



# Mastering the Mysteries

**Studies in the  
book of  
Revelation**

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## **Studies in the Book of Revelation**

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# Lesson 1

## The Historical Background of the Revelation

*"Blessed is 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." (Rev. 1:3)*

### INTRODUCTION

Even though the opening verses of the book of Revelation contain a promise of blessing for those who read it and take it to heart, most Christians neglect its study. There are several reasons why this might be so. First, the language and style of the book is unique in the New Testament. Instead of the straightforward historical narrative of the gospels, Revelation employs visions and figures and fanciful images. In place of the common characters of the parables, we have beasts and dragons. It sometimes seems easier stay with those parts of Scripture whose meaning is obvious, than to wrestle with the complexities of Revelation. The book's apocalyptic style, however, gives it a cosmic rather than an earthy and temporal feel. It makes it clear that the events described in this book are, in every way, beyond the control of man, and in the hands of an eternal and Almighty God. The word "apocalypse" comes from a Greek word which means "a revealing" or "an uncovering." The purpose of the Revelation is not to cover or obscure the truth, but to reveal the plans and works of God.

Second, it is difficult, on casual reading, to find the sense of the book's structure. Revelation is not organized in the chronological order that we expect. It cannot be understood as a single continuous story. One author has likened it to a symphony in which the themes are stated and then developed. The basic ideas are presented and then restated in expanded and embellished forms. Perhaps we should learn from this that God is working on many fronts and in many ways to bring His perfect plan to its ultimate conclusion.

Third, many Christians believe that the book of Revelation has little practical value. It seems to lack the direct application to their lives that they find in the epistles, for example. We must never forget that "all Scripture is

God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). All prophecy serves to demonstrate the sovereignty of our God, who "knows the end from the beginning." My advice you, fellow believer, is: read, study, apply and expect to be blessed!

### **WHY WAS THE REVELATION WRITTEN?**

Read Rev. 1:3. Whose revelation is this? \_\_\_\_\_

Why was it given? \_\_\_\_\_

How was it made known? \_\_\_\_\_

John, who is identified in vs. 1 and again in vs. 4, is understood to be John the apostle of Jesus.

Though we can't be certain, the best evidence indicates that the book was written between 90 and 95 AD. It was during this period that the church in Asia was under intense persecution at the hand of the Roman Emperor, Domitian. John himself had been exiled to the island of Patmos because of his faith (See Rev. 1:9).

The book was circulated among the Asian churches. It served to communicate the commendations, condemnations, and instructions of the Lord Jesus and to give them hope for the future. The primary principles expressed in the book are:

- 1) Faith triumphs over might
- 2) The judgment of God is inevitable and inescapable
- 3) God, not man, is in control of history
- 4) The victory of God and godliness is certain

### **METHODS OF INTERPRETATION**

As you might guess, with a book as widely read and debated as the book of Revelation, there are several approaches to interpretation. The most common are:

#### **1) the Historical approach**

The historicist generally views the Revelation as a symbolic representation of the history of the NT Church, from the apostles to the return of Christ. It is, for them, prophetic in every sense. The symbols and events in the book, therefore, can only be understood "after the fact" and would have had little meaning for its first readers.

## **2) the Spiritualist approach**

The spiritualist rejects the prophetic aspect of the book. For him, the book is a metaphorical presentation of the eternal struggle between good and evil. It depicts the eventual triumph of the Christian church over the pagan world. It might be noted that those who embrace this view tend to reject biblical prophecy generally.

## **3) The Futurist approach**

The futurist holds that the entire book (with the possible exception of the letters to the seven churches in chapters 1-3) deals with the events of the end of the age. It covers that span of time which coincides with the "seventieth week" in Daniel (See Dan. 9:24-27). This is usually understood to be either a three and a half or a seven-year period.

## **4) The Preterist approach**

The preterist contends that everything in the book of Revelation was fulfilled in the 1st century. It deals with the persecution of the church under the tyranny of the Caesars. This view does not acknowledge any prophetic content.

## **5) The Historical background approach**

This view is based on the idea that the book must be interpreted on several levels. It served to encourage 1st century Christians in their struggles with persecution, paganism and compromise with the world. Its message is valid for Christians of all ages, however, because these struggles continue to the present day. The book does have a prophetic character as well, and deals with the climactic end of "this present age."

# **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- 1) Why do you think that this revelation was given first to John?
- 2) Why do you think that the Spirit inspired a prophetic book in this apocalyptic style?
- 3) Which of the approaches to interpretation do you find the most valid? Why?

# Lesson 2

## The Seven Churches of Asia

*"Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." (Rev. 1:11)*

### CHRIST AND HIS CHURCHES

Read Rev. 1:9-20. This passage includes the figures of seven lampstands and seven stars. See vs. 20; what is the meaning of the lampstands? \_\_\_\_\_ What is the meaning of the seven stars? \_\_\_\_\_ It may be helpful to know that the Greek word "*anglos*" can mean either "angel" or "messenger." If it is understood here in the sense of "God's messenger," or "one who speaks for God," who, in practical terms, might be the "angels" of the seven churches? \_\_\_\_\_ Notice in vs. 13 that there is someone "like a son of man" in the midst of the lampstands. Who is this person? (Consider Dan. 7:13-14) \_\_\_\_\_ How do you interpret his position in the midst of the lampstands and the fact that he holds the stars in his right hand? \_\_\_\_\_

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It is clear that the letters to the seven churches of Asia are messages from Christ. Notice how he describes himself in each of the seven letters. Read the following passages and write how Christ identifies himself in each:

Rev. 2:1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Rev. 2:8 \_\_\_\_\_  
Rev. 2:12 \_\_\_\_\_  
Rev. 2:18 \_\_\_\_\_  
Rev. 3:1a \_\_\_\_\_  
Rev. 3:7 \_\_\_\_\_  
Rev. 3:14 \_\_\_\_\_

## **THE SEVEN CHURCHES**

It is certain that there were other churches in Asia when the Revelation was written. One might logically wonder, why these particular churches? Is there a special significance to the choice of churches or to the order in which they are presented. Scholars have wrestled with these questions and have come to a variety of conclusions.

First possible answer: It is known that John spent much of his later life in Ephesus (the location of one of the seven churches). Because the churches are clustered in a rather small geographical area, it might be deduced that John ministered in all of these churches and was, therefore, familiar with their strengths and weaknesses. These short letters would, therefore, take on the character of pastoral epistles.

Second possible answer: By looking at a map of the region it can be easily observed that the letters to the churches are arranged according to the geographical location of the cities. If one were to hand carry the book from church to church, it is likely that they would have arrived at the churches in this order.

Third possible answer: The problems and strengths of these particular churches are representative of the problems and strengths of the church as a whole throughout its history. Some scholars further contend that the letters are in this order because they represent seven distinct periods in the history of the New Testament church, from the first century to the present. Those who take this view generally agree that the church at Laodicea represents the church in present time.

