (Hebrews 4:14). The Bible uses the Greek word "oranos" to describe the "Atmospheric Heaven" in Genesis 6:7; Matthew 6:26; and James 5:18. This is where birds fly and clouds float by. The Bible also uses this same word to describe the "Celestial Heaven" in Deuteronomy 4:19 and Matthew 24:29. It's where the sun, moon and stars are. But there's an even higher heaven. The Bible says, *"Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God …"* (Deuteronomy 10:14). The Apostle Paul wrote, *"This boasting will do no good, but I must go on. I will reluctantly tell about visions and revelations from the Lord. [2] I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know—only God knows. [3] Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know [4] that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell"* (II

Corinthians 12:1-4). 14 years prior to this, Paul had been left for dead after being stoned in the city of Lystra. Paul didn't enter a state of nothingness. The Bible says he was immediately taken to paradise. It was literally impossible for Paul to describe what he saw and heard in heaven. But whatever it was, it was the reason he wanted to go back and start preaching again. The Bible says Elijah was taken up directly to heaven and never tasted death (II Kings 2:11). The Bible says Enoch was taken up directly to heaven and never tasted death (Genesis 5:24). The Bible says, as a frenzied crowd looked down on Stephen, preparing to stone him to death, Stephen looked up to heaven. The Bible says, *"55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God's right hand. 56 And he told them, "Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God's right hand!" 57 Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him 58 and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died"* (Acts 7:55-60). What a contrast between the anger and bitterness of the crowd, and the peace and tranquility of Stephen. How could Stephen be so peaceful? Dying without fighting back or lashing out? The Bible says Stephen looked to heaven and saw Jesus. The Bible says when we see Him, we'll see Him as a Lamb having been slain (Revelation 5:6).

- So, "What's heaven like?" The Bible speaks of heaven 557 times. Heaven is a fundamental theme of the Bible. Nothing can compare to it. It's beyond our wildest imagination. We'll experience new dimensions. New sights. New sounds. Ecclesiastes says in heaven there's no past, or future. If you're a Christian, the moment you die, an amazing thing happens. Your last breath on earth, is your first breath in heaven. You're immediately taken into eternity, where there's no time. This means you'll be living in the eternal now. Albert Einstein's theory of relativity proves this. When you travel at the speed of light time stops! Quantum physics bears this out. The Bible says, "God is light." Because God is light, time ceases. Therefore, from the perspective of those in heaven, you're already with them! The Bible says, *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. 2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them"* (Revelation 21:1-3).
- The traditional Jewish wedding ceremony is a beautiful illustration of this passage. The first step was the betrothal. This was a covenant that bound a man and a woman together as husband and wife (Malachi 2:14 … Matthew 1:18–19). The second step was the groom taking his bride from her house to his father's house (Matthew 25:1–8). The third step was the marriage supper, where the guests were already assembled. So, how does this apply to us? First, the betrothal of Christ and His bride (the Church) is taking place right now as people trust Him to be their Savior (2 Cor. 11:2). Second, Jesus will return to take His bride (all believers) from this world to His Father's house in Heaven (John 14:2–3; I Thessalonians 4:13–18). This is referred to in scripture as the "marriage of the Lamb." Third, the "marriage supper of the Lamb" will take place with wedding guests who've already been assembled (Revelation 19:9). It's important to note these wedding guests are not the bride. Since the marriage supper of the Lamb will take place in Heaven, we know they're believers. But who are these guests? The Bible says they're Old Testament saints who are already in Heaven. These Old Testament saints will be guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- So, will we know each other in Heaven? Absolutely! Matthew 17 and I Corinthians 13 assure us of this fact. When King David's infant son died, David said, *"I will go to him"* (II Samuel 12:23). The Apostle Paul looked forward to being with the Thessalonians in heaven. The Bible says, *"We who are still living when the Lord returns will not meet him ahead of those who have died. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a commanding shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. First, the believers who have died will rise from their graves. 17 Then, together with them, we who are still alive and remain on the earth will be caught*

up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Then we will be with the Lord forever. [18] So encourage each other with these words." (I Thessalonians 4:15-18)

