



WINGS Summer Bible Class 2015-2016

West-Ark Church of Christ
Fort Smith, Arkansas, U.S.A.

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Introduction

Welcome! By reading Revelation and “taking to heart what is written in it,” you are blessed (1:3). Because of the highly symbolic nature of the book, it can be challenging, and even intimidating, but the message of Revelation brings even more rewards! In at least two passages, the author John says that a specific piece of prophecy “calls for wisdom” (13:18 and 17:9), but our Father has promised wisdom to those who ask without doubting (James 1:5-6).

For those who truly desire to learn, each study of Revelation can bring new levels of insight. This study attempts to take the reader through a process of becoming familiar with the text and of discovering methods of understanding prophecy and symbolic literature which will make God’s message to His people clearer. Some of the symbolism is explained in the text itself, but some is not, so different interpretations will occur. Some of the questions in this study will ask you to tell what God says directly, and some will ask, “What do you think . . .?” Some suggestions for studying Revelation: Be willing to admit “I don’t know.” Pray for the Spirit’s help in understanding what you’re reading. Look for the “big picture,” the important themes in Revelation. Respect others’ comments and attempts to interpret passages, and don’t let disagreement upset you. Be willing to grow in your understanding of this amazing book!

May you be richly blessed as you read and study this “revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1)!

Notes: The Bible version used for quotes and questions is the 1984 New International Version. If a question looks at a specific part of a verse, it may say something like, “What does 2:5b indicate . . . ?” That wording is asking you to look at the second sentence in 2:5.

Revelation 1

1. Who gave this revelation?

To (or about whom) was it given?

Why was the revelation given?

2. Who is the person to whom God's angel gave this revelation?

Where was this person (v. 9)?

When did he receive God's revelation? (v. 10)

If this human author was indeed the disciple whom we meet earlier in the New Testament (and some disagreement exists about this), what else do we know about this man? (And see Acts 12:2 for some important information about his brother that would certainly be relevant to the message of Revelation.)

3. For what 3 actions/attitudes can we receive a blessing (v. 3)?

4. Who are the immediate recipients of this revelation?

5. How does John describe our Savior?

How would these terms encourage Christians who were undergoing persecution?

6. How does John describe Jesus' future return to this earth?

7. In God's self-identification, what title does He use (v. 8)?

Who else uses that title at the end of Revelation (22:13, 16)?

8. John calls himself the readers' "brother" and companion in what?

9. According to John, why is he where he is?

10. To whom did the "loud voice like a trumpet" tell John to send the written version of the revelation he would receive?

11. Where was the man who was speaking to John standing?

12. Who is the man with "head and hair . . . as white as snow" and eyes "like blazing fire," with feet "like bronze glowing" and a voice ". . . like the sound of rushing waters"?

13. What other details in verse 16 add to this picture of purity and power?

14. How many times between verse 13 and verse 16 does John use the word "like"?

Why do you think he does that?

What might be the difficulty of a human trying to describe a heavenly being?
(And see the similar wording in Ezekiel 1:26-28.)

15. What was the reaction of John, who had lived and worked with Jesus, upon seeing this magnificent one “like the son of man”?

And what is the Lord’s oft-given (Matthew 14:27, 17:7, and 28:10, for example) reassurance as he touches John?

16. In verses 17 and 18, this beautiful, powerful one gives John what 3 reasons to be encouraged?

17. What are the Lord’s instructions to John about what to write?

18. In the last verse of this chapter, Jesus explains some of the symbols we have already encountered. The 7 stars are _____,
and the 7 lampstands are _____.

The 7 Beatitudes of Revelation

At the end of each lesson, there will be a section that examines a topic from that chapter in more detail. Although this section may present some information or issues for you to think about, it’s designed primarily to help you dig deeper into some aspect of each chapter.

Scattered throughout the book of Revelation are 7 beatitudes, “blessed is/are” statements. Write these out, and think about how they might apply to you as you go through the rest of this study.

1. 1:3

2. 14:13

3. 16:15

4. 19:9

5. 20:6

6. 22:7

7. 22:14

Revelation 2

In last week's text, we saw the resurrected, glorified Christ standing "among the lampstands" (1:13), which are "the seven churches" (1:20). He reassures John and gives him his commission for this revelation of "what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later" (1:19). Chapter 2 begins the specific messages to each church.