## **COMMENDATIONS AND CONDEMNATIONS**

We've all heard someone say, "well, I have good news and bad news." The letters to the seven churches seem to take this basic form. The Lord had both commendations and condemnations for the churches.

**Ephesus** - Read Rev. 2:2-6. What does the Lord commend about the church at Ephesus? \_\_\_\_\_

The Lord also has something against the church. What is it? (vs. 4) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ What is the remedy? (vs. 5) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Notice that it is not a matter of believing but of doing. What will be the result of the church's failure to repent? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ NOTE: the "Nicolaitans" were, "a class of professing Christians, who sought to introduce into the church a false freedom or licentiousness, thus abusing Paul's doctrine of grace, and were probably identical with those who held the doctrine of Balaam, Revelation 2:14." (Easton's Bible Dictionary). Consider Rom. 6:1-2.

**Smyrna** - Read Rev. 2:8-11. These believers seem to be poor. How does the Lord see them? \_\_\_\_\_ How are they being encouraged to face upcoming persecution? \_\_\_\_\_

**Pergamum** - Read Rev. 2:12-17. What does the Lord commend about the church at Pergamum? \_\_\_\_\_  
What does the Lord have against them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What will be the result of a lack of repentance?  
\_\_\_\_\_ What do you think this means?  
(Consider Isa. 11:4; Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12; Rev. 1:16, 2:12) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Thyatira** - Read Rev. 2:18-29. What does the Lord commend about the church at Thyatira? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ The Lord's condemnations seem to center on their toleration of the woman, Jezabel. The name given to this woman may be either actual or metaphorical. What did the original Jezabel do? (See 1 Kgs. 16:30-33) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ How might she and the "Prophetess" at Thyatira be similar?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Sardis** - Read Rev. 3:1-8. Are there any at Sardis who receive the Lord's commendation? If so, who? \_\_\_\_\_  
What does the Lord have against them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Philadelphia** - Read Rev. 3:7-13. What does the Lord commend about the church at Philadelphia? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Does He bring any condemnations?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Laodicea** - Read Rev. 3:14-22. Does the Lord have any commendation for the church at Laodicea? What is his primary complaint?

(See vs. 15) \_\_\_\_\_ What is the Lord's  
reaction to this attitude? \_\_\_\_\_ What  
misconception is exposed in vv. 17-18? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **PROMISES FOR OVERCOMERS**

Every letter ends with a recommendation to "those who have ears" and promises for those who "overcome." Read each of the following passages and write the promises in each:

Rev. 2:7 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 2:11 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 2:17 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 2:26-29 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 3:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 3:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 3:21-22 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

- 1) With which of the churches does the Lord seem most pleased? Why?
- 2) With which of the churches does the Lord seem the least pleased? Why?
- 3) Do you think that there are always local congregations or sects that fit these general patterns? How might the patterns manifest themselves in the present day?

# Lesson 3

## Visions of Worship

*"The twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever." (Rev. 4:10)*

### **EARTHLY WORSHIP**

You will recall that one interpretive view of Revelation holds that the seven churches in Rev. 2 and 3 represent seven distinct periods in the history of the New Testament Church. This interpretation seems sensible in light of the fact that Revelation consists of events arranged in repeating sevenfold series--see the table of contents-- each series concluding with the end of the age. If, in fact, this is the organizing principle of the book, then it stands to reason that the letters to the churches would follow a similar pattern. Those who hold to this interpretation usually understand the periods in this manner:

Ephesus = the apostolic church of the first century.

Smyrna = the persecuted church of the second and third centuries.

Pergamum = the worldly church of the fourth through the sixth centuries.

Thyatira = the corrupted church of the Middle Ages.

Sardis = the church of the period of Reformation.

Philadelphia = the church of the 18th and 19 centuries, alive with a zeal for missions and evangelism.

Laodicea = the church at the end of the age, made lukewarm by apostasy and affluence.

(Adapted from Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*)

This particular understanding is not popular with many teachers of the Reformed faith, because it makes the church at Sardis the representative of the church during the Reformation period; an era whose worship is highly esteemed.

Re-read the letter to Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6). What seems to be the primary lack in the church at Sardis? \_\_\_\_\_

A common criticism of the Reformers and the early protestant era is that, while there was a return to Biblical orthodoxy, that intellectual advance was accompanied by a movement away from a relational faith that sees the

hand of God in everyday life. A lack of spiritual vitality, in spite of correct doctrine, is referred to as "dead orthodoxy." Do you think that such a thing is possible? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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Some who accept the historical view of the letters to the churches, see the first 3 verses as applying to the apostate Roman church while verse four applies to the Reformers and their followers. The church as a whole, then, would be seen as departing from the truth of the gospel. A remnant of the faithful, however, (i.e., the Reformation/Protestant church) remained true and was being encouraged to carry on.

### **HEAVENLY WORSHIP**

Read Rev. 4:1-5:14. It is interesting to contrast worship, as it is depicted in chapters 4 and 5, with that which is described in chapters 2 and 3. On the one hand we see a heavenly worship which is entirely pure and which, with no distractions, is focused on God Almighty and on the Lamb. On the other hand we see an earthly worship which, though it is grounded in its faith in Christ, seems to be easily diverted from that pure focus by false teachers and worldliness. It is clear that, from God's perspective, it is not the church at Ephesus nor the church at Sardis nor the church at Laodicia nor any other earthly church that should serve as our ideal with respect to worship. At best, they fall far short of the heavenly example presented in chapter 5.

Who are the worshipers in this scene?

4:4 \_\_\_\_\_

4:6 \_\_\_\_\_

(Consider Ezk. 1:4-10 & 10:14)

5:11 \_\_\_\_\_

5:13 \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you think the elders represent? Why might there be twenty-four elders? \_\_\_\_\_

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This "worship service" utilizes both recitation and song. The first, in vs. 8, proclaims God's holiness, His omnipotence and His eternal immutability. Why are these aspects of God's character important to us? God's holiness \_\_\_\_\_

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God's omnipotence \_\_\_\_\_  
God's immutability \_\_\_\_\_

The twenty-four elders lay their crowns before the throne and proclaim the worthiness of God. Compare their words with those in 1 Chr. 29:11-13 and Ps. 115:1. Each of the elders has a crown. How did they get them? (Consider 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Cor. 9:25; 1 Pet. 5:2-4). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think they lay their crowns before the throne of God? (Consider Isa. 43:11; Jn. 15:5) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In churches today, worship services are often planned around a particular topic or theme. The theme of the heavenly worship service is clearly "The Worthiness of God." This is certainly appropriate because the meaning of the English word "worship" (*worthscipe*) is "to declare one's worth-ship." Read each of the following verses and list the reasons why our Lord is worthy of all honor and praise:

4:11 \_\_\_\_\_  
5:9 \_\_\_\_\_  
5:10 \_\_\_\_\_

In 5:5-6 Jesus is called by three names. What are they?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (See Gen. 49:8-10; Hosea 5:13-15)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (See Isa. 11:1-2, 10; Jer. 23:5-6)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (See Isa. 53:7; Jn. 1:29, 1 Pet. 1:18-19)

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- 1) What is the purpose of worship?
- 2) Compare earthly worship, as you have experienced it, with the worship depicted in the Revelation.
- 3) John saw God the Father on His throne and describes His appearance in 4:3. Ezekiel had a similar experience and describes it in Ezk. 1:25-28. How do you imagine what they describe?

