Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Studies

Revelation

“Are We There, Yet?”

Bible Studies
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# Revelation

"Are We There, Yet?"

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. When the Bottom Falls Out,</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Need a Plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Ephesus – Lots of Truth, No Love</td>
<td>2:1-7</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Smyrna – Suffering Ahead...Proceed With Courage</td>
<td>2:8-11</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Pergamum – Please, Don’t Feed the Bears</td>
<td>2:12-17</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Thyatira – Forsaking All Others</td>
<td>2:18-29</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sardis – May be Morning, May be Noon</td>
<td>3:1-6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Philadelphia – Little Strength</td>
<td>3:7-13</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Laodicea – The Emperor’s New Clothes</td>
<td>3:14-22</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ever Wonder Why You Were Created?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Heaven Can’t Wait</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Believing is More Than Knowing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The Ninety and Nine</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. First, You Have to Get Their Attention</td>
<td>8 &amp; 9</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. You Are What You Eat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. New Year’s Resolutions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. The Tech Crew</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. How to Recognize the Bad Guys</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Now That’s What I’m Talking About</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. I Hope You Dance</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Emergency Pants</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Cute, Purple Dinosaur</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. When the Music Fades…</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Welcome Back, King Jesus!</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. 2 Births, 2 Deaths, 2 Resurrections</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Now…We Wait…</td>
<td>21&amp;22</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendage:</strong> The History and Future Of the World in 1,000 words or less</td>
<td></td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are We There, Yet?

Introduction

I’ve been here. Off for a family trip somewhere, kids riding in the back seat of the car, excitedly anticipating our destination. There’s something we’ve been waiting to see, someone we are so anxious to talk to, people waiting to throw their arms around us, and, even though the children are the ones who will say it, everyone in the car is thinking: “Are we there, yet?”

My goal for this study in Revelation is that we will be overtaken with that sitting-in-the-back-seat-are-we-there-yet?-longing that will only go away once we see the arrival of Jesus Christ into our world for the second time in history. The first time He came as a baby. The second time…oh my…

Let’s just look at the first verse of the whole book….we’ll begin at the beginning so that we don’t miss the whole point of this book:

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place...” (Revelation 1:1)

What’s the whole point of the book? This is all about Jesus. The book of Revelation was given to us so that we could see what is coming in the future. What’s coming? The total “revealing” of Jesus. Let’s think of the world as a
stage, and imagine that there are a series of curtains on that stage, curtains that are fairly “see-through”, so that as each curtain is removed the one person standing on the stage gets easier and easier to see. That may help us realize what has been happening since the creation of the world, and what will be happening as the events of Revelation unfold. Every event points to Jesus. Every mercy, every disaster, every judgment, every moment of grace - all of them reveal Jesus to us more and more and more, until finally we see Him clearly, mounted on a white horse, returning to be King over the world that was made for Him.

Let’s take a minute and see how Jesus has been “revealed” little-by-little, more-and-more, as history has unfolded:

- First, Jesus Himself created the world and Adam and Eve. Then the unthinkable happened; they sinned. And as He was telling Adam and Eve what would happen because of their sin, the first curtain is pulled away: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” (Genesis 3:15) Jesus Himself would be the future promised seed of Adam and Eve who would crush the head of Satan.

- Then came the time of Noah when the world was overrun with evil. The Lord told Noah to build an ark, and promised that all those who entered the ark would be saved from the coming flood. The ark was the next picture of Jesus, because all who would ever believe whole-heartedly in Him – would be safe from the future judgment of God.

- Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob were chosen to carry within their bodies the seed which would eventually become Jesus, the future Savior of the world. They were promised that He would come, and they were promised that all the world, not just their people, would be blessed through Him.

- Then the twelve sons of Jacob became the people of Israel – the Jews – and from one of those sons – Judah - would come the future Messiah of Israel and of the world.

- The law that the Lord gave to Moses followed. Every aspect of the law pointed to the need for Jesus. For no man could keep the whole law. His sin nature prevented it. Every man would come to realize, because of the law, that a Savior was needed.

- Next, King David showed the world what a true King would be like. He gave us a “shadow” behind that curtain which helped us see even more clearly that this One that was coming would also be a King.

- Ezra, Zechariah, Haggai and Nehemiah come along 500 years later to rebuild a broken-down temple and a destroyed City of God. Broken down
because the sin of the Jewish people had become so great God had had to send an enemy to take them captive…and that enemy had destroyed the Jewish capital and temple in the process. But these ancient men of God rebuilt that city and temple to point again to a Savior who was yet to come. The city and the temple showed that Jesus, Lord of All, wished to live with the people He had created.

- There were more prophets who wandered onto the landscape of history…all of them predicted that a time of judgment must come…but that those who would believe in Jesus, the One, True, God, would be saved.

- Finally, Jesus Himself appeared on earth, a tiny baby, the perfect Lamb of God. The ultimate sacrifice for sin.

- Then He was gone - victorious over death - but physically gone. But, not really gone. He lived within each of His followers, and in the book of Acts and in the letters of the New Testament we continue to see how today He still touches the world, but this time with many hands and many voices. And we see in that the truth that Jesus has work to do before He returns again.

- And now, in the book of Revelation, the last curtains will be finally drawn away. Jesus has become clearer and clearer to us as each curtain on the stage has been drawn back. But there is more to see. More to know about our God…the events of Revelation will make this clear to the whole world. Not one person will be confused about Who Jesus is by the time the prophecies of this book are fulfilled.

The mistake most of us make in reading or studying the book of Revelation is that we do it in order to see the future more clearly. Or in order to see the anti-christ more clearly. Or in order to try to avoid our own suffering. Or in order to have peace that everything will be OK for us.

But let’s not do that. Let’s read and study this book together, all the time asking: “Are we there, yet?” “Do I see Jesus better, yet?” “Is the One I love near, yet?” If we do that – wow! - this book is going to rock our lives.

I think the Bible teaches that when all of this begins, believers in Jesus Christ will have to live through quite a big chunk of the “Last 7 Years”, more commonly known as the “Tribulation”. In other words, I think the church will be raptured out of the great tribulation, but not until after the Anti-Christ declares himself to be god, and demands the worship of the whole world. I know my view of this isn’t what many would agree with….but as we go through this study, I’ll explain why I think this is what scripture is saying.
So…here’s my three-part outline of Revelation:

A. **Chapters 1-7** What the church will live through
   - Chapters 1-3 Preparation of the church – revival
   - Chapters 4-5 The Throne room – an eruption of singing & Praise begins the Last 7 Years
   - Chapter 6-7 The First 6 Seals take a little over 3 & ½ of the Last 7 Years
     - False Saviors/world peace
     - War
     - Economic devastation
     - Disease & death
     - Persecution
     - Earthquake!
     - The 144,000 are sealed, the church is raptured away

B. **Chapters 8-18** What those left behind will live through
   - Chapters 8 – 11 The 7th seal is opened….The 7 trumpets are blown… Israel sees that she has been blind… and comes to collective faith in her Messiah
   - Chapters 12-14 Several flash-backs: more detailed look at the major players of this time:
     - Anti-Christ
     - The False Prophet
     - The 144,000
     - Angels
   - Chapters 15-18 The 7 bowls of God’s wrath are poured out as the World prepares for the final battle

C. **Chapters 19-22** Jesus Returns and the Happy Ending
   - Chapter 19 Jesus Returns
   - Chapter 20 The Milennium (one thousand years of life on earth with Jesus as King)
   - Chapter 21 & 22 What life will be like forever
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

Maybe you don’t see the timeline of the book of Revelation like I do, and you are thinking, “Absolutely not - I don’t think the Church will be here for any part of those Last Seven Years, and boy, am I glad, because I don’t want to go through that stuff.”

If you think that, you’re definitely not alone; as a matter of fact, you’re in very good company. But, as we go through Revelation, I’ll show you why I think the Church will stay on earth for at least part of the Last Seven Years, and I’d like to hold out some hope for the wonderful reasons why it will be pretty great to be here...just in case I’m right:

Top Ten Reasons it will be Great to Live Through
the First 7 Chapters of Revelation:

10. We’ll be so close to seeing Jesus that the very thought of it will fill us with joy even when things are tough.
9. We’ll see Him better and better as it all unfolds and that will build a sense of excitement within us - like the way Christmas Eve used to feel.
8. We’ll see many, many people bow the knee to their Savior & Lord.
7. During catastrophes and calamities we’ll be protected or comforted just like we are now. Sometimes He calms the storm...sometimes He calms the one in the middle of the storm.
6. Jesus will be praying for us – just as He has for 2,000 years
5. There will be much praising going on – music & singing will be incredible!
4. Your prayers...which you wondered if they would ever be answered...will be answered!
3. We’ll be watching prophecy unfold...the conversations around the dinner table will be unbelievable!
2. If the ones you love do not know God, they’ll be in the best position ever to learn about Him and respond. There will be people giving their lives to Jesus up until the very end of the Last Seven Years.
1. As God gets the church geared up – on fire – you will be a part of the greatest revival the world has ever seen.

Many people approach a study of the book of Revelation with a little nervousness, thinking there is a lot of symbolism which they won’t be able to figure out, or that there are varying opinions about what things mean, assuming it’s not possible to have a definite picture of the end times. There is symbolism. There are many opinions. But the book for the most part explains itself. Or the rest of the Bible explains it. It’s not that hard. It will be surprising how much we are able to “put your arms around” as we go through it. We are going to see Jesus more and more clearly – until we will be left, I hope, with a sweet and hungering desire to see His face – soon...Are we there, yet?
Chapter One
When the Bottom Falls Out…
You need a plan
(Revelation 1)

An aging man, living in difficult and lonely conditions on a prisoner island, having just spent his Sunday in communion with the Lord, suddenly hears a voice so loud it startles him like a trumpet. He swings around to see where that voice is coming from, and what he sees is such a massive shock that he falls to the ground, close to death.

What follows that frozen moment in time is a series of visions and instructions and conversations which will all someday come to pass in the same exact detail. We could possibly be the ones who will see those visions come to pass. That thought needs to cause us to react just as that suffering, alone old man did - we should fall down.

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw, that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ”
(Rev. 1:1&2 NIV)
Revelation is a letter. It was written in about 90 A.D. to seven churches located probably on a mail route in what is modern-day Turkey. Verse one of the book tells us that the author was John, and history tells us this John was the apostle John, the one who walked, talked, laughed and learned at the feet of Jesus. A little math will also tell us that John was an old man at the time he wrote this letter, since we know that he was a young man (probably anywhere from 20-30 years old) at the time he first met Jesus, in about 30 A.D.

What do we know about John?

*John 1:35-37*
- He was first a disciple of John the Baptist
- Then he was one of the first disciples of Jesus
- He followed Jesus for three years, until Jesus’ death

*Mark 1:19,20*
- His father was Zebedee
- His brother was James
- His occupation was fisherman
- He was from the Galilee area
- He was from a fairly prosperous family (they had servants)

*Mark 5:37*
- He was not only one of Jesus’ followers, but also a close friend…so much so that he referred to himself as the “disciple Jesus loved”

*John 13:23*
- At the Last Supper, he was the one who leaned on Jesus’ bosom. “The disciple Jesus loved”, was humble. He never referred to himself by name in his own Gospel account.

*Matthew 20:20, Mark 15:40, Matthew 27:56*
- He had an ambitious mother. She wanted to try to guarantee the best places for her sons in Jesus’ kingdom.

*Mark 3:17*
- He and his brother James were nicknamed the “Sons of Thunder”. They perhaps were not the shy and quiet type.

*John 19:26-27*
- He was the only one of the 12 apostles who is recorded as being present at the crucifixion. He was there appointed to care for Mary, the mother of Jesus. History tells us that he did take care of her until her death, many years later. She became a member of his household.

*John 20:4-8*
- He was the first man to reach the empty tomb and look inside and believe

*John 21:1-7*
- He was the first to recognize the Lord on Galilee’s shore

We also know:
- He wrote the Gospel of John, the book of Revelation, and the letters of I, II, and III John
- It is thought that he was the only apostle still living at the time this letter was written.
- He was at one time the Pastor of the church at Ephesus.

God gave this “revelation” to Jesus. He “revealed” to Him a picture of what the future was going to be like. Jesus created miraculous “pictures”, or visions of the future for His followers, then entrusted those pictures to an angel whose job it was to show them to John, who would then put them into words, and send them to the followers of Jesus.

Are you wondering why not a more direct way of getting the truth to the followers of Jesus? Why God…to Jesus…to an angel….to John….to seven first-century churches…and finally, to us? The only answer I can think of is that He wanted us to be very sure of the message. It wasn’t going to be just a passionate feeling or a special knowledge given to the one generation of believers who would actually see this come to pass. It was going to be a true, verified, tried-with-time message directly from God, with proofs.

Isaiah said it best. “Therefore I told you these things long ago; before they happened I announced them to you so that you could not say, ‘My idols did them; my wooden image and metal God ordained them.’” (Isaiah 48:5) There will be no doubt when all this comes to pass, that the things happening are from God, not from any other so-called power in the universe.

“In the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.” (Revelation 1:3 NIV)

In verse 3, the KJV says “keep the things which are written…”, and the NIV says “take to heart what is written in it…”. No matter which version of the Bible you are using, the important question is: What are we supposed to do with the book?

The Greek word, “tereo” is used here, translated “keep” and “take to heart”. If we look to another place in scripture where this Greek word is used, I think the meaning will be clearer to us.

Remember the passage in Luke chapter 2 which tells about the time his parents had taken twelve-year-old Jesus to Jerusalem? He ended up not leaving Jerusalem with the rest of their group, unbeknownst to his parents. They got quite a scare when they realized He was not with them as they travelled back home. They backtracked to Jerusalem and found Him sitting in the temple, discussing the Old Testament scriptures with the elders of the faith! Why had he been so disrespectful of his parents’ feelings? Why were the elders listening so intently to a boy barely coming to manhood?
His parents didn’t understand His answer: “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” When all was said and done, He went back home with them, “but His mother treasured all these things in her heart.” (Luke 2:51) There’s that word: “tereo” or “treasured”. Mary didn’t understand what had happened, so she just tucked all the bits and pieces of information into a special place in her heart, along with the thousands of unanswered questions she must have already accumulated, and treasured them there. Some day she would understand. Some day God would help her understand it all. She didn’t know it then, but some day she would take those treasuries out and share them with other believers in Jesus in order to help them understand.

That’s what we’re supposed to do when we read the book of Revelation: take it to heart...keep it...treasure it. When we have hundreds of questions about what we read, we can tuck them away in a special place in our hearts and guard them there. We don’t have to understand it all in order to take it to heart. Some day we will understand, and if we happen to be in the generation of believers who actually see all of this happen, our treasures can be taken out and shared with other believers so they can understand.

“John, to the seven churches in the province of Asia...”
(Revelation 1:4a NIV)

Who is the book written to? Seven churches in what is modern-day Turkey. Perhaps located on a “mail route”, so that travel from one city to another would be safe enough to get this most precious information to all of them.

“...Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ...” (Revelation 4b &5a NIV)

Even though John penned the book, it is actually from God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

- God the Father: The phrase “him who is, who was, and who is to come” is a paraphrase of the Divine Name of God from Exodus 3:14&15. The “I AM”.

- God the Holy Spirit: The phrase “the seven spirits before his throne” could also be translated “the seven-fold spirit before His throne”. In other words, the Holy Spirit.

- God the Son: And then there’s Jesus...given three titles here by John

“...who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.” (Revelation 1:5b)
The first two titles were of the Jesus John knew and loved.
1) The faithful witness (see John 5:19&20 – Jesus was shown things by the Father, then turned around and faithfully showed those things to us)
2) The firstborn from the dead (the first person to die and then be resurrected into their new, never-to-die-again body.)

The third title was of the Jesus John saw in these amazing visions.
3) The ruler of the kings of the earth (even the most evil ruler in the world cannot make a move unless God allows it)

John had never known Jesus to be an Almighty Ruler of Kings, but he would.

“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and father - to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.”
(Revelation 1:5b&6)

John seems to explode here with praise to Jesus. He has just experienced a vision of the future, and now he is beginning to write it down in this letter while the things he has seen literally overflow his heart and mind. I imagine he can’t help himself as praise just leaks out into the retelling.

He says Jesus has loved us, washed our sins with His own blood, and made us to be kings and priests. How amazing. We’re just people, pretty small and insignificant when you think about it. But God who created the world has loved us, cleaned us up, and chosen us to be priests and kings! Priests I sort of understand. We are already priests in this age of the church - representatives between God and man. “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellence of Him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light...”( 1 Peter 2:9) But kings, rulers, people with responsibility and authority in the world to come? We don’t deserve to be any more than street cleaners. But there is no mistaking it. He says it again in Revelation 2:26 “He who overcomes, and he who keeps my deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations...”, and again in Revelation 20: 4a “Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them...” Jesus has, for some reason impossible for me to comprehend, made His followers Kings.

John keeps going, almost shouting, as he recalls a scene so very fresh in his memory.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.” (Revelation 1:7)

What will be true of Jesus’ coming, according to this verse?
1. Every person will see Him.
2. There will be much mourning when He comes.

Those two facts let us know that this “coming” John is referring to is the actual, physical return of Jesus to earth, as described in Revelation 19:11. Sometimes the word “coming” is referring to the whole package – the many events that will make up the return of the Lord. And sometimes it refers to the “coming” of Jesus to rapture the church. But in this case I think the context indicates this “coming” is the Revelation 19:11 moment of return, on the white horse, in view of the whole world.

Why will there be mourning at His return? Why not rejoicing? Because at the time He returns on the white horse, most of the world, except the nation of Israel, is fighting against Him. Look at Revelation 19:11-21 to get a description of what John is referring to. For the most part, he world to which Jesus returns is not happy He is coming back.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega’, says the Lord God, ‘Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty.’” (Revelation 1:8)

John ends up his few verses of unrehearsed praise with just a reminder to himself, and to his readers, of the true author of the words which would follow.

“I, John, your brother and companion in the suffering and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord’s Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said, ‘Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.’” (Revelation 1:9-11)

John was on the Isle of Patmos, a Roman prisoner island, because he had been preaching and teaching the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. And what was John doing when he was startled by an unusual voice?

He was doing “church.” He was all by himself, worshipping the Lord and having a Sunday church service. This should put all of us to shame as we sleep in on Sunday mornings, or skip church because we’re on vacation, or sit at sporting events on Sunday mornings, or, worst of all, take our kids out of church so that they can play on that traveling sports team. John’s thoughts and energy were
poured into Jesus – worshipping Him, serving Him, loving Him. Why in the world would we want less than that for ourselves or for our children?

“I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone ‘like a son of man’, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.” (Revelation 1:12-16)

When John turned around, he saw:
• Seven golden candlesticks (menorahs).
• A person who looked like the “son of man”. Who was the “son of man”? (Matthew 16:28 – 17:8). Jesus. John is seeing his friend and Savior for the first time in 60 years.
• With a garment on which fell down all the way to his feet (this was like the garments the priests in the temple wore)
• A golden sash around his waist. (again, like the priest in the temple)
• White hair, eyes like fire, feet on fire (symbols of judgment)
• The “son of man” he saw was speaking, and his voice sounded like a roaring river, or waterfall (Ezekiel 43:2)
• He was speaking to seven stars in His hand (we’ll see what those are in a minute)
• As He was speaking there was a sharp sword coming out of His mouth (Hebrews 4:12)
• And His face was so bright it was blinding, like the sun.

The menorah in the temple was symbolic of the Jewish nation being the light of the world...so, in summary, John saw a man who looked like Jesus caring for the seven lights of the world by speaking to them - because judgment was about to commence.

Since at this time the Jewish nation was no longer the light of the world (they had rejected the Light of the World), we can assume that it is the church Jesus is ministering to here. Believers in Jesus Christ were the light of the world then, just as they are now. Some were Jews, some were Gentiles – together they were the light of the world. Jesus, like a priest in the Old Testament temple, is walking amongst them, trimming drooping wicks, adding oil where it is needed, and making sure they were shining brightly in the dark, dark world.

“When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead...” Revelation 1:17a
And then John collapsed. I would have too. John was a sinner. He was in the presence of God Himself. He simply couldn’t breathe with the weakness and filth of his life exposed to the Holiness of God. Also, Jesus had some heavenly things to show John…and maybe “out cold” was the only way John could tolerate what he was about to see.

At this point in time – who knows how long it lasted – John saw everything we can read about today in the book of Revelation. He saw things, heard things, talked to angels… took in everything.

“...Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.’” (Revelation 1:17b-18)

And after John sees and hears everything, Jesus reaches out His right hand (the hand of mercy), wakes John up, and calms John’s fears.

First, He tells him Who He is. Yes, John, I am the One you think I am. I am the First and the Last. I am Jesus. I am God.

Then, He reminds John of His power. Remember, John? I was dead but I didn’t stay dead. I raised Myself from the dead. (John 10:17&18). And I will be alive forever.

And finally He tells John, basically, that He is the One Who decides who dies and when. In other words, “you won’t die, John, until I say it’s time”. You are not dead John…. Get up!

“ ‘Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later. The mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and of the seven golden lampstands is this: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.’” (Revelation 1:19&20)

Write it all down, John. Everything you saw. Everything you heard. Everything the churches need to know now. Everything that is going to take place later. The explanation of the stars and the candlesticks. Write it all down. Then circulate it.

Verse 20 is an excellent illustration of the fact that, indeed, some of the book of Revelation is symbolism. But that doesn’t make it hard to understand.

Generally, when something is symbolism, the passage you are in will say so, or that symbolism will be clearly explained somewhere else in the book of
Revelation or in another place in the Bible. Here, the symbolism of the seven stars and seven golden candlesticks is explained right away:

The stars are “angels”. The word here for angel is actually the word “messenger”, and is used of both angels and men. This could mean, then, that either angels are being spoken to by Jesus so that they can carry the message of the need for revival to the churches…or that specific people are being given that message - perhaps Pastors or church leaders? I personally think this is referring to people, not angels, since the Lord throughout history has most of the time seemed to prefer using people to deliver messages to people.

Since God’s Holy words are always for “do”, and not just for “know”, let’s ask ourselves what we are supposed to “do” as a result of understanding this passage today:

First and foremost, since this book is all about “revealing” Jesus, we need to ask ourselves what we have learned about Jesus. The more we know about Him, the better we can love Him, and the more clearly we can understand our own part in His plan for the world.

Then, let’s ask ourselves: “What was the plan?”

Does that seem like a funny question? I am writing this on the Saturday after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of America. The images on my television screen all week have been terrifying – as I have been imagining how life must feel for those trapped in Superdomes and attics and lawless confusion.

But it helped me understand better what Jesus will be doing at the End of Time, when the events of Revelation come to pass. I have asked myself what those people on the Gulf Coast need most. Is it water? Food? Medical attention? Guns? A hot bath? A room in someone’s house?

And as the week has progressed I have realized that although they desperately need all of the above, what they need most of all is a plan. They need to be able to figure out what to do next, based on a bigger plan which they know will work. They need hope. Once they have accepted the fact that things are going to be hard for a while, if they have a plan for the next step, the next week, the next month, then they can carry on and get life back in order again…eventually.

The bottom had literally fallen out of John’s life. He had no home. No shelter. Perhaps no food or water. Definitely very little comfort and no luxuries. He was on a prisoner island, so I imagine there was also lawlessness all around him. Jesus had just handed him the plan.
Revelation Chapter 1
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1) Who wrote the book of Revelation?

2. (:1) How did it get to John?

3. (:3) In verse 3, the KJV says “keep the things which are written…”, and the NIV says “take to heart what is written in it…”. What do both of those phrases mean we are supposed to do with the book?

4. (:4 & 11) Who is the book written to?

5. (:4,5) Even though John wrote the book, who is it actually from?

6. (:5) What are the three (3) titles given to Jesus?
   1)  
   2)  
   3)  

7. (:5b & 6) What are the three (3) things Jesus has done for us?
   1)  
   2)  
   3)  

8. (:7) What will be true of Jesus’ coming, according to this verse?

9. (:9) Why was John on the Isle of Patmos?

10. (:10) What was John doing when he was interrupted by an unusual voice?

11. (:12-16) When John turned around, what did he see?

12. (:17) Why do you think John collapsed when he saw this?
13. (:17b & 18) What does Jesus do in order to calm John’s fear?

14. (:19) What is John told to do with what he has seen and heard?

15. (:20) What is the symbolism of the stars and the candlesticks?

**Opinion and Application Questions:**

16. What did you learn about Jesus in this chapter?

17. What was the plan?
Chapter Two
Lots of Truth...No Love
(Ephesus)
Revelation 2:1-7

We’re going to spend the next seven lessons with seven churches. Each one had a small note addressed specifically to them in this letter. And when we say “church”, let’s be clear about the fact that we are talking about a group of people who have believed whole-heartedly in Jesus Christ.

These seven churches are not seven church buildings. They are not seven groups of people who simply have the same Christian values in common. They are not seven groups of people who nominally call themselves Christian. These are seven churches. Seven groups of people who have left their empty lives of sin, and decided to be followers of Jesus.

They are far from perfect, as we will see. They may have changed through the years because of decisions which allowed them to wander away from the path
God had pointed out to them. And some have had people join their group who are not true believers. But, make no mistake about it, the people to whom Jesus writes these notes are genuine believers in Jesus. He wrote a personal note to each church lovingly, firmly, honestly pointing out where they need to do an “about-face” in their lives…so they would be ready for what was to come.

Now, you might be thinking, “but… we live 2,000 years later, and we know now that the events of Revelations weren’t “about to come” for those seven local churches addressed in this letter. So why did those seven churches need to get ready?”

That’s a good question, and there is a simple answer: Those who would follow them would need to see their example of repentance in order to keep passing on the baton until it reached the generation which would cross the finish line. Each new generation of churches after them would fall short. Each generation of churches would need to humbly fall before Jesus in heart-wrenching repentance, until finally one generation, while asking the question: “Are we there, yet?” will be able to joyfully exclaim: “We’re there!”

You know where I’m heading with this, don’t you? We, in our generation of churches, need to repent, too. We need to be humbled before our God with a painful look at what we are really like. We need to “bow our knees” before Him, and tearfully, grievingly, repent. Will that bring the return of the Lord? No…He’ll come when it’s time to come. But it will make us ready in case now is the time – or - it will give us the chance to show the next generation what must happen in order for them to be ready…they will need repentance every bit as much as we do.

Honestly, the only church I’m familiar with is my own, so I can’t speak for our whole generation, but I do know that in our church we are proud. We are spoiled. We are comfortable. We love the world. We look like the world. We are haughty. We compromise the truth. We are not brave. I’m not just talking about "everyone else" in our church - I’m talking about me.

We desperately need repentance.

It is a gift of God. And if He decides to give it to us, repentance can begin while we are studying this book together. I am praying that will happen in my heart…and in yours.

As I have read through these messages to the seven churches in Asia I have seen a composite picture of myself. A little bit of this church…a little bit of that church…I seem to be in all of them. That may or may not be true of you, too, so let’s just take them slowly, one lesson for each church, and plead with the LORD of all creation to show us where each of us can repent and change.
First, Ephesus.

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:...” (2:1a)

This little note to Ephesus, just like the notes to the six other churches, is specifically addressed to the angel of the church of Ephesus. Jesus is talking, then, to one of the seven “stars”, or angels which He was holding in His hand in Revelation 1. Was this an actual angel, or a person? As I said before, I think it was a person, and since Revelation is so visual I like to try to imagine what things looked like to John – so in my mind’s eye I see a little group of seven people - Pastors, perhaps, gathered together, standing in the palm of Jesus, desiring to hear every word He has to say to them, so that they can return to their little congregations and begin to spread the fire simply by repeating the Words of the Son of God.

But whether these are angels or people may not matter. What matters is that once these words were recorded by John, the Holy Spirit has been able to convey these same messages to local churches throughout the last 2,000 years. And He will make sure the churches of the end times will know the messages well.

“...These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands;” (2:1b)

Jesus starts out each of these seven notes by describing Himself a little differently to each church. How does He describe Himself in this note to the Ephesians? “…him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands”. In other words, He’s the One John just saw at the end of chapter 1.

Look at the other ways Jesus describes Himself to the other six churches:

1) 2:8 The First and the Last, who died and came to life again.
2) 2:12 Him who has the sharp, double-edged sword
3) 2:18 Eyes like blazing fire and feet like burnished bronze
4) 3:1 Holds the 7 spirits of God and the 7 stars
5) 3:7 Holy and true, Holds the key of David
6) 3:14 The Amen, faithful & true witness, ruler of God’s creation

Any idea why Jesus described Himself differently to each church?
To me, it just logically seems that Jesus was trying to convey a slightly different message to each church…and showing a slightly different side of Himself to each church as He did so.

For instance, to the church of Thyatira He seems to be coming across a little more angry than with all the others. He is emphasizing His right to bring judgment upon them.

Or to the church of Philadelphia He seems to be saying: “Relax. I’m the One Who can either close or open doors for you. Trust Me.”

Real life is sometimes like that, too. To my children I come across a little differently than I do to my husband…or to my parents. I’m still the same person, yet there are many different facets of me.

Or to illustrate it better, we have all had teachers who, when they used their “teacher voice”, were quite able to get our attention. Perhaps Jesus is just using His “teacher voice” in a unique way with each different church, depending upon what would get their attention.

“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name and have not grown weary.” (2:2&3)

Jesus praises six of the churches for something. Sardis receives just a little nod of praise, but Laodicea misses out on commendations altogether.

But He is quite complimentary of Ephesus. They have worked hard and persevered. They have known what is right and what is wrong…and have not tolerated either sin or fakeness. False doctrine is definitely not a problem for them.

However, something about them does need to change:

“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.”
(2:4)

About 30 or 40 years prior to this, the Christians at the church of Ephesus were commended for their love. Paul, in his letter to this church, told them that he had “heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints.” Ephesians 1:15

But now, interestingly, they have ceased from being a loving church. They have plenty of truth…but no love. How could that happen?
Do you notice that their love seems to have been forsaken in about the time span of a generation? I am wondering if the parents came to faith in Christ, rooted and established in love, and then something happened which kept them from passing on that example of love to their children and to new believers. When you look at I John 4:1, I Corinthians 14:29, and I Thessalonians 5:21 you realize that a significant part of the Christian life is “testing and trying” what others are saying to be sure they are really speaking the truth. Sometimes we do actually have to stand up for the truth against those who would pervert it.

Maybe “fighting the good fight”, and “standing up for the truth”, somehow became “hating other Christians who are messing up”, and “retreating to my little corner because everyone else is wrong”. Somehow a heart of service and humility had changed to a heart of hardness and haughtiness.

In John chapter 13, Jesus, while He was on earth, made it very clear to His followers that a life following Him would be a life of loving service to others. And not necessarily wonderful, kind, gentle and loving “others”, either, but “others” who didn’t deserve it, weren’t always thankful for it, and who sometimes returned hate for that love. When Jesus washed His disciples’ feet in John 13, He was showing them that lowly service for another is the way to show the “full extent of love.” His own death on the cross would be the ultimate picture of a heart filled with truth, yet marked by love.

Somewhere in a generation of fighting for the truth, the Ephesians had left love and retreated to truth only…no love. That’s not God’s way; you can’t have one without the other.

Whatever caused this problem, it needs to be fixed. The good news is, it can.

“Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.” (2:5a)

Repenting, like faith, is not just a feeling. It is an action. Now that the Ephesians realized their problem, what could they do in order to repent - do an “about face” - and start heading in the right direction?

Two things:

1. Remember
2. Do what you remember

Sounds pretty simple. Just remember what you used to do when you were a loving church. And then do those things again.
That’s very similar to the advice my husband and I often give to couples who come to us for counseling. Couples who say they have lost all love for each other. “It must be over; we just don’t love each other any more. Divorce must be the answer.”

Our advice? Don’t depend on your feelings right now. Think of the things you used to do for each other when you were first in love, and do those things again. Act first. The feelings will follow.

So, Ephesians, did you used to bring meals to each other when someone was in the hospital? Did you used to smile when someone made a mistake and think to yourself: “I used to do that…I remember when the Lord reached down and helped me with that one…” Did you used to look at people who didn’t believe in Jesus and see not a person full of sin but a person who was a blank page waiting for God’s signature? Did you used to respond in gentleness to harsh words? Did you used to look at a stumbling brother or sister in Christ and know that God could change them in His own time? Did you used to honestly and kindly speak the truth when it needed to be spoken, instead of just protecting yourself by boldly speaking and then retreating to your private, safe world? Did you used to stick around and help when your weak friend began the hard work of changing?

Do those things again. No matter how you feel. Do what you used to do. Love is action, not feeling. The feelings will probably follow – but even if they don’t, love is your top priority. Here’s why:

“If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” (2:5b)

Here’s why we still need to love even if we don’t feel like it: our very ability to survive as a witness for Christ depends on our love. If we don’t have love for one another, how will the world know our message is true?

“But you have this in your favor: you hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” (2:6)

Now this is an interesting little twist. The Ephesians, who had just been told to start acting loving again, are commended for their hatred of something. Yep. Hatred.

From that we can learn an important lesson about love. Sometimes love includes hating sin. And speaking up about it. You can’t love without also speaking the truth about sin.

The Ephesians were hating the practices of a group of people called the Nicolaitans. It seems they were a group of people calling themselves Christians who thought they could believe in Christ and also lead completely immoral lives.
Disgusting. The Ephesians were right to hate their practices. But wrong to have stopped loving them.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (2:7a)

What does each church, each believer in Jesus, need in order to understand the meaning of what Jesus is saying? An ear to hear. In other words – a willingness to change. This letter was written not to give fun information to people about amazing events in the future. It was written to bring about change, so that people who didn’t know God could see Him written in the lives of His followers, and know where to turn when life became frightening and unbearable during the end times. A believer in Jesus is a light. Sometimes change must happen in order for that light to shine brightly.

“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” (2:7b)

The most frequent question I hear when leading a group study in these first couple chapters of Revelation is: “What if I don’t make it? What if I am too weak, and I end up denying Christ if I am persecuted? I know the Bible promises wonderful rewards to those who ‘overcome’, but what if I don’t overcome?”

There’s a verse in I John which will give great comfort if this question is nagging at the back of your mind. “…for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.” (I John 5:4,5)

You don’t have to “hope” you will be an overcomer some day. As a committed follower of Jesus Christ You already are an overcomer. Jesus in you is all you need to face end times. He will make sure you overcome.

The Ephesians – who were true believers in Christ – had some things to change. Some sins to confess. They weren’t perfect. But they were overcomers. They had the ability to respond to this message and be what Jesus wanted them to be.

“...the right to eat from the tree of life...” (2:7b)

Here is the first of seven different rewards for believers who hear these words of Jesus and respond: having the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.

Is Jesus talking about the Garden of Eden?
I think so. Remember the story of Adam and Eve and their sin and subsequent expulsion from the Garden of Eden? Do you remember what happened to the garden? Was it destroyed?

Look at Genesis 3:24 for the answer. “After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.”

The garden was not destroyed. It remained. The tree of life is still there today. When man was cast out of that garden, the tree of life had to be guarded, because if sinful man had found his way back into the garden and eaten of the fruit of the tree of life, he would have been doomed to eternal life in his sinful body. Eating from the tree of life guaranteed eternal life. But eternal life in a sinful, dying body would be, well, Hell. There would have never been any hope for a Savior to come some day to pay the price for sin and offer the hope of a new body to every person who believed in Him.