1. Who will be the messenger for each of the 4 churches addressed in the chapter? (1:20 and 2:1, 8, 12, 18)

2. The apostle Paul spent 2 to 3 years in **Ephesus** (Acts 19:8-10), an important city in what is now Turkey. Research which of the 7 Wonders of the Ancient World was located there. How do you think this "wonder" would have affected daily life for the Christians of **Ephesus**?

3. Where is Christ as he dictates this letter to **Ephesus**?

4. What are some of the things for which he praises believers in **Ephesus**?

5. What is the warning he gives them?

What is the solution to this problem?

6. The Lord often ends his message to the churches with a reminder of the reward awaiting them. What awaits the **Ephesians** who remain faithful?

7. Emperor worship was promoted heavily in ancient **Smyrna**. How does Jesus identify himself to the church in this city (v. 8)?

8. Read verses 9-11. How does this message differ from that sent to Ephesus?

9. Verse 9 says that although they may be _____ physically, they are _____ spiritually.

10. What is Christ's exhortation to them (v. 10a)?

11. Write out the last sentence of verse 10, which tells the price some of these believers may have to pay for remaining faithful in **Smyrna**.

12. Christ's final encouragement for **Smyrna** is that "He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death." What do you think this "second death" is, assuming our first death is physical death? (Revelation 20:6, 14-15 and 21:8)

13. For **Pergamum**, tell the following:
How Jesus identifies himself

His praise for them

His warning for them

His promise of reward

14. In verse 13, what 2 phrases describing their city indicate the strong presence of evil there?

15. Balaam's (v. 14) story is told in Numbers chapters 22-25 and 31. Although Balaam announced God's word to the Israelites and to her enemies, he never fully submitted to God and even worked to turn God's people to idolatry (chapter 25 and 31:16). 2 Peter 2:15 and Jude 11 emphasize another aspect of Balaam's sin. Given this background, what might this "teaching of Balaam" in verse 14 involve?
16. The Nicolaitans (v. 15) are also mentioned as a dangerous influence in this congregation, as they were in the letter to Ephesus. Using a Bible dictionary or other reputable source, find out what you can about this group.
17. **Thyatira** is a city mentioned in Acts 16:14. The "Son of God" now praises this congregation with what words?

Do you find the words "I know your deeds" comforting? Why or why not? (Look at the beginning of the other letters at the different "I know" phrases.)

18. Who is posing a real danger to this congregation of Christ's church in **Thyatira**?

What do you remember about this Old Testament figure for whom the dangerous person in **Thyatira** is (symbolically) named?

What strong punishments will the Son of God give to her unrepentant followers (v. 22-23)?

19. Those who persevere are reminded of what reward?

20. In 3 of these 4 letters, Jesus uses a word to strongly encourage them to stop what they are doing wrong and to turn to the right way. What is that word?

Themes in Revelation

As you read and study Revelation, look for its themes. A theme is an important idea that a writer wants to get across; sometimes a theme is stated, and sometimes it's implied. Themes often deal with big issues, such as death, love, salvation, suffering, eternal life; an author will often emphasize that theme more than once to make sure his readers notice it. As you read through Revelation, begin making a list of possible themes (the last section of each lesson will often touch on those). A suggestion is that each time you recognize a theme, write it on your lesson somewhere in a different color of ink from what you usually use. At the end of these lessons, we'll try to identify some of those specific themes. Here's some help to get you started! From the first 2 chapters of Revelation, we can see 2 themes that will occur again in the book:

--Jesus is alive.

--Jesus is aware of and concerned about the welfare of the different congregations of his church.

Revelation 3

In this chapter, the letters to the angels of the 7 churches continue. There is a pattern in the first 4 letters: of Christ identifying himself, an assurance that he knows their present spiritual situation, a warning, and an encouragement giving some aspect of the future reward for those who remain faithful. Often Jesus uses some feature of their local geography, economy, or culture to make a spiritual point.

The dazzling figure who walks among the lampstands of the churches and holds their 7 stars (angels) in his right hand warns and encourages them with his words, written down by John and represented by the sword coming from his mouth (1:16).