# Lesson 4

## The Opening of the Seven Seals

*"I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?'" (Rev. 5:2)*

### THE SCROLL

Read Rev. 5:1-5. In vs. 5 Christ is announced as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" but He appears to John as a Lamb that looks as if it had been slain. What do you think is the point of this imagery? \_\_\_\_\_

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Why is it that the Lamb alone is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? (Consider Jn. 3:34-35; Eph. 1:20-21; Php. 2:6-11 along with Rev. 5:5, 9) \_\_\_\_\_

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The scroll (or book), which the Lamb is found worthy to open, seems to contain a prophetic pronouncement of the events that are to take place before the end of the age (or, possibly, the events themselves!). As you read through chapter six you will see that, as the seals are broken, the events take place. In chapters six through sixteen, in fact, we will see three separate series of plagues or devastations which come upon the earth; first the seals, then the trumpets, and lastly the bowls. Some commentators contend that their fulfillment is chronological. This position might be illustrated this way:

### THE CHRONOLOGICAL VIEW

SEALS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

TRUMPETS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

BOWLS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The chronological view is somewhat difficult to maintain because each of the series seems to end with events that lead directly to the glorious return of Christ, not just the final series. The overlapping view provides an alternate interpretation. One should understand from this approach that,

while tribulation is a part of the entire time represented by the seven seals, the intensity of the woes increases as the end draws near. Read Matt. 24:6-22. What does Jesus say about the intensity of the tribulation ("distress" in NIV) at the end of the age? \_\_\_\_\_

The overlapping view might be illustrated this way:

**THE OVERLAPPING VIEW**



**CHRIST'S RETURN**

Read Dan. 12:1-9. Do you see any parallels between Daniel's scroll and the scroll presented in this Revelation? If so, what? \_\_\_\_\_

Why isn't Daniel given an interpretation of the meaning of the scroll? \_\_\_\_\_

**THE SEALS**

Read Rev. 6:1-17. This portion of Scripture presents the imagery of the opening of the first six seals. List the events that accompany the opening of each of the six:

6:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

6:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_

6:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_

6:7-8 \_\_\_\_\_

6:9-11 \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you think these "souls" are? \_\_\_\_\_

6:12-17 \_\_\_\_\_

Compare these verses to Isa. 13:9-10; Joel 2:30-31; Matt. 24:29-30. Do you think that all of these prophetic pronouncements point to the same event? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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The four horsemen who are revealed by the opening of the first four seals are often called the "four horsemen of the apocalypse." Read Zech. 1:7-11. What is the mission of the four horsemen in Zechariah? \_\_\_\_\_ What was their report? (Compare 1 Thess. 5:1-3) \_\_\_\_\_

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The four horsemen of Revelation may be understood to represent:

- 1) A world leader who appears righteous but is not . . . (See Ez. 28:12ff, Isa. 14:4ff. We might understand this horseman as a representative of the spirit who empowers such prideful leaders)
- 2) Warfare which results from this world leader's quest for power . . .
- 3) The economic collapse and famine which results from the warfare . . .
- 4) Widespread death.

Read Rev. 8:1-5. This passage describes the events that follow the opening of the seventh and final seal. The scroll is now fully opened and all of its contents revealed. What happens first? (vs. 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What is given to the seven angels in vs. 2? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ In vv. 3-4, what is mixed with the smoke from golden censer and rises to God? \_\_\_\_\_

This portion of the vision ends with peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake.

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- 1) Read 1 Jn. 2:18, 2:22, 4:3; 2 Jn. 1:7. Who or what is "the antichrist"?
- 2) What is the meaning of the title "antichrist"?
- 3) Which of the seven seals is equivalent to the "Day of the Lord."?

# Lesson 5

## The Sounding of the Seven Trumpets

*"And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets." (Rev. 8:2)*

### SIN'S CONSEQUENCES UPON THE EARTH

Read Rev. 8:6-12. In our previous study we saw how man's fallen nature effects man himself. The lust for power leads men into conflict with other men. That conflict yields economic calamity, famine and death. Read James 4:1-3. On what does James blame man's quarrelsome nature? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What is the remedy for this kind of sin? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read Gen. 3:17-19; Rom. 8:19-22. How has the earth been effected by the sin of mankind? \_\_\_\_\_ As we look at the results of the sounding of the seven trumpets of Revelation, we see the judgment of God manifested on the physical earth. Read the following verses and write what the sounding of each of the first four trumpets produces.

1st Trumpet (vs. 7) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2nd Trumpet (vv. 8-9) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3rd Trumpet (vv. 10-11) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4th Trumpet (vs. 12) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How do you imagine the cumulative effect of these disasters would effect life on the earth? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **SIN'S CONSEQUENCES UPON MANKIND**

Read Rev. 8:13-21. Who announces the threefold woe in vs. 13?  
\_\_\_\_\_ As the 5th trumpet is sounded a "star"  
falls from heaven. What is the star given? \_\_\_\_\_  
Commentators disagree about who is represented by this star. Compare Rev.  
9:1 & 11 with Isa. 14:12 and Lk. 10:18. Abaddon and Apollyon both mean  
"destroyer." We might consider that this one is Satan himself, the ruler of  
the fallen angels. On the other hand, it is interesting that the "death angel"  
of passover is also called "the destroyer." (See Ex. 12:23)

What comes out of the abyss? (vs. 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
What are they given power to do? (vs. 5) \_\_\_\_\_  
Over whom do they have no power? (vs. 4) \_\_\_\_\_  
How is this situation similar to that of Job (Job 2:6) and of the passover in  
Egypt (Ex. 12:22-23)? \_\_\_\_\_

We might wonder it means to have the "seal of God" on one's  
forehead. In one of Ezekiel's prophetic visions he is shown a scene where  
God cleanses the temple. Read Ez. 9:3-6. How are the godly designated for  
salvation? \_\_\_\_\_  
Read Eph. 1:13, 4:30. What does Paul identify as God's seal? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Read Rev. 7:3-10. Who does John hear have been sealed  
with the seal of God? (vs. 4) \_\_\_\_\_ When  
John looks, who does he see? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Rev. 9:13-21. While the demonic locusts of the 5th trumpet  
were given the power to torture but not to kill, it would seem that the four  
angels released upon the earth now have that charge. What portion of  
mankind is destined to die at their hand? \_\_\_\_\_ What is  
God's purpose in bringing such disaster upon the people of the earth? (vv.  
20-21). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read Amos 4:6-13; Isa. 9:12-13; Jer. 5:2-3; Hos. 5:14-15; Joel 2:12-13.  
Why, according to these passages, does God allow tribulation and calamity?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read Rev. 10:1-7. Do you think that the "mighty angel" in this  
passage is Christ? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is the angel's message? (vv. 6-7) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What is the "mystery of God?"  
(Consider Rom. 16:25-27, Col. 1:26-27) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Compare Rev. 10:8-10 with Ezk. 2:8-3:3. Why do you think that the scroll is both sweet and bitter? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read Rev. 11:15-19; Matt. 24:31; 1 Cor. 15:52; and 1 Thess. 4:16. What happens at the sounding of the last trumpet? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How do you understand the "kingdom of the world" becoming the "kingdom of our Lord . . .?" Consider Isa. 45:23-25; Php. 2:10-11. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Notice that the portion of the Revelation dealing with the sounding of the trumpets, like that portion which dealt with the opening of the seals (see 8:5), ends with "lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake."