- But, how could heaven be perfect if your loved ones, who never accepted the Lord, aren't with you? The Bible says people will have lots of feelings in heaven. The Bible says people will laugh in heaven (Luke 6:21). We're told of banquets, feasts and singing. But there'll be "no more sorrow, or crying, or pain." The Bible says, *"[4] He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever"* (Revelation 21:4). The Bible says, *"Behold, I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things [of life] will not be remembered or come to mind"* (Isaiah 65:17). In other words, when we get to heaven, we'll have no memory of those who aren't there. But what about that Christian I just can't stand? That person who hurt me so deeply. Will his mansion be right next door to mine? Will I have to deal with her forever? Well, you're going to be blown away by that very same person who bugged you. The Bible says that the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. The Bible says there'll be a glorious and total transformation of every believer. The Bible says, *"[5] And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!" And then he said to me, "Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true"* (Revelation 21:5). The Bible says, *"when we see Jesus … we shall all be like Him"* (I John 3:2). It can't … get any better … than that!
- And the Bible says when you put your faith in Jesus Christ, your name is written in the Book of Life. All your sins and failures have been blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:14). In other words, the pages containing your sins are all covered by the red blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because He loves you so very much.
- In Verse 1 we see the New Creation that God's preparing for us. In Verse 2 we see the New Capitol that God's preparing for us. The Bible tells us later in this chapter that this New Jerusalem will be more beautiful than we can possibly comprehend! Precious gemstones for the foundations. Gigantic pearls for the gates. Streets paved with gold, because gold will be as common as asphalt. In Verse 3, we see the New Communion that God's preparing for us. When we take of communion, here at The Orchard, we draw close to our Lord. The Apostle Paul said, *"but now we see through a glass darkly"* (I Corinthians 13:12). But, in the New Jerusalem, we're going to see Jesus, face to face. And everyone's vision will be perfect because we'll all be in His presence.
- The Bible says, *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone"* (Verse 1). The present heaven and earth will not be simply "refurbished." According to Job 15:15, the heavens are not clean in the sight of God. Why? Because Satan's presence has polluted them (Revelation 12:10). The prophet Isaiah wrote, *"Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore"* (Isaiah 65:17). The word translated "create" is the Hebrew word "bara." This is the exact same word used in Genesis 1:1. It literally means "to create from nothing." We know that the "first earth" was flooded in the days of Noah. The Bible says, "*[3] Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires. [4] They will say, "What happened to the promise that Jesus is coming again? From before the times of our ancestors, everything has remained the same since the world was first created." [5] They deliberately forget that God made the heavens long ago by the word of his command, and he brought the earth out from the water and surrounded it with water. [6] Then he used the water to destroy the ancient world with a mighty flood. [7] And by the same word, the present heavens and earth have been stored up for fire. They are being kept for the day of judgment, when ungodly people will be destroyed"* (II Peter 3:3-7). The Bible says "fire" has been "stored up" (II Peter 3:7). We understand what happens when an atom is split. So, when Jesus lets go His hold of the atom the "*the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise, and the very elements themselves will disappear in fire, and the earth and everything on it will be found to deserve judgment. [11] Since everything around us is going to be destroyed like this, what holy and godly lives you should live, [12] looking forward to the day of God and hurrying it along. On that day, he will set the heavens on fire, and the elements will melt away in the flames. [13] But we are looking forward to the new heavens and new earth he has promised, a world filled with God's righteousness"* (II Peter 3:10-13).