1. He who “holds the seven spirits [or “sevenfold Spirit] of God and the seven stars” begins his letter to **Sardis** with the familiar words “I know your deeds.” What is this church’s reputation?

2. Their Savior does urge them to repent, and twice he tells them they need to _____ (v. 2-3).

3. Although we usually define sin as doing wrong works, verses 2 and 3 emphasize the importance of completing right works. Those who do so are described how in verse 4?

4. Christ also uses a metaphor, people sleeping, for some of the Christians in **Sardis**. What description does he give, in verse 3, of what his judgment will be like for those who do not “wake up”?

Christian writer N. T. Wright, in his book *Revelation for Everyone*, tells some history of ancient **Sardis** that makes Christ’s warning to stay awake especially appropriate:

The residents of Sardis knew very well what had happened to their city six hundred years before the Christian gospel reached them. The city had been thought, for a long time, completely impregnable. It was secure, sitting on top of its steep hill. Attackers might come and go, but the citizens were quite content to see them do so. They knew they could never be captured.

Until one night, during the reign of the famous Croesus, the invading Persian army found a way in. Someone, greatly daring, got up part of the sheer cliff and managed a surprise attack. Because nobody was expecting it, the result was all the more devastating. (29)

5. Those who are obedient to Christ's will for them will be dressed in _____ and will have their names recorded where?
6. The situation in the church in **Philadelphia** is quite different from that in Sardis, where the spiritual danger seems to be largely self-generated. For **Philadelphia**, there seems to be very little direct warning but rather encouragement from "him who is holy and true" and who "holds the key of David" (v.7). These Christians have little _____ (v. 8) but have obeyed God how? (v. 8b and 10a)

Why might these believers have "little strength"?

7. What analogy does Jesus use in these verses to tell them that he will, despite their "little strength," give them opportunities to be witnesses for him (v. 8)?
8. According to verse 10, because they have endured, what will their Savior do for them?

In verse 10, some versions of the Bible say Jesus will keep them "from" the hour of trial coming upon the earth, but the original Greek could also be "keep you through." There are times in Revelation when God's people are spared the effects of the warnings and punishments (9:4-5), just as the Hebrews were spared from all, or most, of the effects of the plagues in Egypt. However, martyrdom for the sake of Jesus is a reality in this book (6:9) and in our world today. Watch for more passages in Revelation about how God protects His people and enables them to endure.

According to verse 10, why will this “hour of trial” come upon the earth?

9. Immediately after the promise of verse 10, what does Jesus encourage his followers to do, in verse 11?

10. To those who endure, our Savior gives the promise to make them a _____ in God’s temple and to write on them what 3 names?

Generally, names held much more significance for these early readers than they do for us, but can you think of an example from today in which a person would welcome a new name?

Can you think of any Bible examples of people with negative names?

Our new, eternal identity will be found in Whom?

11. Some who study Revelation see in the letters to the 7 churches of Asia a chronological progression of challenges that Christ’s church has faced through history. The last congregation, **Laodicea**, has become synonymous with the idea of being “lukewarm.” Why might that be an appropriate label for churches of today?

12. What is missing from the beginning of this letter that we have often seen at the beginning of the other letters?

13. What is their problem, according to verses 15 and 16?

14. According to verse 17, how do they perceive themselves?

But, from the same verse, what does Jesus reveal as their true spiritual condition?

15. What 3 things does he say that they need in order to remedy their situation?

(The NIV's study notes for 3:18 point out that "Laodicea took great pride" in its "financial wealth, an extensive textile industry and a famous eye salve.")

16. What does Jesus say he does to those whom he loves?

17. Verse 20 contains the second image of a door in this chapter. How is **Laodicea's** "door" different from Philadelphia's?

How are they alike?

18. Although his warning to them is stern, Jesus wants the **Laodiceans** to overcome the sins that threaten them. He reminds them of his own battle against, and victory over, the forces of sin. Write the beautiful promise of verse 21.

Apocalypse

One of the challenges of understanding Revelation is understanding the style in which it is written: it is apocalyptic literature. In fact, an early name for this book was *The Apocalypse*, which comes from a Greek word that means “revelation” or “unveiling.” Our language has expanded the meaning so that people today often think of prophecies of future disaster when they hear “apocalyptic.” However, we can start with the very first verse of the book, which gives us the title in the phrase “The revelation of Jesus Christ.” This “unveiling” is about Christ, and it is through him, a message to “show his servants what must soon take place.”