### **THE MYSTERY OF THE TWO WITNESSES**

Read Rev. 11:1-12. Even though the two witnesses are unnamed, scholars and commentators have deduced that they are Moses and Elijah. First, they have the appearance of Old Testament characters (vs. 3). Compare 11:4 with Zech. 4:11-14. Who is Zechariah told that these two are? \_\_\_\_\_ In Moses and Elijah we have representatives of priest and prophet (i.e., those who represent the people to God, and those who represent God to the people). Second, it is these two who appear with Jesus at the transfiguration (see Matt. 17:1-3). Third, the miracles attributed to them in this passage parallel those of Moses and Elijah: Turning water to blood and smiting the earth with plagues remind us of Moses (See Ex. 7:17ff). Elijah prayed for the rain to stop and it did stop. (1 Kng. 17:1). How long did the drought last? (See Lk. 4:25; James 5:17) \_\_\_\_\_ He also called down fire from heaven upon the soldiers of king Ahaziah (1 Kngs. 1:9-12). Consider also that these two are witnesses for Christ. Those who oppose the testimony of the gospel will, ultimately, face hell fire.

The two witnesses are killed. When does this occur? (vs. 7) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Who is able to kill them? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ They lie in the streets of what city (vs.  
8) \_\_\_\_\_ How do the "earth dwellers" respond to the  
death of the two witnesses? (vs. 10) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What does God do with  
them? (vv. 11-12) \_\_\_\_\_

**QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

- 1) Is there any parallel between God's use of the enemies of Israel in the Old Testament and His releasing of demonic forces in the Trumpet judgments?
- 2) Is God's overall purpose to punish or to redeem?

# Lesson 6

## Seven Major Characters of the Revelation

*"The great dragon was hurled down-- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray." (Rev. 12:9)*

### THE WOMAN CLOTHED WITH THE SUN

Read Rev. 12. In this passage we are shown a vision of a woman who gives birth to a son and who is pursued by a great dragon. While clearly figurative, the passage is, at the same time, sensible. If we assume that the male child is Jesus --more on this later--then we would probably see the woman as Mary, the mother of Jesus. It is more likely, however, that the woman of the vision represents Israel, the descendants of Abraham, through whom the promised Messiah was to come. (See Gen 12:36). How might the woman's crown of 12 stars relate to this interpretation? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Read the following passages and note how each relates to God's promise to produce a Redeemer from His people, Israel:

Deut. 18:15 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 7:13-14 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa 42:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Jer. 23:5 \_\_\_\_\_

We read in vs. 2 that the woman cried out in pain. Why might the birth of Jesus, the Messiah, have been painful for Israel? (See. Mk. 2:21-22)

\_\_\_\_\_ Compare Rev. 12:6, 14 with Ex. 19:4 and Matt. 2:13-15. Here we see a direct connection with the life of Jesus. If the woman figuratively represents Israel (i.e., "believing Israel" rather than ethnic Israel (Gal. 3:6-7), how might we understand this? \_\_\_\_\_

### THE GREAT DRAGON

Who does the great dragon represent? (See vs. 9; Gen. 3:1, 14). \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ In vs. 4 we see the dragon sweep one third of the stars from heaven. Many commentators understand this to mean that

one third of the angelic host--probably those under the archangel Lucifer's command--are cast down to earth along with their leader. They would, then, be the fallen angels or demons that serve the devil in fulfilling his purpose.

What is the devil's purpose? Consider the following passages:

Rev. 12:9-10; Zech. 3:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Jn. 8:44 \_\_\_\_\_

Jn. 10:10 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Cor. 11:14 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Pet. 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_

### **THE MALE CHILD**

It seems fairly clear that the male child represents Jesus Christ. The first characteristic of this child is that he will rule. Read the following passages and note what each says about the reign of Christ:

Isa. 9:6-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Ps. 2:7-9 \_\_\_\_\_

Dan. 2:44 \_\_\_\_\_

In what way was Jesus "caught away to the throne of God," vs. 5? (Acts 1:9-11) \_\_\_\_\_

Who are "the rest of her offspring?" (vs. 17) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Read vs. 11. How do they overcome the dragon? \_\_\_\_\_

### **MICHAEL**

Read 1 Thess. 4:16. The term "archangel" simply means "a ruling angel," or a "chief angel." It would seem that God created His angels to serve particular purposes. Although several types of angels are described in Scripture, there are only three angels who are named: Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer (NOTE: the proper name "Lucifer," in Isa. 14:12, is translated "morning star" in some modern English Bibles.). If there are only three archangels, it would explain why Lucifer commanded a third of the "stars of heaven" (vs. 4). Read Dan 10:12-14, 12:1; Dan. 8:15-16; Dan. 9:21-13; Lk. 1:19. What roles do the archangels play in these passages? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Read Rev. 12:7-8. What role does Michael play in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **THE BEAST FROM THE SEA**

Read Rev. 13. Before our attention is turned to the two beasts, the first from the sea and the second from the earth, we get one last view of the dragon (vs. 1). Where is he standing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Notice that this makes him the connection between sea and earth.

Compare the heads and horns on this beast to those of the dragon (vv. 12:3, 13:1). Read Dan. 7:3-7. In what way is the beast from the sea similar to Daniel's vision? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ This beast is not the dragon, but he is like him in many ways. His power and authority come from the dragon (vs. 2). Men worship the beast. Why? (vs. 4) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ What is the particular characteristic of those who worship the beast? (See vs. 8) \_\_\_\_\_

Who, then, does not worship the beast? \_\_\_\_\_  
How are believers to respond to this? (vv. 9-10; also consider 2 Cor. 10:3)

\_\_\_\_\_

Read 2 Thess. 2:3-10. In this passage, Paul describes one whom he call "the man of sin/lawlessness." In what ways are the man of sin and the beast from the sea similar? \_\_\_\_\_

## **THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH**

Consider the appearance of the beast from the earth (vs. 11). Why might he have the appearance of a lamb? (See Matt. 24:23-26) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ With whose voice does he speak? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Where does his authority come from? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ What does he lead the "earth dwellers" to do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ In Rev. 16:13, 19:20k, and 20:10 this beast is called "the false prophet." It would seem that he is a leader of an ungodly and blasphemous religion. Read vv. 16-18 and Rev. 14:9-12. What is the warning? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

There has been much debate and controversy through the years over the meaning of the number "666." We will not solve that mystery here to the satisfaction of all, that is for sure. Here is an idea to consider, however: In Revelation, the number seven is given special significance. It is the number of completion or perfection. Six, on the other hand is called here

"the number of man." In mathematics, six is often a repeating number (when you solve  $2/3$  to a decimal, for example, the solution is  $.6666666 \dots$ ). Perhaps what we are seeing here is man (6) in an endless and useless attempt at self-perfection; no matter what he does, he remains man. This is a logical outworking of the dragon's scheme because this was his deception from the very beginning. (See Gen. 3:4-5).