But there is coming a day when we who have overcome will freely and peacefully walk up to that tree and eat all of the fruit we desire. In our new bodies. Never to die. To live forever, in brand new bodies free of sin, with Jesus, who made it all possible.

A future full of truth…and love.

Revelation Chapter 2: 1-7
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1) Who, specifically, is this note addressed to?

2. (:1) Jesus starts out each of these 7 notes by describing Himself in a different way. How does He describe Himself in this note to the Ephesians?

3. Look at the other ways Jesus describes Himself:
   - 2:8,
   - 2:12,
   - 2:18,
   - 3:1,
   - 3:7,
   - 3:14
Any idea why Jesus described Himself differently to each church?

4. (:2&3) What are some of the things Jesus commends this church for?
5. (:4) What about them needs to change?

6. (:5) What two things does Jesus tell them to do which will help them know “how” to repent?

7. (:5) What will happen to this church if they do not repent?

8. (:6) What else does Jesus commend this church for?

9. (:7) What does each church, each believer in Jesus, need in order to understand the meaning of these little “notes”?

10. (:7) What is promised to those who “overcome”?

11. Why would it be a fantastic reward to be able to eat from the tree of life?

**Opinion and Application Questions:**

12. When you remember what you were like when you first believed in Jesus, do you think you have lost your “first love”?

13. Does “repenting” mean feeling sorry?

14. If you sense a need to “repent”, what is it you know you should “do”?

15. Is it ever good to hate anything? What are the things you hate?

16. Are you an overcomer?
Chapter Three

Suffering Ahead, Proceed With Courage

(Smyrna)

Revelation Chapter 2: 8-11

When you know you are not the first one to ever face your type of suffering, and that you can have conversation with someone who has done it before, you begin to have courage. And courage is what the little church in Smyrna was going to need.

The city of Smyrna was a seaport city, located about 40 miles north of Ephesus, in what is present-day Turkey. In several resources I saw the city described as “beautiful” and “proud”, the “ornament of Asia”. It was also a center
of the imperial cult of Rome. In the day this letter was written, the worship of the Roman emperor was apparently very heavily taught and enforced here. Not a very safe place for people who had chosen to worship Jesus Christ, and Him only.

“To the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.”
(2:8)

How does Jesus describe Himself? The First and the Last, who died and came to life again. In other words - I’m the One who always was, and always will be. I am the absolute power of the universe. I died on a cross and then raised myself to life again. There is nothing I can’t do. There is no problem you may face that will have me wringing my hands in despair. I’ve been there…done that. Whatever you have to face, follow Me, I’ll lead the way.

To me it seems the Christians in Smyrna needed some reassurance and a sense of Someone besides themselves knowing how to walk through a frightening situation. This is what Jesus is giving them in His description of Himself.

“I know your afflictions and your poverty – yet you are rich! I know the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.” (2:9)

This is Who I Am, believers at Smyrna. Now, let me assure you, I also know who you are. I am not ignorant about what you are in the middle of:

1. You have already faced many hard times because you have been willing to live for Me…I know that.
2. You have very little of this world’s things – you are poor. I know that.
3. But I also know that in the truest sense of the word, you are rich. How are you rich? Remember what Paul wrote to the Ephesians over 30 years ago? (Ephesians 1:3-9) Amazing truths -
   - Christians were chosen by God even before He created the world
   - When God looks at Christians He sees pure and perfect people
   - Christians have been adopted by God
   - The sins of Christians have been forgiven and forgotten
   - Christians have been given wisdom and understanding
• Christians actually have been able to know what I (God) think

4. And finally, I know exactly what you have been going through with Jewish people in your community who call themselves Jews, but actually do not believe in God (Me, Jesus) at all.

It would appear that there was a large and hostile Jewish population in Smyrna. Jewish people who called themselves Jews, but actually did not believe in God at all. Romans 2:28 & 29 pretty well describes these Jews of Smyrna: “A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart…”

Those who were true Jews heard the message of their Messiah, Jesus, and believed. Those who were not true Jews heard that same message and responded with hate and persecution against those who were believing in Jesus.

“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (2:10)

What is about to happen to the church at Smyrna? Suffering. Persecution. Martyrdom. What will this suffering be like?

Some will be arrested and thrown into prison
Some of the believers in Smyrna were going to be arrested and thrown into prison. (Remember, what we are reading here was not only significant for the actual Christians who were receiving this letter, but it will also be powerfully true for those people who someday will live in the end times. When that time finally arrives, there will be believers all over the world who will be persecuted for their faith. They will be thrown into prisons, denied the right to even buy food, and killed – as described in Revelation 13:7,16)

It is the devil who will do this
It will look like it is men who are doing this, but it isn’t. The fallen angel, Satan, will be the one wanting it and making it happen.

The reason these people will suffer in this way is so that they may be tried
I think this means they will be “tried” as gold is tried in the fire. Their suffering will bring their true value to the surface. The devil will be the one wanting to destroy them. The LORD Jesus will be the one bringing out the true gold. (I Peter 1:6-7)

This suffering will not last forever…there is a time limit
“Are We There, Yet?”  
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

No matter what the devil tries to do, he is still bound to act only when and where and for as long as the LORD allows him to act.

The church at Smyrna should be faithful unto death

Many of these Smyrnan Christians will end up joining the ranks of those who have given up their lives rather than deny Christ. In fact, look at Revelation 12:11, and let your mouth hang open at the awesome power of being faithful unto death: “They overcame him (the devil) by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” Martyrs through the ages will actually combine their testimony and obedience in the end times for the last great battle with the devil, and be responsible for getting him once and for all kicked out of the heavenlies.

There is a reward waiting for those who go through this. Is a crown of life worth dying for? It must be.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death.” (2:11)

Are there two deaths? What is the “second death”?

- The first death is the lot of all mankind. All men inherited from Adam and Eve the fact of eventual death. The body we are born in must die. It is corrupted with sin and cannot live into eternity. (Genesis 2:16&17)

- The second death is the lot of all men who do not believe in Jesus Christ. Not every person must suffer this death. Only those who choose unbelief. (Revelation 20:11-15) It comes at the end of the Millennium.

When a baby is born, his body has only one ultimate destination – death. This isn’t arguable; we all know it’s true. But inside of that little body is a person – and that person has a choice at some point in his/her life: do I choose to bow my knee to the God of the Universe, trust Him to be my salvation from this dying body I am in? Or, do I choose to bow my knee to myself…trust only myself to earn my own way to eternal life, and push aside the gift of salvation offered to me by the One Who made me?

We all have to die once. Those who choose to refuse Jesus’ gift of salvation have to die twice. And there is no coming back to life after the second death. It is forever. Suffering forever. No wiggle room.
Those who choose to accept Jesus Christ’s sacrifice on the cross as payment for their sin will, after their first death, receive a new body – one which will never die. There is no second death for people with those new bodies.

Jesus has said two things in this passage which help us understand death: One: (:10) You don’t have to be afraid of death even when it is coming at you against your will. If Jesus says I don’t have to be afraid of something, then I figure I can come to Him at that time and remind Him of that, and He’ll be there to help me through it. And Two: (:11) As a believer in Jesus Christ, I will not be hurt by the second death at all. Since that’s the death I really should be afraid of…I guess I don’t have to afraid after all.

There are many who say that the church at Smyrna was praised, but not asked to repent of anything by Jesus in this letter. I think I disagree. I know the word “repent” isn’t used, but I think there is an urging by the Lord for this church to do a “turn-around”. They had done so well and endured so much…but I wonder if they weren’t beginning to hold back, let fear take hold, live on the stories of the past.

The time was upon them to continue to stand up for Christ. To have courage.

In 1536 William Tyndale was burned at the stake in England for the crime of translating the Bible into English. During a time when it was commonly taught in Christian churches that eternal life was earned by good behavior, Tyndale saw in the Scriptures that salvation came by faith alone. Faith in what Jesus Christ did, not faith in what any human being could do. William was convinced that the common, ordinary Englishman needed to be able to read the words of Scripture for himself, in English, so that he could understand and accept the truth for himself.

The church authorities, who were also the political authorities of that time, were opposed to such a translation of the Bible into English, because they knew the common man would read that Bible and realize that many of the teachings of the church. They arrested him and burned him at the stake.

I don’t know if William Tyndale had a passionate personality. I don’t know if he was an eloquent speaker. I don’t know if he was trembling from head to foot as he was tied to the stake. But I know he had courage.

One of the reasons you are reading this today is because William Tyndale had courage. May his courage, and the courage of the little church of Smyrna, be the inspiration for ours.
Chapter 2: 8-11 – Smyrna
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:8) How does Jesus describe Himself in this note to the church at Smyrna?

2. Knowing that Jesus uses His introductions to get the attention of the people to whom He is addressing His message, look at verse 8, and nothing else, and make a guess about what His message to this church may be.

3. (:9) In verse 9, Jesus mentions 4 things He knows about the church at Smyrna. What are they?
   1. 
   2. 
   3. 
   4. 

4. The “Jews who say they are Jews”, referred to in verse 9 - what do you think the story behind that might be?

5. (:10) What is about to happen to the church at Smyrna?

6. What will this suffering be like?
   1. Some will be arrested and thrown into __________
   2. It is the ______________________ who will do this
   3. The reason these people will suffer in this way is so that they may be __________________
   4. This suffering will not last __________________
   5. The church at Smyrna should be _______ unto _______
   6. There is a _______________ waiting for those who go through this.

7. (:11) What will overcomers not have to go through?

8. What is the “second death”? 
9. What does this message to the church at Smyrna say which could ease our fear of death?

Opinion and Application Questions:
10. Would you characterize yourself as a courageous person?

11. Is there someone you know who may never have heard of the “second death”?

12. What could you do this week to explain to that person what the second death is, and how to avoid it?

13. Have you ever thought you might possibly be martyred because you are a follower of Jesus?
Chapter Four

Please, Don’t Feed the Bears!!
(Pergamum)
Revelation 2: 12-17

Why do they put up those signs at Yellowstone which say: “Don’t Feed the Bears”?

Because once you feed a bear, he isn’t satisfied…and he isn’t grateful. He just wants more. And he’ll be back.

Or…have you ever been on a beach, enjoying a beautiful cloudless blue sky, sunshine and peace and quiet….and then a lone seagull soars by, lands near you, and wonders if you might throw him that last bite of your peanut butter sandwich? If you’ve never been there, take my advice and do not - I repeat - do not throw that crumb. If you do, you will suddenly and all at once meet all of the seagull’s cousins and distant relatives, all swooping in at the same time to see who can
slurp up that little piece of sandwich first, and then they will all, as a hungry, noisy group, turn to eye your next move. There is no end to their appetites.

Stay with me….I promise you…this has something to do with Pergamum.

“To the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.” (2:12)

How does Jesus describe Himself in this note to the church at Pergamum? Him who has the sharp, double-edged sword. In chapter 1, as John turned to see the voice which spoke to him, he saw Jesus, and amongst other things, he saw a sharp, double-edged sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus. This is the image Jesus wants to emphasize to this next church.

It sounds a little ominous to me. Sort of like when moms call their kids and use not only their first names, but their middle names, too. Steven Kenneth!!! Andrew Scott!! Most kids pretty much know to respond right away and listen hard when they hear their middle name.

If I hadn’t already read the rest of this passage, I would still assume, just from this intro, that it was going to be stern. Hebrews 4:12 says that the Word of God is like a sharp, two-edged sword. So it was also going to be very authoritative. This was not going to be a suggestion, “it would really be good for you to do this”. This was going to be more on the order of, “quit messing around, and quit right now!”

“I know where you live – where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city – where Satan lives.” (2:13)

Just like Smyrna, Pergamum was a center of Emperor worship. It was also a center of Zeus worship. At one time Pergamum had been the capital of the Roman province of Asia. The city housed one of the finest libraries in antiquity, and was the place where parchment was first used. The people of Pergamum would have been well-educated, inquiring, religious, politically sharp. Everything was “up-to-date in Kansas City”. It was the place you would travel when you wanted to talk to a respected authority in the ways of the world.

Just imagining, of course, but I would say that if I had come to believe in Jesus, having been a respected member of this city previously, I would encounter some heavy opposition from the culturally elite. They might sneer at my new-found faith and treat me like I was suddenly not as good as they were. And if I had come to faith in Christ having previously been not one of the “in-crowd”, I would probably be in even worse shape than ever when it came to having the things and pleasures and respect the rest of my neighbors enjoyed.
And still imagining…I probably would have struggled to know how much of my former lifestyle should fall by the wayside.

Pergamum had already experienced suffering and persecution - the same things Jesus had warned Smyrna about. How did the church at Pergamum come through it? They did great! Even when one of their number was killed, they continued to speak the name of Jesus. They continued to speak up for faith in the sacrifice of Christ as the only way to come to God.

Pergamum Bible Church would be a terrific example for Smyrna to follow, but…

“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.” (2:14,15)

Apparently they were allowing some bad teaching to go on in their group – some really bad teaching.

Some in their church, the “Balaam-followers”, were teaching something an Old Testament prophet named Balaam had taught. And some held to the teachings of the “Nicolaitans”, who were similar to the “Balaam-followers”.

For a little history on Balaam, go to the Old Testament book of Numbers. From chapters 22 thru 24 we see this really silly little story of a king named Balak who wanted a prophet named Balaam to put a curse on the Israelites, because he wanted to be rid of them.

As you read through this story, you get the idea that even though Balaam would not put a curse on the Israelites, saying that he could not curse whom the Lord had blessed, he really was not all that set on doing things God’s way…he just wasn’t allowed by God to do this evil thing. In Chapter 24 the story ends up with Balaam persevering with his refusal to do what Balak wanted him to do – and so he seemingly was a “good guy” in this story.

However, a little farther along in Numbers, (31:16), there is a hint that Balaam did actually end up helping Balak hurt the Israelites, by giving Balak some advice, which, incidentally, worked. Balaam told Balak that they should somehow convince several women to tempt Israelite men into living immoral lives, therefore turning them away from the Lord, and bringing a plague upon the whole nation. Balak got his way – the Israelites caved to temptation and became
powerless. Balaam lives forever in history as a man who would not come right out and disobey the Lord in what he uttered, but did encourage others to commit immoral acts, thereby helping to destroy them.

So now, in Pergamum, those who were following “Balaam-like” teaching, and the “Nicolaitans” had something in common: they lived immorally while claiming to be religious. And not just secret immoral acts, either. The immorality was taught. Encouraged – as a sort of “freedom” that believers in Christ should have because they have been forgiven of all sin. Oh yuk.

Here’s the problem: This kind of teaching being allowed in this little church which was experiencing persecution…it would totally destroy their witness in the community. And absolutely it would confuse these new believers, dragging them away from a sweet, obedient life of service to their Lord. To allow this was basically to invite the destruction of this church.

The believers in Smyrna were being sucked into an untruth which would hurt them, but they probably were living no differently than other people in Pergamum, and probably could easily excuse their behavior because “everyone else was doing these things.” If the church leaders would fight this openly, wouldn’t they run the risk of sending these new believers right back into their Godless lives? Chasing them away from the one place where they could hear about Christ?

“Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.” (2:16)

Jesus doesn’t beat around the bush. He simply says: “repent”. Turn away from this bad teaching. Don’t allow it. Don’t put up with it. Speak out against it. You have been allowing this. Stop. Start to walk in the other direction. Fight against it.

And if they would not, then He Himself would step in, and with the sword of His mouth (the Word of God) would fight against those who were teaching these things. Basically, Jesus is saying, “If you won’t speak the truth, I will”.

These believers in Pergamum were being taught to feed their flesh, and feeding the flesh is a whole lot like feeding the bears at Yellowstone, or the seagulls in Florida. There is no end to the appetites which are aroused. They take over and define life. They totally drown out the voice of the Spirit within, and soon it is hard to know where everything went wrong.

It becomes an ugly, lying, downhill spiral:

“Do the sinful things you used to do…it’s OK.”
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

“Think a whole lot about yourself and your own needs – it’s what you are supposed to do.”

“Desire and think about the things you shouldn’t have…you have been forgiven…sin can’t hurt you anymore.”

“Go ahead and feed your flesh with things you shouldn’t look at, things you shouldn’t eat or drink, situations you shouldn’t be in…it’s OK. In fact, you should do these things. They will enhance your worship of God, because you will be happier and feel closer to God.”

There was no way to try to change these believers slowly. This simply had to stop. Repent. If they wouldn’t, Jesus Himself would come do the job.

Let’s look at Hebrews 4:12 one more time and see what happens when the sword of truth is used in the midst of a situation full of untruth: “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

The very words of God will slash away the lies. They will cut right to the heart of the problem. They know how to fit into the very tiniest nook and cranny and divide between the true and the false. They discern not only actions, but also thoughts and attitudes.

If this church would willingly speak the hard things to each other, then they would possibly spare each other the heartache and pain which the Lord might have to put them through to get them to the point where they would listen to Him.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.” (2:17)

Now comes the promise part of this message. What two things do overcomers get as a reward?

- Hidden manna.
- And a white stone with a secret name.

Huh?

Since these two things are sort of “fleshly” – or, sensual (something to eat, something to touch and treasure), I’m thinking maybe the Lord is saying: “I know you want to eat and drink and have earthly pleasures. Maybe have
something special…just for you, every once in awhile. I’m not saying all fleshly pleasures are bad…but don’t feed your flesh with sinful earthly pleasures…and don’t think you are deprived when you can’t have even good earthly pleasures. I have plenty of pleasure waiting for you in heaven. There will be wonderful food someday and beautiful things to have and to touch. If you can’t have all that now, then while you are on earth, feed your spirit. Soak up My words. And whatever you do, don’t feed the bears! (your sinful desires). When you feed the bears they only want more. They will destroy you trying to get it.

Is this practical for the church today? I mean, I’m not sure I know of any churches encouraging people to live in adulterous relationships, or things like that…


Doesn’t that sound like we’ve been feeding the bears?

Is there something wrong with wanting to experience fleshly pleasure? No. But there is something wrong with being willing to let desire for fleshly pleasure drive our lives and make our decisions. And there’s something terribly wrong with calling our fleshly pleasures “worship”, isn’t there?

Here are some “warning signs” when we are feeding the bears, in other words, feeding our flesh, and not our spirits:

- When we are angry at not getting what we want.
- When we are constantly thinking about the bad things which have happened to us.
- When we don’t care whether other people are OK.
- When we make decisions based on getting our desires met, instead of seeking Godliness.
- When we are full of joy…but our joy does not include others.
- When we are demanding.
- When we are irritated.
- When we are ready to leave a church, or a group of friends, or a spouse…because things aren’t going our way.

If you see these symptoms in your life, do two things:
"Are We There, Yet?"
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

One – Start feeding your spirit (that part of you which communicates with the Lord). Soak up the Word of God more than once a day. Pray frequently in the morning, at noon, and at night. Scoop up every possible opportunity to serve someone besides yourself...in a way which will never bring acclaim to you.

Two - Don’t feed the bears!! Don’t look in the mirror so much. Don’t focus on the things you want so much. Don’t wallow in your memories of things done to you. Ask yourself if you are enjoying your praise music because it makes you feel good, or because it makes you want to be less selfish and more giving. Just stop and think. Am I so wrapped up in me that I’ve been less and less wrapped up in God?

If so, stop feeding the bears.

Chapter 2: 12-17
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:12) How does Jesus describe Himself in this note to the church at Pergamum?

2. What do you think He is about to say to this church?

3. (:13) How does Jesus describe the place where this church is located?

4. How difficult do you guess it might be to be part of this church?

5. (:13) Pergamum has already experienced suffering and persecution...the same things Jesus was warning Smyrna about... How did they come through it?

6. (:14-15) What fault does Jesus find with Pergamum?

7. (:14-15) What was bad about the doctrine of Balaam...and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans?
8. (:16) What would Jesus do if they did not repent?

9. Why would this be so bad? (Hebrews 4:12)

10. (:17) What two things do the overcomers get as a reward?

**Opinion and Application Questions:**

11. What are some examples in today’s world of mixing the things of God with fleshly things?

12. Is there something wrong with wanting to experience fleshly pleasure?

13. How do we know when we are feeding our flesh, and not our spirits?
Chapter Five

Forsaking All Others…. 
(Thyatira)

Revelation Chapter 2: 18-29

“Will you have this man to be your husband; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love him, comfort him, honor and keep him, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him as long as you both shall live?”

“I will.”

“Will you have this woman to be your wife; to live together in the covenant of marriage? Will you love her, comfort her, honor and keep her, in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all others, be faithful to her as long as you both shall live?”
“I will.”

Over and over again as parents, Ken and I had to identify our children’s problems and then say something to them about them. We found that one of the hardest things about parenting is that you like your children…I mean, they are the kind of people you would choose as your friends. But in order to love them the way God wants you to, you have to be willing to have them not like you. You have to be willing to tell them the truth when you know it will be hard for them to listen. It may hurt them, it may make them mad, and you know they may just decide it’s easier to disobey or ignore you than to take the hard road and correct what is wrong. But it’s the kind of thing you do because you love someone enough to care more about their future than you do about your own feelings. I think this is how Jesus felt as He spoke these words, and how the aging apostle felt as he penned them.

When someone hardly ever gets angry, you really pay attention when they do. Jesus is angry here. As you look at verse 18, you will see fire in His eyes, a burning passion emanating from his feet.

“To the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.’” (:18)

Isaiah 53:7, referring to the Jewish Messiah, says that “He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” A lamb. Jesus is like a lamb. Soft. Quiet. Passive.

And then, Jesus is also called the “Lion of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5) - One Who roars with ferocity. One Who kills. One Who is to be feared.

As He begins this message to the church in Thyatira, He is not the lamb. And you can see the lion crouching at the edges.

“I know your deeds, your love and faith, your service and perseverance, and that you are now doing more than you did at first.” (:19)

Thyatira is a very active church, one with lots and lots of good deeds, which, as we will see, goes to show that lots of good works are not necessarily a sign of a good church.

“Nevertheless, I have this against you: You tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

sacrificed to idols. I have given her time to repent of her immorality, but she is unwilling. So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways.” (:22-24)

Apparently the Thyatiran church has been passively allowing a certain woman to teach a very repugnant doctrine. At first glance this bad doctrine seems to be the same problem Jesus just addressed with the church in Pergamum - sexual and other fleshly immoralities. Jesus says she (this woman in Thyatira) is committing fornication (sexual immorality by someone who is not married), and that those she is luring into her trap are committing adultery (sexual immorality by someone who is married). On closer inspection, however, there seems to be more here than just the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans which were predominant in the Pergamum church.

The first thing you notice is that Jesus does seem to be reacting more strongly here than He did with Pergamum. I am taking a guess that whatever was happening here was much more destructive to the furthering of the Gospel. Much more of a personal affront to Him.

Adultery, just the plain-old-garden-variety kind, is: “being married to one person, but intimate with another.”

Spiritual adultery has that same definition but is describing our relationship to the Lord, not to a person. The Bible actually talks a lot about spiritual adultery, especially in the Old Testament. Again and again the LORD accuses Israel, to whom He was married, of committing spiritual adultery. Israel said they belonged to the God of Israel, but consistently slipped away to worship idols. They said they were Jews, but were trusting in other “gods” to get them through life.

Jeremiah was one of the Old Testament prophets who used the visual image of adultery to warn the children of Israel of what they were doing.

“…Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: ‘I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.’ ” (Jeremiah 2:1&2)

“During the reign of King Josiah, the Lord said to me, ‘Have you seen what faithless Israel has done? She has gone up on every high hill and under every spreading tree and has committed adultery there. I thought that after she had done all this she would return to me but she did not…’ ” (Jeremiah 3:6-7)
“Return, faithless people”, declares the LORD, ‘for I am your husband.’” (Jeremiah 3:14)

“This is your lot, the portion I have decreed for you,” declares the Lord, “because you have forgotten me and trusted in false gods. I will pull up your skirts over your face that your shame may be seen – your adulteries and lustful neighings, your shameless prostitution. I have seen your detestable acts on the hills and in the fields. Woe to you, O Jerusalem! How long will you be unclean?” (Jeremiah 13: 25-27)

And the prophet Hosea spent his whole life being a living illustration of the agony the Lord God felt as He saw his beloved wife, Israel, chase after and hop into bed with others.

But it’s not just in the Old Testament that we see this symbol being used – Jesus Himself, in Matthew 12:39, when the Pharisees asked for a sign from Him to prove Who He was, responded: “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!” And James, the brother of Jesus, in his letter written over 30 years after Jesus died and rose again, uses the same symbolism to describe Christians who were loving and trusting in the things of the world, instead of keeping their love solely for Christ: “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?” (James 4:4&5)

Is this “adultery” taking place in Thyatira more than physical adultery? I think so. I think Thyatira is actively engaging in spiritual adultery, openly taught by a woman who is a part of the church.

“I will strike her children dead. Then all the churches will know that I am he who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you according to your deeds. No I say to the rest of you in Thyatira, to you who do not hold to her teaching and have not learned Satan’s so-called deep secrets (I will not impose any other burden on you.)” (23-24)

Jesus says that one of the things He will do to pull them back from their wickedness is kill their children. In other words, there have been those who have heard and been sucked into this awful teaching, and then have gone on to teach others the same ugliness, thereby producing spiritual “children”. He will make sure all believers see that this doctrine of “trusting and loving other gods while saying you are a Christian” is repugnant, and will not survive.

It is a teaching that has gone wrong here. Maybe it’s fairly simple, something which might even be taught today, like, “The Power of Positive Thinking”, or
“Ten Things You Can Do to Get God to Bless Your Life”. Whatever it was, Christians were being drawn into a teaching which promised happiness, when, actually, they were committing spiritual adultery. They were putting their faith in a set of rules, or power, other than Jesus.

God is a jealous God. A relationship with Him is for always and He does not passively sit by while the one He loves flirts with anything or anyone else. Jesus’ words are directed to those in Thyatira who have been duped by a seductive woman with a bad teaching - they are given a chance to repent.

He is also speaking directly to those who have not gone along with this teaching...standing on the sidelines, perhaps, not sure what to do about something which they know is wrong. They are simply told to “hold on to what they have.” (:25)

“Only hold on to what you have until I come.” (:25)

In other words...You know Jesus is sufficient for your every need. You know He loves you and that there is no other power on earth worth turning to. So just hang on to that truth. Just keep trusting Jesus. Hanging on to that truth might get you in real trouble with the ones in your church who have decided they want to stay in spiritual adultery. But hang on anyway.

If the rest of the people who make up your church, Thyatira, hear of your desire to trust only in Jesus, and not any other works or deeds or people or things, and they decide to kick you out for your faithful stand, so be it. You don’t have to retaliate, though, or fight against them. Now is not the time for that.

“To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations – ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter; he will dash them to pieces like pottery’ – just as I have received authority from my Father. I will also give him the morning star.” (:26-27)

What is Jesus’ promise to those who overcome? Someday they will be the ones who are exercising all the power of God, as His emissaries. Someday there will be no doubt in anyone’s mind about who is God, and who can solve every difficulty, who bestows every blessing, and who is worthy of our worship and love.

So wait for that day. Hold on to the truth you know by faith...and some day faith will be sight.

Remember that scene in Revelation 19, when Jesus returns on the white horse? And we, those who trusted Him and believed in Him here on earth, are behind
Him, on our white horses? (Rev. 19:11-21) Jesus says in that passage that He “treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty”. (Rev. 19:13) We learn here in Revelation 2 that one of the things we will do as believers is tread that winepress with him. We will actually be given the authority to join Him in His judgment on the world.

And, we will see the morning star. When the dust settles on the nations which are gathered in the Valley of Armageddon; when the full authority and power of God Almighty – Jesus – has been dumped on those silly, sinful, rebellious people; we will see the morning star. “And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.” (II Peter 1:19)

Judgment won’t last forever. There will be a morning after the very dark night. Jesus is that Morning Star.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (:29)

This phrase, used in Jesus’ notes to all the churches, now switches to being the very last phrase of the message. In the messages to the first three churches it was not the last phrase. With the last four churches it is. I honestly haven’t been able to see any reason why the placement of the phrase would have been changed. It still means the same thing: if you are ready to change, then listen.

If we have committed ourselves to follow Jesus, He is the love of our lives. He is always with us. He’s there when we wake in the morning, and He’s there when we fall asleep at night. He draws us back to Him when we wander away. He smiles at us when we goof up. He longs to see us face-to-face. He’s in this relationship for eternity.

If there is anyone we love more than Him…any power or set of rules we trust more than Him, our call is to forsake all others. We are His and His alone.

Chapter 2: 18-29
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. Do you know anyone who hardly ever seems to get angry?
   - When that person does get angry, how do you react?
   - When Jesus cleansed the temple (John 2:13-17), how did His disciples react?
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

2. (18) Is Jesus presenting Himself here as a lion…or a lamb?

3. (19) How would you characterize this church?

4. (20 - 22) What is this church tolerating?

5. Why do you think Jesus reacts more strongly to this false teaching than he did to the false teaching going on in Pergamum?

6. What is adultery? (just give a definition)

7. What is “spiritual” adultery?

8. (23-24) Could this “adultery” taking place in Thyatira be more than physical adultery?

9. (25) Who, in the Thyatira church, is Jesus primarily addressing? What is His directive to them?

10. (26-27) What is Jesus’ promise to those who overcome?

11. (28) This phrase, used in Jesus’ notes to all the churches, now switches to being the very last phrase of the message. In the first 3 churches it was not the last phrase. In the last 4 churches it is. Any idea why this switch?

Opinion and Application Questions:

12. What are some examples of spiritual adultery in churches today?

13. Are you committing spiritual adultery?
Chapter Six

May be Morning...May be Noon
(Sardis)
Revelation 3:1-6

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: ‘These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. ’”
(Revelation 3:1a)

Jesus describes Himself as holding the seven spirits of God (in other words, the Holy Spirit) and the seven stars (in other words, the seven messengers to the seven churches).
If Someone can hold the Holy Spirit in His hand, what does that tell you about Him? Are there any secrets from this very powerful Being? There’s no reason to think you could “pull the wool” over His eyes about anything. This is important, because, as we see from the rest of verse 1, this church had a reputation of being very alive – very active in the work of the LORD – but, Jesus would have known, of course, the truth…

“...I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead.” (Revelation 3:1b)

They are actually dead. The word used for “dead” here has the meaning of “a corpse”. If a person is dead physically, there is no heartbeat, no brain activity. No life at all in them. If a person is dead spiritually, what does that mean? There is no life at all in that part of them which is able to communicate with God. Spiritual death is, however, a little different from physical death, because every person starts out life spiritually dead.

Physically, we start out alive, and then die. (no choices involved here) Spiritually, we start out dead, and then can choose to come alive.

So what does Jesus mean when He says this whole church is dead? Obviously He doesn’t mean they are physically dead. If He meant that, He wouldn’t be writing to them. They’d be dead.

So He must mean spiritual death…which means they have never come to life spiritually. In other words, this church is chock-full of people who have never come to faith in Christ. They have the appearance of being Christians, but they are still dead.

“Wake up! ...” (Revelation 3:2a)

I’m quoting this verse from the New International Version (NIV), and in that version, the verse begins with the phrase “wake up!” The English Standard Version (ESV) and the New American Standard Version (NASV) also say “wake up” here. But the King James Version (KJV) and the New King James Version (NKJV) say “be watchful”. Those two phrases (“wake up” and “be watchful”) are both translated from the same Greek word, but they seem to give different meanings, so which one is the most accurate?

a. “wake up” (NIV, ESV, NASB)
b. “be watchful” (KJV) & (NKJV)

This is an important place to stop and look at the actual words the LORD had the original writers use. The Greek word which has been translated “wake up” or “be watchful” in these different versions is the word gregoreuo. It means “to keep awake”, or “to be vigilant”, or “to be watchful”.

51
The sense of the word is more the idea of directing an awake person to be even more awake than of trying to make a sleeping person be awake again.

Here are some other places in scripture where the Greek word *gregoreuo* is used: Look up these other instances, and see if you can come to a conclusion about the meaning of this phrase in our passage in Revelation:

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When you look at all these instances, you realize something: this is not a command you would give to a dead person - it’s something you would say to an alive person who is having trouble staying awake, or being alert. Or, to understand it in the context of this passage, this is not something you would say to someone who has never put their faith in Christ.

So here’s the question: Even though this church is dead (full of unbelievers) Jesus is telling them to “be watchful” …*something you would say to an alive person (a follower of Jesus), not a dead person (an unbeliever)…who is Jesus speaking to when He says “be watchful”?*

This church is dead because it is made up of mostly unbelievers…but there are a few believers. A few true Christians. And they are the ones being addressed here. There is something they can do to change the “dead” status of this church.

> “Wake up! Strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of my God.”  
> (Revelation 3:2)

Their works are not “complete” yet. Long before time began, the Lord knew exactly who would choose to believe in Him throughout the long course of human history. And part of His grand design for the world was His choosing of specific “works”, or “deeds” to be done by specific believers in Him.
Does that seem a little far-fetched? Look at Ephesians 2:10: “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Not far-fetched at all. The Lord had specific things He wanted this church to accomplish, and they weren’t done yet. Those things had to be done by believers in Him (those “in Christ Jesus”)…not by unbelievers.

So what can the true believers in Sardis do to bring their church back to life, so that they can accomplish those things yet to be done in God’s plan? Revelation 3:2 says they are to “watch”, and that this change in alertness, or change in attitude, will “strengthen” the church.

Watch what? Be on the alert for what? Stay awake for what? What is it they were to be looking for?

The same thing we are told throughout scripture to be watching for - the return of Jesus. They had stopped talking about, thinking about, dreaming about, singing about, longing for & praying for the return of their Lord, Jesus of Nazareth. They had stopped watching.

When I first became a follower of Jesus I was 17 years old. I had spent my life going to church with my family, but had never connected in my heart with the fact that Jesus had died for me. Jesus was a fact to me – not a Person Who loved me and wanted to walk through life with me. I had never seen myself as less than what God wanted me to be. But at 17 it was as if a light came on somewhere inside of me, and two things happened simultaneously: One – I wanted very much to know God. I realized for the first time that He wanted to know me. He wasn’t just “up there somewhere in heaven, watching the world.” He was supreme God and He wanted to connect with me. And then Two – I realized I was not fit to come into His presence. I was not perfect. I had committed sins. I wanted to sin. I would never, on my own, be able to be good enough to have that oneness with God that I so desired.

Then I heard a truth which turned me around. It was the same truth that I had heard for 17 years, but now it suddenly made perfect sense. Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for my sin. Not just a fact anymore. Now a reality inside of me. He made a way for me to have that connection with God – He removed the obstacle of my sin by clearing the books with God all by Himself.

When I slowly put all that together in my head and in my heart, this 17-year-old girl, dead inside because she could not communicate with a Holy God, fell to her knees and said “thank-you” to Him. I remember somehow communicating with Him that I knew I didn’t deserve this wonderful gift He had just offered me, that I wanted it even though I didn’t deserve it, and that the only thing I had to give back to Him was the rest of my life. I surrendered the only thing I had –
which I knew wasn’t worth much – and got in return more than I ever realized a person could receive. A relationship with the One, True God. A future which would never end. A Comforter to live within me. New eyes. New ears. New heart. And, most of all, a love for Jesus which surpassed any love I would ever experience for the rest of my life.