Apocalyptic writing contains some distinctive characteristics that Western readers may not be familiar with. First, it is highly symbolic. Why? Most importantly, this is a revelation, an unveiling from God, and that’s the form that He, in His wisdom, chose for this book. Second, the symbolism is useful to convey a vital message to a certain group (believers) but perhaps not to another (persecutors of those believers). In apocalyptic literature, one thing may symbolize many things, and often a physical action will symbolize a greater spiritual happening. Numbers are also used symbolically; for example, 1,000 years may mean a long, but not endless, time.

Besides being highly symbolic, apocalyptic writing contains much sensory imagery (notice how many times John “sees” or “hears” something). It’s like reading a movie! Such imagery is, again, God’s choice of how to convey His message. A high level of imagery often provokes strong emotion, such as the awe that leads to spontaneous worship in the throne room (chapters 4 and 5, among others).

One other challenging aspect of apocalyptic literature is that time is not always linear. For one thing, God exists in eternity, something we humans truly cannot understand! John 8:58, while showing Jesus’ identity with his Father, also shows the mastery of time that God and Jesus possess. More on time as we go on, but keep in mind these ideas:

1. In Revelation 1:19, Jesus tells John, “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.” This revelation was to encourage Christians then and to encourage all of us since then.
2. Unless the text says so, it’s risky to assign a definite, specific time to everything Revelation alludes to, as many Bible scholars have concluded from previous failed predictions. The Spirit will give us clues, but we must have wisdom (Revelation 13:18) to interpret clues. More principles about time in Revelation: Just because event A is mentioned in Chapter 11 and event B in Chapter 12 doesn’t necessarily mean B happens second. Also, there are series of warnings in this book; these events may overlap or even occur multiple times down through history.

Find a reputable Bible dictionary, and research other general information about the characteristics of apocalyptic writing in the Bible. Write down anything that seems especially helpful here.

Revelation 4

In the first part of John's "revelation of Jesus Christ" we see the powerful, pure, resurrected Lord "among the lampstands" (1:13), which represent 7 churches in Asia. Although some of these congregations are in serious spiritual danger, through their own apathy or temptation to compromise with the world around them, or are facing fierce persecution, they **all** belong to Christ, and he urges them to repent and endure. His message to these churches ends with the same admonition, one which we should heed today: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." One of the best ways to hear the Spirit today is to diligently read the Word of God, which is the "sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17).

1. Where does the one with a voice "like a trumpet" now take John?

Jesus tells John that he is showing him "what must take place after this" (4:1). Remember that there were no chapter divisions in the original text, so this verse comes directly after the messages to the churches in Asia Minor. In a general sense, what John sees next is a vision of what is and what will be for these early Christians, and for all who read this Revelation.

2. Whom does John see?

Why do you think He is not named? (Revelation 5:1 and 20:11 and 1 Timothy 6:15-16)

3. Readers of the revelation to John who had read Old Testament scriptures would perhaps be familiar with the jewel imagery of the throne room, which is similar to that in Ezekiel 1:26-28. Write Ezekiel 1:28.
4. The sight of the glorious King dominates the throne room, but John does notice 24 elders. Twenty-four is a number that seems to represent faithful humans. What group of 12 was significant in the story of God's people in the Old Testament?

What group of 12 comes to mind from the New Testament?

(Chapter 7 will tell us that our Lord knows the exact number of those faithful to Him everywhere and from all times!)

5. In verse 5, we see happenings that indicate God's power at work. What are these phenomena that will appear throughout Revelation? (And see Exodus 19:16-18 and Psalm 18:12-14.)

What impression do the flashes of lightning (v. 5), white clothing (v. 4), and 7 blazing lamps (v. 5) give?

6. The lamps and "sea of glass" may remind readers of the earthly temple, which has its reality in the throne room. Whom do we see next, in verse 6, and with what are they covered?

What do you think this last characteristic indicates?

7. Again, the imagery of these creatures is very similar to that in the first chapter of Ezekiel (1:4-10). Skim Ezekiel 10, and tell the name of these heavenly attendants.

What animals do the "four living creatures" of Revelation 4 resemble, and what characteristics do you see in the animals that would help these beings serve God?