### **THE 144 THOUSAND**

Read Rev. 14:1-5. This group is first seen in Rev. 7:1-8. They are explicitly listed as 12,000 ( $12 \times 1,000$ ) from each of the 12 tribes of Israel. We must be careful not to disconnect this group from the multitude from every race and nation that appears, however. Here, as in the previous passage, they sing a new song--the song of the redeemed. Compare Rev. 5:9-10.

NOTE on the number 1,000. In common language we use the number 1,000 to mean a very large number; but not necessarily exactly a thousand. In reality, the number could be more or less than a thousand. "If I have told you once, I've told you a thousand times . . ." is a common saying, for example. It is unlikely, however, that the speaker actually gave the instruction, whatever it was, 1,000 times! Scripture, on occasion, uses the number in the same way as a figure of speech. Consider the following passages: Ex. 20:6; Ps 50:10-12; Ps. 84:10; Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8.

# Lesson 7

## The Pouring of the Seven Bowls

*"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."  
(Rev. 15:7)*

### THE WRATH OF GOD

Read Rev. 15. This chapter begins with a vision of seven angels with the seven last plagues. These plagues represent the outpouring of God's wrath. They are the last, it says, because with them the wrath of God is completed. Why is God's wrath now completed? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ In vs. 2 we see a sea of glass or crystal. Where is this glassy sea located? (See Rev. 4:6.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ In Rev. 15, the glass is mixed with fire. The fire may be a symbolic representation of God's judgment. Who is standing beside (or upon) the sea? \_\_\_\_\_

Read the following passages and record what each teaches us about the "wrath of God":

- Jn. 3:36 \_\_\_\_\_
- Rom. 1:18-19 \_\_\_\_\_
- Rom. 3:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_
- Rom. 5:9 \_\_\_\_\_
- Eph. 2:3 \_\_\_\_\_
- Col. 3:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Thess. 5:9 \_\_\_\_\_

### THE SEVEN BOWLS

Describe the plagues or punishments poured from each of the seven bowls:

The 1st bowl (vs. 2) \_\_\_\_\_

The 2nd bowl (vs. 3) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The 3rd bowl (vv. 4-7) \_\_\_\_\_

The 4th bowl (vv. 8-9) \_\_\_\_\_

The 5th bowl (vv. 10-11) \_\_\_\_\_

The 6th bowl (vv. 12-16) \_\_\_\_\_

The 7th bowl (vs. 17) \_\_\_\_\_

What follows the outpouring of the 7th bowl? (See vs. 18) \_\_\_\_\_

Many commentators point out the similarity between the judgments of God, as they are presented in Revelation, and the plagues that He caused to come upon Egypt in the days of Moses. The plagues, though not identical, are similar. There is another similarity, however, that is often overlooked. In both cases, even in the midst of intense tribulation, there is a hardness, even a hardening, of the hearts of the unbelievers. Read vv. 9 and 11. Who do the people of earth cry out against? \_\_\_\_\_ It is clear that they know that God is sovereign, but even in their suffering they refuse to repent and serve Him. So it was with Pharaoh (See Ex. 8:15, 32; 10:1).

## **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:**

1) Define each of the following terms.

Day of the Lord

The Last Days

The Second Coming

Armageddon

2) What, if anything, do each of these terms have in common?

3) Do Christians need to live in fear of God's wrath? Why or why not?

# Lesson 8

## The Restoration of Creation: the end of evil

*"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!'" (Rev. 18:1-2)*

### THE GREAT HARLOT

Read Rev. 17. This portion of Scripture draws a picture of the judgment of God upon "the great harlot." Where is the woman seated (vs. 3)? \_\_\_\_\_ Compare the description of the beast in vs. 3 with that found in Rev. 13:1. Who is this beast? \_\_\_\_\_ Why do you think she might be depicted astride this beast? \_\_\_\_\_

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The appearance of the woman is described in vs. 4. How is she dressed? \_\_\_\_\_ She has a golden cup in her hand. What does it contain? \_\_\_\_\_ What is her name? (vs. 5) \_\_\_\_\_ The word "mystery," as it is used here, refers to something which was not previously known but which is now being revealed. The true character of this one has been hidden, but is now clear to all. We see her dressed up in her finery, but we know that her allegiance is to the beast. This woman is the representative of evil. Why do you think she is dressed so attractively? \_\_\_\_\_ In vs. 5 she is also referred to here as a "mother." Describe her offspring \_\_\_\_\_ How does her offspring differ from that of the woman in chapter 12? \_\_\_\_\_

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The final verse of this chapter refers to her as a great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth (i.e., the leaders of the kingdom of the world). This could be a literal city (like Rome, or New York, or Topeka, for example), but is more likely a figurative representation of the dwelling place of worldliness and godlessness, wherever that may be. Read 18:4; Jer. 51:6;

2 Cor. 6:14-17; 2 Pet. 3:9-14. What is the warning and instruction to God's people? \_\_\_\_\_

Can the people of God co-exist with evil? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

Babylon is the natural abode of those who live their lives as if there were no true and living God to call them to account. In "Babylon" every man does what is right in his own eyes! We must remain aliens in Babylon because we are servants of the Most High God!

### **BABYLON IN PROPHECY**

There are numerous references in Scripture to the great city Babylon, some historic and some prophetic. The first appearance of Babylon is in Genesis 11 where we find the account of the building of the "tower" of Babel. Babylon's final appearance is here in Revelation, where we find the enigmatic reference to "Mystery Babylon." As we look at the imagery associated with Babylon it becomes apparent that, though the historical Babylonian empire may be dust, the struggle between God's people and the forces which Babylon represents continues.

Read Gen. 11:1-9. What is the great sin committed by the inhabitants of Babel? (Consider Gen. 1:28). \_\_\_\_\_

From this first seed of rebellion grew the ugly noxious weed of humanism. It is this arrogant, rebellious character which persists in the prophets word's concerning Babylon. Isaiah calls this Babylonian attitude, "the arrogance of the haughty" and "the pride of the ruthless." Habakkuk calls the Babylonians "guilty men, whose own might is their God."