The church I began attending, Del Norte Baptist Church in Tucson, Arizona, was not perfect, but wow, did they ever have a longing for the return of Jesus. I remember singing “Coming Again, Coming Again…May be morning, may be noon, may be evening, and may be soon” in many services. People would sing with tears streaming down their faces as they anticipated the day when they would one day see Jesus.

I learned to look up into the sky and wonder if today was the day when He would return. Whenever I saw a beautiful cloud formation, (because I had learned that Revelation 1:7 said He would be coming with clouds) especially one which was tipped with a silver lining, my heart would burst with the joy of anticipation that someday I would see His face.

That is what the true believers in Sardis needed to begin to do again. Long for His return. Turn their eyes to the clouds. Talk about it. Pray for it. Dream about it. Sing about it. As they did that, the Lord would come alongside and turn on the lights in other hearts – the ones who had the look of being alive, but were dead. And they would, like me at 17, be able to connect with Jesus Christ – not just in their heads…but in their hearts.

“Remember, therefore, what you have received and heard; obey it, and repent. But if you do not wake up, (gregoreuo), I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you.” (Revelation 3:3)

What will happen to this church if the true believers in it do not begin again to “watch”?

If the true believers in Sardis did not do an about – face - did not begin again to long for the return of Jesus - the dead Sardis church would be surprised by the return of Christ. I Thessalonians 5:4 says that those who know Christ in a personal way will not be surprised when He returns. They will be looking for it. They are alive to God and to what He is doing on the earth. But those who are still dead will have no clue what is happening until it is on them. If the true believers in Sardis did not begin to “watch”, their friends and loved ones who went to church with them would not get their opportunity to come to personal faith in Jesus.

“Yet you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes. They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

worthy. He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”
(Revelation 3:4&5)

In verse 4, Jesus describes those who already are true believers in this church, and then in verse 5 He describes those who will overcome – in other words – come to real faith in Jesus Christ - as the true believers are a witness to them:

- They will have on white garments. Their filthy clothing, wrecked by the sin in their lives, will be exchanged for pure, white, beautiful clothing. Their clean-ness in the presence of God will depend not on their own clean-ness, but on the clean-ness of Jesus. (His perfection is what God the Father looks at when he asks: “how is Kathleen doing today?”)
- They will walk with Jesus; they will have that sweet, day-to-day relationship with Him which everyone longs for in their hearts.
- Jesus will never blot out their names from the book of Life. There is a book, spoken of in the Old Testament, which records every person alive. When that person dies, his or her name must be removed from the “Book of Life” – for he/she is no longer alive. But…a person who has believed in Jesus will never die. Even when their body dies, their soul lives on forever with Him, so they never die. That person’s name will never be blotted out of the book of life.
- Jesus will acknowledge each believer before His Father and in the presence of all the Holy angels.

And now the message to Sardis closes.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (3:6)”

If you want to hear…hear.

Let’s get personal now and apply this to our lives today.

Does your church have unbelievers in it?

No matter how great of a church you go to, there are probably people there who have never made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ.

What can you do about it?
Just exactly what the Sardis church could do. Start to think about, read about, pray about, sing about, talk about & long for the return of your Savior, Jesus. Let it be the thing which identifies you.

A funny thing happened a couple of weeks ago in the parking lot after church. A man had visited our church who was dressed in the garb of a worshipping Jew. Robes & tassels. After church there were a few of us left in the parking lot as this man left, and he pulled out of his car a beautiful shofar (ram’s horn), and sounded it for us. It was an arresting sound – not like an instrument noise at all – but more like a loud mournful and joyful sound all at the same time. Beautiful.

One of our group had gotten into her car before this man decided to demonstrate the shofar for us. She was facing in the opposite direction from his car, so she didn’t even see what he was doing. She only heard the sound. As she told us afterward, she heard the sound of the shofar, connected it in her mind immediately with the fact that at the rapture there will be a “trump of God”, wondered if this was the rapture, and then wondered why she was still there, sitting in her car. (“…in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. for the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.” I Corinthians 15:52) She began to cry – and then looked up and saw that we were all still there, too – and she jumped out of the car, crying and laughing at the same time. Once we realized the mix of emotions she had just experienced, all of us doubled over with laughter – the look on her face was priceless. She knew that it “may be morning…may be noon…may be evening…and may be soon…” It wasn’t at all too much of a leap in her mind to go from trumpet sound to “let’s go!”

So, true believers in Jesus the Christ, if we begin again to long for, think about, pray for, sing about and talk about the return of Jesus, we might be the way God can work in someone else’s life to help them come to true faith in Him.

Appendage:
At this point you may have a question for me, knowing that I believe the scripture teaches that the rapture will be taking place sometime during the second half of the last 7 years. You might be wondering how I can think that the return of Jesus Christ could happen at any minute. I mean, how could the return of the Lord be imminent (any minute) if there are still things which need to happen before the rapture?

Good question. I do think the return of Jesus could happen this morning, or this afternoon, or tonight. I think the return of Jesus Christ is a series of events which begin as the Last Seven Years begins, and ends with His return on a white horse with all of us behind him on our white horses. I think His return is a seven-year event. The rapture happens somewhere within that seven years. When I was first a believer in Christ I thought the rapture would be the first event we would be
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

looking for to signal His return - but now I am convinced scripture teaches the rapture will happen sometime during His return, not at the beginning.

But that doesn’t mean I don’t live in minute-by-minute anticipation of the moment when the LORD will say “now” – and the seven years will begin. At any time the Lord of all the universe will click the stopwatch, and the 7-year-countdown to seeing His face will commence.

May be morning…may be noon…..

Chapter 3:1-6
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1) Jesus describes Himself as holding some things…what are they?

2. If Someone can hold the Holy Spirit in His hand, what does that tell you about Him? Are there any secrets from this very powerful Being?

3. (:1) This church, Sardis, has a reputation of being alive – but what is the real story about them?

4. If a person is dead physically, what does that mean?

5. If a person is dead spiritually, what does that mean? (John 5:24)

6. So what does Jesus mean when He says this church is dead?

7. In verse 2, Jesus tells this church to:
   c. “wake up” (NIV)
   d. “wake up” (ESV)
   e. “be watchful” (KJV)
   Here are some other places in scripture where the Greek word translated “wake up” or “be watchful” is used: Look up these other
instances, and see if you can come to a conclusion about the meaning of this phrase in:

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8. (:2) So…even though this church is dead (full of unbelievers) Jesus is telling them to “be watchful”….something you would say to an alive person (a follower of Jesus), not a dead person (an unbeliever)…who is Jesus speaking to when He says “be watchful”?

9. (:2) Does Jesus expect this church to still get things done for Him? (Ephesians 2:10)

10. (:3) What will happen to this church if the true believers in it do not begin again to “watch”? What kind of people will be taken by surprise at Christ’s return? (I Thess. 5:4)

11. (:4&5) How does Jesus describe those who are true believers, and those who will become true believers?

**Opinion and Application Questions:**

12. Does your church have unbelievers in it?

13. What can you do about it?
There was a time many years ago when our little family was homeless. We had been working to start a church in Colorado, and no matter what we did, doors kept closing in our faces, support didn’t come from all the places we looked to, we encountered fierce opposition to our efforts from some in the community, our strength was down to next to nothing, and we finally admitted defeat. We left the little home we had rented, packed our 5 children and all of our worldly possessions in an about-to-be-repossessed van, and drove away from Colorado – headed for my Dad’s house in Indianapolis. We had nowhere else to go. It was December of 1978. We arrived Christmas Eve in a place we had never been before, with 5 small people looking to us for their survival – we were discouraged, afraid, and humiliated to be invading the home of my father because we were….homeless.
We were pitiful. But, looking back, we realize today that we carried some extremely valuable things with us. We had, of course, our family. And we also had, despite our discouragement, a sure knowledge that God was still God. We loved His Word just as much as ever – in fact, we clung to it as we limped across the country. And we knew that we loved Him – we just couldn’t figure out what He was doing.

I think of that trip to Indianapolis, and the way we felt during that time, when I think of the little church of Philadelphia – the church with “little strength”.

“To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What He opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.’” (Rev. 3:7)

Jesus presents Himself to this church as:
- holy
- true
- One Who holds the key of David
- What He opens no one can shut
- What He shuts no one can open

Most of those descriptions are pretty self-explanatory, but what is the “key of David”?

The explanation for this phrase comes, I think, from Isaiah 22: 22-25. The “Key of David” to Jews meant the inherited legal right to sit on the throne of Israel – the right to be king and to exercise the power that went with it…to make decisions…affect people’s lives.

In the Isaiah passage we are told of Eliakim, who inherited the legal right to the throne, and, even though he was an evil king, still had the power to pass on that legal right to another from the house of David. But Eliakim was carried off to Babylon as a prisoner, and the key of David was sort of “lost.” Even after the Jews’ return to Jerusalem 70 years later, no man was able to hold that throne again – until Jesus.

Here Jesus affirms that He was, and is, indeed, the inheritor of the right and power of the throne. The King had come. The King was coming.

If you combine that understanding with the rest of the things Jesus said about Himself in this verse, you get a picture of a very powerful King. The most powerful King in the universe.

“I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.” (3:8)
Even though this church had “little strength”, they still:

- Kept His Word
- Did not deny His name

Now this true and powerful King is speaking to his loyal subjects, the church at Philadelphia. They weren’t strong and powerful themselves, but they had continued to declare Him King, even when everyone else said He was dead, a joke, a thing of the past, a powerless myth.

They had kept thinking about and teaching and loving His Word. And they had been willing to speak His name.

In their minds, perhaps, it didn’t take a lot of strength to do those two things. Maybe they were thinking that even a person with their last breath could do that. I wonder if they weren’t feeling awful that they just weren’t changing their world all that much. They were loving His word and honoring His name, but not much was happening.

Apparently their faithfulness in what seemed little meant more to Him than they realized.

In the book Church History in Plain Language, Bruce Shelley tells about a letter written by a young mother in 1573. She and her husband were Anabaptists – wanting to follow the teachings of scripture even though they were greatly persecuted by the Catholic church. They had seen from the Bible that baptism was a sign to the world of the fact that a person had placed their faith in Christ. They had realized that the infant baptism they had received was not the same thing as the baptism of scripture, and they had gotten “re”-baptized, as believers, to mark their belief in Jesus. The official church of that time responded with executions.

The father had been executed already, and the mother, who had been allowed to give birth to her daughter first, was next. Here’s what she wrote to her brand-new baby girl: “My dearest child, the true love of God strengthen you in virtue, you who are yet so young, and whom I must leave in this wicked, evil, perverse world. Oh, that it had pleased the Lord that I might have brought you up, but it seems that it is not the Lord’s will...be not ashamed of us; it is the way which the prophets and the apostles went. Your dear father demonstrated with his blood that it is the genuine faith, and I also hope to attest the same...”

Little strength – just enough to keep His Word, and not deny His name.

“I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars...” (3:9a)
It looks like the loyal subjects of King Jesus in Philadelphia had been at the mercy of people calling themselves Jews (which should have meant they also were loyal subjects of the true King), who were in reality just liars, because they did not believe in the true King.

“— I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you. Since you have kept my commandment to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.” (3:9b-10)

What is the hope Jesus gives the church about this situation? Two things:

1. Someday those who said they were “loyal” citizens of Israel, but were not, would fall down and worship at the feet of Jesus (Philippians 2:9-11), and at the feet of the true believers (not because they are worshipping the believers, but because the true believers are standing right next to Christ as “every knee bows”), and they would finally recognize the love Jesus had had for these to whom they were so cruel.

2. Jesus is going to protect these true believers during the time of trial which will come upon the whole world. I’m pretty sure Jesus is referring here to the future Last Seven Years, when the wrath of anti-christ and the wrath of God are poured out on the world. The purpose of this future time of testing is going to be to see whether or not the people of the world believe…to refine the gold to the surface. Even the last horrible time of the wrath of God will be for the purpose of bringing people to repentance and faith.

Both of these “hopes” were promises of things yet to come, in fact, they were things which would not take place in the lifetime of the people in this church in Philadelphia. They were a promise to a future generation of “Philadelphians” – a future generation of true believers with little strength. Jesus would protect them during the trials which were to come…not based on their strength…but based on His.

“I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown.” (3:11)

This is not saying that anyone could take away the crown of life which God gives to the saved. They were not going to “lose their salvation” if they did not hold on. There are other crowns, ones which are rewards for acts of faith. These might be “taken” or “stolen” from them - if believers in Philadelphia quit actively living by faith.

“Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which
There was a local custom in Philadelphia of honoring a magistrate by placing a pillar in his name in one of the temples. Some day there will be such honor and safety and security for the believers in Jesus, even though now they may be considered the scum of the earth.

And also Jesus is making a promise here: there will come a day when I can openly declare you are mine. You may be ridiculed for a short time because people refuse to believe in me, but that won’t last forever. Someday everything will be known. Your security is by faith right now. Some day it will be by sight, too. Isaiah 44:2-5, Isaiah 43:5-7.

The very name of Jesus will be written on these believers and on all who come afterwards. A name that no one knows but Him. “His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.” (A description of Jesus returning in Revelation 19:12)

My name tells you who I am. If the name of Jesus is written on me, the most important thing about me is that I am His. I belong to the true King. No one can do anything to me which will take that away. He will not let them. Even if I face execution, nothing can change Who He is, or who I am. That is my strength when I have none of my own.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches.”

Chapter 3:7-13
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (7) Jesus presents Himself to this church as:
   - holy
   - true
   - One Who holds the key of David
   - What He opens no one can shut
   - What He shuts no one can open
   Most of those descriptions are pretty self-explanatory, but what is the “key of David”?
2. (:8) Even though they had “little strength”, what two things did they still do?
   1) ___________
   2) ___________

3. (:9a) Who is making life miserable for this church?

4. (:9b-10) What is the hope Jesus gives the church about this situation?

5. (:11) What “crown” could someone take away from these believers?

6. (:12a) Being a pillar in the temple of God…why would that be such a reward?

7. (:12b) Having the name of Jesus written on me…why would that be a reward?

**Opinion and Application Questions:**

8. Do you feel sometimes that you have “little strength”?

9. What from this passage strengthens you?
Chapter Eight
The Emperor’s New Clothes
(Laodicea)
Revelation 3:14-22

There once was an emperor who loved fine clothes more than anything. One day, two charlatans showed up in his kingdom, proclaiming that they made the finest clothes in the whole world. They said that they made the clothes of the finest material and of golden threads…and that the clothes were so magnificent no one could actually see them.

The emperor knew that, no matter what, he had to have some of these new, amazing clothes. The two so-called “weavers” made the clothes for the emperor, and then stood with him in front of a mirror as he tried them on. He did feel a little uncomfortable when he realized the clothes were not visible in the mirror,
but, after all, these were the finest clothes ever made – it didn’t matter if he
couldn’t see them, right?

A huge parade was planned for the emperor to show off his new clothes, and
as he was escorted through the town, all those who lined the parade route smiled
and waved and made loud comments about their wonderful, well-dressed
emperor. No one was willing to say that their emperor was, in fact, not clothed at
all…for that would be admitting that they weren’t able to appreciate the very
finest things in life, wouldn’t it?

A young lad finally exclaimed, “But…the emperor has no clothes on!” – and
the comment spread like wildfire through the celebration, until finally everyone
was whispering, “the emperor is naked!”. The emperor, not wishing to admit the
unthinkable, finished the parade, undressed, his chamberlains walking sedately
behind him, holding up his invisible train.

“To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘These are the
words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s
creation.’” (3:14)

How does Jesus describe Himself to this church?
  a. The Amen (meaning…the final word)
  b. The Faithful Witness (meaning…the One Who has always given
     unerring witness about Who God is)
  c. The Beginning of the Creation of God (meaning…the One Who
     began it all)

And what does that tell us about the message He is about to send to Laodicea?
Jesus is saying, “I started all of this, and I’ll finish it”. Sort of like Bill Cosby’s
old comedy routine where he told his disobedient children “I made you and I can
take you out!” Whoever is listening to this message from Jesus had better know
this – no sense in arguing. He knows what He’s talking about. No yeah, but’s!

“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you
were either one or the other!” (3:15)

What do you think Jesus meant when he said they were neither “cold” nor
“hot”? If you look ahead to the next verse, it becomes obvious that He is saying
they are not refreshing. They are not like a hot cup of coffee, bringing warmth
and relaxation, and they are not like a cold up of water, reviving the weary. They
are basically pretty useless and distasteful.

“So, because you are lukewarm – neither hot nor cold – I am
about to spit you out of my mouth.” (3:16)
He’s not exactly beating around the bush, is he? If they were offered to Him as a drink… He would spit them out.

“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.” (3:17)

For goodness sake! How have they gotten into this condition? They are like the emperor. They have so loved the things of this world, and so chased after more and more and more of what this world offers, that they finally have gotten to the place they believe they have it all. They have wealth. If they want something they simply have to go get it. They need nothing. And they don’t realize they are actually wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. They are parading around in their lives so proud of their great accomplishments, and not one of them is brave enough or innocent enough to tell the others – “You actually are a mess!”

Help! Any way out of this?

“I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so that you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.” (3:18)

This is the good news part of this message. There is a way out of this humiliating and degrading situation. Unlike Hans Christian Anderson’s emperor, this church does not have to finish the parade trying to pretend. They can put some clothes on. But there is a price to pay.

The LORD counsels them to come to Him for the real gold, the real clothes, and the eyesalve which will make them able to tell themselves the truth once again.

But it will cost. It must be bought. He tells them they must “buy” it.

Knowing that not one of us has anywhere near the wealth and power of God, what could we possibly bring to Him which would “buy” the real gold? The real clothes? The eyesalve?

I struggled with this verse many years ago. Ken and I were on a vacation with friends to the East coast. I remember it was fall, and the colors on the trees were breathtaking. As we drove through the landscape just north of Boston, this verse, Revelation 3:18, kept going through my mind, over and over and over again. Yes, I wanted the real gold. The real clothes. The eyesalve. And if I had the price to pay I would gladly pay it. But what was the price? What did I have which had
enough value that I could offer it to the God Who made the universe, in exchange for the things I saw I needed?

I was already a committed believer in Jesus Christ. I knew He was my Savior, and I knew I was going to be with Him in eternity. I knew He had given me everything I had – my home, my husband, my children, my dog, my health, my abilities. And I had fallen in love with all He had given me. I dearly loved my life.

As the Lord and I worked through the challenge this verse posed, I finally realized what I had which was valuable enough to purchase from Him the things I needed: Everything I had. All of it.

My home. My husband. My children. My dog. My health. My abilities. All the things He had given me – was I willing to give them all back to Him as the purchase price for the true wealth He had for me? Had my life become so dear to me that I loved it more than Him? Could I trust Him with the things He had entrusted to me?

It should have been an easy answer once I finally figured it out. But it wasn’t. I mulled it over for that whole trip. Knowing that of course I could and should give it all back to Him….and also knowing that it was a sacrifice I wasn’t prepared to make. Don’t get me wrong. I wasn’t thinking that if I made this decision some horrible things was going to happen and I would lose my family, my home, my things. But I did know that I would be saying - “if” I would lose it all, it would be OK, because it wasn’t mine anymore – I had used it as a purchase price to claim the true wealth and happiness that the LORD was offering.

By the end of that trip the decision had been made. Everything I valued in life was placed on the counter. I made the purchase. I “bought” from the LORD true wealth. The kind which would never turn out to be fake or less than I thought. The decision was agonizing. The relief was overwhelming. I hadn’t realized what I had become – A Christian who “was rich, had acquired wealth, and did not need a thing”…an emperor in invisible clothes.

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent.” (3:19)

If a parent tells Ken and I that they love their children too much to discipline them, do you know what that tells us? They don’t really love their children. When the Lord takes us to the woodshed, we know He loves us.

“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.” (3:20)
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

When a church, or an individual Christian, has become an “emperor with new clothes”, Jesus is on the outside. Maybe He is a part of life, but not the center of it. The promise in this verse is that when any of us hears the LORD knocking, we know He is on the outside, and we know we can invite Him to be on the inside - but we have to do the inviting. We have to open the door to Him. We can trust Him to come in and take over.

“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.” (3:21)

What does this overcomer receive? A place of honor, sitting next to the One Who made it all happen. When we are finally sitting there with Jesus, what do you think we will be feeling about all the “things” we gave up in order to be wrapped in His wealth and security?

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (3:22)

If you have been taken to the woodshed somewhere in chapters 2 and 3, you now have an ear to hear what the Holy Spirit has to say to you….and you will not believe the things waiting for you in chapters 4 thru 22!

Chapter 3:14-22
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:14) How does Jesus describe Himself to this church?
   a.
   b.
   c.

2. (:15) What do you think Jesus meant when he said they were neither “cold” nor “hot”?

3. (:16) How does Jesus feel about this “lukewarm” condition they are in?

4. (:17) How have they gotten into this condition?

5. (:18) How can they get out of this condition?
6. (:19) If they are feeling rebuked, what does that tell them about the way the LORD feels about them?

7. (:20) Where is Jesus in this church’s life?

8. (:21) What does the overcomer receive?

**Opinion and Application Questions**

9. (:22) Have you heard this message? Has it been for you?
### The Seven Churches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCH</th>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Promise</th>
<th>Good Things</th>
<th>Who He Is</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ephesus</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Smyrna</td>
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Chapter Nine

Ever Wonder Why You Were Created?

Revelation 4

When I was a little girl, I had more than one close brush with death. The first couple of events aren’t in my memory bank, I was just told about them.

I was born breach with the cord wrapped around my neck, and from what I hear, there was some doubt as to whether I would make it safely into the world.

A couple of months later, my 2-year-old big sister thought I was crying because I wanted some of her raisins, dropped them one by one down my open mouth, then took pity on me because I was choking, picked me up out of my bassinet (by the neck), and carried me to Mom.

And then when I was about 4 years old, our family had a gas heater which sprung a leak during naptime and nearly asphyxiated my Mom, my new baby
Are We There, Yet?
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

brother, my two sisters and myself. It seemed that it was only by a miracle we woke in time to realize what was happening and stagger out into the fresh air.

That same year I decided I could walk to my Nana’s house – a few blocks away and across a busy intersection. I didn’t tell anyone I was leaving because I wanted to surprise her. I picked flowers on the way for Nana…and was quite shocked when she was almost hysterical at the sight of me, alone, standing at her door.

Due, in part, to these family stories of my narrow escapes from an early death, I have always considered my very full and happy life a gift from God…a miracle. And, like most other people I know, I often wondered: “Why was I created? What is my purpose?” Chapter 4 of Revelation answered that question for me…

“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’” (4:1)

The “I” here in verse one is John. Still alone on Patmos, still in the spirit on the Lord’s Day, he looks up and sees a door open into heaven and hears that same trumpet-sounding voice he had heard in Chapter 1 (1:10&11). This time the voice invites him to enter through that open door into heaven in order to view the things which will happen in the future.

The church on earth has been readied for the Last Seven Years through the messages of chapters 2 and 3, and now we get to see, in Chapters 4 and 5, how heaven itself will be prepared for the end of time.

“At once I was in the spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.” (4:2)

He arrives in heaven “in the spirit” – meaning, I think, that he has actually gone to a real place – heaven – but he is not in his physical body. He is seeing and experiencing a real happening in a real place – but that happening is in the future, so he has to see it with his spirit, not with his real body, which cannot travel into the future.

The first thing he sees is a throne. And on it is One who is sitting. I’m picturing John, and I imagine that at first he has no idea what else is even in the vicinity of that throne. He is actually seeing God Himself, and a person certainly wouldn’t be noticing much else at that point. We will find out later in this chapter what else John sees. And we find out later in the book of Revelation (16:17) that this throne is actually in a temple in heaven. But for now nothing else can grab John’s attention. He is seeing God, for the 2nd time that day. The first time was when he saw his friend and King, Jesus, walking amongst the seven golden
candlesticks – God the Son. Now he sees God the Father sitting on a throne in heaven. Wait a few verses and he is going to see God the Holy Spirit, too. John probably understood the Trinity pretty well at that point.

“And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne.” (4:3)

What does John actually see? Some One sitting on a throne. Soft golden light..as if it is coming through a prism of precious stones. A Rainbow which looks like an emerald. This One on the throne is described by what surrounds Him. He is too awful, too frightening, too overwhelming to be actually seen. (Isaiah 6:5)

Lucy, in The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe, asks Mr. Beaver: [about Aslan] Lucy: “Is he... safe?” Mr. Beaver: “Safe? Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Of course he isn't safe... but... he's GOOD... He's the King.”

God… why am I even allowed to type His name? He allows me to do this so that I may make my little attempt to spread the news about Him. The news that He actually wants to know people, that He wants One-on-one relationships with His creation. He has provided a way this can happen. I groan inwardly at the thought that I will see Him some day…wanting to see Him…and yet, honestly, afraid.

“Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.

Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

‘Holy, holy, holy
is the LORD God Almighty
John starts to look around. He sees:

a. :4 Twenty-four chairs with twenty-four elders sitting on them. I will make a small attempt here to guess who I think these twenty-four are, just from their description. They have on white robes, which are described in Rev. 3:4 and 19:8 as belonging to people who have been made righteous by the blood of Christ. They also have golden crowns on their heads…only people who believe in Jesus Christ have been promised crowns…not angels or demons or animals.

But, they are present in heaven surrounding the throne before the seven seals have even begun to be opened on the scroll…meaning they are there, in bodies, before the Last Seven Years begins.

There are many who believe these twenty-four represent believers in Christ who have been raptured. But because I am very strongly convinced from many other passages in scripture that the rapture does not take place until well into the 7 last years, I have to come to another conclusion.

I think that these twenty-four are representatives of all people throughout all time who have and will come to faith in Jesus Christ. They represent all of believing mankind…past, present, and future. And as such, they surround the throne of Almighty God in this heavenly preparation for judgment, saying by their presence: “We agree with everything the LORD God is doing. We are 100% behind Him in every decision He is making here. Not one of us has any shred of a doubt that this must be done. We have no regrets. We resound with praise for Him.”

If this is, indeed, who the twenty-four are, then you and I as believers in Christ are represented by them, too. As they surround the throne they are our proxies. In this scene, we are not there yet to do this, so they declare in our stead that we are ready and willing for God to do what God will do. God is God. Does God need our agreement in order to accomplish His will? No, of course not. But He has it.

b. :5 The Holy Spirit is described here as seven lamps of fire. He is similarly described in Rev. 1:4 as “seven spirits” before His throne. And in Chapter 5:6 He is described as “seven horns and seven eyes”. He is light, He is power, He is omnipresent…He is present
with the Father, present with the Son, and yet present, also, everywhere else at all times.

c. :6a A sea of glass. Did you know there are two other places where this is seen in scripture? Check out Exodus 24:10 and Ezekiel 1:26. These are records of two other times when mere people have gotten a glimpse of this awesome God on the throne, and have also noticed a floor of blue – so clear you can actually see through it. I wonder if some day we will be able to stand in front of this throne and see what our world looks like from the top down?

d. :6b-8 And 4 beasts. They have eyes in the front of them and behind them. The have eyes under their wings. They look like lions, calves, men and eagles. I think they represent all of God’s creation (every animal, fish, man, woman, mountain, tree, and drop of water) – and they, like the twenty-four elders, are here surrounding God’s throne in order to add their words of agreement and unqualified approval to the rising swell of praise for God’s plan.

What is about to happen will be catastrophic to the earth. Mountains will dissolve. Islands will be moved. Animals will die. Rivers will be corrupted. Oceans will become thick as blood. But all of the creation of God is represented here by these four beasts – ready and more than willing to have their LORD bring about all this destruction – so that the created world can finally become what it was meant to be. It would be worth everything. Romans 8:20-22 tells us that the creation of God has been “groaning” up until the present day because of the frustration of not being able to be all that God intended it to be. This is about to come to an end, and the four beasts are there to shout their praise to the ends of the heavens.

All of these are before His throne by God’s choice and design. They are a glimpse of what life will be like someday. Each has a different purpose. Each has their own song to sing or part to play in order to make up the whole of what God has in mind.

And while John is seeing these things, he hears thunder, voices, rumblings, and unceasing singing of praises to God. I would say it is getting noisy in heaven. Excitement is building. Anticipation is thick. The storm is about to begin.

“Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and
worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

‘You are worthy, our Lord and God,
To receive glory and honor and power,
For you created all things,
And by your will they were created
And have their being.’” (4:9-11)

When those 4 beasts begin their chorus of praise, the twenty-four elders can’t help themselves. Yahoo!!! Take off that crown and cast it before the Lord – all the good works ever done by men were made for this moment. More praise to our God. More glory for Him.

So now we come to the answer to one of the favorite “sit-around-with friends-and-pontificate” questions of life. Why am I here? What is my purpose? Am I supposed to make a mark in the world, or just enjoy life? Should I bring more people into the world, or not? Should I follow my dreams, or take care of others? Should I live in a 3-bedroom ranch, or work harder, for the mansion on 12 acres?

Verse 11 answers the question. But the NIV doesn’t give you the full picture…The King James version says it best: “Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.”

All things were created for this reason: to bring pleasure to God. You and I were created to bring pleasure to God. To bring a smile to His face.

Revelation 4
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (4:1) Who is this happening to in verse 1? What is he told he will be seeing?

2. (4:2) What is the first thing he sees in heaven?

3. (4:3) Who does John see sitting on the throne…and what does He look like?
4. (4:4-8) List the things around this throne. Note the similarities and differences.
   d. :4
   e. :5
   f. :6a
   g. :6b-8

   How are these things similar?

   How are these things different?

5. (4:5 & 8) Is it quiet or noisy in heaven? What is John hearing?

6. (4:9-11) What happens when the 4 beasts begin to praise God?

   **Opinion and Application Questions:**
   7. (4:11) Why were you created? Are you doing it?
Chapter Ten

Heaven Can’t Wait

Revelation 5

Look at the cast of characters in this scene!

- SomeOne sitting on the throne
- A scroll
- A mighty angel
- John
- The 24 elders
- A lamb
- 4 living creatures
- Holy Spirit
- Over 100 million angels
- Every creature on earth

Big scene.

We open the scene still in the Throne Room. God the Father is sitting on the throne. Holding a scroll.
“Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals.” (5:1)

He is holding the scroll in His right hand. Is that significant? To me it says that John is seeing an actual personal being here. And that that Person has picked up an actual physical scroll, and is holding it in His actual physical hand.

A scroll was a document. Something which was written down on a piece of parchment, then rolled up, containing the words of one person, or an agreement between two people.

It was sealed with 7 seals. Typical of scrolls in that time, the seals would have all been on the outside of the rolled-up scroll. They would each have to be broken before the contents of the scroll could be opened and read.

A sealed scroll was most of the time a legal document showing ownership of something. The seals were applied after the document was finished, and were there to ensure that:

a. Only the owner of the document could see everything which was inside it. It was private.

b. No one would dispute its authenticity. It was powerful because no one could dispute what was in the document if it was based on the law. In other words, if the law says you can own a car in the United States, then the title you get when you buy your car proves that you own it, and no one can take it away from you, saying it’s theirs. The title has been recorded in a safe place, and the fact that you have the title, and it says you own the car, is the last word. It’s final.

So what was this scroll in verse 1, chapter 5? The title deed to our universe.

When did it come into being? When the earth was created. Look at Genesis 1:1. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” He made it. It was His. He had the Title Deed. The Title Deed would have described the world. It would have said what life was going to be like in the world. Ever wonder what the earth was supposed to be like before sin destroyed it…or what it will be like once Jesus returns to reign? This Title Deed describes it.

Then look at Genesis 1:28. God, Who owned the world, gave the world to Adam and Eve, the man and woman He had created. The Title Deed was given to Adam and Eve, with a stipulation. Look at Genesis 2:17: “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” If they disobeyed this command, they would have to die. The Title Deed was theirs as long as they lived. And they would live forever if they obeyed God.
And because God was not just playing around with them, not just tempting them with sin without really being serious about it, He held the Title Deed in His mighty hand and sealed it seven times, each seal spelling out what must happen if Adam and Eve ever gave up control of the world they had been given. If they ever did such a horrible thing, the seals indicated what price must be paid before the world could be redeemed.

Adam and Eve did the one thing God had told them not to do (Genesis 3:1-7). They broke the covenant with God. They ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They rebelled after listening to the words of Satan, who told them that God was lying - they would not die after all but would actually become just like God, therefore able to have all they wanted without having to obey His rules.

So now what? The world was God’s – but He had given it away. It was Adam and Eve’s as long as they lived, but now they weren’t going to live forever. I think Satan counted on the fact that God would have to kill these people, and counted on the fact that then the world would be up for grabs, not belonging to anyone, and he intended to grab! In the meantime, Adam and Eve had the legal right to the world, but had lost control. The one they had obeyed, satan, now had a way to get what he wanted. He didn’t have ownership…not yet….but definitely he had the power to find evil men on this earth who would do things his way, and thereby control the world.

Of course we know that God did figure out a way to rescue Adam and Eve. He promised that someday one of their “children”…who would come from them and inherit the world from them…would pay the necessary price to buy back the world they had lost. And all would be saved.

That child, Jesus, did pay that price on a cross 2,000 years ago, and defeated evil forever by rising from the dead. Then He went back to heaven to wait for the time when the Father would say that the Title Deed could be opened and things could be set in motion for the world to belong again to men who wholeheartedly served God.

Revelation Chapter Five – the time has come.

“And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?’ ” (5:2)

A search was being made for a man, a descendant of Adam and Eve, who was qualified to open the seals and take the rightful ownership of the world. This man had to be one who would not die. No sin. One who had not rebelled the way Adam and Eve had.

And none could be found. The world as John knew it, with death and divorce and pain and suffering and cruelty and sickness and accidents and abuse, would
go on just the way it was if no man could be found who was worthy to break the 
seals on that scroll and claim the world again.

“But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open 
the scroll or even look inside it.” (5:3)

Where did the angel look for this person? He looked in the heavens. On the 
earth. Under the earth. Every place a man could possibly be.

“I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to 
open the scroll or look inside.” (5:4)

Why was John crying? Didn’t he know that Jesus had paid the price for sin? 
Yes, of course he knew. But sometimes what you know doesn’t quite seem 
enough to help you through the times when it looks like things are falling apart. He needed help to see that of course Jesus had taken care of it. He needed a 
friend.

“Then one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep! See, the lion of 
the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to 
open the scroll and its seven seals.’ ” (5:5)

So one of the 24 elders tapped him on the shoulder and said, “John, I know 
you’ve seen the worst this life can give. I know you are on a prisoner island and things look grim, but you are giving up too soon. Look!”

“Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in 
the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and 
the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the 
seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth.” (5:6)

Who was the person worthy to take the scroll? Jesus. The lamb of God. He 
lived a perfect life, so He qualified to take this scroll. He was standing in the 
center of the scene at the throne. He looked like a slain lamb. And He also 
looked like an alive lamb. Ever seen an animal which had died which also is 
alive? You’re seeing it here.

He had seven horns, indicating the complete and perfect power he possessed. He was not only an alive, sinless man, but He also was powerful enough to conquer, if necessary, any who would fight Him for control of the world.