8. What do the 4 creatures say in praise of God?

How often do they say this?

Verse 9 says they give God what 3 things?

9. When we last see these four creatures in Revelation (19:4), what are they doing?

10. In verses 10 and 11, what is the 24 elders' natural reaction whenever the 4 creatures praise "him who sits on the throne and lives forever and ever" (v. 9)?

11. According to the 24 elders, why does He deserve "glory and honor and power"?

12. What is the significance of the elders laying their crowns (v. 4) before the throne (v. 10)?

About Time

As last week's section on apocalyptic literature mentioned, chronology in Revelation can be challenging. Some things we do know: The book is not a linear, Chapter 1 to Chapter 22 retelling of how things will be. For example, Chapter 12 shows, in highly symbolic and compressed language, Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection. Another thing we know is that God is eternal yet unchanging: The praise scene in God's throne room (4:2-11) is not a one-time event; listen to the language of verses 8-10.

There is a definite end to earthly time shown in Revelation; the picture of Judgment Day begins in 20:11, although there is foreshadowing of Judgment Day

in earlier chapters (11:15-19 and 14:14-20). In the meantime, we see repeated warnings from God (for example, when seals are opened and trumpets sounded), but these warnings, reflected in natural disasters, diseases, wars, political upheavals, etc., don't just happen in one cycle in history and then cease. They have likely happened multiple times down through the years, often overlapping other warnings, in the hopes that people will repent (9:20).

The third set of 7 horrible events, initiated by the pouring out of the bowls of God's wrath, is different in that they are punishments much more than warnings. After the bowls are poured out, we see the destruction of God's enemies, and periods of time (although still symbolic) are mentioned more and more: As time runs out, time matters more!

What does God's word say about time and His judgment?
Matthew 25:31-46

Acts 17:30-31

Hebrews 9:27-28

2 Peter 3:3-15

Revelation 5

In Chapter 4, we, with John, get a glimpse of the very throne room of heaven. Look back at the chapter—at the beauty, the sounds of thunder and songs of praise, the brilliance of the lamps, the lightning, the Creator Himself. Imagine how John must have felt as an earthly visitor in this gorgeous place. Perhaps now he could relate better to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah after his visit to the throne room of God:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two wings they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory.” At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. “Woe to me!” I cried. “I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.” (Isaiah 6:1-5)

1. In this chapter, an inspired but human John attempts to describe the glory and beauty of God and His throne room. What is God holding in His right hand?

2. What important question does “a mighty angel” ask?

3. Why is John upset?

4. With what words does one of the 24 elders encourage John?

The elder’s very first words to John—“Do not weep!”—anticipate what beautiful act of healing when God ushers in His people’s final home (21:4)?

5. What creature does John hear about from the elder (v. 5)?

What creature does he actually see (v. 6)?

6. Why a lion? (And see Genesis 49:8-10)

7. Why is the lion a lamb?

8. This creature has 7 _____ and 7 _____. (Seven represents completeness, fullness.)

9. In verse 6, the phrase “the seven spirits of God” is mentioned (and in 1:4 and 4:5). Look up this verse in a couple of other Bible versions from what you normally use. What is another possible translation of this phrase?

What does this verse say about the Spirit’s work?

What do we know about God’s Spirit from Jesus’ words in John 3:5-8? (And see Ecclesiastes 5:11.)

10. In verse 8, what does the incense in the creatures’ and elders’ bowls represent? (And see 8:3-4.)

Do these verses change how you see prayer? If so, how?

11. The heavenly beings now begin to praise the Lamb. From verse 9, why is the Lamb worthy to open the scroll? (And see verse 5.)

12. Who next joins in the praise of the Lamb?

What impression does the phrase “thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand” give?

13. According to them, what 7 things does the Lamb deserve?

14. And then, in a thrilling scene, EVERY CREATURE EVERYWHERE joins in the praise justly due their Creator and His Lamb! What do these countless voices sing (v. 13)?