- The Bible says, *"the elements will melt away in the flames"* (II Peter 3:12). Following this mass destruction, possibly resulting from nuclear war, God will create from nothing (bara) yet another heaven and another earth. This is how Isaiah could prophesy, *"Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore"* (Isaiah 65:17). This is why Paul could write of the "third heaven." The Bible says, *"2 I was caught up to the third heaven fourteen years ago. Whether I was in my body or out of my body, I don't know —only God knows. 3 Yes, only God knows whether I was in my body or outside my body. But I do know 4 that I was caught up to paradise and heard things so astounding that they cannot be expressed in words, things no human is allowed to tell"* (II Corinthians 12:2-4). In addition, the Bible says, "*And the sea was also gone"* (Verse 1). This speaks of the new creation.
- Verse 2 describes the new capitol of the new creation. Verse 3 speaks of a new communion. Today, as we partake of the bread and drink of the cup at the Lord's table, we seek close communion with Him. But Paul said, *"12 Now we see things imperfectly, like puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely"* (I Corinthians 13:12). But, in the New Jerusalem we'll see the actual glory of God. It won't be puzzling any longer. Our vision will be clear. We'll be in His presence.
- In Verses 6-7 we read, "*6 And he also said, "It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. 7 All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children*" (Revelation 21:5-7). It is finished. Does that sound familiar? Every religion and cult base their teachings on what we must do. But Christianity is based on what Jesus Christ has done. We can't do anything to get right with God. Except open our hearts to Him. And receive His grace and love and mercy. 2,000 years ago, Jesus said, *"I go to prepare a place for you."* Did you notice in Verse 6, He didn't say "I'm still working on it?" Or "It's a good starter home." No! He said, "It is finished!"
- In Verses 6-7, we find three elements essential to any community. First, resources. The Bible says the water in the New Jerusalem flows freely (Verse 6). Second, responsibility. The Bible says we will *"inherit all these blessings"* (Verse 7). This inheritance represents not only acquisition but administration. This inheritance refers to the father who is sharing the family wealth with his children. Third, relationships. The Bible says, "*I will be their God, and they will be my children*" (Verse 7). There will be a relationship in heaven unlike anything we've ever known on earth. In John 3:16, we read that God gave us His Son. In Luke 11:13, we read He gives us His Spirit. Here in Revelation 21:7, He gives us Himself!
- The Bible says in Verse 9, "*9 Then one of the seven angels who held the seven bowls containing the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come with me! I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb. 10 So he took me in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. 11 It shone with the glory of God and sparkled like a precious stone—like jasper as clear as crystal*" (Revelation 21:9-11). The Bible says the church is His bride. We, His bride, will be living in this glorious city called the New Jerusalem with Jesus! Forever! John sees the New Jerusalem descending out of heaven. We'll be residing there, but not limited to there. This "jasper" we read about in Verse 11 is not the jasper that we think of. The stones of the Old and New Testament days have different names today. The "jasper" in this passage is what we call today a "diamond." Diamonds weren't known as gems in the first century. In fact, they didn't start popping up in European jewelry until about 1,200 years later. A diamond is basically a chunk of coal that over time and under tremendous heat and pressure is transformed into a brilliant stone of great beauty and value. Just like us. Over time and under heat and pressure, we're lovingly transformed into something of beauty (I Peter 4:12-13). It is true, He makes all things beautiful in His time. We're transformed from worthless chunks of coal into incredible brilliance and beauty.
- The Bible says in Verse 12, *"12 The city wall was broad and high, with twelve gates guarded by twelve angels. And the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on the gates. 13 There were three gates on each side—east, north, south, and west."* (Revelation 21:12-13). The Bible says the 12 gates bear the names of the 12 tribes of

Israel. And there are 12 angels at each of the 12 gates. Not St. Peter, but angels! Sometimes I'm asked if people, particularly children, become angels when they die. The answer is no. The place changes, but the person remains the same. The same person who becomes absent from the body becomes present with the Lord (II Corinthians 5:8). We won't become angels, but we'll be with angels.