And He had seven eyes…which are the seven Spirits of God…in other words, He is not only the Lamb, Jesus, but He is also the Holy Spirit, and He is standing at the center of the throne. He is also God the Father. He is One - and He is Three - as He steps up to the throne and takes the scroll from the Father. Ever
seen anyone who is three people and one at the same time? You are seeing it here.

“He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne.” (5:7)

The Son walks up to the throne, and receives the scroll from the Father.

“And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.” (5:8)

Heaven goes crazy!!!! Praise and worship just explode, first in heaven, then on earth. The four living creatures and the 24 elders fall down in front of the Lamb. They are holding golden bowls full of incense, which are your prayers and mine.

Have you ever prayed and prayed and it seemed that nothing happened? Here are your prayers…right here in this scene. Stored up. Not lost. Not forgotten. Not used up. Accumulating through the centuries to finally be present at the day when the Lamb reaches out and takes the scroll. Remember what Jesus told us to pray? “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10) That prayer is going to be fulfilled now. The will of God is finally going to be fully done on earth, just as it is in heaven.

Every time you’ve prayed for Jesus to return; every time you’ve prayed for things to be as He always wanted them to be; every time you’ve prayed that a friend or loved one would know God; those prayers not only accomplished God’s will then, but here they are again. You and I and believers from the beginning of time are partnering with our God to take back the world.

Sometimes the word “saints” has been used to refer to special Christians who do amazing things. But that is not what is meant here. Saints are all those people who, from the beginning of time, have placed their faith in the One, True God. Whether they have done amazing things or just ordinary things. They have either believed Him when He said He would come some day to save them from sin. Or they have believed Him when He said that He had already come. Believers on both sides of the cross – before and after – are the saints.

“And they sang a new song:
‘You are worthy to take the scroll
And to open its seals,
Because you were slain,
And with your blood you purchased men
for God
From every tribe and language and
People and nation,
You have made them to be a kingdom and
Priests to serve our God,
And they will reign on the earth.' ”

Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering
thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand.
They encircled the throne and the living creatures and elders. In a
loud voice they sang:
‘Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain
To receive power and wealth and wisdom
And strength
And honor and glory and praise!’

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the
earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing:
‘To him who sits on the throne and to the
Lamb,
Be praise and honor and glory and power
For ever and for ever!’ ”
(5:9-13)

Three different groups break out in song. Who are they?

First, in verses 9-10, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders,
representing all of God’s created world and all people who ever have or ever will
put their faith in God, begin singing a new song. There have been times when I
have heard a song for the first time and I just know right away that I love it. It
speaks to me, sort of resonates with my personality. I think that’s how these four
living creatures and twenty four elders must have felt - only about a thousand
times more - singing a new song they have never sung before!

Then, in verses 11–12 angels begin singing! Ten thousand times ten thousand!
That’s 100 million! And in addition to that, thousands of thousands too! Did you
know there were that many angels?

Finally, in verse 13, from the earth below praise bursts forth from every
creature! All of God’s creation cannot keep silent! The long wait is over! The
scroll has been brought out! Soon the world will finally be what God intended it
to be! God’s creation will no longer be “groaning”, waiting for the peace of being
again in tune with Him.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

I have tried to picture what this moment will be like. Will every creature on earth make a “yelp” at the same time? Will dogs be howling? Will horses be dancing in the fields?

This moment happens just before the seals begin to be broken. Just before the Last Seven Years begins. If this happens during my lifetime, will I know that all of heaven has just erupted into craziness? I hope so.

“The four living creatures said: ‘Amen!’, and the elders fell down and worshipped.” (5:14)

Singing, shouting, falling down, millions of beings gathered together around the throne of God. The anticipation of this moment is culminating in one, urgent, undeniable fact:

Heaven Can’t Wait!

Revelation 5
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1) Who was holding the scroll?
   In what hand was he holding the scroll?
   How was the scroll sealed?

2. (:2) What was the angel looking for?

3. (:3) Where did the angel look for this person?

4. (:4) Why was John crying?

5. (:5) Who comforted John? And what was this person’s good news to John?

6. (:6) Who was the person worthy to take the scroll?
   Where was this person standing?
   What did this person look like?

7. (:7) From whom did he take the scroll?
8. (:8) What happens as soon as he takes the scroll?  
   What were the creatures and elders holding?  
   What are saints?

9. (:9-13) Three different groups break out in song…who are they?  
   a. :9-10  
   b. :11 – 12  
   c. :13

10. (:14) There is complete agreement in heaven and in all of God’s  
   creation about what?

**Opinion and Application Questions:**
11. What did you learn about God in this chapter?

12. What did you learn about Jesus in this chapter?

13. Is your sense of anticipation building?
Chapter Eleven
Believing is More Than Knowing

Revelation 6

Time to begin to reclaim the world…and look who is actively involved:

“I watched as the lamb opened one of the seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, ‘Come!’.”

(6:1)

The four living creatures, or beasts, who represent all of God’s creation are a part of the opening of the first four seals. They have been looking forward to this day for thousands of years. When each of these 4 beasts speaks the word “come”, they are willingly calling into action those demons who until now had been held back from doing horrible, evil things to those who live on the earth. Even though Satan has wanted to, never in history have evil powers been allowed to do these
things on a world-wide scale. But now, permission is granted. When Adam and Eve sinned, satan received the power to do these things, but only now is he allowed to execute that power. Even as the “prince of the power of the air” Satan has been forced to stay within the boundaries God has given him. But now all stops are out. This will be the final battle between the Lord and the angel who rebelled against Him. The winner of this battle will inherit the earth and all it contains. Satan’s full power is unleashed for this seven-year struggle. It begins with a rider on a white horse….

“I looked, and there before me was a white horse! Its rider held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest.” (6:2)

The colors of the horses are going to help us understand what John is seeing. A horse symbolized power of some sort, and a white horse indicated peace. So the white horse was a power for peace. Interesting, since we know that these are powers of evil being released here...

The rider on the white horse held a bow - as in bow and arrow. He has weapon power. This bow was going to be used to shoot, or “launch” something. And he was going to be given a crown (a symbol of authority). He doesn’t have authority when he first appears. He hasn’t earned authority. He is simply given it. And then he leaves the scene in heaven to descend into the earth and conquer. (Daniel 11:21 also describes this rider of the white horse: “…a contemptible person who has not been given the honor of royalty” - in other words – someone who gets authority, but not in the traditional way)

Putting our arms around this whole picture, we see a representative of evil, someone who will be respected because he has military power and has been given authority, who is going to launch peace and win control over many people because of that peace. He is the anti-christ. (“anti” doesn’t mean he is going to be a “bad” Christ…it means he is going to be “against” Christ. His goal is to make sure people do not worship Christ.)

He is going to be promoting peace, and he will have Satan’s power to do it, but it won’t be God’s peace. It won’t be the real peace that comes from knowing Jesus. It won’t be the peace that comes from knowing you are right with God. It won’t be the peace that comes when people act lovingly toward one another. It will be a false peace that will ultimately have to be paid for by the citizens of planet earth – the price will be denying Jesus Christ.

“When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, ‘Come!’ Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword.”
(6:3&4)

Again a horse, a red one – the color of war. The rider is carrying a large sword – the symbol of war.

Thus, next we have an evil power unleashed on the earth who wants to cause war - wants to cause men to kill each other - and has the power to make it happen. This rider begins to take peace from the earth, so we can assume a certain amount of time has passed since the first rider has brought peace to the earth.

Is this world-wide war? Does every country in the world join in? I don’t think so. I think the prophet Ezekiel describes this war as an attack on Israel after a time of peace so profound that Israel has let down all of her defenses. “You (the enemy of Israel) will say, ‘I will invade a land of unwalled villages; I will attack a peaceful and unsuspecting people – all of them living without walls and without gates or bars. I will plunder and loot and turn my hand against the resettled ruins and the people gathered from the nations, rich in livestock and goods, living in the center of the land.’ ” (Ezekiel 38:11-12)

How, then, is an attack on Israel such a major influence on the whole world? Even from today’s current events we know that unrest in Israel affects the entire globe. But why does it? Is it Politics? Religion? Economy?

None of the above. The real reason the entire world is affected by Israel is that God loves Israel. He loves the land. And He loves the people. And because of that, satan hates Israel. Israel is the battleground for control of the world. What happens in Israel always affects the whole world.

“When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse! Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a day’s wages, and three quarts of barley for a day’s wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine.’ ” (6:5&6)

Into a world which has tasted of peace, then been thrown into war again, comes a rider on a third horse. A black horse – representing suffering. The rider held scales in his hand for measuring something. Suffering is going to come into the world in the form of economic control because of food shortages. Some will have to work a whole day just for a loaf of bread. The ordinary guy in the street is going to starve.
But look at what is not touched by this. The oil and the wine. The food of the rich will not be affected. Those who have much will do just fine…those who have little will get worse and worse. The power of evil is now able to control the little guys…and reward the big guys who will do what evil tells them to do.

“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.” (6:7&8)

Just when you think things can’t get much worse, they do. The fourth seal is broken, and death, which has always been with us, is released to affect ¼ of the world! More war, more killing, famine, disease, and even the wild beasts of the earth (who up to now have been too afraid of mankind to attack for no reason) will make death an every-day event.

When a person dies without believing in Jesus Christ, he/she goes to Hades. It’s a place of punishment, the “holding cell” where all the unbelievers go – until they are some day brought before the Great White Throne (Rev. 20) and then cast forever into the Lake of Fire. Since Hades is following close behind Death on the pale horse, I think we can assume that death, famine, disease and the wild beasts of the earth are affecting the unbelieving population of the world. In other words, this seal is not describing the persecution and martyrdom of believers in Jesus. That comes next. This seal is affecting the whole world. Hades will receive most of those who die. Most of them will be unbelievers.

“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’ Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.” (6:9-11)

Wow! What has anti-christ been doing through all this? Probably boldly solving these world problems so that all will come to trust in his power and authority. What have the true believers in Jesus Christ been doing during all this? Recognizing what is happening. Beginning to tell everyone they possibly can about it. Reading the scriptures themselves to answer their own questions. Talking about what to expect next. Spreading the good news about Jesus – the only hope left to anyone alive on planet earth.
And what happens to the believers in Jesus when they do this? They die. They are persecuted and murdered. And we see many of them here, martyred, but safely gathered under the throne, being told to wait a little longer until the worst of times is over and those who will yet die have joined them and Jesus is ruling again. Not long. Only a short wait. Trust your God. He knows what He is doing.

You mean God is really going to let all of this happen, even to people who love Him and believe in Him? Why?

Because there are people alive in the world in these last days who would never hear about Jesus unless life on earth was allowed to get this bad. There are people who would never consider the claims of Christ unless someone died speaking them. God allows it in order to rescue the last remaining ones who would believe if only they could hear.

Do we see these martyrs again?

Yes – Look ahead to Revelation 20:4. “And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the Word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their forehead or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

They died because they wouldn’t worship anti-christ, but chose, instead, to tell the world about Jesus and teach His Word. They will live forever.

Matthew 24:9-28 describes this same time pictured by the 5th seal. (see the chart at the end of this lesson.) A look at this passage will confirm that the time of persecution and martyrdom, the 5th seal, takes place just after the middle of the Last Seven Years, after anti-christ enters the temple in Jerusalem and demands to be worshipped as God. That helps us place the first 4 seals, then, in the first 3 ½ years, and the 5th, 6th and 7th seals in the second 3 ½ years.

Which means this next seal, the 6th one, is opened sometime after anti-christ has taken over complete rule of the earth, sometime after intense persecution of believers has begun, sometime after it becomes necessary to wear the mark of the anti-christ on the hand or forehead in order to simply get daily food, and sometime after the 2 witnesses have begun preaching outside the temple in Jerusalem…

The Lord, from heaven, has watched as His faithful martyrs have chosen death rather than worship of anti-christ. And now anti-christ is about to begin to feel the earth shake as the Lord will allow no more…
“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.” (6:12-14)

Here are six things which happen when the 6th seal is opened:
1. (:12) Earthquake
2. (:12) Sun turned black
3. (:12) Moon turned blood red
4. (:13) Stars fall to the earth
5. (:14) Sky appears to roll up like a scroll
6. (:14) Every mountain, island, moves

“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?’ ” (6:15-17)

What will people do when these things happen? Run. Try to hide. Pray to the rocks to protect them. They know. Somehow they know this is coming from God and the Lamb. In fact, they seem to know that God is sitting on a throne and the Lamb is ready to release His wrath.

So here’s a question: If this terrible earthquake were to happen today, how many people do you think would realize it was the One sitting on the throne and the Lamb who were involved in it? How many people do you think would understand that the next thing to happen would be the wrath of the Lamb? The Kings, generals, slaves, rich, mighty…how do they know this?

Here’s what I think: they have heard the testimony of those who believed in Jesus. They have watched them declare their love for Him just before their heads were chopped off. They have heard from the mouths of martyrs what each seal was going to bring. There is no way to be alive in the world at this time and not know what God is doing.

Wow! So, does everyone believe at that point? You’d think so, wouldn’t you? But they don’t. They call on the mountains and the rocks to hide them from God, but they do not call on God to forgive them. They do not cry out for the true God of all the world to save them. They do not want to confess that they are sinners and in need of a Savior. They know Who is doing this, but…..

Believing is more than knowing
Appendage to Revelation 6:

Another scripture passage which describes these very same events is Matthew 24:3-30. The following chart shows how the two passages line up side-by-side to show the sequence of the 6 seals. (the Matthew passage uses many more verses than the Revelation passage to describe the 5th seal – the time of persecution and martyrdom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seal</th>
<th>Verses in Revelation 6 which describe this:</th>
<th>Verses in Matthew 24:3-30 which describe this:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Seal: Anti-Christ appears, brings peace</td>
<td>:1&amp;2</td>
<td>:3-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Seal: War &amp; Killing</td>
<td>:3&amp;4</td>
<td>:6&amp;7a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Seal: Famine</td>
<td>:5&amp;6</td>
<td>:7b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Seal: Disease (pestilence) &amp; Death</td>
<td>:7&amp;8</td>
<td>:7b-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Seal: Martyrdom</td>
<td>:9-11</td>
<td>:9-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Seal: Earthquake, sun darkened, moon like blood, people realize this is God doing this</td>
<td>:12-17</td>
<td>:29-30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter 6 – Believing is
More Than Knowing - Questions

1. (:1) Who told the rider on the white horse to “come”?

2. (:2) What was the rider on the white horse holding…and what was he given?

3. (:3&4) What did the rider of the red horse have the power to do to the earth?

4. (:5&6) What was the rider of the black horse holding in his hand? What kind of damage was he going to be allowed to do?

5. (:7&8) How much of the earth will be affected by the rider of the 4th horse?

6. (:9-11) How is the 5th seal different from the first four?
7. (:12-14) List 6 things which happen when the 6th seal is opened:
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
   5.
   6.

8. (:15-17) What will people do when these things happen?

9. (:16-17) Who did people think was causing these things to happen?

Opinion and Application Questions:

10. Why do people automatically assume it is God they should fear when these disasters happen?
Chapter Twelve

The Ninety and Nine

Revelation 7

"What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?" Matthew 18:12

Six seals have been broken. Believers have been unbelievably pressed on every side, chased, tortured and slaughtered. A great earthquake has alerted the whole world to the presence of The Father and The Son. And now, just before the wrath of Almighty God justifiably descends on this world, in an instant of time, He sets events in place to reach out, one last time, to rescue the sheep that wandered away.

It is the nature of our awesome Lord to go find the one who has wandered away. He has every right to leave that one behind, to say “Fine. You didn’t want me all these years - face your consequences!”

In fact…He had every right to have thrown up His hands in disgust and left all of us wandering around in the wilderness of our own sinful mess. But He didn’t. He came to earth as a helpless baby. He chose righteousness over sin every time. He gently told us Who He was. He bowed His head in submission and gave His life. He, by His own power, defeated death and still lives today. And patiently
He has waited for nearly 2,000 years to give each of us our chance to be rescued from our sin, to hear about Him and believe in Him.

You see? It is the nature of our God to scoop up the rebellious little run-away, and tenderly lead him back home, no matter how long it takes.

Who is the run-away? What does that have to do with chapter 7?

From this point on in the book of Revelation, it is going to be important to think about John – and his vantage point. Some of the things we are shown in the next few chapters are in heaven. Some of them are on earth. In some places John is still in heaven, looking down at earth…and then sometimes he is on earth, viewing things from there.

As you look at verses 1 and 2 you notice that John is seeing something happening on earth…and that John appears to be somewhere outside of earth (he’s still in the throne room) viewing it.

“After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree.” (7:1)

The first thing John sees is four angels surrounding planet earth, spaced pretty equally from each other. They are purposely keeping something from happening. They’re protecting the ecology of the earth.

The six seals brought devastation to the people of the earth as they were opened, but they did not destroy the ecology of the earth. The trumpets which are to come will be different. They will touch the atmosphere, the ecosystems, the landscape.

But this destruction is being held back for just a few minutes.

“Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: ‘Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God.’” (7:2&3)

Now we see a 5th angel. What was he doing? Coming up into the heavens from the eastern part of the world. Where in the east? Israel? Other middle-eastern countries? China? We’re not told.
He is holding the seal of God and is giving orders to the four angels protecting the earth. He tells them to continue to protect until he has used the seal of God to mark 144,000 people on the earth.

These people are described as the “servants” of God...so they are believers in Jesus. And in verse 4 we see that they are from all the tribes of Israel, so they are Jews. There is every reason to think, too, because this scene involves the whole world, that these Jewish Christians are scattered throughout the earth.

“Then I heard the number of them that were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel.” (7:4)

John sees one hundred forty four thousand receive the mark of God. Twelve thousand from each of twelve tribes of Israel. Let’s picture this. When this happens, somewhere in the world there are twelve thousand believing Jews from each of the twelve tribes listed in verses 5-8. Like all the other believers in Jesus they have been persecuted for their faith in the previous few years. Perhaps some of them have come to faith because of the witness of other Christians, whether Jew or Gentile. They’ve been hiding. They have had to go without food because they would not take the mark of the anti-christ. They have faced death – probably seen many of their loved ones martyred. And they have told the story of Jesus as often as they could.

You probably wonder – Why are they being “sealed”? The context of these verses would lead us to assume the sealing had something to do with protecting them from future harm. (In chapter 9:4 we see that this is the case). And also it looks like this sealing was so that they would be set apart from the other believers, set apart for a purpose. They are going to be “left behind” when the church is raptured so they can go out to rescue the sheep which wandered away. From recent book and movie titles we might assume that being “left behind” would be a bad thing, but in this case it is a very good thing.

“From the tribe of Judah, 12,000 were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben, 12,000 from the tribe of Gad, 12,000 from the tribe of Asher, 12,000 from the tribe of Naphtali, 12,000 from the tribe of Manasseh, 12,000 from the tribe of Simeon, 12,000 from the tribe of Levi, 12,000 from the tribe of Issachar, 12,000 from the tribe of Zebulun, 12,000 from the tribe of Joseph, 12,000 from the tribe of Benjamin, 12,000” (7:5-8)
These are Jewish Christians who have survived through the first part of the Last Seven Years. They are going to stay behind to bear the message of Christ to the world which remains after the rapture, specifically to the Jews. They carry an age-old message: Your Messiah is coming again. He was here once and you missed Him. Don’t miss Him again.

Will they rejoin the raptured church in heaven at some point? We’ll save that question for chapter 14.

There is a little mystery about this list of twelve tribes. A couple of names are omitted – Dan and Ephraim. And, the tribe of Levi is there, even though the tribe of Levi usually is not mentioned in the list of twelve tribes. Curious? I’ve included some of my thoughts on this in a separate article – check out “Who’s Who?” in an appendage which follows this chapter.

“After this, I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

‘Salvation belongs to our God Who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb!’”

All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God,...” (7:9-11)

John is still in heaven. We know that because now what John is seeing is right in front of him, in the throne room in heaven (:11). He sees a multitude of people so large that they cannot be counted. Now that’s amazing...in chapter five he described over one hundred million angels around the throne...a huge number, but still, somebody had a count. I’m guessing, then, that this multitude was well over one hundred million.

We realize, as we read on, that these are believers in Jesus gathered here. They are from every nation, tribe, people and language which ever existed on the earth. When you realize that in 2005 there are over 6 billion people in the world, and that since the creation of this world there have been billions more, it is not hard to understand that many more than 100 million people who have at some time in history been true believers in Jesus, have been snatched out of the world (whether alive or dead) and been given white robes and palm branches, and begun to have the greatest praise celebration ever.
To me it seems pretty obvious that this is the rapture described in I Thessalonians 4:16&17: “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. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.”

They are clothed in white garments – showing us that they are pure and righteous in the eyes of God because of the shed blood of Christ. (Rev. 19:8). And they are holding palm branches. A symbol of the praise that is about to erupt from their mouths. Some have come out of the Great Tribulation on the earth. Some have come out of the grave. Some have come from the church age, some from the Old Testament age. Some believed in a Messiah who was to come, some believed in a Messiah who had already come. King David is there. Abraham. Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul. Did I say John? Wow! John could possibly have been standing there looking at himself. And if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are there, too. John, who wrote the book of Revelation in 100 AD, possibly saw you standing there, too. Sort of “Back to the Future”-ish, isn’t it?

The persecution on earth has been cut short by the sudden departure of the persecuted. (Matthew 24:22)

And the only believers in Jesus left on planet earth are:

- The 144,000 believing Jews who are sealed with God’s protection.
- The 2 witnesses who have been preaching out in front of the temple in Jerusalem since the middle of the Last Seven Years. They, too, have divine protection.

What does this great multitude say, and what happens as soon as they say it? Praise, praise, praise - for salvation. They are all there at that moment for one reason, and one reason only – Jesus Christ offered them the gift of salvation. It was of Him and from Him, and they can think of only that.

They can barely get one verse of salvation praise out of their mouths before the angels join in with praise of their own. Everything any being has ever valued is attributed to the One and Only Almighty God. Did any of us ever have any wisdom? Did we ever get any thanks? Or Honor? Did we ever feel that we had any power to accomplish anything? Or strength to endure?...it all belongs to God. It all came from Him. It all goes back to Him. He is all in all.

“Amen!
Praise and glory
And wisdom and thanks and honor

99
And power and strength  
Be to our God for ever and ever.  
Amen!” (7:12)

At that moment, before the throne in heaven, we understand. It was always all about God.

“Then one of the elders asked me, ‘These in white robes – who are they, and where did they come from?’ I answered, ‘Sir, you know.’ And he said, ‘These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” (7:13&14)

This is a rhetorical question from one of the twenty four elders (the kind you ask so that you can answer it yourself): “So, John, who do you think these people are? Where do you think they came from?”

John’s probably thinking: “I’m not sure…look at all those people….Do I recognize someone here…what has just happened…?”

So he answers: “Ummm….you tell me.”

Gladly, John. These are the ones who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. These are your past, present and future brothers and sisters. This is the bride of Christ.

“Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will spread his tent over them. Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (7:15-17)

It’s worth spending a minute thinking about what these verses tell us about the future this group faces - because their future is our future.

1. They will serve God day and night in His temple  
2. They will be living with God forever  
3. No hunger ever again  
4. No thirst ever again  
5. No unbearable heat ever again  
6. Jesus will always care for them – be their shepherd  
7. He will lead them to cool water  
8. God Himself will wipe every tear from their eyes.
I love verse 17 as it describes, in the manner of Psalm 23, how Jesus will gently care for us as a shepherd. We are the ninety and nine. We are safely in our home. No more sinful, painful world for us. But one of us is missing. One ran away and now is wandering, hurt, frightened, still down there in that sinful world.

The nation of Israel is the run-away sheep which needs to be found and tenderly brought home to the Lord. And there are even a few more gentiles who will believe, too. Even as the wrath of God begins, Jesus has made sure there is witness of the truth for them to respond to. They will make it safely home, but not until the world has fallen apart around them.

Revelation 7
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. Where is John standing when this scene begins…earth or heaven?

2. (:1) What were the 4 angels doing?

3. (:2&3) What was the 5th angel doing?

4. (:4) How many were sealed?

5. (:2-4) Why do you think they were sealed?

6. Who are these 144,000?

7. (:9-11) What does John see as soon as these are sealed? Is John still in heaven?

8. (:9-10) Where are these people from? How many are there? What are they doing? What are they wearing? Who are they?

9. (:10-12) What does this great multitude say, and what happens as soon as they say it?

10. (:13-14) Who talks to John, and what does he ask him?
11. (15-17) What are the 8 things these verses tell us about the future of this group of people?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

Opinion and Application Questions:

12. **Multiple Choice**: If you are alive when these events take place, will you be:

   - ☐ a part of the 144,000…
   - ☐ a part of the great multitude which is raptured away?
   - ☐ or one of those left to face the 7 trumpets?

13. Who is the “one” sheep the Lord seeks out once the ninety and nine are in a safe place?

**Appendage #1**

**Revelation 7 –**

**Q&A**: How do we know there is a “Rapture”? The term is not in the Bible.

*Answer:* True. The term “Rapture” is not found in the Bible. It is a word which describes an event talked about in scripture, but that event is never actually called “Rapture” in the Bible. Somebody thought that name up. But the event itself is not just “thought up”. It is actually going to take place, according to scripture.

*Where is the Rapture described in scripture?*

   - ☐ Matthew 24:31
   - ☐ I Corinthians 15:52, 53
   - ☐ I Thessalonians 4:13-18
   - ☐ Revelation 7:9-17

*So, what exactly is the Rapture? What is its purpose?*

The Rapture is when the Lord snatches up to heaven all who have believed in Jesus throughout all time. Those who have already died are caught up first, then those who are alive at the time join them. They all meet the Lord Jesus in the
Heavens, then gather together before the throne of God in heaven to sing praises, and then prepare with Him to return to earth.

Its purpose is to remove earthly believers from the earth before the time of God’s wrath, gather the entire family of God in heaven for a soon return with their Savior, and prepare the way for the nation of Israel to come to belief in their One and Only Messiah.

Appendage #2
Revelation 7
Q&A: But how do we know the Rapture will take place during the Last Seven Years? Couldn’t it take place before or after the Last Seven Years?

No, not before:

1. The Book of Revelation is written to prepare the church for the end times (Rev. 22:16)(Revelation chapters 2&3)…why prepare the church for something if the church will not even see or be a part of it?

2. The Rapture is a huge event for the church in end times. It seems logical that the Book of Revelation, written to the church, would include a description of the rapture, or a reference to it. I think that description is found in Revelation 7:9-17. If Revelation 7:9-17 is not a description of the rapture, then there is no description of, or reference to the rapture in the Book of Revelation.

3. Revelation 7: The passage in Revelation 7 shows the rapture happening within a sequence of events. First, 6 seals are broken (Revelation 6), then the 144,000 Jewish servants of God are sealed (Revelation 7:1-8), then the Rapture (Revelation 7:9-17), then the breaking of the 7th seal (Revelation 8:1), then the 7 trumpets are blown (Revelation 8:2 – 11:19), and then Jesus returns to the earth (Revelation 19).

   ▪ Verse 1 says “After these things”, indicating a sequence of events. Yes, there are places in Revelation which are out of sequence, but none of those places contains the phrase “after these things”. That phrase seems to be reserved for actual sequences of events. (Matthew 24:1-31, the words of Jesus, indicates the very same sequence of events)

   ▪ Verse 9 refers to a “great multitude” which “no man could number”, or “all nations, kindreds & tongues”. This huge group of believers in Jesus, coming from such a wide diversity of nations, etc., could only come from many
different ages…thousands of years-worth of believers…since there are nations, kindreds & tongues which have existed in the history of the world – but do not exist now.

- Verse 14 says this group came out of “great tribulation”. This doesn’t necessarily mean they came only from the “Tribulation”-time, or the Last Seven Years. It could also mean that all believers, from all times in history have endured great times of persecution, or tribulation. The word “tribulation” means “pressure”.
- Verse 14 definitely describes these people as believers in Jesus. If they don’t come from just the Last 7 Years, then they must be believers from all ages…which makes this the rapture.

4. The 144,000, sealed before this event (see Revelation 7:1-8) are obviously believing Jews from the church. – therefore, the church has to be around when this happens.

5. The purpose of the Seals (Revelation 6) is to awaken the whole world to the presence and purpose of God Almighty. The presence of the church on earth is necessary for this.

6. God has not promised believers would not go through terrible things or persecution – on the contrary, He has said over and over again that we will, and that He will lovingly be with us through it (Philippians 1:29, I Peter 3:15-17, Hebrews 11, Revelation 2:10). The fact that the church would have to suffer quite a bit if they stay for the first part of the Last Seven Years is not inconsistent with God’s love.

**No, not after:**

The very end of the Last Seven Years is a time when God pours out His wrath upon the earth. Christians are promised in I Thessalonians 5:9, I Thessalonians 1:10, Romans 5:9, and Revelation 3:10 that they will not have to go through the wrath of God. The rapture, therefore, cannot happen after the wrath of God. But the rapture, placed in the sequence of Revelation 6 & 7, is timed to remove most believers from the world just before His wrath begins. (Rev. 11:18, Rev. 6:16,17)
There is a little mystery about the list of 12 tribes in Revelation 7. A couple of names are omitted – Dan and Ephraim. And…the tribe of Levi is there…even though the tribe of Levi usually is not mentioned in the list of 12 tribes. Curious? Check this out below and see what you think:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The List of 12 tribes</th>
<th>In their original birth order (Genesis 29&amp;30 and Genesis 49)</th>
<th>As they gathered around the tabernacle (Numbers 2)</th>
<th>As they settled in the land of Canaan (Joshua 13-20)</th>
<th>When they are the 144,000 – (Revelation 7:5-9)</th>
<th>As they will someday settle in the Millennium (Ezekiel 48)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Reuben – in all lists</td>
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<td>Reuben</td>
<td>Reuben</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Simeon – in all lists</td>
<td>Simeon</td>
<td>Simeon</td>
<td>Simeon</td>
<td>Simeon</td>
<td>Simeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Levi – Never included when the list had to do with inheritance of the land</td>
<td>Levi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dan – absent from the 144,000.</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Naphtali – in all lists</td>
<td>Naphtali</td>
<td>Naphtali</td>
<td>Naphtali</td>
<td>Naphtali</td>
<td>Naphtali</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Gad – in all lists</td>
<td>Gad</td>
<td>Gad</td>
<td>Gad</td>
<td>Gad</td>
<td>Gad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Asher – in all lists</td>
<td>Asher</td>
<td>Asher</td>
<td>Asher</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Issachar – in all lists</td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11. Joseph – his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh split up his place as inheritors of land, but Joseph is included in the 144,000.</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Benjamin – in all lists</td>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>Benjamin</td>
<td>Benjamin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Ephraim – inherited Joseph’s right to land – but <strong>is not</strong> included in the 144,000.</td>
<td>Ephraim</td>
<td>Ephraim</td>
<td>Ephraim</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Manasseh – inherited Joseph’s right to land – and <strong>is</strong> included in the 144,000.</td>
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The fun thing about a table like this is that you can try to come to some conclusions...here are mine:

1. Levi does not inherit land; that’s why he is not included in any lists after Genesis. Levi was the priestly tribe. The fact that Levi is included in the list of the 144,000 tells us that the 144,000 didn’t have anything to do with occupying, inheriting, or ruling the future land of Israel. **The sole purpose of the 144,000 has to do with ministering during the Last Seven Years.** Ministering, by the way, as “priests” of Jesus Christ *(Rev. 5:9&10)*. In that sense, all the 144,000 were priests, including, of course, those from the tribe of Levi.
2. Levi is not included in any but the first list of the 12 tribes, so how did the 12 tribes stay the “12” tribes? (only 11, right?) Answer: When Joseph was replaced by his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, that subtracted one more tribe (12 tribes minus Levi and minus Joseph equals 10 tribes) and added two tribes (Ephraim and Manasseh) thus, leaving the number at 12.

3. Dan (and Ephraim – see below) is missing from the 144,000 list. The tribe of Dan is not represented in the 144,000, at the mid-point of the Last Seven Years, but is present less than 3 years later as the land of Israel is divided up amongst 12 tribes. From that I would have to conclude that there were not enough believing Jews from the tribe of Dan to make up the 12,000 necessary to be included in the 144,000. I also conclude that the tribe of Dan is not non-existent at that point, because they are there to inherit land only 3 years later, after the Lord returns and the land is divided up amongst the tribes of Israel. So, there are Jews from the tribe of Dan alive in the world at the time of the rapture – just not enough Danites are believers in Jesus to get to be included in the 144,000.

4. The 144,000 are believing Jews before they are sealed, not after they are sealed. I come to that conclusion because Dan and Ephraim were left out of this list. Their pre-sealing salvation condition determined whether or not they would be in the list.

5. The 144,000 were actual, physical Jews, not just symbolically “people of faith”. If their Jewishness was only symbolic, then there would have been no reason to not list the tribe of Dan (or Ephraim – below).

4. The fact that the Lord is choosing 144,000 actual, physical Jews to minister during the last part of the Last Seven Years tells us that the Lord is once again dealing directly with His chosen nation, Israel.

5. After the initial “order of birth” (in Genesis) list above, Joseph was never included in other lists of the twelve tribes because his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh took his place. The plan was that all of Joseph’s descendants would receive their portion of land, not officially through Joseph, but instead through Ephraim & Manasseh.

6. However, Joseph is included in the 144,000 list. His son, Ephraim, is not. His son, Manasseh, is. The conclusion here could be that there were not enough believing Jews of the tribe of Ephraim to make up the required number of 12,000, either, but there were enough of Joseph’s descendants, whether they were of Manasseh or Ephraim, to make up the required 12,000.

Summary of the chart, then? The 144,000 are actual, physical Jews who, before they are sealed, are believing Christians. Their purpose is to stay behind
when the church is raptured, in order to be used of God to deal directly with the non-believing Jewish people left alive on earth after the rapture. They are all protected, and every one of them makes it safely through the first six trumpets of God’s wrath. They leave the earth before the 7th trumpet blows. (see Revelation 14)
Chapter Thirteen

“First, you have to get their attention”

Revelation 8 & 9

Remember the story about the farmer who cannot get his stubborn old mule to do what he wants it to do? He asks around and finds a friend who says he knows how to get the job done. The friend comes by the farm, finds a 2x4 in a nearby trash heap, and walks up to the mule.

He calmly looks the mule in the eye, then swings the 2x4 back and hits the mule squarely between the eyes. The old mule, stunned, falls to his knees.

The very alarmed farmer screams “What in the world do you think you are doing?”

The friend answers – “First, I had to get his attention.”
“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets” (8:1&2)

John’s still in heaven. What he is about to see at first will be right in front of him – near the throne. Later on, he will be looking at earth, as he sees what is happening there.

The Lamb opens the 7th seal and there is silence. Why is this seal so significant that it brings a ½ - hour hush to those assembled before the throne?

They have been celebrating their arrival – the gathered believers from all ages and the angels have been singing and praising and slapping each other on the back (my imagination here) – and now it is as if someone has just said “E.F. Hutton” – and the crowd takes a collective breath in…and doesn’t breathe again for 30 minutes!

Why? I think it is because the wrath of God is about to begin. Up to this point in the Last Seven Years the world has seen the wrath of Satan, the wrath of anti-christ, and the wrath of those who do not believe. But that has been nothing.