15. What is John the Baptist’s praise for Christ in John 1:29?

The importance of the fact that the Lion is a Lamb cannot be underestimated. Contemporary Christian writer N. T. Wright says this about the amazing happenings of Chapter 5:

And now we come to one of the most decisive moments in all scripture. What John has heard is the announcement of the lion. What he then sees is the lamb. He is to hold what he has heard in his head while gazing at what he now sees; and he is to hold what he is seeing in his head as he reflects on what he has heard. The two seem radically different. The lion is the symbol both of ultimate power and of supreme royalty, while the lamb symbolizes both gentle vulnerability and, through its sacrifice, the ultimate weakness of death. But the two are now to be fused together, completely and forever. From this moment on, John, and we as his careful readers, are to understand that the victory

won by the lion is accomplished through the sacrifice of the lamb, and in no other way. (53-54)

Praise and Worship

We are an impatient people who like immediate results. In 5:5, when one of the elders tells John, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah . . . is able to open the scroll and its seven seals,” we naturally expect that Lion to open the seals and for things to start happening! Instead, the 4 creatures and 24 elders, many angels, and every creature everywhere break out into loud, joyful praise because of what the “Lamb, looking as if it had been slain” has done!

Write Revelation 5:11.

Write Hebrews 12:22.

Who praises Jesus in verse 13 of Revelation 5?

In the song in verses 9-10, how many times is reference made to “you” (the Lamb)?

Do our songs of praise today mention Jesus or ourselves more?

Revelation describes worship more than any other book of the Bible! How can we worship as the inhabitants of heaven do?

“Joy is the serious business of Heaven.”—C. S. Lewis

Revelation 6

We humans often feel that a preacher who speaks for over half an hour is long-winded, but the previous 2 chapters of Revelation have been devoted to continuous praise that heaven—and creation—cannot help but give to its God and Savior. And because God is eternal, so is this praise. And because God offered the Lamb of Heaven, we too can sing the songs of Revelation 4 and 5!

1. Who appears when the Lamb opens the **first seal**?

Who summons forth the horsemen (v. 1, 3, 5, and 7)

2. The second rider, who appears when the **second seal** is opened, is on a “fiery red horse.” Its rider is given the power to do what?

In this context, what might the red represent?

3. When the Lamb opens the **third seal**, a rider on a black horse appears, carrying what?

According to the voice that speaks in verse 6, what will be affected when this horseman appears?

4. Who appears next, at the opening of the **fourth seal**?

What do these beings have power to do?

5. A popular term for these riders who appear in Chapter 6 is the “four horsemen of the Apocalypse.” The seals—and what happens as each seal is opened—are not necessarily chronological, but assuming that the first horseman, “a conqueror bent on conquest,” represents someone determined to win a battle, what might the next 2 horsemen represent in the context of war?
The red horse’s rider, who “was given a large sword”?

10. What are some of the happenings that occur when the **sixth seal** is opened?

Although this kind of language is often used to describe God's judgment on living mankind (for example, Isaiah 13:9-13, in which God is pronouncing judgment on Babylon), these verses could also be showing a preview of events leading to the final judgment of all mankind (and the martyrs' question being answered). What do the people do in verses 15 and 16?

Why (v. 17)?

11. What characteristic is mentioned in verse 16 that is not usually associated with the Lamb?

Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls

Beginning with Chapter 6 and continuing through Chapter 16, we see 3 series of 7 events that serve a definite purpose in God's plan. In Chapter 6, what do the summons "Come" (to the horsemen) and the words "was [or "were"] given" tell you about who is "behind the scenes" in what the horsemen are carrying out?

The first series of seven judgments happens after each of the 7 seals on the scroll of Chapter 5 is opened. The 7 trumpets begin sounding in 8:7, but beginning with the fifth trumpet (9:4), believers are excluded from harm from the events of the last trumpets.

Do believers feel the effects of the events following the seals and the first 4 trumpets? It is possible. The opening of the fifth seal prompts what, in 6:9-10?

Just as God provided protection for His people during some or all of the Egyptian plagues (Exodus 8:22), He protects His people from some of the bad events in Revelation. Both believers and non-believers can learn much from God's discipline. What did God tell the Laodiceans in 3:19?

Although believers may, in this life, feel the effects of their own and others' sin, they will not have to suffer the eternal effects of that sin, thanks to the Lamb of God! (John 1:29)

Just as God gave Pharaoh several chances to repent, what is he urging people to do as they go through the events of the seals and the trumpets (9:20 and 16:9)?