- The Bible says, in Verse 14, *"14 The wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb"* (Revelation 21:14). The Bible says the wall of the city has 12 foundations, 12 layers or 12 stories. On each of these foundations are the names of the 12 apostles of the New Testament. So, the Old Testament and the New Testament are represented in the New Jerusalem. Why? Because we enter into our knowledge of our Lord through the Old Testament covenant! The roots of Christianity are in Judaism. The Apostle Paul said we've been grafted into Israel. God sent His son to the Jews. And that's why Satan hates the Jews. And that's why we stand with the Jews. Ephesians 2:20 says we're built upon the foundation of the Apostles, with Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. But we enter into our understanding of Him through the Old Testament covenant.
- The Bible says in Verse 15, "**15** *The angel who talked to me held in his hand a gold measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall.* **16** *When he measured it, he found it was a square, as wide as it was long. In fact, its length and width and height were each 1,400 miles* **17** *Then he measured the walls and found them to be 216 feet thick (according to the human standard used by the angel)*" (Revelation 21:15-17). The city's measurements are all multiples of 12. There were 12 tribes in Israel. There were 12 apostles who started the church. There are 12 foundations and 12 gates. The height, length and breadth are all the same. So, this totals 1,960,000 square miles for each of the 12 "floors" (foundations), which totals 23,520,000 square miles. Our moon has 14,600,000 square miles. All of Asia has 17,200,000 square miles. So, there's plenty of room! Thus, the New Jerusalem is a perfect cube. Exactly the same shape as the "Most Holy Place" in the Temple (I Kings 6:20).
- The Bible says in Verse 18, "**18** *The wall was made of jasper, and the city was pure gold, as clear as glass.* **19** *The wall of the city was built on foundation stones inlaid with twelve precious stones: the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald,* **20** *the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.* **21** *The twelve gates were made of pearls—each gate from a single pearl! And the main street was pure gold, as clear as glass*" (Revelation 21:18-21). The Bible says the walls are made of jasper (diamond) representing purity and durability. Most Biblical scholars believe the 12 stones found in this passage correspond to the 12 stones that were on the breastplate of the High Priest (Ex.28). In those days when someone needed guidance, they would go to the High Priest who wore this breastplate. The High Priest would then use the Urim and the Thummim (which means "light" and "perfection") causing the stones to light up on the breastplate of the High Priest until a word was spelled out giving guidance and direction (Numbers 27:2; Nehemiah 7:65). So, how does this apply to us today? Well, one of the most common questions people ask me is "How can I know God's will for my life?" Remember, these stones of light and perfection worked in harmony with each other. These stones of light and perfection represent the bride of Christ (the people of God). So, how can you know God's will for your life? Stay close to Him. And stay close to His people. And the "light" of the Lord will shine through!
- The pearl represents God's people (Verse 21). How do we know? In Matthew 13, Jesus tells the story of a man who sold everything to purchase a pearl. That's exactly what Jesus did. He gave everything He had, including His very life, to purchase us. We are like the pearl, since a pearl is nothing more than an irritating grain of sand or a tiny parasite coated by the lustrous nacre of an oyster. Yes, we're irritating. Yes, we're parasitic. But God robes us and covers us and therefore makes us trophies in order that all of creation throughout eternity might marvel at His grace.
- Gold has been highly valued throughout history. But not in heaven. Gold is used as casually as asphalt (Verse 21). So, whatever we value most on earth will be as common as asphalt in comparison to the glory of the New Jerusalem.

- Finally, the Bible says in Verse 22, "**22** *I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.* **23** *And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light.* **24** *The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory.* **25** *Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there.* **26** *And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city.* **27** *Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life*" (Revelation 21:22-27). In the Millennium of Revelation 20, the Bible says the moon will be as bright as the sun is now, and the sun will be seven times brighter than it is now (Isaiah 30:26). But in the New Jerusalem, there will be no need for the sun or moon at all because the glory and brilliance of the Lord will illuminate the entire city. In addition, it's gates *"will never be closed at the end of the day because there is no night there"* (Verse 25). The enemy isn't present. There's even more good news ahead in Revelation 22!
- What a place heaven will be! Some people make Christianity complicated. But that's not what the Bible says. Nine simple words is all it took for a death-row criminal to enter paradise. "Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom" (Luke 23:42-43). But it's even simpler than that! Peter said the same thing, in only three words. "Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30). But it's even simpler than that! John said only one word is needed to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. "Lord" (Romans 10:9). Remember, no matter how far you've walked away from Him, the return trip is only one step. It's better to end life with nothing but Christ than to end life with everything but Christ. Now, some people say, us Christians are so "heavenly minded" we're no "earthly good." But unless we are "heavenly minded" we won't be any "earthly good!" So, let's pray to be "heavenly minded" and invite as many people as we can to our incredible, indescribable, incomprehensible forever home in heaven.
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- **Revelation 22: 1 – 21:** *"Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.* **2** *It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.* **3** *No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him.* **4** *And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.* **5** *And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.* **6** *Then the angel said to me, "Everything you have heard and seen is trustworthy and true. The Lord God, who inspires his prophets, has sent his angel to tell his servants what will happen soon."* **7** *"Look, I am coming soon! Blessed are those who obey the words of prophecy written in this book."* **8** *I, John, am the one who heard and saw all these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me.* **9** *But he said, "No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers the prophets, as well as all who obey what is written in this book. Worship only God!"* **10** *Then he instructed me, "Do not seal up the prophetic words in this book, for the time is near.* **11** *Let the one who is doing harm continue to do harm; let the one who is vile continue to be vile; let the one who is righteous continue to live righteously; let the one who is holy continue to be holy."* **12** *"Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds.* **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. They will be permitted to enter through the gates of the city and eat the fruit from the tree of life.* **15** *Outside the city are the dogs—the sorcerers, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idol worshipers, and all who love to live a lie.* **16** *"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star."* **17** *The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let anyone who hears this say, "Come." Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.* **18** *And I solemnly declare to everyone who hears the words of prophecy written in this book: If anyone adds anything to what is written here, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book.* **19** *And if anyone removes any of the words from this book of prophecy, God will remove that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy*