The angels have known all along that this day would come. They knew that their Holy and Almighty God had a justice side to Him that would emerge in time. They saw the justness of God themselves at the beginning of the creation when He condemned the fallen angel, Satan, and all those who followed him, to an eternity of punishment.

The angels have wondered, we are told, how the wrath of God could have waited so long. How it could have held back when the world nailed His Son to a cross? How could He have offered salvation to people who in no way deserved it? (“…even angels long to look into these things” I Peter 1:12b)

But now here it is. The moment the very Maker of the universe set in motion thousands of years before. It is time to let mankind know the fierceness of the Great and Mighty “I Am”. The Lion is going to roar.

“Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there
come peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.” (8:3-5)

Here we see again the prayers of the saints playing a part in the end times. Where have we seen them before? In chapter 5, remember? The twenty four elders and the four beasts surrounded the Lamb and sang praises to Him, just before the seven seals were opened. They were holding harps and golden vials full of the prayers of God’s people. So again, now, as the seven trumpets are about to be blown, and the wrath of God is about to begin, those who have had faith in Him throughout the centuries are taking part, as if to say, “We agree. This is what we have been praying for.” “…Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10)

We also see another earthquake. Where else have we seen an earthquake?

Just a little bit before this, as the 6th seal was opened, there was a monster earthquake on planet earth. (6:12-17) It shook the entire world, and men everywhere fled to some kind of shelter simply to survive. I imagine this next earthquake, just before the seven trumpets, gets everyone’s attention really fast. Devastating earthquakes are fresh on their minds.

At the opening of the 7th seal, seven angels blow seven trumpets. What happens at each?

“Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth. A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.” (8:6&7)

1) 8:6-7 Hail, fire and blood are dumped on the earth. One third of trees and grass is burned up.

“The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” (8:8&9)

2) 8:8-9 A huge burning “mountain” (a comet?) crashes into the ocean. One third of the ocean turns to blood.

“The third angel sounded his trumpet, and a great star, blazing like a torch, fell from the sky on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water – the name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter, and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.” (8:10&11)
3) 8:10-11 A “star” (or, again, comet?) plunges into the water supply – rivers and lakes – poisoning 1/3 of the earth’s drinkable water. Men die from drinking it.

“The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them turned dark. A third of the day was without light, and also a third of the night.” (8:12)

4) 8:12 Sun, moon and stars are darkened, giving 1/3 less light.

(After the first 4 trumpets a heavenly messenger flies through the air with an announcement:

“As I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying in midair call out in a loud voice: ‘Woe! Woe! Woe! To the inhabitants of the earth, because of the trumpet blasts about to be sounded by the other three angels!’ ”

(8:13)

His announcement? Each of the next 3 trumpet blasts is going to be a “woe” (warning):

- Blast #5 will call forth 5 months of suffering from scorpion-like stings (9:12 confirms that this is the first “woe”).
- Blast #6 will release a terrifying army, and allow the death of 2 prophets of God (11:14 confirms that this is the second “woe”).
- Blast #7 will bring forth storm damage, earthquake, and mammoth hail damage. (The last “woe”)

And why does the angel in 8:13 need to give such an additional warning about the 3 trumpet blasts yet to come? **Because the awful things happening in the first 4 trumpet blasts don’t seem to have gotten anyone’s attention!**

“The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads. They were not given
power to kill them, but only to torture them for five months. And the agony they suffered was like that of the sting of a scorpion when it strikes a man. During those days men will seek death, but will not find it; they will long to die, but death will elude them.

The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. Their hair was like women’s hair, and their teeth were like lions’ teeth. They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle. They had tails and stings like scorpions and in their tails they had power to torment people for five months. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.” (9:1-11)

5) 9:1-11 Horrible insect-like-things come up out of the ground, having stings like scorpions. They torture men for 5 months, with one exception: they do not touch those with God’s seal. (the 144,000)

“The sixth angel sounded his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns of the golden altar that is before God. It said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.’ And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill a third of mankind. The number of the mounted troops was two hundred million. I heard their number.

The horses and the riders I saw in my vision looked like this: Their breastplates were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow as sulfur. The heads of the horses resembled the heads of lions, and out of their mouths came fire, smoke and sulfur. A third of mankind was killed by the three plagues of fire, smoke and sulfur that came out of their mouths. The power of the horses was in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails were like snakes, having heads with which they inflict injury.” (9:13-19)

6) 9:13-11:14 First a huge weird army kills 1/3 of all the people on earth. Then the 2 witnesses who have been testifying in Jerusalem are killed by anti-christ. (we’ll see that in chapter 11)

The seventh trumpet will be blown at the end of chapter 11.
What similarities do you notice in the first 4 trumpet blasts?
- They do not produce a lot of deaths
- They do produce a lot of misery
- They specifically affect the ecology of the earth
- Everything is diminished by 1/3
- They are quick
- They are attention-getting
- They would produce growing fear
- They possibly would not directly affect all people

What similarities do you notice in trumpets 5 and 6?
- Greatly increased suffering
- Prolonged suffering
- They take time
- Would have produced great fear
- Evil angels are employed
- They seem to affect all people on earth

The point? It seems like the first six trumpet blasts get more and more demanding, almost louder and louder, PAY ATTENTION!!! Here’s why:

“The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood – idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.” (9:20&21)

How incredibly sad. By the time almost all of the horrifying events of the first six trumpets have been set loose on the earth (the two witnesses have not been killed yet, but everything else has happened), still there is no repentance to be found. Men cling to their sin. They stubbornly will not let go of their wrong ideas. They are flying headlong into eternal destruction and they cannot release their grip on the things they think they love, the sin which has brought them only temporary pleasure.

If there were no chapters 10 or 11 it would be understandable. The Lord has certainly given every person in the world ample time and ability to turn in faith to Him. If we would just skip right here to chapter 15 and begin the seven bowls of God’s wrath, we would say that God is just and has a right to do what He is going to do.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

But there is a chapter 10. And there is a chapter 11. And not one of us deserves the grace of God which will be poured out in them.

During this whole time of the trumpets the two witnesses have been proclaiming the Good News in Jerusalem and the 144,000 have been bearing the message of Christ to the world. How do you think they feel as they see the results of the 6th trumpet, and still, no repentance on planet earth?

I can only say that if it were me, I’d be discouraged. But, then, these amazing servants of God know the rest of the story (so do I, come to think of it).

Now that the Lord has gotten the world’s attention… and specifically the attention of the nation he chose so very long ago…..

Revelation 8&9
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. Where is John when Chapter 8 begins?

2. (:1&2) What happened for ½ hour after the 7th seal was opened? Why?

3. (:3-5) Here we see again the prayers of the saints playing a part in the end times. Where have we seen them before?

4. (:5) An earthquake. Where else have we seen an earthquake?

5. At the opening of the 7th seal, 7 angels blow 7 trumpets. What happens at each?
   1) 8:6-7
   2) 8:8-9
   3) 8:10-11
   4) 8:12
   5) 9:1-11
   6) 9:13-11:14
   7) 11:15-19

6. What similarities do you notice in the first 4 trumpet blasts?

7. What similarities do you notice in trumpets 5 and 6?
8. (8:13) An angel announces that there are going to be 3 “woes”…what are they?

9. (9:20-21) What attitude prevails on the earth at this time?

Opinion and Application Questions:

10. During the whole time of the trumpets the 2 witnesses are proclaiming the Good News in Jerusalem and the 144,000 are bearing the message of Christ to the world. How do you think they feel as they see the results of the 6th trumpet…and still, no repentance on planet earth?

11. How do you feel when you witness to someone and they do not respond?
Chapter Fourteen

You Are What You Eat

Revelation 10

The end of Revelation 9 was a cliff-hanger. A sixth trumpet had been blown and a huge army was released into the world. That army, taking possibly about a year, killed 1/3 of the world’s population.

We’ll have to wait until Chapter 11 to find out what happens after this army does its worst.

Chapter 10 is going to bring us “up to speed”, as if God sort of pushed the pause button while He gives us the background of three more things which happen before this 6th trumpet time is over.
"Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven..."  
(10:1a)

John is now definitely on earth, looking up to heaven. Up until now he has seen things which are happening on earth, and he has seen things which are happening in heaven…but he has seen those things from the vantage point of heaven. Now he is on earth. We see that John, for this chapter and the first part of chapter 11, is actually a part of the events taking place on earth during the Last Seven years.

The first seven verses of this chapter raise three questions: The first is: **Who is this Angel?** Read through the following verses, and then let’s make a list of 8 things we notice about this angel, then I’ll tell you my guess about who he is:

“...He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun, and his legs were like fiery pillars. He was holding a little scroll, which lay open in his hand. He planted his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and he gave a loud shout like the roar of a lion. When he shouted the voices of the seven thunders spoke. And when the seven thunders spoke, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Seal up what the seven thunders have said and do not write it down.' Then the angel I had seen standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven. And he swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created the heavens and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it, and said, 'There will be no more delay! But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.'”(10:1-7)

There are eight things we notice about this angel:
1. (:1) Robed in a cloud
2. (:1) Rainbow around Him
3. (:1) Face like the sun
4. (:1) Legs like fiery pillars
5. (:2) Holding a little scroll
6. (:2) He descends and stands on earth
7. (:3) His shout sounds like a lion’s roar
8. (:6) He takes an oath in the name of Jesus, Almighty God

Until you get to verse 6 it seems that this must be Jesus/God Himself who is appearing to John. This “angel”, or “messenger”, is described in all the same ways we have seen Jesus described earlier in the book of Revelation:
Jesus is robed in a cloud in 1:7
Jesus/God has a rainbow about Him in 4:3
Jesus has a face like the sun in 1:16
Jesus has legs like fiery pillars in 1:15
Jesus holds a scroll in 5:7
Jesus has been on earth before (Matthew, Mark, Luke & John)
Jesus is the Lion of Judah (5:5)

But then you see that in verse 6 the angel makes a strong proclamation, in the form of an oath. The oath is taken in the name of Jesus. Hmmm… Would Jesus take an oath in His own name? Yes, I think He would, because we have record that God has done that before. In Psalm 110:4 the Lord takes an oath affirming that Jesus will be a priest. Hebrews chapter 7:20–22 confirms that God did indeed, make an oath in His own name. I guess I’ve concluded that this “angel” is Jesus. But no matter what you have concluded, perhaps it doesn’t matter whether or not we know who this is. This we do know: this heavenly being has a specific message for John, and wants John to know that it comes privately from Jesus to John.

Here’s the second question we might have about these verses: Why can’t we know what the seven thunders uttered?

Apparently John needed to know what the seven thunders said, but we don’t. There are things about God we simply won’t know here in this life. There are things about God’s plans which He doesn’t reveal to us. But He did want John to know.

What possible good would it have been to reveal only to John, a man who lived and died in 90 A.D., something about a future event which would happen long after he was dead? Surely we would be the ones who would need to know this, because we, or some future readers of Revelation, might actually be around when this happens, right?

I personally think the answer to the above question is that John was allowed to hear something which would happen during the Last Seven Years because John was going to be there during the Last Seven Years. I think it’s possible the things John heard from the seven thunders would be someday a confirmation to him that it was time to begin doing something.

Are you scratching your head at what I just said? I’ll try to explain it more in just a few paragraphs. Keep reading.

And here’s a third question about these first 7 verses: What is the “mystery” of God which is completed at the blowing of the 7th trumpet?
When the word “mystery” is used in scripture it is not referring to something God is trying to hide from us. It refers to something which just simply can’t be completely understood until all the facts are in.

In Old Testament times it was a “mystery” when the promised Messiah would come. There were lots of clues, but the total picture didn’t become clear until Jesus was on earth and showed Who He was.

Also in Old Testament times it was a “mystery” that someday the total body of believers would include not just Jews, but Gentiles, too. Again, there were clues, but the whole picture was not clear until the Gentiles began believing in the Jewish Messiah and it was evident that Jews and Gentiles would make up the church.

There’s another Old Testament “mystery” – the one I think John is being told about here. Over and over again in the Old Testament the Jewish people were told that a time would come when the Jewish nation would come, as one body of people, to faith in their Messiah. Zechariah describes this time in Zechariah 12:10-13:1. He describes a nearly unbearable time of grief as the whole nation will realize they missed the coming of their Messiah the first time He came. And then he shows a time of incredible joy as they put their faith in Him, and are given new, soft hearts of love for their God, Jesus. (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

John is being told that that time (the faith time for Israel), a “mystery” for so long, is very close once the world is in the grip of the 6th trumpet. To me the words of 10:7, “…when the 7th angel is about to sound his trumpet…”, give the picture of that 7th angel, about to put the trumpet to his lips…then pausing as a whole nation of people falls to their knees before their God.

“Then the voice that I heard from heaven spoke to me once more: ‘Go, take the scroll that lies open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land.’ So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, ‘Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.’ I took the little scroll from the angel’s hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour. Then I was told, ‘You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages and kings.’ ” (10:8-11)

John is told to take the little scroll the angel is holding, and eat it. In other words, to read it, understand it, digest it, and be ready to communicate it. The Lord has a message for John to give to others. And this message needs to be communicated at a specific time during the Last Seven Years.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

I personally think this passage is telling us that John will be one of the two witnesses we will see described in Revelation 11. I think he and one other person of God’s choice will suddenly appear on planet earth about half-way through the Last Seven Years, will park themselves in Jerusalem, near the new Jewish temple, and will preach the message of the little scroll for 3 and ½ years. We’ll see in Chapter 11 what happens to John and the other witness during that 3 and ½ years...but here, in chapter 10, I think we see the Lord letting John know that he will be taking part in these events he has up till now just been observing and recording. I think that’s why John hears the seven thunders, but does not need to communicate them to us. He is the one who will need to recognize the message of the seven thunders. When he hears those seven thunders someday, he will know it’s time to begin to preach the message of the little scroll.

That message...why is it both bitter and sweet? Why does it taste good as he eats it, but then turn his stomach sour?

Because it is the best flat-out fantastic news every to be broadcast on the earth. *Jesus is LORD and is returning!* (joyful news for those who believe in Him) But it has a bitter, bitter side to it - *Jesus is LORD, and is returning* (death, suffering, and judgment for those who choose not to believe). John is to shout to the whole world the long-awaited news about the return of the God of sweet love and bitter wrath. He will be delivering this message some day to people, nations, languages and Kings.

A lonely prisoner on an island, separated from the ministry and the churches he loved, is being told that there would come a day when all the world would hear his final message.

How can we apply this chapter today? The message John was given was the most important thing in his life. He consumed it. He lived it. He suffered for it.

You and I have been given a message, too. It’s the story of Jesus. He existed before the world began. He created the world. He entered our lonely, pathetic lives 2,000 years ago as a real flesh-and-blood man in order to live a perfect life, die on a cross, and rise from the dead, forever victorious over death and sin. When we have faith in Him, we become His children and will live with Him for eternity. And He is coming again someday to rule as King over all.

Have we “eaten” our message? Is it burning in our stomachs? Do we feel that we must communicate this message or we will miss the purpose of our lives? Have we learned it? Have we practiced it? Have we suffered for it? What would keep us from communicating that message at least once every day?

If any of us are standing on the sidelines, telling ourselves that we can just “live” good lives in front of the world and that that will communicate the message, then we have not eaten it yet.
I urge you….eat it. We are what we eat.

“When your words came, I ate them, they were my joy and my heart’s delight.” (Jeremiah 15:16a)

Revelation 10
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (A little review) What is the first thing which happens when the 6th trumpet is blown? (look at chapter 9:13-19)

2. (10:1) Where is John now?

3. (10:1-7) Who is this Angel? List 8 things you notice about this angel, then take a guess:
   1)
   2)
   3)
   4)
   5)
   6)
   7)
   8)

4. (10:3-4) Why do you think we can’t know what the 7 thunders uttered? What does this tell you about God…and about God’s plans for us?

5. (10:5-7) What is the “mystery” of God which is completed at the blowing of the 7th trumpet?
6. (10:1, 8-10) What is the “little scroll”? Why is it both bitter and sweet?

7. Look back at all of Chapter 10, and try to determine three reasons this angel appeared to John.
   1)
   2)
   3)

Opinion and Application Questions:

8. Have you “eaten” the message God has given you? If so, in what way is it both bitter and sweet?
I’m writing this on New Year’s Day, and in the light of the book of Revelation, I have twelve New Year’s Resolutions to suggest:

1. **Learn a bunch of Praise Songs and hymns by heart.** The best way to do this is to attend regularly a great church where people love to sing. You’ll learn songs by heart just by singing them over and over again. Listen to a Christian radio station, or get some great praise CD’s. Try singing in the shower, or as you get up in the morning, without
instruments or tapes or CD’s. Get used to the sound of your own voice praising God. Someday “a-capella” may be our only choice.

2 Scripture by heart. If you know me very well, you know that this has become my great passion. I have begun memorizing whole books of the Bible, and the Word of God running through my head at all times of the day and night has forever changed my relationship with God. I can see that this will be increasingly more valuable in the Last Seven Years. It wouldn’t surprise me at all if Bibles were confiscated and destroyed at some point during those Last Seven Years.

3 Have a few games in your hip-pocket. If someday we don’t have movies to go to, or televisions to watch, or any other form of entertainment available to us, we are going to really value anyone who knows how to play games. Word games. Storytelling. Kickball. Hide and go Seek. Life will still be fun; we may just have to be more creative.

4 Live simply. I’m not suggesting that you move to the mountains and leave civilization. Just scale back a little. Get rid of the things you really don’t have to have.

5 Practice Giving. Do you know how much fun it is to give things to people? It’s honestly more fun than getting.

6 Get to know your gifts. When you became a believer in Jesus Christ you were given special gifts from God, gifts which He intended you to use for others. Maybe you can teach. Maybe you can preach. Or maybe you love to help other people accomplish their goals. Whatever gift you have been given, you are going to be a valuable part of some little body of believers, bringing to the table the things other people need to get through life. Find out now what your gifts are. Practice using them. Get good at it.

7 Get a reputation. So your neighbors and friends will come to you for help. This isn’t the time to be a secret Christian.

8 Learn good health habits – we all know about eat your fruits and vegetables, lower the fat, forget the extra salt, but here are my basic suggestions for living in the end times:
   • Identify – learn how to recognize symptoms
   • Isolate – retreat to your room so you won’t pass on your germs
   • Hydrate – drink a lot of water – help your liver keep your body cleansed.
   • First Aid – take a class on this – keep a kit at hand

9 Practice a plan of salvation. The Four Spiritual Laws. The Romans Road. The Bridge Diagram. It doesn’t matter which one, just get good at a way of explaining the story of Jesus. Practice telling other people how you came to faith in Christ. If we live in those Last Seven Years, we are not going to want to be shy about sharing our faith.

10 Practice hospitality. Entertain friends. Invite people to lunch. Have overnight guests even if all you have to offer is an air mattress. Keep lots of towels & pillows in the closet. Make a good cup of coffee/have some tea bags around/keep some bottles of Pepsi in the refrigerator. The point
is not to be the most lavish or amazing resort around - just keep your home clean and share what you have. You could be doing a lot of this.

11 **Be truthful.** This is pretty simple. Just tell yourself and others the truth. Be honest. Lying destroys relationships, and good relationships are going to be exactly what we need.

12 **Stockpile faith, not money.** Your checking account is worthless. Don’t give another thought to how much money you have saved up or how little money is in your wallet. Money isn’t going to get us through. It’s faith that will count. Faith is what you do when you believe what God has said. As you read your Bible, or listen to good teaching or preaching about the Bible, believe what you hear and act on it. That’s faith. Do it a lot. If we are the generation which sees the beginning of the Last Seven Years, we will have a stockpile of faith to meet the challenges which will come. Your practice of faith will make you the most valuable person around.

What do New Year’s Resolutions have to do with Revelation Chapter 11? Read on.

In Chapter 10, John just received a small book from a messenger sent from Jesus. Now John is told by this same angel to go and measure the temple in Jerusalem.

“I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, ‘Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshipers there.’ ” (11:1)

John is doing the measuring. Why would he be doing this? What is the significance of measuring something?

Let’s put it this way: If I would walk outside and begin measuring my neighbor’s yard, what would he think? My neighbor would probably at least come out and ask me what in the world I was doing. More likely, he would be mad. Why? Because measuring something indicates ownership.

So somehow John is “staking out God’s territory”. He is saying: “This piece of real estate is God’s. And the people worshipping here are also His.” When is John doing this? I think it’s at the beginning of the second half of the Last Seven Years. At this time in the Last Seven Years the anti-christ will ascend the steps of the temple and demand to be worshipped as God. We’re going to see that described in Revelation 13. But before he does that, John the Apostle is given the task of walking around the temple site and around the worshippers there and saying, in effect, “no matter what you do, anti-christ, this is God’s. These people are God’s. You cannot have them. You cannot rule for long.” I think John does this as he begins his ministry as one of the two witnesses.
Who are the people God is staking out there? Well, if this is happening, as I think it is, at the 3 ½-year-mark in the Last Seven Years, then the church is still on earth, so I guess it could be Christians who are worshipping there. Also, it’s very likely there are Jews worshipping there (as they do even today). Many of them will be Jews who have not yet believed in Jesus, but who will be part of that national day of faith we know will happen at the end of the Last Seven Years. Maybe the Lord is having John draw a line around them so that all the heavens will know those people are His, even though they have not yet come to their time of truth and faith.

But, no matter who they are, John is counting them. They belong to God.

“’But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months.’” (11:2)

The Old Testament temple grounds had not only a temple on them, but also several spacious courts where Jews could gather and view the activities of the temple. Apparently this temple which will exist in Revelation times is much the same. John is told not to measure the courts, for they will be full of gentiles (non-Jews). These would be gentiles who do not believe in Jesus and who will be attacking those who do believe in Him. The time had not yet come for the entire temple grounds to be declared set apart for God. John is simply staking out the temple building itself, the place where sacrifices were made, and a few people.

“’And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.’ These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.” (11:3-6)

No one knows for sure who these two witnesses will be. They are described in ways similar to the prophets of old. And some have thought they will be Elijah (II Kings 2:1-11) and Enoch (Genesis 5:21-24), two men from the Old Testament who never died. Others have thought they will be Elijah and Moses, for both of them had powerful, miraculous ministries during their lifetimes. Some have guessed that Elijah might be at least one of them, since his coming is predicted to occur before the Day of the LORD. (Malachi 4:5) And my guess, as you saw in my notes on Chapter 10, is that John the Apostle is one of them. I’m guessing Elijah is the other.
But these are all guesses. We really don’t have enough definitive scripture to say for sure. If the Lord begins this Last Seven Years during our lifetimes, we will see for ourselves - because their ministry will begin before the church is caught away.

How long is their ministry? 1,260 days. Or, in other words, 3 ½ years. Their ministry begins half-way through the Last Seven Years, and continues right up until the end of that seven years. If we are alive as the Last Seven Years begins, and if we are not martyred, then we will see on our televisions the answer to the question: “Who are the two witnesses?”

What do olive trees and candlesticks have to do with the ministry of the two Witnesses? Here’s a clue from the Old Testament: Zechariah 4 describes two Old Testament people as being two olive trees who are funneling the power of the Holy Spirit into the candlestick which is Israel – so that Israel can shine the truth of God to the world.

Thanks to Zechariah we can see that these two witnesses are the future two olive trees who are funneling the oil (power) of the Holy Spirit into the candlestick which is Israel. When these two witnesses begin their ministry, they are being heard by many believing Jews who are part of the church. During their ministry many of those believing Jews are raptured away, but 144,000 of them remain, and then the 2 witnesses minister to them, teaching them what to say and how to say it with God’s power. And then, just after the end of the ministry of the two witnesses, the nation of Israel, as dead as dead men’s bones (Ezekiel 37:1-14), comes to life (when they come to faith) – being infused with power from God. The two olive trees (the two witnesses) faithfully pour the oil of the Holy Spirit into the Candlestick (Israel) which has been nearly extinguished for over 2,000 years. And it burns brightly – once again shining the truth of God to the world.

Zechariah 4:6 says it all: “… *not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,* says the LORD Almighty.”

The ministry of the two witnesses will only succeed because of the power of the Holy Spirit. That’s the only way any ministry ever succeeds.

They’ll be pretty impressive. Fire will come out of their mouths and destroy anyone who tries to hurt them. The anti-christ will be ruling the world during this time, and he will definitely be frustrated at his failed attempts to stop them. When the two witnesses say “no rain”, there is no rain. They will be able to turn water into blood. And they will be able to strike any place on the earth with plagues. Disease, death, storms, tsunamis - anything they want to do they will be able to do.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

Until they are done with the job God has given them.

“Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the great city, which is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt, where also their LORD was crucified.” (11:7&8)

If I’m right, and the apostle John is one of these two witnesses, then this part of the vision of the future is not very fun for him to watch. They finish their fiery 3 ½ years and God then removes the protection they have had, and allows them to be killed.

Fair? No, not in my eyes. But my eyes aren’t the important ones. God’s are. And in His eyes it is necessary. As the two witnesses are murdered a total miracle takes place - a miracle necessary for God’s plan.

“For three and a half days men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.” (11:9-10)

People on earth will be partying as they realize these 2 men are finally gone. The anti-christ has finally been able to disable them. Life will get back to normal again….

“But after three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then the heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they went up to heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on. At that very hour there was a severe earthquake, and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and GAVE GLORY TO THE GOD OF HEAVEN (emphasis is mine).” (11:11-13)

I’m really sorry I won’t be on earth to see this.

1. The 2 dead bodies come alive
2. They jump to their feet
3. Everyone who sees this is terrified (duh)
4. A loud voice from heaven tells the 2 men to “come on up”.
5. They do
6. A huge earthquake in Jerusalem
7. The survivors begin praising God!
Up to this point there has been little repentance and belief (see Revelation 9:20&21). There has been no giving glory to God. Suddenly the resurrection of these two dead prophets of God sparks belief…faith…acceptance of the truth…this is the long-awaited salvation time for the nation of Israel. (Zechariah 12:10 – 13:1) The city of Jerusalem literally explodes with faith… and as the word spreads to the rest of the world…faith in Jesus Christ, for Jews and Gentiles alike, spreads like wildfire. (Zechariah 10:6-10) (Zechariah 8:20-23).

Amazing. The grace of God has extended to the surviving nation of Israel, who rejected and hated their Messiah. And it has been extended, too, to Gentiles who also have spent this Last Seven Years thinking anti-christ was the answer for their lives.


“The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon”
(11:14)

The mystery of God is completed. The 7th trumpet is next.

“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our LORD and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.’ And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying: ‘We give thanks to you, LORD God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great – and for destroying those who destroy the earth.’ Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm” (11:15-19)

a. First, many voices proclaim that the world has become the ___________ of Jesus.

b. Second, the 24 elders proclaim that Jesus has begun to reign as ___________.

c. Third, the temple in heaven is opened and the ___________ of the ___________ is seen.

d. Fourth, there is ___________, ___________ and peals of ___________.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

e. Fifth, an earthquake.
f. And Sixth, a great hailstorm.

Whew! Take a deep breath and think about where we are. It’s all over. Jesus is reigning. He’s on His way back to earth. As this 7th trumpet blows He declares Himself the Reigning King, the nation of Israel comes to belief in Him, and He terrifies His enemies by emptying seven bowls of His wrath on the world. (we’ll see the details of that in chapters 15-18). There’s more to be read about in the chapters to follow, but all of that is sort of “flash-backs” with fill-in-the-blank-spaces-type-information. As chapter 11 ends, it’s all over but the triumphant entry on the white horse.

Let’s take a minute now and ask ourselves: “How should all of this affect my life, right now?”

This is where the New Year’s Resolutions come in. I’ve made 12 of them because I’ve seen what the future may hold for me, and I’d like to be more prepared than I am.

I hope you will make some, too, wherever you are and whenever you are reading this – it sure seems like it is time to get ready…

Revelation 11
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1&2) Who is measuring?
2. (:1&2) If I would walk outside and begin measuring my neighbor’s yard, what would he think?
3. (:2) What was John not going to measure? Why?
4. (:3 – 6) The 2 Witnesses – who are they?
5. (:3) How long is their ministry?
6. (:4) What do olive trees and candlesticks have to do with the ministry of the 2 Witnesses? (see Zechariah 4…what verse from Zechariah 4 might be a good description of the ministry of the 2 Witnesses?)
7. (:5&6) What do these 2 Witnesses have power to do?
8. (:7&8) What will happen to them when they are finished with their ministry? How fair is that?

9. (:9&10) How will most of the people on earth feel about their deaths? Why?

10. (:11-13) What 7 things happened after they had been dead for 3 1/2 days?
   1) 
   2) 
   3) 
   4) 
   5) 
   6) 
   7) 

11. (:13) There is a group of people giving glory to God…how does this compare to what people have been doing up to this point? (9:20&21)

12. (:14) This verse tells us that the resurrection of these 2 Witnesses marks the end of the 6th trumpet…what is next?

13. (:15) When the 7th trumpet is sounded, many things happen.
   b. First, many voices proclaim that the world has become the _______ of Jesus.
   c. Second, the 24 elders proclaim that Jesus has begun to _________
   d. Third, the temple in heaven is opened and the _________ of the _________ is seen.
   e. Fourth, there is ________________, ___________, and peals of ____________.
   f. Fifth, an ________________.
   g. And Sixth, a great ________________.

**Opinion and Application Questions:**

14. What New Year’s Resolutions would you make in the light of the soon return of Jesus?
Chapter Sixteen
The Tech Crew

Revelation 12

There’s hardly anything I love more than a play or musical. When our kids were still at home, some of them participated in high school drama productions. “Bye, Bye Birdie”, “Little Shop of Horrors”, “Flowers for Algernon”, “Annie”, “West Side Story”. I loved sitting in the audience and getting carried away in the story as it unfolded in front of me. Occasionally I would help out backstage, moving props, pinning costumes, stumbling around in the dark, wearing black, and being (hopefully) unseen by the audience. Part of the “Tech Crew”.

While the audience was seeing actors on the stage in bright lights, the tech crew was furiously working in the shadows, preparing for next scene, cleaning up the last scene, or watching to see how things were going.

In Revelation we have seen an amazing parade of events on the stage of the future. Earthquakes, disease, comets falling from the sky, believers in Jesus being prepared and taking courage, people of the world laughing and celebrating when men of God are killed. It has been breathtaking.
But now, in Chapter 12, we are going to go backstage. It’s time to see what the “tech crew” has been doing.

“A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.” (Rev. 12:1&2)

John is shown a woman, shining like the sun, the moon under her feet, and wearing a crown of 12 stars. She’s pregnant, and is in labor, in pain, about to give birth.

Who is this? Look at Genesis 37:9-11, and then at Luke 2:1-10. At first glance you might think this is picturing Mary, the mother of Jesus. As you read further in Revelation 12 you see that this woman gives birth to the Son of God – Jesus. Again, it seems logical that this vision is of Mary. But then, as you read even further in Chapter 12, verses 6, 13 & 14, you realize that this woman will actually be playing a part in the Last Seven Years. She’ll be running and hiding from her enemy.

So this isn’t Mary. Instead, the woman John sees represents the nation of Israel. Jews, born of Abraham. The whole Jewish nation, like a woman great with child, was protected as they brought forth the Son of God. And they will run from their enemy in the Last Seven Years.

When Mary and Joseph were huddled in a stable, painfully giving birth to the Savior of the world, they were the culmination of many generations of Jews who knew their Savior was coming, and anxiously awaited his birth.

And when they were in that stable, I hope they didn’t have a clue about the hugeness of their enemy – and what he was preparing to do even as they wrapped their baby in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger…

“Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.” (Rev. 12:3&4)

John now sees a huge, red dragon with seven heads, and on one of those heads, ten horns. On each head there was a crown. This dragon is described as the one who was responsible for removing a third of the stars from the heavens.
This terrifying creature stands right in front of the woman who is giving birth, waiting to destroy the child she brings into the world.

Who is the dragon? There’s little room left for doubt once you read ahead to verse 9. He’s that old serpent who was in the Garden with Adam and Eve. He’s the devil, Satan. He’s the one whose goal it is to lead every human being away from the Lord, the one who rebelled against God after the creation of the world and incited a rebellion in heaven – with 1/3 of the angels – and then incited a rebellion on earth – with God’s two newly-created human beings.

He’s powerful, frightening, and evil. He fully believes he can defeat God. But he can’t.

“She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne.” (Rev. 12:5)

Why does the dragon fail in his plan? Because God merely has to say “no” and satan must step back. The woman gives birth to Jesus. He lives a perfect life. He dies on a cross (surely the dragon thought he had won at this point), and then He simply rises Himself up from the dead, and is caught up to heaven. The dragon isn’t an evil God, he’s just an evil angel, still under the authority of the One Who made him.

“The woman fled into the desert to a place prepared for her by God, where she might be taken care of for 1,260 days.” (Rev. 12:6)

The woman flees to the desert after her child is caught up to heaven. But when does that fleeing take place…how long after her child is caught up to heaven? Since we know this woman in John’s vision is actually the nation of Israel (not just Mary), then we can understand that this “fleeing” to the desert takes place many, many years after her child is caught up to heaven. Thousands of years, in fact. As you look ahead at verse 14 you see that she, Israel, flees into the desert about half-way through the Last Seven Years. She will be protected there for 3 ½ years.

Is this woman exclusively “believing Israel”? In other words, is this woman made up of only that group of Jews who are believers in Jesus (today we would call them Messianic Jews)? No, I don’t think so.

Remember, at the half-way mark in the Last Seven Years, the church is still on earth? They have gone through the same tragedies as everyone else as the first four seals were being opened on the scroll. The church at this time, as in all other generations since Pentecost, is made up of Gentiles and Jews who believe in Jesus. And, in addition to these Jews who are a part of the church at this point in
history, there are many, many other Jews on the earth, too. Jews who do not believe in Jesus.

The woman who is protected at the 3 ½ - year mark represents only Jews, that is true, but some of them are Jews who believe in Jesus, and some do not. The Lord is protecting them all because He still has promises to keep to the chosen children of Abraham – and He will protect them until He can do just that.

“And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven.” (Rev. 12:7&8)

Now, enter - the tech crew. While all the players are on the stage of the world, here’s what’s happening behind the curtains:

Michael, the arch-angel, is leading an army of angels in heaven – and they are fighting against an army of demons who used to be their partners in worship of God, but now are followers of the rebellious lover of evil, Satan.

Look at verse 8. It’s such a little phrase, but it totally describes the entire career of the evil angel: “…he was not strong enough…”. The dragon will some day take on God but he will never be strong enough to win. Never.

“The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.” (Rev. 12:9)

Up until this point (half-way through the Last Seven Years), Satan has made his home on earth, but has had “visiting rights” in heaven. (see Job 1:6-12 for an example). He still had the right to appear before God – accusing people before God.

But half-way through the Last Seven Years, Michael and his angels are able to wrestle him out of that right – and the devil knows he only has 3 ½ years before the Son of God returns to claim the earth – only 3 ½ years to defeat the Lord he rebelled against thousand of years before.

“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the
word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” (Rev. 12:10-11)

So…have you been thinking that the “tech crew” is made up of Michael and his angels? Are the angels the ones who do the behind the scenes work, keeping the drama going? Are they the “overcomers” who finally kick the devil out of heaven?

No. There’s no doubt they are the ones fighting in the heavens… but the “overcomers” who defeat the dragon are described as “not afraid to die”. Angels don’t die. They wouldn’t be afraid to die.