The actual events of Babylon in history serve as an analogy of sorts by which the reader is able to better understand things for which he has no other frame of reference. Read Hab. 1:5-11. What is Habakkuk's prophecy regarding the Chaldeans (i.e., Babylonians)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Read Hab. 2:2-3. For what time is this prophecy given? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Isa. 14:4, 13-15 and Isa. 47:1-11. If Babylon represents the "kingdom of the world," who is its king? What power stands behind such a kingdom? \_\_\_\_\_ Though we no longer contend with the Babylon of history, that arrogant part of man's nature

which allows him to exalt himself against his Creator remains. What was once demonstrated in Babylon has now become the ruling principle of the "kingdom of the world."

### **THE FATE OF THE UNGODLY**

In vs. 17:13 we see the "kings of the earth" in an unlikely configuration; they are of "one mind." They have associated themselves around a single purpose. To whom do they give their power and authority in order to accomplish this purpose? \_\_\_\_\_ What is their purpose for coming together? (vs. 14) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ The explanation of who these kings are in vv. 10-12 is somewhat confusing. The outcome of their actions, however, is very clear (vs. 14). Read Rev. 19:11-21; Ps. 21:8-9; Isa. 11:4; 2 Thess. 1:5-10, 2:7-8. How do they do in their war against the Lamb (vs. 14)? \_\_\_\_\_

What name is given to the one who sits upon the white horse in Rev. 19:11? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Who is this character? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the fate of the beast and the false prophet? (See Rev. 19:20). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ What weapon does the figure on the white horse use to destroy his enemies? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Are prisoners taken? \_\_\_\_\_ What is the fate of the "great city?" (See 18:2 and compare Isa. 13:19-22; Jer. 50:33-46) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How will the world view the destruction of Babylon? (Rev. 18:9-19)

\_\_\_\_\_ How should God's people view the destruction of Babylon (vs. Rev. 18:20, 19:1-2; Ps. 59:10-11)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson 9

## Seven Major Events of the Revelation

*"Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it."  
(Rev. 20:11)*

### **RESTRAINING THE DRAGON**

Read Rev. 20:1-3. What happens to the dragon in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What is the duration of  
his "sentence"? \_\_\_\_\_ What is the purpose of his  
restraint? \_\_\_\_\_

The exact nature of "the abyss" is not revealed to us. We can deduce from other passages that it is a place or means by which the powers of evil are restrained. Read Lk. 8:28-31. Notice that the demons beg Jesus not to torture them and not to order them into the abyss.

It would not be correct to think that the restraining of Satan makes him unable to do anything in this world. He has been restrained by the power of God to the extent that he is unable to prevent the spread of the gospel to the whole earth; to every nation, tribe, language and people. Satan cannot keep the Church from fulfilling its calling and purpose! (See Matt. 24:14).

It is very important that we remember that our God reigns! There are evil forces. Satan has his angel legions and followers on the earth. They are not in any way, however, equal to God. Satan is not an autonomous creature who can overrule God's decrees. Satan may do what God allows him to do and no more. Consider the restrictions that God put upon Satan when he dealt with Job (See Job 1:8-12, 2:3-6)

### **CHRIST REIGNING**

Read Rev. 20:4-6. In this passage we see a figurative representation of those who have overcome the beast reigning with their Lord. How long does this reign last? \_\_\_\_\_  
How does this time period relate to that of the dragon's restraint (vs. 2)?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE ON MILLENNIALISM:** Many Christians look for a period of 1,000 years during which Christ comes to earth, sets up a government and rules, with the help of the saints, over the unbelieving nations. This "millennial reign" is thought to be an intermediate period between this present age and the age to come. This belief, known as pre-millennialism, is based upon Rev. 20:4, along with the understanding that God's covenant promise is to ethnic Israel specifically and exclusively, rather to men of faith from every tribe, nation, people and language. The 1,000 year period is expected to end with a final battle and the judgment of God upon the unbelieving citizens of the earth.

An alternate, and more widely accepted view, is that the 1,000 year period is equivalent to the church age (i.e., that period from the time of Christ's ascension till his return--this present age, in other words). This belief is based upon the understanding that Christ reigns here and now; His rule does not await some future time. He *is* the King of kings. The government is upon His shoulders. He sits upon the throne of David, now and forever. The 1,000 year figure in both vs. 2 and vs. 4 can be understood as a long period of indeterminate length--already nearly 2,000 years. This alternate view is called amillennialism, or more accurately, present-millennialism.

The student should remember that God's covenant promises are to those of ethnic Israel who put their faith in God's Messiah (Christ). Those promises are not exclusive to them, however, but are for all people of faith. (Read Gal. 3:6-9; Rom. 11).

Read Rev. 20:4. Who do we see "reigning" with Christ? (See Rev. 7:2-3, 13:8-9). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Though it may seem so at first, to "reign with Christ" cannot mean having equal authority with Christ. The sense of the word "reign" refers more to one not being subject to other men than to having other men subjected to him. For believers, there is no King but Jesus!

## **DECEIVING THE NATIONS**

Read Rev. 20:7-8. You will recall from the previous lesson that, at the end of the age, the "kings of the earth" become unified in their purpose. What is that purpose? \_\_\_\_\_  
This unity is a direct result of the loosing of Satan (See vs. 3b). For the first

time in history, he is allowed take full control of the kingdom of the world. There have been wars and rumors of wars throughout the history of man. Never before, though, has the kingdom of the world been united in its opposition to God.

How is Satan's influence over men manifested itself today? Read the following passages and comment on each:

- Lk. 10:17-20 \_\_\_\_\_
- 1 Cor. 10:13 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Cor. 2:9-11 \_\_\_\_\_
- 2 Cor. 4:3-4 \_\_\_\_\_
- Eph. 6:12 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jas. 4:7 \_\_\_\_\_
- Jn. 13:2 \_\_\_\_\_
- Acts 5:3 \_\_\_\_\_
- Eph. 2:1-2 \_\_\_\_\_

### **DIVINE DESTRUCTION**

Read Rev. 20:9-10. Verse 8 refers to the "nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog." Compare Ezk. 38:17-39:7. The Gog and Magog of this passage appear to be literal places; Gog probably being a city or region within the land of Magog. They are clearly unbelieving people and enemies of God's people. In Revelation, Gog and Magog are used to represent the unbelievers and enemies of God's people throughout the earth. In the imagery of 20:9 we see this people as an army marching across the whole earth. What do they surround? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ What is the destiny of Magog in Ezekiel? (See vs. 39:6) \_\_\_\_\_ What is the destiny of the people represented by Gog and Magog in Revelation? (See 20:9b)

Who had deceived these people? (vs. 10) \_\_\_\_\_ What happens to this deceiver? \_\_\_\_\_

### **OPENING THE BOOKS**

Read Rev. 20:11-15. Who is the one seated upon the great white throne? (Consider Matt. 25:31-34, 41; Acts 17:30-31) \_\_\_\_\_ Does it appear that the destiny of any individual is in doubt when they come before the throne for judgment? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

One of the books opened is the "book of life." What are the contents of this book? (Consider Rev. 17:8, 20:15; Lk. 10:19-20; Eph. 1:4; Php. 4:3) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What are the contents of the other books (vv. 12b-13)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ While salvation is by grace through faith, judgment is according to works. Read the following verses and record what each teaches us regarding the judgment of God:

Ps. 62:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Matt. 16:27 \_\_\_\_\_

2 Cor. 5:10 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Pet. 1:16 \_\_\_\_\_

What is the destiny of those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life? (vs. 15, 21:8; Php. 3:18-20) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## **REVEALING THE HOLY CITY**

Read Rev. 21. What is the name of the Holy City? (vs. 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ How is the city described in vs. 2 and in vs. 9?  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ The mixing of metaphors here makes it clear that both the Holy City and the bride represent the redeemed, the people of God. In the Holy City we see the people of God dwelling together in the presence of God (See vs. 3; Heb. 11:10, Jn. 14:2). In the bride we see the relationship between Christ and His people, in an eternal covenant of love and honor (See Rev. 19:7-8, 21: 9; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:25-27).