city that are described in this book. 20 He who is the faithful witness to all these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon!" Amen! Come, Lord Jesus! 21 May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy people" (Revelation 22:1 – 21).

- The Bible says when Jesus returns to earth, His feet will touch down on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14). This will cause a radical topographical change in Israel. The Mount of Olives will be split in two from the north to the south. This will cause a river to flow to both the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. Consequently, the infusion of fresh water into the Dead Sea will cause it to come back to life. In fact, a prosperous fishing industry will thrive around the Dead Sea (Ezekiel 47)! So, once inside the walls of this glistening heavenly city, John began to describe "Main Street." In the middle of the city is "*the throne of God and of the Lamb"* (Verse 1). From the throne flowed "the water of life" (Verse 1). It's clear as crystal and forming a river right down the middle of the street. The Bible says, "*On each side of the river grew a tree of life …"* (Verse 2). It could be said that the Bible is an account of three trees.

  - First, the Tree of Life. It was seen at the beginning of human history. It will be seen at the end of human history. It was originally planted in the Garden of Eden. It will be transplanted into the gardenlike city of the New Jerusalem. Humankind chose not to eat of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. But we will eat freely of the Tree of Life in the New Jerusalem.

  - Second, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This was the only tree Adam and Eve were not to eat. When they disobeyed and ate of the forbidden tree, death and damnation were the result. So, why would God place a forbidden tree in the Garden in the first place? Choice. True love always demands a choice. Since God is love and wants a loving relationship with humanity, He provided an opportunity to reject Him. Before they ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve knew only good. Any time they had a question, they went directly to God for the answer. God wanted to bless them. But when they ate of this tree, they knew good and evil apart from God. They became independent and cut off from all the resources and blessings of their Creator.

  - Third, the Tree of Calvary. This tree cleanses my sins and covers my mistakes. May we turn away from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, from what we think we know, and feast on the Tree of Life. When we get to heaven, we won't see the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We'll only see the Tree of Life. From this tree we'll enjoy the fruit that will keep us in perfect health and complete harmony with He who gave his life for us on the Tree of Calvary.

- So, how could "a tree" grow on "each side" of the river? Remember, our understanding is finite. We are bound by current laws of physics. Current dimensions are limited. But the day is coming when we will fully understand what even the most brilliant of scientists and theologians can't even imagine. We'll marvel at incredible and unlimited dimensions in a new universe. The Bible says this tree bore "*twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations"* (Verse 2). The Bible says this tree of life is a fruit-bearing tree like no other. It bears 12 crops of fruit, one fresh every month. But, if the leaves are for healing, does that mean there will be sickness in heaven? Absolutely not! The Greek word translated "heal" is literally "therapeia" from which we get our word "therapy." It doesn't mean healing from sickness, but rather maintaining of health. The original language also implies exhilaration and invigoration. So, are we going to eat in heaven? Absolutely! Following His resurrection, Jesus ate (Luke 24:37-43). Likewise, we'll be eating the fruits of this amazing 12 fruit bearing tree in heaven.