Who would be the ones who are “not afraid to die”? People. People who believe in Jesus Christ. People who know they might die if they go public with their belief in Jesus, and are afraid to die, but who bravely face death, anyway – knowing that they have a future with Jesus after death.

Who “overcomes” Satan and his evil angels? People. Believers in Jesus Christ. The church which is alive at the beginning of the Last Seven Years. The ones who were prepared in Chapters 2 and 3.

You, maybe. And me. The Tech Crew. How do they defeat the one who has been allowed to have power over all the world?

- By trusting in the blood of the lamb.
- By speaking out.
- And by being willing to die.

As believers on earth are trusting, speaking, and willingly facing death, Michael and all the angels in heaven are freed up to fight against the great and powerful red dragon, and he loses his footing in heaven, forced to retreat to earth.

“Therefore rejoice you heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has gone down to you! He is filled with fury because he knows that his time is short.” (Rev. 12:12)

Great time in heaven. But watch out earth (and all you courageous believers who are still there)!

The dragon is mad. He knows what God has decreed - that he only has 3 ½ more years to do his worst. He believes God means what He has said, but he certainly isn’t going to bow his knee to the Lord. He doesn’t believe God can accomplish what He has decreed. He’s going to fight…by attacking people on earth.
“When the dragon saw that he had been hurled to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child.” (Rev. 12:13)

First, the dragon attacks the Jews. It doesn’t matter to him whether or not they are believers in Jesus. Why? Because he is trying to destroy any Jew anywhere. He knows what God has promised. He knows God has said in His Word that Jesus will return to earth, and before His return the Jewish people will believe in Him, and be there to welcome Him back. He is going to throw every ounce of his power and hatred into the next 3 ½ years – so that God cannot keep that promise. His plan through the ages has been to destroy the Jews. He is determined to succeed now, before the return of the One Who can destroy him.

“The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times, and half a time, out of the serpent’s reach. Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth.” (Rev. 12:14-16)

God’s plan all along has been to protect the Jews. He protected them until they received the law under Moses. He protected them until they built their temple under Solomon. He protected them until they re-built their temple under Zerubbabel. He protected them until the True Temple of God, Jesus, actually arrived on planet earth as a baby. And He will continue to protect them until the Son of God returns to lay claim to His world, welcomed by that last generation of Jews - the sinful but pardoned and protected people He chose as His own thousands of years before.

“Then the dragon was enraged at the woman and went off to make war against the rest of her offspring – those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” (Rev. 12:17)

When the dragon sees that he cannot destroy the protected Jews, he turns in snarling anger to destroy any person anywhere who would dare to admit they serve Jesus Christ. He chooses a man sold out to evil to accomplish this task (we’ll meet him in Chapter 13), and persecution of the church begins here with a ferocity never seen before in history. The 5th seal (seen in Revelation 6), with martyrs under the throne, occurs some time after this persecution begins.

Meanwhile, silently, unapplauded, The Tech Crew is in the background, each one doing his part to bring the drama to its conclusion. Faithfully the believers in Jesus Christ obey their Lord, willing, even, to die, knowing that life is just around the corner
Revelation 12
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1&2) John sees a vision of a woman in the skies – describe her. Who do you think this is? (verse 6 will help you)

2. (:3&4) Now John sees something else in the heavens. Describe what he sees. Who do you think this is? (verse 9 will help)

3. (:5) What happens to the child the woman gives birth to? Why does the dragon fail in His plan?

4. (:6) When does the woman flee into the desert? How long will she be protected there? (verse 14 will help)

5. (:7&8) Who is fighting in heaven, and who wins?

6. (:9) What happens to the dragon and his followers when they lose the battle in heaven?


8. (:11) How did they defeat this great, powerful dragon?

9. (:12) When the dragon finds himself cast out on earth, how does he feel?
10. (:13) What does he do? Why would he do this?

11. (:14-16) Is the woman protected from the dragon? How?

12. (:17) When the dragon sees that he can’t destroy the woman, what does he do next?

Opinion and Application Questions:

13. What does the chapter tell you about your role on earth today?
Chapter Seventeen

How To Recognize the Bad Guys

Revelation 13

I don’t like scary movies. I’m always for the good guys, and that means I’m always afraid of the bad guys. It seems to me there’s enough fear in my life without paying money and sitting in one place for 2 hours in order to add a little more.

The scariest movie of all is the one where I can’t figure out who the bad guys are. You know what I mean….just when you think you can trust the character – Wow! – he’s the one who makes you jump in your seat!

So for all my fellow cowards, here’s a little heads-up - in Revelation 13 we see a foolproof way to spot the bad guys...

“And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name.” (Rev. 13:1)

Sound somewhat familiar? Haven’t we seen 7 heads and 10 crowns somewhere else? How does this beast compare to the dragon of Chapter 12? (look back at 12:3)
The Dragon of Revelation 12:3 | The Beast of Revelation 13:1
---|---
7 heads | 7 heads
10 horns | 10 horns
7 crowns on his heads | 10 crowns on his horns

The dragon of Rev. 12:3 is Satan. His seven heads with seven crowns represent the seven times in world history he controls the world. He has accomplished world control six times in the past, and he will get one more shot at it sometime in our future:
- Egypt
- Assyria
- Babylon
- Media-Persia
- Greece
- Rome
- The final evil kingdom of end times (which is described in scripture as a revived Roman empire fueled by a partnership of ten nations)

He has 10 horns on one of his heads, indicating that one of those times of world control is shared by a group of 10 nations.

The Beast of Revelation 13:1 is the anti-christ. His seven heads without crowns indicates that he is one of that group of seven rulers who serve Satan as he controls the world.

His 10 horns (on one of his heads) with 10 crowns on those horns indicates that he is the ruler of the final evil kingdom - the one with power shared by 10 nations.

“The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have had a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.” (Rev. 13:2&3)

What else is true of this beast?
- a. He comes from the sea
- b. Resembles a leopard
- c. Feet like a bear
- d. Mouth like a lion
- e. The devil gives him power
Are We There, Yet?
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

f. One of his heads appears to be fatally wounded, but the wound is healed.
g. The whole world follows him because of this healing.

“Men worshiped the dragon because he had given authority to the beast, and they also worshiped the beast and asked, “Who is like the beast? Who can make war against him?” (Rev. 13:4)

The whole world (we’ll see in a minute that there are a few hold-outs) worships the dragon (Satan) and the beast (anti christ) because anti christ has such great power. He is able to keep peace in the world. No army can succeed against him. Because of this, he is able to give people the lifestyle they desire: comfort, peace, and happiness, so of course they worship him.

“The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for forty-two months. He opened his mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander His name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.” (Rev. 13:5&6)

Out of the mouth of this evil man come terrible blasphemies. A blasphemy is an untruth or a disrespectful statement about God. The beast is quite free to say anything he wants about God – there seems to be no power on earth or in heaven able to stop him.

“He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. And he was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation.” (Revelation 13:7)

Anti christ is given power to not only rule the whole world, but also to make war against the believers in Jesus Christ – something predicted long ago in the book of Daniel. (see Daniel 7:21)

You can’t help but ask “why?” at this point. Why would the Lord remove His hand of protection from those who love Him? I’m not sure I understand the mind of God on this question, but I do know that God allows it, that it is for a purpose, and that He will never leave or forsake those who are walking through it.

Just as God knew from before He created the world that His Son would have to die, so He has also known that this time of suffering must come for His children. And just in case any of us would rise up and declare, “Hey! I don’t deserve this!”, just remember; we do. Jesus didn’t deserve to suffer and die. But we do.

“All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast – all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world. He who has an ear, let him hear” (Rev. 13:8&9)
Remember I said there are some who don’t join in the world-wide worship of evil? True believers in Jesus Christ do not worship the beast, and they suffer for it. This calls for patient endurance. But the option – to bow the knee to Satan’s evil puppet – is not an option at all. (Look at Rev. 14:9-12 to see some encouragement from God for those who hold out. Then look at 15:2 and see the proof - many did not worship the beast.)

How about a little backtrack and review here: Remember, the events in this chapter are more or less an “overlay” over things we have already seen happening in the world during the Last Seven Years. Chapters 12 through 18 are “flashing-back” and filling in details for us. So, in order to place this in the right time slot, answer this: What seal is opened after this terrible persecution of believers begins? (Rev. 6:10-11)

Right. The Fifth seal. Go back to Revelation chapter 6. The Fifth Seal on the scroll held by the Lamb is opened and we see that persecution has been going on for awhile. There are already martyrs.

If Revelation 13 would be placed as a transparency on top of a timeline of the Last Seven Years, it would begin at the 3 ½-year mark and end at the 7-year mark. Anti-christ receives his great power at the half-way mark of the whole seven year period, then he institutes horrible persecution of believers in Jesus, then the 5th seal is opened in the heavenlies. At some point after that persecution begins, the Great Earthquake of the 6th seal takes place; after that the sealing of the 144,000 is accomplished, and then the church is raptured away. The church is on earth, then, as this unequaled persecution by the beast begins.

“If anyone is to go into captivity, into captivity he will go. If anyone is to be killed with the sword, with the sword he will be killed.” (Rev. 13:10a)

The verse above is from the NIV version of the Bible. I use the NIV most of the time for my studies because most people have an NIV in front of them, and it is less confusing to use the version they are looking at. But the NIV doesn’t always have the best translation of a passage, and Rev. 13:10 is one such example of that.

Read it in the NASB: “If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed.” (Rev. 13:10a)

It’s different, isn’t it? The first part of the verse seems to be the same. Sort of a comfort that “what will happen will happen”. But the second part of the verse says something different. The NIV makes it sound like it’s more of “what will happen will happen”, but the NASB is a better translation. It’s actually a warning.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

“This calls for patient endurance and faithfulness on the part of the saints.” (Rev. 13:10b)

This verse is the first of several “embedded gems of hope” within the text of Revelation. These gems give special messages to those caught in the middle of the tragedies of the End Times. You can see by these gems that believers exist and that they are living by faith somehow. What does this “embedded gem of hope” warn struggling believers about?

Imagination tells me that people caught in the middle of this terrible persecution would at least consider trying to murder, or assassinate this evil ruler. Even believers in Jesus Christ might think this was the right thing to do. But this verse gives an “embedded gem of hope”, in the form of a warning, to those who might be thinking this. “No – do not kill him – no matter what he is doing to believers and others”. Why? Because he must stay and finish. It is written. Hands off. And “No – do not kill your captors”. Love them. Tell them about Jesus. You are their only hope.

“Then I saw another beast, coming out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed. And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men. Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he deceived the inhabitants of the earth. He ordered them to set up an image in honor of the beast who was wounded by the sword and yet lived.” (Rev. 13:11-14)

The false prophet is another evil man. It’s his job to keep people worshipping the beast. He seems meek and mild, like a lamb, but when he speaks he has great authority. Why do the people on the earth believe the false prophet? Not just because he is so sure of himself, although that is worth a lot in the “gather the crowd” game, but also, because he has such amazing powers.

“He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.” (Rev. 13:15-17)

After the false prophet gets people to believe him because of the mighty miracles he can perform, he sets out to control those people totally. First, an
image is created to be worshipped by everyone. Not only must people worship the image, but if they don’t, somehow the image is able to kill them. Is this a demon-powered statue? Something of clay or wood? Or is it an image on a computer screen? There’s not enough here to tell us.

“This calls for wisdom. If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is man’s number. His number is 666.” (Rev. 13:18)

Another “gem” tucked away to aid the persecuted. How will this verse help the struggling believers? Although we can make guesses today about what this number of the beast means, there is no doubt that when the time comes, in the 2nd half of the Last Seven Years, that number, 666, will mean something very obvious, and it will be the way believers know who the beast is, perhaps long before anyone else does.

So here’s the question we should ask ourselves:

Both anti-christ and the false prophet seem to be able to easily grab the world’s attention and their devotion, even though they are two very evil men. How does that happen, and what does that teach us?

How does that happen? They both have great power. They can do miraculous things. And people are only too willing to follow anyone who has amazing power.

What does that teach us? It’s a warning. Don’t follow someone just because he or she has power. Don’t believe just your eyes; listen. Listen for the truth. Listen for the name of Jesus being held high. Listen for love and honesty. Listen for anyone who will freely admit that Jesus Christ is God above all.

That’s how we recognize the bad guys – they look good until they open their mouths.

Revelation 13
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1) How is this beast the same as, and how is this beast different than, the dragon of Chapter 12? (look at 12:3)
2. (:2&3) What else is true of this beast?
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
   e. 

3. (:4) Why does the whole world have such an attitude of worship toward the beast?

4. (:5-6) What kind of things come out of the anti-christ’s mouth?

5. (:7) What is anti-christ allowed to do?

6. (:8-9) Who doesn’t worship anti-christ? (look at Rev. 14:9-12 to see some encouragement from God for those who hold out…then look at 15:2 and see if we have any proof that some did not worship the beast.)

7. What seal is opened after this terrible persecution of believers begins? (Rev. 6:9-11)

8. (:10) This verse is the first of some “embedded gems of hope” within the text of Revelation. These gems give special messages to those caught in the middle of the tragedies of the End Times. You can see by these gems that believers exist and that they are living by faith somehow. What does this “embedded gem of hope” warn struggling believers about?

9. (:11-14) Why do the people on the earth believe the false prophet?

10. (:15-17) After the false prophet gets people to believe him, what does he make happen?

11. (:18) Another “gem”. How will this verse help the struggling believers?
Opinion and Application Questions:

12. Both anti-christ and the false prophet seem to be able to easily grab the world’s attention and devotion, even though they are 2 very evil men. How does that happen….and what does that teach us?
Chapter Eighteen

Now, That’s What I’m Talking About!

Revelation 14

Finally! It’s all starting to come together! The action is about to be fiercely intense and lightning fast – hang on to your hat!

In Chapter 14:
- 144,000 Jewish Missionaries join their brothers and sisters - the earlier raptured believers – in heaven
- 3 Angels take up the mantle of proclaiming the truth to a very frightened world
- and 2 Harvests take place…one good….one not so good…

Where are we in time? As the chapter begins, it is just before the two witnesses are killed and then come back to life in Jerusalem. Just weeks, or maybe days away from the blowing of the 7th trumpet.

What is it like in the world? The anti-christ and the false prophet have gripped whole populations like the claws of an eagle. The pressure to take the mark of the beast is brutal. The two witnesses in Jerusalem have angered everyone with their talk of the wrath of God, and their incessant interruptions of life with plagues and
storms and fire. The 144,000 Jewish missionaries have spent the last months fanning out across the globe to spread the news of the soon coming of the true Lord of All. Jewish people everywhere are wrestling with truth on the one hand and thousands of years of wrong tradition on the other. All people want is a little relief, a little of the calm they knew seven years ago…

“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.” (Rev. 14:1)

Where is John now? And what does he see there?

He’s somewhere with a vantage point of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. He sees Jesus standing on the Mount of Olives with the 144,000 Jewish Missionaries we first saw back in Revelation chapter 7.

If you remember, the 144,000 Jewish believers in Jesus were chosen to remain behind when the rest of the church was raptured in chapter 7. At that time they were marked with a “seal” so that they would be safe as they remained in a world controlled by anti-christ. From this passage in chapter 14, it looks like that “seal” was the name of Jesus Christ, written on their foreheads.

But now, it looks like their job is over. They have gathered at the Mount of Olives. And they are about to depart.

My imagination tells me that they probably spent the few years or months of their ministry going to every corner of the world to tell Jews and Gentiles of the soon return of King Jesus. From Revelation 9:20&21 we see that they probably do not see many results of their ministry while they are actively spreading this news, because most people on earth seem to have preferred their sin. But that is about to change.

“And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.” (Rev. 14:2)

First, John hears a song coming from heaven. Or maybe that would better be described as the accompaniment for a song. The song is going to be sung by the 144,000, but the background music is swelling from the heavens.

This background music sounds like a voice (look at 14:2 in the NASB: “And I heard a voice from heaven”)…and then it sounds like a waterfall or rushing mighty river…and like thunder. And then it sound like harps. No matter which version of the Bible you are looking at, this is undoubtedly a piece of music which feels like it lifts you from your feet and transports you to heaven.
John has heard harp music before, in chapter 5, when the twenty four elders and the four beasts fell down before the Lamb, praising Him because He was worthy to take the scroll and open it.

And John will, soon, hear the voice/waterfall/thunder sound again when the raptured church raises the roof as they prepare to return on their white horses with the Lord. (Rev. 19:6)

So - this may be a leap - but I think the sound John is hearing from heaven here in 14:2, as he sees the 144,000 gathered on the Mount of Olives with Jesus, is the voice of the raptured church, welcoming the 144,000 back into their fold. They are joyously and loudly singing and playing instruments, providing a huge background for the song the 144,000 are about to sing before the throne.

“And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.” (Rev. 14:3)

Notice how the scene has suddenly changed. No longer are John, Jesus, and these 144,000 standing on the Mount of Olives. Now they are before the throne of God in heaven. The 144,000 have been “caught-up to heaven”, the same as their fellow believers were a couple of years ago.

And there is a song to be sung by the 144,000. A song only they can sing, because they are a singular group of people. They were believers in Jesus before the rapture. They are Jews. They were a part of the church. They are a part of the Jewish nation which will soon believe in Jesus. They span the gap between the past and the future. They were bought with a price, the same as you and I have been. At the start, here, of Chapter 14, they gather in Jerusalem, having ministered on earth during the time of God’s wrath, and having been spared by His own protection. They are leaving now to rejoin the saints from all ages who were raptured, and they are returning soon with those saints to serve Christ in His 1,000-year reign.

They have left the earth before seeing the conversion of the nation of Israel, but they know it is coming… there is much to sing about.

“These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths, they are blameless.” (Rev. 14:4,5)
We learn a few things here about these 144,000:

- They have not defiled themselves with women – but have kept themselves pure.

Hmmm. Such a funny phrase. Is this saying these 144,000 have never married? Or is it saying they have never given in to any sexual temptation? Or both? The KJV and the NKJV, instead of saying “kept themselves pure”, says “they are virgins”.

It’s just odd. For them to be “pure” is great – but they are living in sinful bodies, just like we are now, and for them to have lived to adulthood and never given in to sexual temptation of any kind seems like an impossibility, doesn’t it? And since when does marriage defile anyone?

Here’s my best guess about this: I think this has something to do with Old Testament rules and regulations for priests. A look back to the Old Testament and the stringent requirements set forth by God for priests to enter His presence may help in understanding this description of the 144,000.

A priest was not asked to remain celibate…not asked to never marry or never have sexual relations. Priests in the Old Testament did marry and have children and enjoy healthy sexual lives.

A priest, or any other person, however, was told that having sex outside of God’s ordained design (outside of heterosexual marriage, or between people and animals) was a sin – and would defile that person. And many other things would also defile a person: touching a dead body, eating something forbidden by God, touching something proclaimed “unclean” by God, disease, private bodily fluids, mold and mildew, etc.

But normal, healthy sex between two married people was not considered “defiling”…except in one instance.

If a person (usually a priest) was preparing to enter the presence of Almighty God, either in the tabernacle or in the temple, or, in Moses’ day, simply in the wilderness, then, and only then, abstinence from marital relationships was part of the process of becoming “ceremonially clean” enough to approach God.

Why? Because all things which pertained to the flesh should be put away at that time. Entering the presence of The One, True, God was not to be considered a casual encounter. The God-ordained pleasures of the flesh were not considered evil…but they
Are We There, Yet?
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

sure weren’t anywhere near as satisfying or pleasant as being with God.

The person who approached God would spend a few days putting away all of the normal fleshly pleasures (Exodus 19:15), so that he could say with his life – “God is more important to me than anything.” There was no other way to stand before God. It had to be wholehearted and not “defiled” with any other human desire.

That helps me understand this phrase in Revelation 14:4. The 144,000 are being described here as “priests”, approaching God again and again as they ministered to the world, having put away from themselves anything in this world which had ever meant more to them than Him. They’ve left all in order to follow the call of God to minister to the world. They are priests.

So what kind of priests will they be? They will be priests just like you and I are today. (Rev. 1:6) They will be men (or, perhaps, women) who serve the Most High God and are able to enter His presence at any time – clean – undefiled – set apart - covered by the blood of Jesus.

So – “undefiled with women” and “pure”, or “virgins” – does that mean they will be 144,000 who have never married? Never sinned sexually? Does it indicate they are all men? Or does it mean they are Jewish believers in Jesus Christ who are either men or women, married or unmarried, who have willingly left normal life pleasures behind for the chance to serve the God of All in this one, special time in history?

I haven’t yet answered those questions for myself…But this one thing we can be sure of: these 144,000 are “set apart” for God. And they would willingly go whersoever He said, no matter what the cost...(read the next phrase)…

- They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes.
  Point made.
- They were redeemed from among men.
  They are not angels or visions or dreams. They are real, flesh-and-blood people who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ.
- They are the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb.
  The “firstfruits” in the Old Testament agricultural societies, was the early part of the harvest, brought as an offering to God, to thank Him for the harvest which was to come.
The 144,000 are the “firstfruits” of the harvest of Jewish believers which is yet to come.

Throughout the Old Testament there are promises, made by God again and again, that some day the Jewish nation would, as a whole, declare their faith in Jesus Christ as their Messiah.

Throughout history, there have always been a few individual Jewish people who have taken that step of faith. From Abraham who believed God…to Moses…to King David…to obscure prophets and penniless widows…to Mary, and Joseph…to 12 apostles…all the way to Jewish believers who worship in churches and messianic synagogues today.

But never, including the time of Abraham, has there been an entire Jewish nation – 100% - who have placed their faith in their Messiah.

That time will come at the very end of the Last 7 Years – you can see it described in Zechariah 12:10-13:1. And the 144,000 are the “firstfruits” of that “harvest”.

- They are perfect as they stand before the throne.
  Perfect in the same way you and I will someday be perfect as we stand before the throne. These 144,000 were sinners, make no mistake. But they have been forgiven and made perfect by the matchless blood of Jesus Christ. As they stand before the throne in their new, resurrected bodies, they are complete – perfect – sinless – forever to live with God.

Let’s put our arms around it: the 144,000 - what part will they play in the Last Seven Years?

a) They will be a part of the church before it is raptured. They are Jewish, and believers in Jesus Christ. They go through the first part of the Last Seven Years with everyone else. They see the anti-christ come to power at the half-way mark, and they endure the persecution of Jews, and then Christians, which follows.

b) Then, when the persecution becomes so intense it seems there will be no Christians left on earth, these 144,000 are miraculously protected by God and remain on earth as the whole rest of the church is raptured.

c) At this point, they have no doubt about who they are and what they are to do. They have a message to spread. They need to find Jews throughout the world and tell them their Messiah is coming. They have the protection of God while they do it.
d) There are only two other people on planet earth doing the same thing. The two witnesses are in Jerusalem, preaching the truth about Jesus, and making life miserable for the inhabitants of planet earth.

e) A few people may accept their message...Jews and Gentiles...but most do not right away. But the seed of truth has been sown. The harvest from that seed will come.

f) The 144,000 finish their assignment probably just before the two witnesses are slain in Jerusalem.

g) They gather on the Mount of Olives to meet their Savior there, and are “caught up” to the throne in heaven where they joyfully meet with the rest of the raptured believers in Jesus, and sing out their song of redemption.

h) Then they wait, with all the other raptured believers from all ages, for the day, just around the corner, when they will follow Jesus as He returns to earth on a white horse.

“Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water.’” (Rev. 14:6&7)

Now that the 144,000 have left, the world is still given a message of hope. Three angels announce the messages of God from the skies. There is no way any person anywhere is missing these messages.

The first angel simply states the Gospel message. God is God. Fear Him. Give glory to Him. Worship Him. He loves you – but He also will judge your sin. You’ve been trusting in the wrong thing. Do not wait any longer to bow your knee to Him. I am imagining that this message also is: Jesus is God. Not Allah. Not any other “god” who has been worshipped in this falling-apart world. Jesus…and Jesus only….is God. Worship Him.

“A second angel followed and said, ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries.’” (Rev. 14:8)

What is the message of the 2nd angel? A warning. Babylon (a word which describes the world system run and controlled by anti-christ) is over. Do not put your faith in Babylon. Do not follow anti-christ. The devil’s program has failed. This announcement of failed Babylon is made while Babylon is still a very successful world system.

“A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on the
forehead or on the hand, he, too will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the mark of his name.’ ” (Rev. 14:9-11)

Then comes a promise. If you worship anti-christ and take his mark you have no further chances. The wrath of Almighty God will descend on you. Period. No second chances. Take the mark of the beast and:

- You will have the wrath of God dumped on you
- You will be tormented with fire and brimstone, forever
- You will never rest again

“This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. Yes,’ says the Spirit ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.’ ” (Rev. 14:12-13)

As this third angel gives his message the world is a pretty Godless place. The church is gone. The 144,000 have left the earth. The 2 witnesses are either dead, or about to die. The nation of Israel has not yet come to faith in Christ. I can’t imagine a colder or more frightening time in history.

This verse, however, gives us a couple of clues about life on earth in these last few days of the Last Seven Years:

- First, there must be a few, scattered believers in God somewhere, because this message is for them. These, wherever they are hiding out, must have become believers in Jesus after the rapture. They have responded to the message of the 144,000, or to the message of the 2 witnesses in Jerusalem, or to this final message from the 3 angels. They are running, or hiding, or in jail cells awaiting an execution.
- Second, very soon after this message is proclaimed, a whole nation of Jews will believe in Jesus Christ. Things will be really hard for them. But clinging to Jesus will be so worth it. They have a promise here – they will be blessed in holding on to Jesus.

Death and suffering are still possibly coming for some of these. Verses 12 and 13 tell them: “Hold on.” “If you have to die because you believe in Me, I’m with you. You are blessed.” They would rather be blessed of God and die than be blessed of Babylon and suffer forever.
“I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one ‘like a son of man’ with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, ‘Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.” (Rev. 14:14-16)

Who is sitting on this cloud? He is wearing a crown. Seems like it’s Jesus. Look at the other descriptions we have seen of Jesus so far in the book of Revelation: (1:13-16, 5:6, 10:1) How is this one different, and why? (11:15)

Yes, this is Jesus (or maybe His personal angel) sitting on this cloud. We saw Him in Revelation 1:13-16 as the High Priest who is waiting…getting the church prepared. We saw Him in Revelation 5:6 as the Lamb who was slain, Who came back to life, Who was ready to begin to open the scroll. And we saw Him in Revelation 10 getting John prepared for his last ministry. In each of the times we have seen Jesus depicted up till now, there has never been a crown upon His head. But here, there is.

Why? Because He has begun to reign.

When did He begin to reign? When the 7th trumpet was blown. It’s described in Revelation 11:15. It happens after the two witnesses are murdered and then resurrected, and after the earthquake in Jerusalem which follows. Jesus begins to reign not because a group of people agree that He is King, but because He, in heaven, decides it’s time to put on the crown and reign. He is poised to destroy all unbelievers and return to earth, but first….a harvest….a harvest of belief.

The moment has come for the Jews to believe. They are ready. They have heard the message from every possible source. Some have had their closest friends die. Some have suffered. Some have run from anti-christ. Some have trusted in anti-christ and then been miserably disappointed. Their eyes have been opened to the Savior their ancestors turned away from so many years ago. They finally see. They believe. The Lord predicted through the prophet Hosea that this would happen (Hosea 5:15-6:3) The description of their time of belief in Zechariah 12:10-13:1 is heart-wrenching. They believe. This is a harvest of faith which has been a long, long time in the coming.

And then….a second harvest…

“Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. Still another angel, who had charge of the fire, came from the altar and called in a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, ‘Take your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of grapes
from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe.’ The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of God’s wrath. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press, rising as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.” (Rev. 14:17-20)

How is this harvest different than the first harvest?

This harvest is not a harvest of belief. It is a harvest of wrath. This harvest describes the battle of Armageddon. Throughout Israel war begins. Satan seeks to destroy every last Jew alive. The War to End All Wars. It won’t last long.

Remember the martyrs under the throne who cried out “How long, O Lord?” when the 5th seal was opened? (Rev. 6:9-11) They don’t have to wait any longer. The end is here. The end of child abuse. The end of divorce. The end of poverty. The end of hunger. The end of AIDS. The end of death. The end of sadness. The end of hatred. The end of cruelty. The end of persecution. The end of martyrdom.

Now, that’s what I’m talking about!

Revelation 14
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1) Where is John now? And what does he see there?

2. (:2) What does he hear?

3. (:3) Where is John now? Who else is there? What are they doing?

4. (:4&5) From these 2 verses, name 7 things which are true of the 144,000.
   1) 
   2) 
   3) 
   4) 
   5) 
   6) 
   7)
5. (:6&7) What is the message of the first angel?

6. (:8) What is the message of the 2nd angel?

7. (:9-11) What is the message of the 3rd angel?

8. (:9-11) What is the fate of any who worship the beast and take his mark?

9. (:12-13) A gem of hope – who is it for? The church has been raptured, the 144,000 have left the earth.

10. (:13) From this verse, what do we know will still happen to some believers?

11. (:14-17) Who is sitting on a cloud? He is wearing a crown…have we seen that in any other description of Him so far in the book of Revelation? (1:13-16, 5:6, 10:1) What has happened? (11:15)


13. (:18-20) How is this harvest different than the first harvest?

Opinion and Application Questions:

14. How does this chapter affect your life today?
Appendage #1
Revelation 14
Q&A: Will Israel Someday Believe in Jesus Christ?

I don’t understand how anyone could think there is no future time of belief for the Jews as a people. There are so many other verses than the ones below…this is only a sampling….

**Jeremiah 51:5**: “For neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken (widowed) by (from) His God, the LORD of Hosts, although their land is full of guilt before the Holy One of Israel.” (spoken to the Israelites when they are warned by Jeremiah of the coming judgment of Babylon)

**Isaiah 54:7&8** “For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, but with everlasting lovingkindness I will have compassion on you’, says the LORD your Redeemer.”

Look at the whole chapter of Isaiah 54: (spoken to Israel)
:1 “the sons of the desolate one (Israel) will be more numerous than the sons of the married woman…”
:3 “…for you will spread abroad to the right and to the left. And your descendants will possess nations and will resettle the desolate cities.”
:4 “…but you will forget the shame of your youth, and the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.”
:6 “for the LORD has called you, like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, even like the wife of one’s youth when she is rejected.”
:9 “For this is like the days of Noah to Me. When I swore that the waters of Noah would not flood the earth again, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you nor will I rebuke you.”
:10 “For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but my lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and my covenant of peace will not be shaken…”
"Are We There, Yet?"
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

:11 “...behold, I will set your stones in antimony, and your foundations I will lay in sapphires. Moreover, I will make your battlements of rubies, and your gates of crystal, and your entire wall of precious stones...” (sounds a lot like Rev. 20, doesn’t it?)
:14 “In righteousness you will be established; you will be far from oppression, for you will not fear...”

And all of Isaiah 12

And Isaiah 11:11-16 “…the LORD will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath...and will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

And Jeremiah 33: As the Jews are learning of the soon to come Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah slips in promises of what will come after: “Behold I will bring to it (Jerusalem) health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth. I will restore the fortunes of Judah, and the fortunes of Israel and will rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities...it (Israel) will be to Me a name of joy, praise and glory before all the nations of the earth which will hear of all the good that I do for them, and they will fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it.” (:7-10)

“Thus says the LORD, ‘If my covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them.’ ”

And Hosea 6:1-3 “Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, that we may live before Him. So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.”

And Hosea 14 “Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God...” (:1) “Take words with you and return to the LORD, say to Him, ‘Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips.’ ” (:2)
Animal sacrifices would not be enough. Only words of true repentance would be sufficient.
And then, of course, Paul, in his letter to the Romans:

9:27-29 “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved...unless the LORD of Sabaoth had left to us a posterity, we would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah”

Yes, Israel some day, though then they will be just a small part of the total number of Jews who have ever lived, will be saved.

10:12 “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same LORD is LORD of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him, for ‘Whoever shall call on the name of the LORD will be saved.’ ”

Yes, when Jesus comes the first time a wonderful thing will come out of a bad thing. Israel’s unbelief at that time will open the door for all, Jews and Gentiles, to experience believing in and knowing the Messiah.

10:19 “I will make you jealous by that which is not a nation, by a nation without understanding will I anger you…”

And somehow the nation which is not a nation, in other words, the church, will bring about jealousy in the hearts of Jews...as they see a people who are able to communicate with their God, when they are not...

11:5 “In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.”

Within that church are a few Jews – those who do believe in their Messiah.

11:11 “I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous. Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be?”

But the church is not the same as Israel. There are promises still to be kept to Israel. Israel is not gone from the care and touch of God. And when Israel finally does come to faith...how much greater will that be than anything up to that point in history?

11:15 “For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”

The time of Israel’s belief will be Life for the Jews. Life for more Gentiles. Completing what God started.
11:30-31 “For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy.”

When Israel was disobedient, Gentiles were blessed. When Gentiles are blessed, Israel gets another chance at mercy.

Now look at Zechariah, who saw how it would look when Israel finally came to faith – the whole nation.

12:10 “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn....”

13:1 “In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity....”

When will it happen? – when all the nations are gathered against Jerusalem

12:9 “In that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

And after two thirds of the Jews have been destroyed. The final third will be the ones who, as a collective group, place their faith in their Messiah:

13:8 “It will come about in all the land, declares the LORD, that two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, ‘They are My people,’ and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

And that brings us to Revelation 14:14. Hold on for one more minute as we remind ourselves of the drama that has unfolded up to this point:

What has happened to Jews who do not believe in Jesus scattered throughout the world during this Last Seven Years?

- They have, like the rest of the world, seen anti-christ bring peace to a trembling world.
- They have seen him come to power and demand to be worshipped.
- Some of them fled from him as he came to power and began to pursue Jews - God protected them.
- Some of them stayed behind, attracted to the anti-christ
• They have seen the ferocious attacks against Christians by anti-christ.
• They have heard the testimonies and seen the power of the 2 witnesses in Jerusalem.
• They have gone through the great earthquake and somehow survived, perhaps realizing that those who called themselves Christians are suddenly gone from the world.
• They have heard the testimonies of 144,000 Jewish believers in Jesus who did not leave with the rest of the Christians.
• Many more of them have realized that the ruler of the world is evil.
• They have been confused.
• They are wondering if they have been wrong.
• And then they see the anti-christ finally able to kill the 2 witnesses.
• And they watch their 2 dead bodies lie in the streets of Jerusalem, not even given a decent burial.
• Sometime during those 3 days the Holy Spirit breaks down barriers of fear and unbelief and blindness…
• And on the third day the 2 witnesses rise from the dead, in front of the whole world…and there is an earthquake in Jerusalem….
• And the Jews who watch all this are so ready….they cannot help but see the hand of God, Jesus, reaching in to their lives.
• And then, because He decides to, Jesus begins to reign. He is now the King of all. And His first act as reigning King of the earth is to raise His sickle…

Revelation 14:14: “Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, ‘Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.’ Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.”

Jesus gathers in a harvest of belief – His people, the Jews, wherever they are in the world, finally come to faith in Him.