The city is pictured with twelve gates, three on each side. What is written on these gates? (vs. 12) \_\_\_\_\_ The city walls rise upon twelve foundations. What is written on them? (vs. 14)

\_\_\_\_\_ This is a representation of the covenant people of all ages. The city is laid out in the form of a cube. How large is each side? (vs. 16) \_\_\_\_\_ In today's measurements, the city would be 1,400 or 1,500 miles in each direction. Perhaps the significance of this enormous structure lies in its shape as well as its size. The "holy of holies" in Solomon's temple was also in the shape of a cube (See 1 Kings 6:20). Only the high priest was allowed to enter. Now, however, all believers of all the ages have been granted access to the very presence of God.

The appearance of the city is awesome, being covered with gold and every kind of precious jewel. We must remember that the angel promised to show John "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (vs. 9). What we are seeing here is the glory of the redeemed of the Lord, now adorned as a bride for her husband!

### **THE WEDDING FEAST**

Read Rev. 19:6-9. According to the proclamation of the angel in vs. 9, who are the blessed? \_\_\_\_\_ Read Jn. 3:28-29. Who is speaking in this passage? \_\_\_\_\_ How does he describe himself? \_\_\_\_\_ Who is the bridegroom? \_\_\_\_\_  
Read Matt. 26:29. When did Jesus say that he would again "drink the fruit of the vine with his disciples?" \_\_\_\_\_

Read Matt. 22:2-14. In this parable we see a king who intends to provide a wedding banquet for his son. The people who were initially invited refused to come. Why? \_\_\_\_\_ To whom did the invitation ultimately go? \_\_\_\_\_  
Did a large number come to the feast? \_\_\_\_\_ There is one man who is singled out by the king and who is ultimately cast out. What was the problem with this one man? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Referring back to the passage in Rev., what is the required dress for this banquet? (Consider Isa. 61:10; Rom. 13:14; and Gal. 3:26-27).  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

There is great rejoicing when husband and wife are joined together in the bonds of marriage. Far greater will be the rejoicing when the redeemed of the ages are joined forever with their Lord and Savior in the halls of heaven!

# Lesson 10

## The Restoration of Creation: A New Heaven and Earth

*"He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!'"*  
(Rev. 21:5)

### ALL THINGS BECOME NEW

Read Rev. 21:1-5 and compare Isa. 65:17-18, 66:22-23. These passages speak of a new \_\_\_\_\_ and a new \_\_\_\_\_. According to Rev. 21:1 what made this new creation necessary? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Read 2 Pet. 3:10-13. In this passage we are given some additional information regarding the future of this world. What is its destiny? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ What is the significant difference between the old and the new creation? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Read Gen. 1:1. This verse does not speak of God's beginning. It tells of the beginning of the heaven and earth that God created. We must understand that God has a purpose and plan for all that He does. Read Gen. 2:4-8. Although the heavens do testify to the power and glory of God (Ps. 19:1), creation is more than a demonstration of His might. God created the heavens and the earth to provide a perfect living environment for man.

Popular literature depicts the destiny of the believer as a dwelling in the clouds, complete with white robes and the playing of harps. It is easy to see where such ideas might come from. God did not make man for such a life, however. Man is, and has always been, a doer. Read Gen. 2:15. Where was the first man put to live? \_\_\_\_\_ What was he to do there? \_\_\_\_\_ If the first creation was designed as a fit dwelling place for man what do you think the purpose of the new creation will be? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ We know from 2 Cor. 5:17 that God's recreation is not limited to the heavens and earth. What else bears the stamp of God's recreation? \_\_\_\_\_

Read 1 Cor. 2:9; 1 Jn. 3:2. Although we might try to envision what God has in mind, it is impossible to know what the new heaven and earth will be like. We do know, however, that it will be just what we need for a fulfilled and abundant life. (Jn. 10:10, Rom. 8:28.)

### **THE TEMPORARY AND THE ETERNAL**

Read Rom. 8:17-22. Though creation was pronounced "good" (Gen. 1:31) by its creator, it can no longer be described that way. This present world, along with its inhabitants, bears the scars of sin and of rebellion against God. It is no longer a fit dwelling place for the righteous saints. It is for this reason that people of faith look forward to that which is new (See Heb. 11:13-16). Read 2 Cor. 4:18. According to this verse, what is eternal? \_\_\_\_\_ What should be considered temporary? \_\_\_\_\_ How might this understanding effect the way we think and live? \_\_\_\_\_ (Consider 2 Pet. 3:10-13).

One might wonder about the destruction and recreation of "the heavens" along with the earth. Does this refer to the abode of God and of the angels? Probably not. While the term "heaven" (Gk. οὐρανός, *ouranos*) can refer to that spiritual dimension, in this case it is more properly understood as "the sky." Even with the passing of the heavens, then, it is that which is seen that passes away and is replaced with that which is not yet seen--the temporal is replaced by the eternal.

### **A RESTORED RELATIONSHIP**

Read Rev. 21:3. What is the proclamation of God found in this verse? \_\_\_\_\_ Compare Lev. 26:12; Ez. 37:23, 26-27; Jer. 31:31-33. What is the consistent promise of God? \_\_\_\_\_ What does this show us about God's purpose and desire with regard to his people? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Rev. 21:22-27. John clearly expected to see a temple in the holy city, but it is, in fact, absent. There is no need for a temple when all of life is lived in the presence of God. There will be no need for services when all of life is worship. Even as Adam walked and conversed with God in the garden of Eden, so will all the saints know God in a personal way.

Verse 23 states that "the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine upon it." Note that this does not say that the sun and moon will not be part of the new creation. It only says that they will not be needed to provide light. What is the source of light in the new creation? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ The gates of the great cities of ancient times would be closed at night to protect those inside from invaders who might come under cover of darkness. What is the meaning of the imagery of vv. 25-27? \_\_\_\_\_

To whom is free access granted? \_\_\_\_\_

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God's purpose in all of history has been the restoration of his holy creation and the re-establishment of pure fellowship with his creatures. Salvation history shall have reached its conclusion and goal when the redeemed of all the earth walk humbly with their Redeemer in that new heaven and earth which has been created just for them. Praise the Lord!!