The prolonged warnings and punishments will also serve to show what about God's final judgment (15:3 and 16:5)?

What can suffering accomplish in the life of a believer, according to these verses?

Psalm 119:67, 71

Romans 5:3-5

Romans 8:17

1 Peter 4:1-2

What is the other response to suffering? Note the repeated phrase in Amos 4: 6, 8, 9, 10, and 11 and the final result in verse 12.

Write the beautiful last sentence of Revelation 2:10, which tells us the high level of commitment God expects and deserves and the beautiful reward which those who persevere will receive.

Revelation 7

In Chapter 6, as the Lamb opens the seals, we see 2 groups of people crying out. First are those “under the altar” (6:9) who lost their physical lives for the Lamb and are now protected, and soon to be vindicated, by God. Then there are those who are trying to hide under rocks (6:16) to escape “the wrath of the Lamb.” The question posed in the very last verse of Chapter 6—Who can stand in the day of God’s wrath?—is about to be answered in Chapter 7.

1. The opening of the seals will resume in Chapter 8, but first God has a specific job for his heavenly servants, the angels. What are the 4 doing in the first verse?

This is only one of many mighty feats angels will accomplish in Revelation. And if the servants (19:10) are this powerful, how much more their Lord and Master!

2. Another angel tells these 4 not to do what, although they have the power to do so?
3. God’s “servants” on earth are about to be sealed. What are some of the things that a seal does?

What do the following verses say about how God seals Christians?
2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Ephesians 1:13-14

Ephesians 4:30

4. How many are to be sealed (v. 4)?

Do you believe this is a symbolic or literal listing of “the servants of our God” (v. 3) on earth? Consider the following (and any other relevant verses) as you answer: $144,000=12 \times 12 \times 1,000$. Read Romans 3:29-30 and Galatians 3:28-29, and skim Numbers 1:17-50.

5. Verse 9 introduces another large group. Where are they?

How many are there?

What is their nationality?

What are they doing?

6. Another round of praise bursts from this group. Who (v. 11) joins in the praise?

7. Since John “hears” of the 144,000 being sealed (v. 4) and then “sees” the uncountable multitude in heaven (v. 9), the first group may actually be part of the second. In verse 14, who does one of the elders say this second group is?

Did they completely escape suffering on earth? (Show a verse for your answer.)

8. Besides praising God, what is this group doing (v. 15)?

9. Verse 15 mentions “in his temple.” We have already seen elements of the earthly tabernacle and temple in the throne room. What does Hebrews 9:23-24 say about the earthly sanctuary and the heavenly one—which is the “copy” and which is the “real thing”?

According to Ephesians 5:29-33, what greater relationship do our earthly marriages reflect?

Write 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Considering all these verses, what do you see in the comparison between our experiences and knowledge here on earth and in heaven?

10. The last part of verse 15 contains what beautiful promise from God to the believers who have persevered? (Write this from 2 different Bible versions.)

11. What else will the Lamb do for them?

12. Which of the blessings in the last 3 verses most appeals to you? Why?

The Persecuted

Some Bible students believe there will be a “great tribulation” (as in 7:14) right before Christ’s final coming, and while it is indeed possible that Satan’s short “unchaining” in 20:3 may produce a difficult time of increased persecution, it is true that many believers have already undergone or are undergoing great suffering. Although the timing of Chapter 7 is uncertain, it does not seem to be the final rewarding of all God’s faithful, but this large group has indeed come through “the great tribulation.” And isn’t there a sense in which any martyr for Christ who is persecuted to death has undergone a great tribulation?

Revelation was written to encourage both contemporary believers (in John’s day) and future believers to persevere and to be assured of Christ’s victory over evil. Nero (Roman emperor from 54 to 68 A.D.) was especially cruel to Christians, and his nephew Domitian (ruled 81-96 A.D.), who called himself “Lord and God,” was even worse. And, amazingly, today, “up to 150,000 Christians are violently killed each year. Christians suffer persecution in at least 60 countries. More Christians were martyred in the 20th century than all other centuries combined. The number of Christians murdered for their faith doubled from 2012 to 2013, then nearly doubled again in 2014” (“The Cost of Faith”).