- So, what will happen when we see His face (Verse 4)? Like David, we'll be truly satisfied (Psalm 17:15). Why? Because when we see Him, we'll be like Him (I John 3:2). There will be no need for the sun because warmth and illumination will come from the Son (Verse 5). This glorious garden city where the pure river flows through 12

fruit bearing tree is not too good to be true. How do we know? The Bible tells us so (Verse 6). But is this really going to happen "soon" (Verse 6)? This was written over 2,000 years ago. Remember, this doesn't mean these things would happen in John's day. Rather, it means once the end-time events begin, they will rapidly accelerate. We've seen Israel become a nation again. So, we're soon on our way! And also remember, the Bible says to the Lord 1,000 years is a day (II Peter 3:8). So, according to His timetable, He's only been gone two days (Verse 7).

- Do you remember after John fell down to worship an angel, the angel said to John, *"No, don't worship me. I am a servant of God, just like you and your brothers and sisters who testify about their faith in Jesus"* (Revelation 19:10)? So, how could John worship and angel again (Verse 9)? The same way we make the same mistakes and commit the same sins over and over again. But the good news is the blood of Jesus obliterates every trace and memory of sin to God. We can't forget certain sins. But God says, *"And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins"* (Hebrews 8:12).

- The Bible says the angle told John, *"Do not seal up the prophetic words in this book, for the time is near"* (Verse 10). Some people think the Book of Revelation is hard to understand and should be kept closed. Just the opposite is true if we follow the divine outline given in Revelation 1:19. This book is to be kept open. This book has a unique blessing. Keep it open. Keep reading it. The Bible says, *"God blesses the one who reads the words of this prophecy to the church, and he blesses all who listen to its message and obey what it says, for the time is near"* (Revelation 1:3).

  - Chapter 1 Jesus Resurrected
  - Chapters 2 - 3 Church History
  - Chapters 4 – 5 The Rapture
  - Chapters 6 – 19 The Tribulation
  - Chapter 20 The Millennium
  - Chapters 21 – 22 The new heaven and new earth

- The Bible says if you can't be convinced of the truth of the Word by the revelation of Jesus Christ and fulfilling of Bible prophecy, what could possibly convince you (Verse 11)? Jesus said, *"Look, I am coming soon, bringing my reward with me to repay all people according to their deeds"* (Verse 12). Disciples of Jesus Christ will receive the reward of eternal life with Him in heaven. Those who are not disciples of Christ will receive the reward of eternal torment in hell. It's not complicated. The word "dogs" in Verse 15 refer to "legalists" (Philippians 3:2). The word "*sorcerers"* is literally "drug-takers" (Verse 15). Jesus said, "*I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne"* (Verse 16). How could this be? As the babe of Bethlehem, Jesus was the heir of David; but as the Christ of eternity, He existed before David. So, the invitation to "***come***" to Christ is given to a world that is lost and dying, doomed and damned (Verse 17). It's the work of the Holy Spirit to bring people to Jesus Christ. But we have the privilege of issuing the invitation. Throughout the Bible, "***come***" has always been the invitation. The Bible says, *"**Come** now, let's settle this," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18); *"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink—"* (Isaiah 55:1); *"**28** Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. **29** Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls"* (Matthew 11:28-29); *"Come and see"* (John 1:39).

- The last phrase in the Old Testament is, *"Otherwise I will come and strike the land with a curse"* (Malachi 4:6). That's the law. But the last phrase in the New Testament is, "*May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's holy*

people" (Verse 21). Grace is the final word of the New Testament. So, let's seek His Kingdom and His righteousness.

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- Videos of every teaching session of this class are available at www.TheOrchardLife.com
- Revelation Study notes are also available by emailing Ellen at office@theorchardlife.com or calling her at 970-963-8773.
- Robin and I thank God for you. We pray you've been blessed through the reading and study of the Book of Revelation. Feel free to email me at coursonmaui@msn.com or call me at 808-298-7145.
- Love God. Love people.