# Lesson 11

## Visions of Christ

*"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches . . ." (Rev. 22:16)*

### THE CENTRAL FIGURE

The book that we are studying is the revelation of Jesus Christ to his church. He is the central figure. What is revealed here is His victory--a victory that is complete and total. Christ, the mighty conqueror, overcomes even death and the grave in order to secure life everlasting for the redeemed; for His beloved bride. There is one, of course, who would impose himself in the place of Christ, who is also revealed in this book. This one, Satan, the devil, pictured here as a dragon, is not presented as victor, however. In spite of his best efforts to pervert and distort God's plan, he is vanquished.

It is both interesting and exciting to look at the images of our Lord as he is presented to us in this great book. Read Rev. 1:13-16. Here we see our Lord appearing "like a son of man." The great mystery of the incarnation is that God the Son took upon himself the form of a servant but, at the same time, remained God. (Consider Dan. 7:9, 13-14; Php. 2:5-7). He is dressed in a priestly robe, He is seen in the midst of the lampstands and He speaks with the voice of God. We must never forget that Christ alone is head over all things for the church (Eph. 1:22). If He is not in the midst of the churches, then they are false churches. If He does not hold their leaders in His hand then they are false leaders. If His word is not proclaimed in the church, then it is preaching a false gospel. Read Heb. 4:12-16. Who is our high priest? \_\_\_\_\_ What does the figure of the sharp double-edged sword represent? \_\_\_\_\_

Read Rev. 5:5-6. Here we see a vision of our Savior. The Great Shepherd of the sheep who, in order to save the sheep that have gone astray, takes their place. Even in his sacrificial death, however, He never ceases to be the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the Root of David. (Consider Ez. 34:11-16; Isa. 53:4-7; Matt. 26:53-54; Jn. 10:11, 18). How different is the Lamb of God from that false lamb seen in Rev. 13:11!

Read Rev. 10:1-3. Over against the beasts who arise from the earth and from the sea, here we see Christ. He stands as ruler over all--both land and sea. His voice is not like that of the dragon, a voice that speaks blasphemy and falsehood. He speaks with the voice of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. It is He and he alone who proclaims with authority that the day of the Lord has come!

Read Rev. 12:1-5. Again we see a contrast between the apparent weakness of the "male child," born of a woman and seemingly in jeopardy from the moment of his birth, and the reality of Christ who is God Almighty. His sovereign rule is not in question and cannot be thwarted! (See Ps. 2:7-9; Rev. 2:27, 19:15).

Read Rev. 14:14. This one, who sits upon the cloud, is royalty. He is seen, once again, as being "like a son of man," yet He wears the crown of authority and of victory upon His head. The sickle in his hand is to be used to reap the harvest of humanity. Read Matt. 13:24-30; Mk. 4:26-29. Both of these parables draw pictures of the Kingdom of God and of the harvest at the end of the age. Does the harvest consist of good fruit, bad fruit or both? (Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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Read Rev. 19:11-16. This is not the humble servant of the Lord who rode into Jerusalem upon the foal of a colt (Zech. 9:9; Jn. 12:12-15). This is Christ, the triumphant king, who comes riding upon a white horse. What is He called? \_\_\_\_\_ What does He do? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ We see in vs. 13 that He wears a robe dipped in blood. It may be that this is the blood of the Lamb, shed for the salvation of many. It is more likely, however, that this is the blood of those who have thought to resist the Lord of glory. This is the day of redemption for the people of God, but it is also a day of the Lord's vengeance. (See Isa. 34:1-4, 63:1-6; Rev. 14:19-20). Now, with absolute certainty, it is revealed to all that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords!

## **THE GREAT "I AM"**

There is much to learn about the person and work of Christ from the figurative language and word pictures of John's vision. There is much that is revealed in a more direct manner as well in the "I am" phrases of the

revelation. Read each of the following passages and write down what Jesus reveals concerning himself:

Rev. 1:8, 17; 21:6; 22:13 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 1:18 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 2:23 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 3:20 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 22:16 \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12; 22:20 \_\_\_\_\_

***"Come, Lord Jesus.  
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen"  
(Rev. 22:20-21).***

# Lesson 12

## The Theological Message: Look with hope toward Christ's return

*"Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." (Rev. 22:12)*

### FULFILLMENT OF A PROMISE

Read Rev. 22. Jesus promised the woman at the well that, if she asked him, he would give her living water to drink. Here we see, not a cup of water or even a spring. Here, flowing from the very throne of God, is a river of the water of life. How foolish it would be to seek such water elsewhere (see Jer. 2:13), because God is the very author of life!

Read Gen 2:9, 3:22-24; Prov. 11:30; Rev. 2:7. In God's original creation He placed the tree of life in the midst of the garden along with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Now, in God's new creation, we find only the tree of life in the midst of the city. The curse that God placed upon His original creation due to the advent of sin (see Gen. 3:14-19) is now removed from the new creation. The greatest promise of all, however, is that God and man, Creator and creature, Lord and servant would have fellowship and would commune face to face. Note the promise in each of the following passages:

Matt. 5:8 \_\_\_\_\_

Job 19:25-27 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Cor. 13:12 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn. 3:2-3 \_\_\_\_\_

The believers hope throughout the ages, to dwell in the presence of God, is now fulfilled. (See. Ps. 23:6; 2 Cor. 5:1; Rev. 21:3).

## **NO MORE TRIBULATION**

Read Isa. 61:19-20; 2 Sam. 22:29. Rev. 22:5 says that "there will be no more night." While this could be understood literally, the contrast between darkness and light is an analogy common in Scripture to point to the difference between good and evil, or between righteousness and ungodliness. The absence of darkness is equivalent to the absence of sin. The new creation is the abode of righteousness!

What do each of the following verses teach us about the darkness and the light?

Ps. 139:11-12 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 5:20-21 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 9:2 \_\_\_\_\_

Jn. 1:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Jn. 3:19-21 \_\_\_\_\_

Jn 8:12 \_\_\_\_\_

Jn. 12:46 \_\_\_\_\_

Eph. 5:8-10 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Pet. 2:9 \_\_\_\_\_

1 Jn. 1:5-7 \_\_\_\_\_

Read Jn. 16:33 and Rev. 21:4. Those things which cause us pain and suffering in this world are all the results of sin. Those things have no place in the new creation because sin has no place there. It is certainly true that "eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has prepared for those that love Him." This we do know, however; God's perfect order will be our way of life. We will be happy and fulfilled because that is the promise of Rev. 22:14. What is the message of vs. 17? \_\_\_\_\_

All this is ours at the time of His return--from then and forever--if we belong to Him, if our names are written in the Lambs book of life. This precious book has been given to us so that we may know that the victory of our God is sure. So that we may live in hope and in the confidence of those whose destiny is secure. We don't know the day or the hour of His coming, but we know that it is soon. Jesus himself reminded us, therefore, to be alert, to be watching, and to be ready. Read Titus 2:11-14.

*"He who testifies to these things says,  
'Yes, I am coming soon.'  
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."  
(Rev. 22:20)*