And His next act is to send forth another sickle…and begin the war which will end all wars. We’ll see it in Revelation 15&16…it won’t last long.
Chapter Nineteen
I Hope You Dance
Revelation 15

I’m writing this in March of 2006, and we’ve just gotten back from Sabbatical. It was everything we had hoped it would be…rest, sunshine, lots of laughter and talk, long walks, thinking, planning, great books and music, time to do nothing, time to match our strides again, and, believe it or not, the 15th chapter of Revelation dovetails quite nicely with the things I was learning from God during this last month.

In your life experience so far, have you had the chance to watch someone grow up, wanting so much for them that it almost became a pain in your heart? Your brother or sister, maybe? Or your children, or your grandkids?

Wanting them to experience the wonders life has to offer…to learn to sing or paint or teach or create or worship? To excel…to fall down and get up…to run the fastest…play the hardest…build the best?

If you don’t care for country music, please be patient with my personal taste, but still, read the words of this song – by Lee Ann Womack, dedicated to her two daughters, Aubrie and Anna Lise, ages 9 and 1:
At the end of our Sabbatical I have come home with a prayer for you.

*I hope you dance.*

Let me explain.

During our month we visited as many churches as we could, wanting to learn and observe and worship together with believers we had never met before. We saw in all those other churches the same things we see in ours:
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

- Lazy Christianity – I’ll get around to it later…maybe.
- Selfish Christianity – What’s in it for me? What will make me comfortable and happy?
- Retired Christianity – Time to let everyone else do the hard work. I deserve to have things easy now.
- I Have an Excuse Christianity – I’m sick. I’m divorced. I’m married to an unbeliever. I have children. I travel on the weekends.
- Cloistered Christianity – Keep the world away – I need to be safe and Christians are really the only people I can enjoy.
- Family Christianity – My family is all I have time for. They are my ministry.
- Pitiful Christianity – Pity me…I have problems

And, of course, we saw one more…


Here’s the dance, described in Revelation, Chapter 15:

A moment of review: As we begin this chapter, here are the things which have already happened in the Last Seven Years:
- 7 seals have been broken
- 7 trumpets have been blown
- Believers in Jesus have been martyred
- Jews have been slaughtered
- The anti-christ and the false prophet have risen to power and then controlled the world for nearly 3 ½ years.
- The 2 witnesses have ministered for 3 ½ years, then been killed, then been resurrected, and gone to heaven
- The 144,000 Jewish believers have ministered for a couple of years, then been caught up to heaven with the Lord.
- Many unbelievers have taken the mark of the Beast
- Jesus Christ has decided to begin to reign as King. His first official act as King is to open his arms to the surviving Jewish nation which has come to collective, amazing, faith in Him.
• And chapters 15 & 16 show us His second act as King – wrath!

“I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues – last, because with them God’s wrath is completed.” (15:1)

In chapter 12 John had seen two marvelous signs in the heavens: a woman in the heavens (the nation of Israel) and a great, red, dragon (Satan).

Now, again in the heavens, he sees seven angels (or..messengers), and they are holding the seven last plagues which God will pour out on the earth. The earth has already felt the wrath of God through the plagues of the seven trumpets, but that was nothing compared to what will happen when the seven last plagues, seven bowls full of God’s wrath, are dumped on the earth.

“And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given to them by God…” (15:2)

John sees a group of people in heaven, standing before the throne of God. Remember in chapter 4:6 we saw a sea of glass right in front of the throne of God in heaven? This appears to be that same sea of glass, only now it is mingled with fire. It’s almost as if looking down from heaven to earth through this floor of glass enabled John to see the devastation, suffering, and martyrdom taking place down there, flickering like fire.

Who are the ones standing on that sea of glass? The ones who have chosen, over the last seven years, to give their praise to God, and not to the beast.

Some of these are the martyrs we saw waiting under the throne in Revelation 6:9-11. After one half of the Last Seven Years had already passed, we saw them asking God how long it would be before He finished this horrible chapter in the life of the world He had made. They were told to wait a little longer, because there were others who also would get the privilege of facing death for their faith.

Also, some of those standing on that sea of glass are from the raptured ones who caught away from the earth sometime in the 2nd half of the Last Seven Years. All the raptured ones? I don’t think so. Just those who had taken a stand for God and suffered for it. Maybe they had not been martyred, but they had still suffered for their testimony before the rapture.

And some of them would be those who, after the rapture, came to faith in Jesus Christ, and had been martyred for not taking the mark of the beast.
All of them were willing to live lives of faith and are now gathered in front of the throne, singing, and, I think, dancing. This is a time of great celebration, anticipation, joy.

“...and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: ‘Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty, just and true are your ways, King of the ages.” (15:3)

They sing the song of Moses, and the song of Jesus, the King. They are Jewish Christians, and gentile Christians, together, one body of believers who had stared down the most powerful, evil man in the history of the world. Through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul talks lovingly about the one body of Christ – both Jew and Gentile – in Ephesians 2:11-22. We see a courageous, passionate part of that body here, the martyred ones.

“Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (15:4)

You see, while on earth they had very good reason to fear the beast. He had power to hurt them and those they loved. He could starve them. Beat them. Torture them. Chase them out of their homes. He had great, great power.

But they knew, through faith in what they saw written in the Bible, that the beast was not the one to fear. God was. And they chose to fear God and face the wrath of the beast. A good choice. They have reason to sing and dance.

“After this, I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen, and wore golden sashes around their chests.” (15:5&6)

The temple in heaven, where the very presence of God dwells, is opened. Seven angels walk out of that temple with one purpose in mind – they’ve been given a job to do – execute the fierce wrath of God. The time has come.

“Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever.” (15:7)

Why would one of the four living creatures (or beasts) have a part in the pouring out of God’s wrath? The four beasts, as we discussed in Revelation 4, seem to have something to do with the creation of God. They represent that creation, or they protect it, perhaps. But now, even though the creation of God is about to be smashed to pieces, the four beasts, through the representation of one of them, are
saying: “You, O Lord, are more important than creation. Your glory is the utmost priority in all of eternity. Yes, of course, we agree – your wrath must descend on creation.”

“...And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.” (15:8)

I just can’t seem to put this into words. The glory of God. The purpose of God. The wrath of God. So immense that no person could ever live through it unless they are protected by the mercy of God.

In Exodus 33:18-23, Moses begs God to show him His glory. He wants to know the magnitude of the God he serves. The Lord grants Moses’ request, but tells him that he cannot survive if he views His straight-on, full-out glory. So God hides Moses in a cleft in the rock of a mountain, where he can just barely peep out, and then He covers Moses with His hand as He walks by – in His full glory – and Moses is able to catch a glimpse.

That’s how huge the glory and wrath of God is. Too big for Moses. Too big for me. And until these seven plagues are finished, everyone in heaven is protected – no man may enter the temple in heaven – for they would be cinder if they did.

So…here’s a legitimate question: Why is it so important for God to execute his anger? Why can’t He just forgive everyone’s sin and give all people a brand new start? Why wrath first?

Holy wouldn’t be holy if sin can be overlooked. Holy is only holy if there is always punishment for sin. God would cease to be God if He said “OK, you’ve done an evil thing, but I love you, so I won’t hold it against you.”

He won’t ever do that. Every sin has to be punished.

Either I pay for my sin, or I accept the gift Jesus offered me – His payment for my sin. It has to be paid for. Jesus took my punishment on the cross. I don’t have to have the wrath of God poured out on me…if I accept the gift Jesus offered.

One more question, then: Why are these ones in heaven so full of joy? They know what is coming. It’s going to be terrible. How can that give them reason to dance?

Somehow – and this is way past my understanding – there is a tremendous privilege in suffering or being martyred for belief in Jesus Christ. There is an amazing joy. These believers have more reason to dance than any others. They
have been chosen by God to receive the greatest blessing of all – martyrdom and suffering - and they dance before the throne at the end of the Last Seven Years – just before the wrath of God does its final work.

Back to where we began, then. My prayer for you? I pray that you will not be a lazy Christian, or a selfish Christian, or a retired Christian, or an I-Have-an-Excuse Christian, or a cloistered Christian, or a family Christian, or a pitiful Christian.

I pray that you are a Passionate Christian – Loving the things God loves. Intentionally active in a good church. Taking risks for the unsaved. Speaking the name of Jesus every chance you get. Making sacrifices for believers. Accepting suffering. Eyes forward with joy, looking for… the dance.

I hope you dance.

Revelation 15
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1) John says he sees “another” sign in heaven. What signs had he seen before in heaven?

2. (:2) What does John see? Who are they? What are they doing? Where are they?

3. (:3) They are singing 2 songs…what does that tell you about this group of people?

4. (:4) Who have these people decided to “fear”?

5. (:5&6) What does John see next?

6. (:7) Why would one of the four beasts be involved in the pouring out of God’s wrath?

7. (:8) The temple now becomes a place where no human being could possibly survive. Why? And how long will this last?
8. Why is it so important for God to execute his anger? Why can’t He just forgive everyone’s sin and give all people a brand new start? Why wrath first?

Opinion and Application Questions:

9. Why are the ones in heaven so full of joy? They know what is coming. How can that give them reason to dance?
Chapter Twenty

Emergency Pants

Revelation 16

If you only come away with one thing from this chapter, here’s what I’d like it to be: In the midst of darkness and confusion, even when they aren’t even aware of it, God’s people have everything they need to pull through.

“There then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go, pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth.’” (16:1)

As we ended up chapter 15, seven angels had just exited the temple in heaven. They were holding seven golden bowls (or vials) full of the wrath of God. Those seven bowls contained the sum total of all that was left of the wrath of God. When those seven bowls have been emptied on the earth, the wrath of God will be finished.

“The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.” (2)

Ugly and painful sores appear on all those people who have worshipped the beast and taken his mark.
There are true believers in Jesus Christ on earth, too, at this time. The church is long gone – they left in the rapture sometime after the half-way point in the Last Seven Years. The 144,000 Jewish witnesses are gone, too. We saw them leave in chapter 14, just before the nation of Israel came to faith in Jesus. The two witnesses who held the world spellbound out in front of the Jewish temple for 3½ years are gone. They were murdered and then rose from the dead shortly before this final wrath of God commenced.

The true believers on earth at this time are the recently-converted Jews gathered in Jerusalem and scattered throughout the earth. And there are also gentile believers who have come to faith in Christ since the rapture. None of these true believers have taken the mark of the beast, and are therefore protected from the sores which appear because of the first bowl.

"The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died."

"The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood." (:3&4)

Blood. The sea is turned to blood. The rivers and sources of water are turned to blood. If I were giving advice to people just before these events take place, I would tell them to buy up all the bottled water they could find when they see most people in the world suffering from sores on their bodies.

"Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: ‘You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve’. And I heard the altar respond: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.’ " (:5-7)

The angel who poured out this plague, and then another voice coming out from the altar in heaven (the martyrs of the 5th seal?) – both of them basically say: “You are right to be doing this, God. These people deserve it.”

Think back to Revelation 15:3 for a minute. Those who had been martyred by the beast were singing words almost identical to the ones we see here. This, then, is the strong testimony of those who have suffered the most: no regrets about God’s judgments.

"The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the
intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.” (:8&9)

Things get hot! The earth’s population is writhing under this plague, but most are not responding well to the obvious evidence of the mightiness of God. They know God is doing this…and they shake their fists in His face: “You think I am going to admit I am filthy with sin?...You think I am going to give up and say I need your forgiveness?...You think I am going to want you to get more glory than me? No Way!”

When I read these verses, I found myself echoing the sentiments of the 3rd angel – “Give it to ‘em, God…they deserve it!”

But what of the believers who still live on earth during this? I have asked myself again and again – do they, too, have to suffer this plague? The first plague only fell on the followers of the beast. The 2nd and 3rd plagues surely could have been survived by moving away from the oceans, and having a fresh supply of water.

But what about this immense heat? Do the believers in Jesus suffer this, too?

I can’t say for sure that this applies to our suffering end-times saints, but I did find a really great Psalm which perhaps contains a promise for believers in Jesus during this time:

“The LORD watches over you –
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all harm –
He will watch over your life;
The LORD will watch over your coming and going
Both now and forevermore.” (Psalm 121:4-8)

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

Darkness falls upon the kingdom of the beast. And somehow this darkness brings intense pain. What a contrast – first the sun scorching the earth, then thick darkness. And while the people of the earth are blaspheming God for the pain of the darkness, they are also still suffering from the sores of the 1st bowl. This tells
me that it is possible these first 5 plagues happen quickly – each following the other speedily – perhaps a matter of days or maybe even hours.

Those who blaspheme God for their suffering are beginning to understand exactly what is happening. They know they are sinners. They know God is angry at their sin. And they refuse to repent. They know what they have done wrong. They will not bow the knee.

I think it can never be said that there could be a person anywhere in the whole world at this time who does not know what God requires, and also knows of the forgiveness He offers. These are not innocent people who are overwhelmed by the events of the wrath of God. These are rebellious sinners who will not ask for forgiveness. A whole world full of them.

“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.” (:12-14)

The 6th bowl prepares the world for Armageddon. What three things happen?
1. The River Euphrates is dried up so armies may march easily across it.
2. Three demons come forth to work miracles all over the world.
3. These demons, because of their miracles, are able to gather the armies of the world to the land of Israel for a battle against God.

A battle against God. The world has come so far in their evil thinking that they actually think they can battle against God and win. Wow.

“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.” (:15)

What is the Lord’s message to those believers caught in the grip of this perilous time?

Remember your emergency pants.

I’ll explain.
When Ken was in college it seems there was at one point a rash of practical jokes being played on several of the guys in the mens’ dorms. One young man actually woke up in the morning to find that his bed (and he) had been transported during the night – outside to the commons area in the middle of the whole campus. He woke up to sunlight, and birds chirping, and staring eyes as he frantically tried to figure out how he was going to get out of his bed and back into the dorm clothed only in his underwear.

Although Ken was not the young man in question, he did learn a valuable life lesson from his friend’s situation: always wear “emergency pants” when you go to bed.

A couple of years after that Ken and I were married. I have to tell you – it was a little different to realize my husband would be sleeping in a pair of slacks every night…not pajamas…but an old pair of slacks. He told me they were his “emergency pants”, and told me why they were such a good idea… I got used to it.

A few years later we had started a church in Illinois, and we had a young college-aged man living with us every weekend. Ross would come down to our church on Friday from his Bible College in Wisconsin, in order to help out on Sundays. Then he would drive back Sunday night.

It was the middle of a very nasty winter. There was snow and ice on every street. In the middle of the night one weekend we were wakened out of a dead sleep by a terrible banging and crashing noise outside on the street. We peeked out the curtains and saw that someone had slid on the ice in front of our house, had crashed into Ross’s car, and was trying to disengage the two cars by gunning his car back and forward. Not wanting to let the guy know we had seen (and heard) what he was doing to Ross’s car, we didn’t turn on the light. Ken hopped out of bed, slipped on a pair of jeans, and ran out to try to stop the guy. At the same time Ross, from another bedroom, came running out to do the same.

The two of them rushed out of the house only to see the guy finally getting free of Ross’s car, and speed away down the street. Ross and Ken chased him for about a block, then realized he was long gone, and came back home.

When the two of them walked back into the house, dejected and not a little angry at the fleeing car-basher, we all began laughing because Ross had rushed out into the cold winter’s night and chased down our street in his underwear.

But it got even funnier when Ken and I finally went back to bed, and as he undressed we realized he had on 2 pairs of pants! His jeans…and his “emergency pants”! After so many years – he had forgotten how prepared he was! We laughed into the early morning hours.
Now, having that very spiritual story in your mind, look at verse 15 again:

“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.” (16:15)

This wonderful little jewel of a verse is spoken, it seems to me, almost in a whisper. A sweet promise to those who do know Jesus and are living through these seven bowls of God’s wrath. “I am going to come very quickly”. “Keep watching”. And don’t forget – “..you already have on your emergency pants!” The righteousness of Christ is covering you – no matter what happens, you are going to show forth His glory – not your shame.

The sixth bowl seems to last long enough for the world’s armies to gather at Armageddon. How long do you guess that would take? Time to move troops, ships, air power? Two or three weeks?

The point is: It probably won’t take long. I think it’s a pretty safe guess that the events of the seven bowls could take a month or less.

There’s an interesting, curious verse in Daniel which I think applies to this time of the seven bowls: Daniel 12:11. Daniel is told that once anti-christ sets himself up to be worshipped in the temple (half-way through the Last Seven Years) it will be 1,290 days until the wrath of God is over.

We know anti-christ sets himself up to be worshipped in the temple in Jerusalem three and ½ years into the Last Seven Years. Three and one-half years is 1,260 days. So at the end of 1,260 days anti-christ no longer reigns…Jesus does.

But then, 1,290 days is 30 days longer than three and ½ years…so what is that extra 30 days all about?

I think it’s possible that the 30 days is the length of time it takes for the seven bowls to be poured out on the earth. Jesus begins to reign, from heaven, as King, and then spends the first 30 days of His reign pouring out His wrath, and then He returns on a white horse…to clean up the mess. Just a guess – but possible.

Therefore, here’s the sequence of events as I see it:
1. The Last Seven Years begins.
2. Half way through this Last Seven Years, anti-christ sets himself up in the temple to be worshipped.
3. The Last Seven Years ends at the blowing of the 7th trumpet (Revelation 11:15), when Jesus, still in heaven, declares Himself the reigning King of All. The one-thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth begins.

4. Still in heaven, the first thing Jesus does as reigning King is bring the Jewish nation back to Himself, in a moment of corporate faith. (Zechariah 13:1, Revelation 14:14-16)

5. Still in heaven, the second thing Jesus does is pour out His final wrath – seven bowls of it - upon the unbelieving world below, somehow protecting the ones who have believed in Him and are waiting for Him. This takes 30 days. During this 30 days the armies of the world gather at Armageddon because they know Jesus is returning to earth, and they plan to kill all who are waiting for Him, and then to destroy Him, too.

6. After the 30 days, Jesus returns. His feet touch the Mt. of Olives, and He proceeds to destroy the anti-christ, the false prophet, and every unbeliever in the world (Revelation 19:11-21). Satan is imprisoned for 1,000 years. (Revelation 20:1,2)

7. The clean-up of planet earth begins, with every believer pitching in to rebuild our devastated world.

(For your own further study, here’s another passage which I think describes the Armageddon gathering of armies: Zechariah 12,13,14)

“Well, they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ Then there came flashes of lightning, rumbles, peals of thunder, and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.” (:16-21)

Once the world’s armies are gathered just outside Jerusalem, in the Valley of Armageddon, the 7th bowl is poured out. What happens?

- A loud voice from the throne
- Saying: “It is DONE!”
- Flashes of lightning.
- Peals of thunder.
- And voices
- The granddaddy of all earthquakes
- Jerusalem is split into three parts
- All cities of the world are taken down
- The evil city, Babylon, is destroyed
• No more islands
• No more mountains
• Huge hailstones come down on men.

The earth is destroyed! But it’s not over….

“Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert.” (Isaiah 43:18&19)

Revelation 16
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1) What is about to be poured out on the earth…and how much of it? (Rev. 15:1)

2. (:2) What happens when the first bowl is emptied….and who does it happen to?

3. (:3-4) What do the 2nd and 3rd bowls have in common?

4. (:5-7) What sort of testimonies are given after the 3rd bowl?

5. (:8-9) After the 4th bowl is poured out, how are people on earth reacting?

6. (:10-11) What happens at the 5th bowl? Do you see any clue here about how long it has been since the 1st bowl?

7. (:12-16) The 6th bowl prepares the world for Armageddon. What three things happen?
   1)
   2)
8. (:15) What is the LORD’s message to those believers caught in the grip of this perilous time?

9. The 6th bowl seems to last long enough for the world’s armies to gather at Armageddon. How long do you guess that would take?

Other passages which describe this gathering of armies:
   a. Ezekiel 38
   b. Zechariah 12,13,14

10. (:17-21) Once the world’s armies are gathered just outside Jerusalem, in the Valley of Armageddon, the 7th bowl is poured out. What happens?
   - A loud ______ from the ______
   - Saying: “It is __________”
   - Flashes of __________
   - Peals of __________
   - And __________
   - The granddaddy of all __________
   - Jerusalem is split into ______ parts
   - All ______ are taken down
   - The evil city, __________, is destroyed
   - No more __________
   - No more __________
   - Huge __________ come down on men.

Opinion and Application Questions:

11. Does it strike you as crazy that anyone on earth at this point in history would actually think they could fight against God and win?

12. What could they be thinking?

13. Do people think that way today?
Chapter Twenty One

Cute Purple Dinosaur

Revelation 17

(Freeze Frame. The next two chapters take place as end-times events are momentarily frozen for John…action resumes in Revelation 19)

What are the two most-frequently-asked questions about end times?

• One – When is it going to happen? And
• Two – Who is the anti-christ?
A riddle….a puzzle….and a mystery. That’s what chapter 17 is. And when we solve it, we’ll know when Jesus is returning, and who the anti-christ is, guaranteed.

As you read through this chapter you’ll see we have some interesting characters in our little drama that is the “end times.” We have a woman whose name is Babylon, many waters, a beast, seven mountains/seven heads/seven kings, an eighth King, Ten horns, and a Lamb….what does Chapter 17 say about each of them?

I think the best way to solve the puzzle of Chapter 17 is to fill out a chart, and then come to conclusions. As I’ve read through Revelation 17, verse by verse, I’ve asked myself what that verse teaches about the person or entity in each column. For example, as I read through Chapter 17 looking for clues about the woman whose name is Babylon, I began at verse 1 and asked: “Did I just learn something in this verse about her?” As I saw things, I wrote them down in the proper column. I did this for each column, so that I ended up reading the whole chapter through seven times, one time for each column. The following chart is the sum total of what I learned as I tried to sort things out. If you want do this exercise yourself, start with blank columns. You’ll find a table with blank columns in the “Chapter 17 Discussion Questions” section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Woman whose name is Babylon</th>
<th>Many Waters</th>
<th>A Beast</th>
<th>7 Heads/7 Mtns/7 Kings</th>
<th>8th King</th>
<th>10 Horns</th>
<th>A Lamb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>:1 she is a harlot</td>
<td>:1 the woman sits on top of them (or…has control over them)</td>
<td>:3 red</td>
<td>:3: 7 they are a part of the beast</td>
<td>:11 after the 7 kings, there will be an 8th king, who is really one of the first 7 kings, and who will reign over the 7th heads/mountains.</td>
<td>:3, 7 they are a part of the beast</td>
<td>:14 the beast and the 10 kings wage war against the Lamb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:1 she sits on many waters</td>
<td>:15 they are people, nations, tongues and multitudes</td>
<td>:3 full of blasphemous names</td>
<td>:9 The 7 heads are the same as the 7 mountains</td>
<td>:12 they are kings of kingdoms which reign with the beast</td>
<td>:14 He is LORD of Lords and KING of Kings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:1 she is going to be judged</td>
<td></td>
<td>:3: 7 heads</td>
<td>:10 the 7 kings are the leaders of the 7 heads/mountains.</td>
<td>:13 they give all their power to the beast</td>
<td>:14 He wins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:2 she has lured many leaders and people to take part in her adultery</td>
<td>:8 he used to be</td>
<td>:3: 10 horns</td>
<td>:10 the first 5 heads/mountains/kings had already existed in John’s time</td>
<td>:14 they join the beast in waging war against the Lamb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:3 she sits on a red beast</td>
<td>:8 In John’s time he is not alive, but is in the Abyss</td>
<td>:3: the woman sits on him (controls him)</td>
<td>:10: the 6th head/mountain/king existed during John’s time</td>
<td>:14 they</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:4 she is beautifully clothed and wears expensive jewelry</td>
<td>:8 he will go to everlasting destruction some day</td>
<td>:8 he will come out of that Abyss some day and be alive again</td>
<td>:10: the 6th head/mountain/king existed during John’s time</td>
<td>:14 there are people with him, who are called, chosen, and faithful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:4 but when you get close, you</td>
<td>:8 people will wonder at him</td>
<td>:8 In John’s time he is not alive, but is in the Abyss</td>
<td>:11 he will be destroyed</td>
<td>:11 he is the beast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>:9 he will have power 7 times in the world – each time the woman has more power than</td>
<td></td>
<td>:11 the 7th head/mountain</td>
<td></td>
<td>:14 they</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
realize she is filthy
:5 her name is Babylon the Great, and she is the originator of all adulteries and wickedness
:6 she loves to kill people who love Jesus
:9 she sits on top of 7 mountains
:10 she will be destroyed by the 10 horns
:18 she has more power than kings

him
:10 each time of power there is one man who is King over that power.
:11 when he comes back to life, he is the 8th king, but really, he is one of the 7 who have already existed by that time.
:11 he will be destroyed
:13 when he is the 8th king, he will receive the most power he has ever had in history, because 10 other kings will give it to him.
:14 he will not prevail against the Lamb
:16 he and his 10 other kings will hate the woman and will destroy her

/king will exist in the future

are defeated by the Lamb
:16 they will hate and destroy the woman
:17 God allows them to destroy the woman,
:18 even though she is really stronger than they are

Now...here’s that same chart again, with additional scripture passages listed under each of those persons/entities. Look up these passages and see what they add to your collection of facts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Woman Whose name is Babylon</th>
<th>Many Waters</th>
<th>A Beast 7 Heads/7 Mntns/7 Kings</th>
<th>8th King</th>
<th>10 Horns</th>
<th>A Lamb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 11:1-9</td>
<td>The only passage which refers to this is in Revelation 17:1,15</td>
<td>Daniel 7:8-25</td>
<td>Daniel 2:31-45</td>
<td>I think The only passage which refers to this is in Revelation 17:10&amp;11</td>
<td>Daniel 7:7-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zechariah 5:5-11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel 8:9-26</td>
<td>Daniel 7:4-12</td>
<td>(But possibly, Daniel 7:7&amp;8 are referring to this 8th king. He supplants 3 of the 10 horns, leaving 7 horns, then becomes the 8th horn,)</td>
<td>Revelation 19:19-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 14:8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel 9:27</td>
<td>Daniel 8:3-4</td>
<td>Revelation 13:1</td>
<td>Revelation 5:6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 18</td>
<td></td>
<td>Daniel 11:21-45</td>
<td>Revelation 12:3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation 19:2&amp;3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Zechariah 11:16-17</td>
<td>Revelation 13:1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I Jn. 2:18</td>
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<td>II Thess. 2:3-12</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Matt. 24:15-28</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

184
After comparing all those facts listed in separate columns, we can come to some conclusions:

**Who’s Who? (or…What’s what?)**

- **The Woman whose name is Babylon:** She is Godless religion. She has great power. World power. But not power that is of God. She is the one who originally inspired men to rebel against God. She is the one who instigated the first murder. She is the one who taught men to say, at Babel, and ever since then, “I did it my way!” She has partnered, over and over again in world history, with political and economic power. In the end, she will be destroyed by the very political and economic power she partners with.

- **The Many Waters:** The people of the world.

- **The Beast:** The man who is anti-christ

- **The 7 heads/7 mountains/7 Kings:** This is the most wicked political power which has ever existed. Seven times in world history Satan has managed to rule the world, and has used that political power to try to destroy God’s plan by destroying God’s people. When were those seven times? Six have already happened…one is yet to come.
  1. Egypt (the time of Moses)
  2. Assyria (during the time of the Kings of Israel)
  3. Babylon (the end of the Kings of Israel)
  4. Medo/Persia (the times of return to Jerusalem and rebuilding of the temple, city and walls)
  5. Greece (the times of Antiochus Epiphanes)
  6. Rome (the times of Jesus)
  7. The Final evil kingdom (which will exist under anti-christ)

- **The 8th King:** The man who is anti-christ. He has absolute power over the 7th and last great world power sponsored by Satan.
I think there are two possible explanations to the fact that He is called “The 8th King”:

1. At one time in history he was king one of the 7 times Satan managed to control the whole world. He comes back to life and reigns as king of the world again – as anti-christ. This view would suggest that the 7th last great world power exists at some time in history, then disappears, and then re-appears again with a come-back-to-life anti-christ as its king.

   Or……………………

2. Possibly, Daniel 7:7&8 is referring to this 8th king. He, as anti-christ, supplants 3 of the 10 kings who are supporting him, leaving 7 kings, so then he is the 8th king.

- **The 10 Horns**: Ten kings who live at the time of anti-christ, and give their total power to him so he can accomplish his goal of controlling the world and defeating the plan of God. They will annihilate the woman who is called Babylon.

- **The Lamb**: Jesus Christ

At the beginning of this chapter I said that when we have this totally figured out, we will know who the anti-christ is, and when the Lord Jesus is returning. How’s that? Because it won’t be totally figured out until we are living in the middle of it. At the midpoint of the Last Seven Years the anti-christ will demand to be worshipped as God. We’ll know for sure then who he is. And we’ll know we only have 3 and ½ years to go.

Through the years there have been theories galore about when? And who? Most of them we just shouldn’t even pay attention to at all. “No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matthew 24:36). It just isn’t our job to set dates. But God has given us puzzles, riddles and mysteries to drop necessary clues for the generation which will be someday living through this. It’s not wrong to study and think through what He has told us. But it is pointless to seek to know ahead of time what He won’t totally reveal until He decides to begin the end.

Maybe you could use a laugh about now. On the following page is a thought from "brucehowes" via IDEA-CENTRAL:
"Are We There, Yet?"
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

Theory: It's Barney!

Note to all prophecy buffs, the revelation of the TRUE anti-christ is now exposed. It is Barney. here's proof:

1. Start with the given:
   CUTE PURPLE DINOSAUR

2. Change all U's to V's (which is proper Latin anyway)
   CVTE PVRPLE DINOSAVR

3. Extract all Roman Numerals:
   C- V -- V- L -- D - I -V

4. Convert these into Arabic values:
   100- 5 - 5 -50 - 500 - 1 - 5

5. Add these numbers:
   666

There you have it, proof that Barney is the antichrist!

You get the point, I know. The generation going through the Last Seven Years will have no doubt about who the anti-christ is. Until then, keep your eyes on Jesus. The anti-christ is evil and powerful, but he’s nothing compared to Jesus.
Revelation 17
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

How to fill out this chart? Just read through Revelation 17, verse by verse, and ask yourself what that verse teaches you about the person or entity in each column. I suggest reading through the chapter once for each column…a total of seven times:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Woman whose name is Babylon</th>
<th>Many Waters</th>
<th>A Beast</th>
<th>7 Heads/7 Mtns/7 Kings</th>
<th>8th King</th>
<th>10 Horns</th>
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Here’s that same chart again, with additional scripture passages listed under some of those persons/entities. If you want to, look up those passages and see what they add to your collection of facts:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 11:1-9 Zechariah</td>
<td>The only passage which refers to Daniel 7:8-25</td>
<td>Daniel 2:31-45</td>
<td>The only passage which refers to Daniel 7:7-8</td>
<td>Revelation 5:6-8</td>
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188
Come to your own conclusions…..

Who’s Who? (or…What’s what?)

- The Woman whose name is Babylon:

- The Many Waters:

- The Beast:

- The 7 heads/7 mountains/7 Kings:
• The 8th King:

• The 10 Horns:

• The Lamb:
Chapter Twenty Two
When the Music Fades…

Revelation 18

The Babylon mentioned in Revelation 17, 18 & 19 has existed since the time of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. “Babylon” is basically satan’s world system, opposed to God, of course. It controls and deceives people in three different ways:

- False religion. This part of Babylon convinces people to worship that which is not true…not God.
- False economy. This part of Babylon offers beautiful and desirable things…food, jewels, furnishings, buildings, wealth, the “good” life…and teaches people that obedience to God is not necessary to receive these things.
- False Politics. This part of Babylon controls the nations of the world. Again, no need for submission to God.

Chapter 17 shows us the future destruction of the false religion part of Babylon.
Chapter 18 shows us the future collapse of the false economy part of Babylon.
And Chapter 19 shows us the future death of false politics…and then Babylon will be gone forever.

“After this, I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendor. With a mighty voice he shouted:
‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the Great!
She has become a home for demons
And a haunt for every evil spirit,
A haunt for every unclean and detestable bird.
For all the nations have drunk
This angel is so bright he actually lights up the earth. Doesn’t that give you the thought that there might be a whole lot more to God’s world than we have ever dreamed possible?

The angel is proclaiming the destruction of the world’s economic system. He is stating that the place which will be the center for that economic control, the geographical place which will be the end-times Babylon, will forever be a place to hold demons. Maybe it becomes a part of what we think of as Hell.

Lies have been told by Babylon and believed by and participated in by the rulers of earth, the people of every nation, and merchants around the globe.

What lies? The lies that said: “Here are the things you want. You can have them. It doesn’t matter how you get them.”

“The angel proclaimed that Babylon was to be destroyed. He is stating that the place which will be the center for that economic control, the geographical place which will be the end-times Babylon, will forever be a place to hold demons. Maybe it becomes a part of what we think of as Hell.

Lies have been told by Babylon and believed by and participated in by the rulers of earth, the people of every nation, and merchants around the globe.

What lies? The lies that said: “Here are the things you want. You can have them. It doesn’t matter how you get them.”

Then I heard another voice from heaven say:
‘Come out of her, my people,
so that you will not share in her sins,
so that you will not receive any of her plagues;’” (Rev. 18:4)

What are the people of God told to do? Get out while the getting’s good! If any of you who believe in Jesus Christ have any tiny part of you which is still thinking everything will return to normal and life will continue as it always has, get rid of that thought. The world that is coming isn’t at all like the one you’ve been living in. The world that is coming is based on God’s ways, not Babylon’s ways. God, and God alone is worshipped. Material blessings are gifts from God and are gratefully received, not stolen or fought for. And power over nations is God’s power. Allegiance is to Him.

Get out of Babylon. In your thinking. In your physical presence. Flee! Run! Babylon is toast.

“...for her sins are piled to heaven,
and God has remembered her crimes.
Give back to her as she has given;
pay her back double for what she has done.
Mix her a double portion from her own cup.
Give her as much torture and grief
As the glory and luxury she gave herself.
In her heart she boasts,
How is Babylon described here? A proud, arrogant woman who has decided she will never suffer. She is so sure of her own power that she raises her chin proudly in the presence of God and snubs Him.

But….*mighty is the Lord God who judges her.* She never had a chance. She was only *allowed* to live. Now it is time for her to be gone.

Gone she will be.

> "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry:
> ‘Woe! Woe, O great city,
> O Babylon, city of power!
> In one hour your doom has come!’ " (18:9&10)

Do the rulers of the earth repent of their sinfulness when they see all that power slipping into nothingness? No.

> "The merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her because no one buys their cargoes any more – cargoes of gold, silver, precious stones and pearls; fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet cloth; every sort of citron wood, and articles of every kind made of ivory, costly wood, bronze, iron, and marble; cargoes of cinnamon and spice, of incense, myrrh, and frankincense, or wine and olive oil, of fine flour and wheat; cattle and sheep; horses and carriages, and bodies and souls of men."

> "They will say, ‘The fruit you longed for is gone from you. All your riches and splendor have vanished, never to be recovered’. The merchants who sold these things and gained their wealth from her will stand far off, terrified at her torment. They will weep and mourn and cry out:
> ‘Woe, woe, O great city,
dressed in fine linen, purple and scarlet,
and glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls!
In one hour such great wealth has been brought to ruin!’ "
“Every sea captain, and all who travel by ship, the sailors, and all who earn their living from the sea, will stand far off. When they see the smoke of her burning they will exclaim, ‘Was there ever a city like this great city?’ They will throw dust on their heads, and with weeping and mourning cry out:

‘Woe! Woe, O great city, where all who had ships on the sea became rich through her wealth! In one hour she has been brought to ruin!’” (18:11-19)

Do the merchants of the earth repent of their sinfulness when they see all those riches disappearing? No.

They mourn and grieve for the power and riches they are losing. But they do not admit they are sinners. They will not say “I’m sorry” to Almighty God. They are going to slide into everlasting destruction along with their gold, silver and cinnamon!

“Rejoice over her, O heaven! Rejoice saints, and apostles and prophets! God has judged her for the way she treated you.” (18:20)

What are the people of God told to do? Be filled with joy that the evil of the world is nearly gone. It’s the only reaction which makes sense for the people who love the One, True God.

And then, as if these words from heaven might not be enough to make his readers totally convinced of the predetermined end of evil, John is given another picture to convey God’s message….What does John see next?

“Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder about the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said:

‘With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again.’” (18:21-23a)
All the sweet, comforting, life-confirming things that have been a part of life in Babylon will be gone. Forever. Music, skills, fine foods, soft light, the hope of the future in the eyes of two people in love…gone forever.

“Your merchants were the world’s great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray.” (18:23b)

How did Babylon fool everyone for so long? The lure of wonderful things, without worship of the One, True God has blinded everyone. When the pursuit of beautiful things is more important than the pursuit of God Himself, Babylon rules.

Look what Babylon has done with her power:

“In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth.” (18:24)

Massacres, persecutions, holocausts, child abuse, violence, addictions…all these have come from beautiful Babylon.

Now…it’s time for all of us to ask the question we are afraid to ask: “Am I attracted to Babylon, too?” “Am I a lover of beautiful things…willing to bypass trusting God for those things?”

I can’t answer the question for you. I can only, with God’s help, answer the question for me. And if I find I am living with one foot in Babylon…how do I leave? “Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues…” (Revelation 18:4)

How do I live here in the midst of Babylon and leave Babylon, too?

Because, you see, this chapter is not just for those living in the end times. Babylon has been around since Adam and Eve. The picture we have in Revelation 18 is just a summary of what Babylon has always been like. How do I live here in the midst of Babylon and not fall for the lies of Babylon?

Keep my eyes on Jesus. Love Him. Long for Him. Spend time with Him. Ask Him to give me eyes which see this world as He sees it. “…those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

Someday the music of this world will fade away. I know, because I have believed in Jesus, I will be where the music will always be playing. The question is: while I’m here, waiting for that sweet time to come, who has my devotion? God….or Babylon?
Revelation 18
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (:1-3) John sees another angel come down from heaven – what is this angel like? What does the angel proclaim?

2. (:4) What are the people of God told to do?

3. (:5-8) How is Babylon described here?

4. (:9-10) How do the rulers of the earth respond when they see the world’s economy crumbling?

5. (:11-19) How do the merchants of the earth respond?

6. (:20) What are the people of God told to do?

7. (:21) What does John see next?

8. (:22-23a) What will be gone forever from Babylon?

9. (:23b) How did Babylon fool everyone for so long?

10. (:24) What is Babylon responsible for?

Opinion and Application Questions:

11. What two things are believers told to do with respect to Babylon?

12. Am I a part of Babylon today…if so, how do I leave?
Chapter Twenty Three
Welcome Back, King Jesus!

Revelation 19

As Chapter 19 opens, Babylon is almost completely destroyed. All that remains are her armies, gathered at Armageddon, led by anti-christ and the false prophet. They are shaking their fists into the heavens, and preparing to invade Jerusalem. The Jews in that city have been trusting in their Messiah, Jesus, all through the long night, to rescue them…and then….

John hears a great voice of much people in heaven.

“After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:
‘Hallelujah!
Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
for just and true are his judgments.
He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of his Servants.’
And again they shouted:

‘Hallelujah!’

The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.” (Rev. 19:1-3)

Who is doing the shouting? Who is in heaven at this point? It’s got to be us! All the believers in Jesus who have died or been raptured up to this time.

We are all going crazy with joy because:
- The evil, evil woman whose name is Babylon, who has bombarded the entire world with lies and wickedness since Adam and Eve, is about to be dust.
- Our sisters and brothers still on earth, hiding and afraid, are about to be rescued.
- We are completely sure that Jesus has accomplished all of this – we are not patting ourselves on the back at all.
- We are straddling our horses and trying to hold them back…

When I read these first three verses I always smile to myself and picture that scene in The Wizard of Oz when the munchkins are all dancing and celebrating and singing – “Ding, Dong, the Witch is Dead!” Complete, abandoned happiness. Clicking of heels and laughter and slapping each other on the back.

“The four and twenty elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

‘Amen, Hallelujah!’” (Rev. 19:4)

Not to be left out of a good time, what did the 24 elders and 4 living creatures do then? What they always do when someone is praising God – they join in! They never miss a party.

“Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

‘Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
both small and great!’” (Rev. 19:5)

Who is being told to let loose and praise? All the servants of God. Not just the ones in heaven, I think, but all of them. “And you will sing as on the night you celebrate a holy festival; your hearts will rejoice as when people go up with flutes to the mountain of the Lord, to the Rock of Israel, the Lord will cause men to hear his majestic voice and will make them see his arm coming down with raging anger and consuming fire, with cloudburst, thunderstorm and hail.” (Isaiah 30:29-30)
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

Even the ones on earth who have been making it one minute at a time through the long, long night - suddenly they, as one, feel the need to sing out in praise to their Savior. And we join in from heaven – the noise is coming from heaven and earth - probably rocking John to the center of his being:

> “Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:
>   ‘Hallelujah!
>   For our Lord God Almighty reigns!’
>   Let us rejoice and be glad
>   And give him glory!
> For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. “ (Rev. 19:6&7)

Why not memorize those verses? Someday you will be saying them with every other believer who has ever lived.

> “Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints). Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’ ” (Rev. 19:8&9a)

Wedding festivities are about to commence. A supper and activities and beautiful clothes. How long before the wedding actually takes place? I think it will be about a thousand years. (Rev. 21:2) When all the people who are yet to be born in the Millennium have had their chance to believe in King Jesus, then the bride of Christ will be complete. Every person who has ever placed their faith in the Messiah of Israel – every Old Testament believer, every New Testament believer and every Millennium believer – all of us together – are the completed, beautiful bride of Christ. The Father’s gift to the Son. But a thousand years isn’t so long, is it? Only about a day or so…(II Peter 3:8)

> “…and he added, ‘These are the true words of God.’ At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.’ ” (Rev. 19:9b&10)

I can’t really say that I blame you, John. It all must have been so overwhelming. Praises and noise and shouting and joy and anticipation and preparing for a wedding and love and the very words of God. You fell at the feet of the angel and began to worship!
But of course you knew that only God is to be worshipped. And your friend, the angel, knew, too, that you only needed a nudge in the right direction to remind you of who you weren’t talking to.

So, just look up….

“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp, two-edged sword with which to strike down the nations. ‘He will rule them with an iron scepter.’ He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” (Rev. 19:11-16)

What will this be like? There is a Psalm of David which describes this event, too:

“The cords of the grave coiled around me;
the snares of death confronted me.
In my distress I called to the LORD;
I cried to my God for help.
From his temple he heard my voice;
my cry came before him, into his ears.
The earth trembled and quaked,
And the foundations of the mountains shook;
they trembled because he was angry.
Smoke rose from his nostrils;
consuming fire came from his mouth,
burning coals blazed out of it.
He parted the heavens and came down;
dark clouds were under his feet.
He mounted the cherubim and flew;
He soared on the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his covering, his Canopy around him –
The dark rain clouds of the sky.
Out of the brightness of his presence clouds advanced,
with hailstones and bolts of lightning.
The LORD thundered from heaven;
the voice of the Most High
resounded.
He shot his arrows and scattered the enemies,
great bolts of lightning and routed them.
The valleys of the sea were exposed
and the foundations of the earth laid bare
at your rebuke, O LORD,
at the blast of breath from your nostrils.
He reached down from on high and took
Hold of me;
He drew me out of deep waters.
He rescued me from my powerful enemy,
from my foes, who were too strong for me.
They confronted me in the day of my disaster,
but the LORD was my support.
He brought me out into a spacious place;
He rescued me because he delighted in me.” (Psalm 18:5-19)

How can I comment on this? I can’t even imagine living through it!

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried out in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, ‘Come, gather yourselves together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great.’” (Rev. 19:17&18)

The earth’s winged sanitary engineers are being called into duty.

“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.” (Rev. 19:19-21)

And just like that - it’s over. With a word from the King on the white horse the enemies of God are deposited into the place of everlasting punishment. With just a word.
There are three groups of people who are part of His return:
   a. People on earth gathering to make war with Jesus
   b. People on horses joyfully returning with Him
   c. People on earth shouting “Welcome Back, King Jesus!”

You will be there. Which group of people will you be a part of?

Revelation 19
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (1-3) John hears a great voice of much people in heaven. Who is doing the shouting? Who is in heaven at this point?

2. (4) What did the 24 elders do then? (hint: what they always do when someone is praising God.)

3. (5) Who is being told to let loose and praise?

4. (6) The praise that bursts forth sounds like what three (3) things to John?
   1)
   2)
   3)

5. (7-9) What is about to commence? How long before it happens? (Rev. 21:2)

6. (10) John is overwhelmed with all he is hearing and seeing at this point…and he makes a mistake. What is his mistake?

7. (11-16) The Lord finally returns. What are 10 things which describe Jesus as He descends to earth?
   1)
   2)
   3)
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

8. (6:17-21) What happens to the beast and the false prophet and all the armies of the world gathered outside Jerusalem?

Opinion and Application Questions:

9. There are three groups of people who are part of His return:
   d. People on earth gathering to make war with Jesus
   e. People on earth shouting His praises
   f. People on horses returning with Him

   This is a picture of the future. Where are you in the picture?
Chapter Twenty Four
Two Births, Two Deaths, Two Resurrections

Revelation 20

Daniel saw this chapter happening about 500 years before John saw it: “In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.” (Daniel 7:13-14)

Let’s jump right in: What are the two things which happen immediately as the LORD sets up His kingdom?

“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.” (Rev. 20:1-3)
First, the dragon, who is the old serpent from Genesis, and who is also called the devil, and satan - he is the fallen angel who rebelled against God after the creation of the world - is taken captive and rendered powerless for one thousand years. For that thousand years he will not be allowed to deceive anyone into believing the lies of Babylon. What lies? … that there is such a thing as worship if you are not worshipping the One, True God…or such a thing as material wealth that does not come in God’s way and in God’s time…or such a thing as power which is not submitted to God.

“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:4-6)

And second, those who are part of the first resurrection are given authority to rule with Christ for the thousand years. When I say first “resurrection”, I mean people who now have their new bodies, their resurrected bodies, bodies just like Jesus had after He was resurrected from the grave. There are three kinds of people who make up this first resurrection. Who are they?

1) Well, first of all of course, Jesus. He was the “first-fruits” of all those who would someday be given resurrected bodies. (I Cor. 15:20)

2) The ones who come back with Christ in resurrected bodies, on white horses (Revelation 19:11-14) (in other words, the raptured ones – including both Old Testament and New Testament believers in Jesus Christ. All those who ever lived and had faith in God’s Messiah are part of this group. It they were already dead when the rapture occurred during the Last Seven Years, they were “caught up” first, then were joined immediately by all those who were alive and remained. 1 Thessalonians 4:16&17) Also included in this group are the 144,000

3) Two witnesses, who joined up with the raptured ones later, after each of their special jobs on earth was accomplished. (Revelation 14:1-3)
4) The ones who believed in Christ after the rapture, and then died or were martyred. They are a part of this group, too. Are they getting their resurrected bodies now, in Chapter 20, as He returns to earth? Or did they get their new bodies one at a time as they died during the Last Seven Years? I’m not sure scripture gives a clear answer on this – but there is no doubt they are here, in Chapter 20, as the thousand-year Millennium begins.

Who is not a part of this first resurrection? All dead people throughout history who never, in their lifetime, accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Neither Old Testament unbelievers nor New Testament unbelievers are a part of this resurrection. Neither are those who remained unbelievers all the way through the Last Seven Years. All unbelievers are dead. When Chapter 20 begins, there is not one unbeliever left alive anywhere on earth. We will see all of these unbelievers one more time before we finish Revelation. But not until the thousand years are over.

Also not a part of the first resurrection are the people who believed in Jesus since the rapture and somehow stayed alive to the end of the Last Seven Years. This would include the believing nation of Israel. As the thousand-year Millennium begins they are alive on planet earth, still in their un-resurrected bodies, and will live through the Millennium in that state as believers in Jesus Christ (when I say “in that state”, I mean: just the same as we are now – believers in Jesus but still living in bodies which can age and decay and sin). They will still struggle with sin, just as we do now, and they will still bring forth children. Their children will still need to come to faith in Jesus as they live through those thousand years.

The concept of a glorious reign of God on earth is seen in scripture all the way from Genesis to Revelation. Revelation shows us that this glorious reign on earth will be one thousand years in length, or, a “millennium”.

How will the Millennium be different from any other time in history?

Nature:

- Sweet water where there was bitter: Ezekiel 47:1-12
- Rain for healthy crops and green pastures: Joel 2:21-26
- Living water flowing from Jerusalem – Zechariah 14:8
- Natural elements (like wind & rain) will not make us fear – Matthew 14:24-33, Mark 4:35-41
- Deserts turned into flowering wonderlands – Isaiah 41:18-20
- The land of Israel multiplying people and prosperity – Ezekiel 36:8-11
- Mountains moved, if necessary – Matthew 21: 21,22
- No more decay – Romans 8:19-21
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

- Swarms of living creatures will thrive because of clean water: Ezekiel 47:9
- No more wild beasts: Ezekiel 34:25
- Deserts will become pools of water Isaiah 35:7

**Food Supply:**
- Refreshing drink – Joel 3:18
- Plentiful rain for a plentiful food supply – Isaiah 30:23,24
- Israel will be a land known for its crops – Ezekiel 34:29, Zech 8:11,12
- Plenty for all to eat – John 6:5-14
- Wine, gardens, fruit – in abundance – Amos 9:13
- No hunger – Psalms 22:26

**Peaceful Existence**
- Wolf lie down with lamb – Isaiah 65:25
- Little children will tame wild animals – Isaiah 11:6-8,
- No war – Hosea 2:18
- Theaters of war will become pastures – Isaiah 29:17
- Evil people will disappear – Isaiah 29:20, Zephaniah 3:11
- Singing and joy will mark our lives – Isaiah 35:10
- People will build houses, settle down – Isaiah 65:21
- The Lord will quiet us with His love – Zephaniah 3:17
- No fear – Zephaniah 3:13, 16
- No violence – Isaiah 60:18
- Satan will be bound in a dungeon – Revelation 20:1-3

**Healing**
- Deaf will hear, Blind will see – Isaiah 29:18
- No one will be sick – Isaiah 33:24
- Lame will leap, dumb will speak – Isaiah 35:6

**Long Life in the Millennium**
- People will live a long, long life– Isaiah 65:20
- People will bear children – Isaiah 65:23
- Children will not rebel – Isaiah 65:23, Psalms 22:30,31
- Only believers will enter the millennium – Zephaniah 3:12, Psalms 22:27,28
- Jesus will be with us, will reign – Zephaniah 3:15, Zechariah 14:9
- Death will have no power – Psalms 22:29

“When the thousand years are over, satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into
the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (Rev. 20:7-10)

When the Millennium is over, the devil will be set free for a short time. He will roam the earth and see if any people are alive on earth and willing to once more believe his lies. Here’s the amazing thing: he is able to deceive so many people that they are described as “the number of whom is as the sand of the sea”.

Can you believe it? After living for a thousand years under the reign of Jesus Christ, with justice, prosperity, blessings, comfort, care, good health, no crime tolerated - a utopia - still, innumerable people decide to rebel against God once more in history. They choose their lives of rebellion and sin over faith and submission to God. They have looked and acted like everyone else for one thousand years, but in their hearts have never chosen to place their faith in Jesus.

Why? Not because they have lived hard lives or are unhappy. But simply because they do not want to bend their knee to God. They do not want to admit their own sinfulness and need for a Savior.

They rebel, join with Satan to try to defeat God, surround the city of Jerusalem one last time, and are consumed with fire from heaven, an ending which has been clearly foretold by God since the day the book of Revelation was penned – in about 100 AD.

Unbelievable.

The last rebellion is over…and next:

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written

in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:11-15)

Who appears before the Great White Throne for judgment? Here’s the key to understanding the Great White Throne judgment: It’s the dead who appear there.
Who is dead at this point in history? All those who have ever died in all of history but had never believed in Christ. Every dead person who had never bowed the knee to Jesus from Old Testament times, New Testament times, The Last Seven Years, and the Millennium.

Everyone else – from all of history – is not dead! They are alive! They have been resurrected and given new, sinless bodies to live in forever. The alive believers in Jesus Christ do not appear at the Great White Throne for judgment.

No living person appears before the Great White Throne. There is no future judgment of God waiting for those who have already had their sins judged on the cross of Jesus Christ. Yes, there may have been times in their lives when those people needed to be reprimanded by God, or disciplined. “Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline.” Revelation 3:19. But that discipline was for the purpose of bringing them back into a vibrant walk with Jesus. That discipline was never the anger, or wrath, of God. It wasn’t for punishment. Their total sin was condemned and judged and eternally punished in Jesus Christ on the cross. There is no more judgment for sin for any person who has believed Jesus paid the price for their sins.

The people who appear before the Great White Throne are actually resurrected from the dead in order to see their lifetimes of actions and then hear God’s judgment on those actions. This is the 2nd resurrection. These people receive bodies which can see and experience this Great White Throne judgment. And then those bodies will suffer the punishment given by God. Those bodies will suffer eternally in Hell. Before this moment the souls of these unbelievers had been suffering in Hell. But now they have eternal bodies, too, which will suffer in Hell.

Anyone who has believed in Jesus Christ and had their sins forgiven by Him during their lifetime is already resurrected at this point. They are not part of this 2nd resurrection, or of the second death which comes for everyone who must appear at the Great White Throne. This is a command appearance. No one may choose whether or not they want to come.

Now look at verse 15 one more time. What is the one thing which sends every man to everlasting punishment…no matter how good or bad he/she has been? “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire”.

Let’s say someone has lived a wonderful, exemplary life. They have helped others, maybe sacrificed their own life to save someone else’s life, maybe invented things which helped all of humanity, maybe comforted others in horrible circumstances, maybe raised moral, upright children, maybe served in their community or in their church, mosque or synagogue. But that someone never was
willing to submit their life to Jesus Christ, never wanted to admit their need for a Savior, never bowed their knee to the Messiah of Israel.

Their name is not written in the book of life. They are dead. They are dead because they never believed in Jesus. You see - every person starts out dead - that’s the inheritance we received from Adam and Eve. Believing in Jesus is the only thing that changes anyone from a dead person to an alive person. All dead people end up in a lake of fire – and there they will receive the punishment they rightly deserve for the evil deeds they have done. Every lie…every theft…every adultery…every hatred. Every sin is punished. Forever. In the lake of fire.

No good deed can get your name in the book of life. Only being alive can get your name into the book of life.

Only receiving Jesus Christ in your lifetime changes you from a dead person to an alive person, and records your name forever in the only book which counts at the Great White Throne.

Ask yourself - Who takes part in each of these?

a. **First Birth**: Every person (physically born)

b. **Second Birth**: Those people who put their faith in Jesus (born again – spiritual birth)

c. **First Death**: Every person (the grave)

d. **Second Death**: Only those people who do **not** put their faith in Jesus. (the lake of fire)

e. **First Resurrection**: Only those people who at sometime in their life put their faith in Jesus. (this resurrection happens in “parts” - first at the Rapture, and then at the “catching up” of the 144,000 and the two witnesses, and then as new believers in Jesus are martyred after the rapture)

f. **Second Resurrection**: Those people who at some point in their life do **not** put their faith in Jesus. (this resurrection happens at the Great White Throne)

**A short Riddle:**

If you are part of the first **BIRTH**, you **will** be part of the first and **second DEATHS**, **unless** you are part of the second **BIRTH** …then you will experience the first **DEATH**, but not the second, and will be part of the first **RESURRECTION** but will never have to go through the second **RESURRECTION**.

At all costs - avoid the second death and the second resurrection.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

Revelation 20
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (1:1-6) What are the 2 things which happen immediately as the LORD starts to set up His kingdom?
   a. (:1-3)
   b. (:4-6)

2. How will the one thousand years be different from any other time in history?
   **Nature:**
   - Ezekiel 47:1-12
   - Joel 2:21-26
   - Zechariah 14:8
   - Matthew 14:24-33, Mark 4:35-41
   - Isaiah 41:18-20
   - Ezekiel 36:8-11
   - Matthew 21:21,22
   - Romans 8:19-21
   - Ezekiel 47:9
   - Ezekiel 34:25
   - Isaiah 35:7
   **Food Supply:**
   - Joel 3:18
   - Isaiah 30-23,24
   - Ezekiel 34:29, Zech 8:11,12
   - John 6:5-14
   - Amos 9:13
   - Psalms 22:26
   **Peaceful Existence**
   - Isaiah 65:25
   - Isaiah 11:6-8, 11
   - Hosea 2:18
   - Isaiah 29:17
   - Isaiah 29:20, Zephaniah 3:11
   - Isaiah 35:10
   - Isaiah 65:21
   - Zephaniah 3:17
   - Zephaniah 3:13, 16
   - Isaiah 60:18
   - Revelation 20:1-3
Healing
- Isaiah 29:18
- Isaiah 33:24
- Isaiah 35:6

Long Life in the Millennium
- Isaiah 65:20
- Isaiah 65:23
- Isaiah 65:23, Psalms 22:30,31
- Zephaniah 3:12, Psalms 22:27,28
- Zephaniah 3:15, Zechariah 14:9
- Psalms 22:29

3. (7-10) What happens as soon as the one thousand years is over?

4. (11-15) Who appears before the Great White Throne for judgment?

5. (15) What is the one thing which sends every man to everlasting punishment...no matter how good or bad he/she has been?

6. Who takes part in each of these?
   a. First Birth:
   b. Second Birth:
   c. First Death:
   d. Second Death:
   e. First Resurrection:
   f. Second Resurrection:

A riddle to fill out:

If you are part of the first ____________, you will be part of the first and second ______________, unless you are part of the second ________

...then you will experience the first ____________, but not the second, and will be part of the first ______________ but will never have to go through the second ______________.

(hint: 2 births, 2 deaths, 2 resurrections)
Chapter Twenty Five
Now…We Wait…

Revelation 21 & 22

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.” (Rev. 21:1)

Take a deep breath. It’s done. Everything which sin wrecked has been either redeemed or destroyed. It’s time to do what Adam and Eve started to do - live with God. A new world is needed for that. God will not live anywhere there is even the slightest blemish. God is perfectly Holy, set apart, unique. The world of God will be the same.

It will help us to see the events leading up to chapters 21&22 as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28:

“Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.”

At the end of Jesus’ life on earth He sat down at the right hand of the Father in heaven. At the end of the Last Seven Years, as we have seen in Revelation, Jesus returned to earth to reign as King for a thousand years. At the end of that thousand years He takes the kingdom over which He has reigned and hands it to the Father.
“For he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.”

The Millennial reign of Jesus on earth will be the time He needs to totally bring into submission every enemy. The devil is locked in chains, but it looks like some of his fellow rebellious angels are still free on earth.

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

Yes, death does occur during the Millenium, even though it is very rare. Death is thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14) at the Great White Throne judgment. And when that happens, the last enemy of Jesus Christ is gone forever.

“For he has put everything under his feet. Now when it says ‘everything’ has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.”

Paul is careful here to be sure we don’t misunderstand. At the end of the Millennium everything is now under the authority of Jesus Christ. But of course that doesn’t mean God the Father is under his authority.

“When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.”

Jesus hands it all to the Father. Then he steps also under the authority of the Father. God is all in all. A perfect world could exist no other way.

“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” (Rev. 21:2)

Why is Jerusalem called the “Holy City”? And why do we need a New Jerusalem?

Jerusalem was chosen by God as the place where He would dwell with men on earth. (I Kings 8:10,11) But because of the sinful condition of men and the earth, of course the dwelling of God had to be mostly symbolic. Yes, His presence was there, but it could not be anywhere near the glory that the actual, 100% presence of God would have been.

So Jerusalem is called throughout scripture the “Holy City” because it symbolized the time when God would 100% dwell with men. Israel was chosen as the nation to tell the whole world about God – Who would someday totally dwell with men.
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

But Israel, the Jews, priests - none of these are mentioned in Revelation 21&22. Only Jerusalem. Why? There is no longer any need for one nation to be a witness to the others. Or one people to carry out festivals and traditions which pointed the rest of the world to God. No need for sacrifices, or even a temple. Just no need any more. There is now only one nation. All people who ever believed in the Messiah of Israel…the Messiah who was God Himself…are now that one nation.

Jerusalem always was God’s down payment on a promise: that someday He would dwell 100% with men.

The promise of Jerusalem is totally fulfilled in Jesus. God dwells with men.

The forever New Heaven and New Earth are Jerusalem. God dwells with men.

That’s why Abraham, who had all the promises of God, was always “…looking for a city whose builder and maker is God.” (Hebrews 11:10). He was looking for the New Jerusalem – the New Heaven and the New Earth. He was looking for a time and a place where God would dwell 100% with men.

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’” (Rev. 21:3&4)

God’s overall purpose for men, ever since He created the earth, and even before that, has always been that they would be “for the display of His splendor”. We were all made to reflect the glory of God. (Ephesians 3:10-13, Isaiah 61:3)

Does that grab you, thrill you, or does that disappoint you? Were you hoping His purpose would somehow be all about you? Don’t worry – even if you honestly say you were hoping it would be more about you, you won’t feel that way then. You’ll be ecstatic that your main purpose is to reflect His glory.

“He who was seated on the throne said, ‘I am making everything new!’ Then he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’ He said to me: ‘It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God, and he will be my son.’” (Rev. 21:5-7)
The New Jerusalem. The New Heaven and Earth. They are us, the people of God, dwelling forever and ever and ever with God. And our greatest pleasure and purpose will be to be all about Him. The One who gave us drink from waters which would never dry up. The One who has prepared a world for us to inherit.

In verse 9 we begin to see what that world will look like. But, first, a question: Who won’t be in the New Heaven and New Earth?

"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death." (Rev. 21:8)

No sinners whatsoever. Not one, anywhere. They will already be in the lake of fire. Forever gone. Picture again the Great White Throne from chapter 20. Every person standing before that throne had every deed in their life examined. If there was any sin found anywhere in any person, that person was not allowed to enter into the perfect New Heaven and New Earth. The only way any sinful person could have hoped to enter that perfect world would have been if they had, during their lifetime, accepted the gift of righteousness (perfectness) offered by Jesus Christ. If they had never accepted that gift, then their name was never recorded in the Book of Life. And they were cast into the lake of fire forever. Period. No exceptions.

Now we come to the description of the New Heaven and the New Earth. I hope as you read through this passage you find more than one thing which connects with you. There are so many beautiful things about the New Heaven and New Earth that there’s no way to totally describe it. But try, at least, to linger for a few minutes on one verse or one aspect of this place we will be living in forever. After you read this passage, I’ll tell you my favorite part.

"One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a
“Are We There, Yet?”
A Chapter-by-Chapter Study of the Book of Revelation

square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass.

I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.” (Rev.21:9 – 22:5)

Here’s my pick:

Revelation 21:26 says the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into this place. In other words, the things which were most valuable about the old world we used to live in are brought into this new world.

My immediate thought when I first read this was: “What things were most glorious and valuable about our old world? Gold? Silver? Gourmet foods? Landscapes? Housing? Soft textures? Beautiful colors? Sunsets?”
And then I read verse 27. “Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” It’s people who are entering. It’s not things, after all; it’s people. People are the most valuable thing on earth.

The story is told of Saint Lawrence in the 2nd century, a deacon in the early church, and a treasurer of the church’s resources, who “…was brought before the authorities and asked to hand over all the church’s treasures to the government.” To refuse meant certain death. He compliantly asked for eight days to gather the treasures of the church, at which time he promised to present them to the emperor’s representative. On the eighth day he appeared and brought with him orphans, the poor, the lame, the widows in distress. Pointing to them, he told the authorities, “These are the treasures of the church!” For that reply, Lawrence was sentenced to death in the fire and not many days later was roasted on a spit over burning coals.” (from: *The Trouble With Jesus*, Joe Stowell.)

People are the treasures of this earth…and will be the treasures of the next. That’s my favorite part of the New Heaven & the New Earth.

So, what’s next? Now….we wait. We know what will happen during the Last Seven Years and during the Millennium. We know the major players. We know who the bad guys will be. And we know where we will be.

The Lord finishes up this “rock-your-world” book with a few things to remember….I think of these last few verses as my “Top Ten List of things Jesus wants us to know as we wait…”

1) (22:6) “The angel said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true…’”
   It’s all true. Not one word in this book is a lie. You can trust what you are reading.

2) (22:7) “Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book.”
   Keep it. Tuck it away safely in your heart and carry it around. Even when you still have questions.

3) (22:8&9) “I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!’”
   Don’t worship the message or the messenger.
4) (22:10) “Then he told me, ‘Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near.’”
Don’t keep it a secret.

5) (22:11) “Let him who does wrong continue to do wrong; let him who is vile continue to be vile;…”
Not everyone will accept it.

6) (22:11b-15) “…let him who does right continue to do right; and let him who is holy continue to be holy. Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.”
Have you accepted Jesus Christ for Who He has said He is? Have you become a follower of Jesus? Then you are “right” and “holy” in the eyes of God right now…and you will continue to be right and holy until the moment you stand in His presence.

7) (22:16) “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches.”
It’s the church who needs to know these things. If anyone tells you the book of Revelation isn’t for the church, because the church will be gone for the events described there, they are wrong. Jesus sent this message for the church.

8) (22:17) “The Spirit and the bride say ‘Come!’ And let him who hears say ‘Come!’”
If you are thinking you will be afraid of what you see in this book, you are in for a surprise. Expect your response to be “Come!”. Come, Lord Jesus…I can’t wait for this to happen.

9) (22:18,19) “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”
Don’t add to it, or subtract from it. It says what it says. We can use other portions of scripture to understand it, but we can never explain it away.
10) (:20) “He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ ”

When all of this happens, it will happen fast.

And now….we wait….


Revelation 21 & 22
Questions for Discussion or Personal Study

1. (21:1) Why do we need a New Heaven and New Earth? (I Cor. 15:24-28)

2. (21:2) Why is Jerusalem called the “Holy City”? (I Kings 8:10,11) And why do we need a New Jerusalem?

3. (21:3) What has been God’s overall purpose for men – ever since he first created the earth – and even before that? (Ephesians 3:10-13, Isaiah 61:3)

4. (21:8) Who won’t be in the New Heaven and New Earth?

5. (21:9 – 22:5) Pick one thing you especially like about the New Heaven and New Earth, from this description, and why?

6. (22:6-21) List 10 things Jesus wants us to know as we wait…

   1. (:6)
   2. (:7)
   3. (:8&9)
   4. (:10)
   5. (:11a)
   6. (:11b-15)
   7. (:16)
   8. (:17)
   9. (:18,19)
  10. (:20)
Appendage

The History and Future of the World
In 1,000 words or less

- There always was God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God created angels, and God created a bride (a universe and people) for His Son – a gift of great Love. The angels were to serve the Son by caring for the universe and the people. The Universe and the people were for giving love and pleasure to the Son.
- One of God’s created angels decided he would be like God…better, indeed, than God, and he rebelled against God’s plan. He did not want to serve the universe and men, he wanted the universe and men to serve him.
- This evil angel, Satan, was then no longer allowed to live in the heavenly places, but he was allowed, for a short time, to live on earth and to visit heaven.
- Satan tempted men to also rebel against God, and they did. And when they decided to not obey God, but to obey Satan instead, they became the servants of Satan, not God. And Satan had what he wanted…a universe and men to serve him.
- But God, of course, had a plan all along for what He knew all along would happen. The Son would make a love sacrifice for the universe and people which were His. He would become a man, live a life of obedience to God – no rebellion at all – and then the Son would allow Himself to be killed by men who were servants of Satan – and thus provide a way for those He loved to have their sins paid for, and to be able to choose obedience to God once again.
- Satan knew God had this plan for the Son to come as a man, so he tried for thousands of years to kill off any man who might be obedient to God and thus play a part in God’s plan, especially Jewish people, because the Son would be coming as a Jewish man.
- But Satan failed. The Son was born, lived, loved, and was killed, and then didn’t stay dead! He couldn’t stay dead. Now men had a way to escape from their slavery to Satan.
- The Son promised to return again to His universe and to His people, to once and for all destroy the evil angel. But He waited longer than anyone ever thought He would.
- While He waited, Satan fought hard to destroy any man on earth who might obey God and thus be there to welcome the Son when He would return, especially the Jewish people, for the Son had said the Jewish people would believe in Him and be there, believing in Him, at His return, and that He had special promises to fulfill to them when He got back.
• During this time of waiting, many men on earth believed and obeyed God, turning from evil. Because of their faith, Satan could not win the battle he was fighting, and ultimately was cast out of heaven forever, never to stand in the presence of God again, and 1/3 of all the created angels were on his side.

• When Satan was cast out and realized that this was it – no more chances – and that there was only a short amount of time (3 ½ years) before the Son would return, this evil angel was enraged, and began to kill believers in God as fast as he could.

• He tried first to kill all the Jews, whether they were believers or not – just in case they might someday believe in the Son. But when they seemed to have special protection from God, he was even madder, and ferociously attacked all believers in God.

• In order to kill them off fast enough – before the 3 ½ years were up – Satan found a man who would totally sell himself out to evil, and Satan gave that man all the power and authority he himself had always had, and that man, the anti-christ, began to murder believers. He forced the whole world to worship him, and the only ones who saw through him were believers in the Son. Another man was given great power, too – the false prophet – and the two of them forced people all over the world to worship anti-christ and to wear his mark.

• At this point it looked bad for the believers in the Son. If the Son was not going to return until the end of the 3 ½ years, it seemed that there would be no believers left anywhere on earth at His return.

• So, of course, God had a plan. He cut short the killing by removing those who were being killed. The Son snatched them up to heaven to join Him in preparations for His return. But before He removed believers from the earth, He chose 144,000 of them, all Jewish believers, to stay on earth and spread the news of His soon return. And He gave them special protection – a seal on their forehead – so that they could never be harmed by Satan.

• Those 144,000 preached the Good News about the Son to the whole world through one major catastrophe after another. When their job was finished, they joined the snatched away believers in heaven, ready to return with them when the Son returned. And because of the job they did, many, many Jewish people chose to believe in the Son just before His return. And when those Jewish people believed in the Son, many, many Gentiles did, too. Some died for that choice. Some lived.

• And the Son returned. All His enemies were destroyed. Believers who had died or been snatched up to heaven returned with Him, and the believers who had lived through it were there to greet them with shouts of joy!

• And the Son and His bride lived happily ever after…exactly what God had planned all along.
“Are We There, Yet?”
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