What can we do? Even if we do not live in a country whose government overtly persecutes Christians, Christ’s admonition to stay ready spiritually (16:15) applies to us today as much as it did to John’s first readers. We can pray regularly for those being persecuted, and we can also ask our church leaders about whom to pray for specifically and about what other support they and their families might need (Hebrews 13:3).

Read one account of a Christian martyr this week.

Revelation 8

We are finally going to see what happens when the Lamb opens the last seal. The first 4 seals revealed war and its consequences. The fifth seal introduced us to “the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they maintained” (6:9). They were told to wait “a little longer” for the justice they longed for. When the sixth seal is opened, a great earthquake and other events in nature terrify those who do not believe. Before the seventh seal, God takes a moment to seal his faithful on earth and to give us a glimpse of the innumerable saved in heaven, who are now shepherded by the Lamb (7:17)!

1. What happens when the Lamb opens the **seventh seal**?

What might this silence signify? (Habakkuk 2:20 and other any passages you can think of)

2. Continuing the picture of a heavenly temple, an angel stands before the altar with a golden pan for incense. What rises from this censer to God?
3. In a move predicting the next series of warnings, the angel fills the censer with fire from the altar and hurls it to the earth. What happens?
4. What is next hurled upon the earth, as the **first** angel blows his **trumpet**?

What Old Testament warnings upon unbelievers might Jewish readers think of (Exodus 9:13, 17-18)?

5. When the **second trumpet** is sounded, what happens?

What effect of this catastrophe might once again remind readers of God’s judgment against Pharaoh in Exodus (7:17)?

6. Upon the sounding of the **third trumpet**, a giant star falls from the sky. What is the result?

7. What happens when the **fourth** angel sounds his **trumpet**?

8. Although these happenings are catastrophic, they do not completely destroy the earth. Why do you think a third of creation is affected?

9. What might the readers have thought of at the picture of an angel blowing a trumpet (Matthew 24:31)?

From Numbers 10:1-2, 8-10, what are some of the situations in the Old Testament in which God's people heard a trumpet?

10. Before the trumpets continue in the next chapter, we see an angel flying through the air with what message for those on earth?

Our Earth and Sin

After the very first sin (Genesis 3), God handed out punishments and curses. The word "curses" was applied specifically to the serpent (Genesis 3:14) and to the ground (3:17), and from then on, the physical world has suffered from our sin also. According to Genesis 1:31, how did God feel about His creation?

Because of the first sin, death became a part of our earthly lives. What additional events do you think we experience on earth that were not present in Eden before that first sin? (Look at the list of consequences in Genesis 3 and the blessings of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21 and 22.)

Who will be destroyed in the final judgment, according to the last part of Revelation 11:18?

From Revelation 21:1, what will be restored? (See Romans 8:21 also.)

Revelation 9

Chapter 8 began with the Lamb opening the final of 7 seals, followed by silence in heaven. We are not told the exact reason for that silence, but the events accompanying the opening of each of the seals have been sobering. We know something similar is about to occur from the second verse of Chapter 8: “And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.” And indeed, with the first 4 trumpets, a third of the natural world suffers terrible consequences; the eagle’s message in the last verse says more is to come, 3 last trumpets that will be “woes” to those on earth. However, in Chapter 9, there is a clear statement from God concerning why the earth is undergoing these “plagues.”

1. In verse 1, the **fifth** angel sounds his **trumpet**, initiating the first of 3 “woes.” This star (possibly a reference to Luke 10:18, but see Revelation 20:1 also) seems to be different from the one in 8:10. What is the star given, and what does the star do with this object?

2. In verse 1, the star “is given” the key, and in verse 3, the locusts “were given” power. In verse 4, they “were told” what they could and could not do. What implications do you see from this wording?

Do you see any significance in there being a key for the Abyss?

(According to the NIV study notes on Luke 8:31, the Abyss was considered “a place of confinement for evil spirits and for Satan.”)

3. What comes from the smoke from the Abyss?

What power are they given?

4. Whom and what can they NOT harm?

5. These scorpion-like locust warriors are not even allowed to kill, but to instead torture whom?

For how long? (And see verse 10.)

(This period of time is approximately the lifespan of a locust, or of the span of the dry season, when locusts would do the most harm.—NIV note on Revelation 9:5)

6. What would the affected people seek (v. 6)?

Why?

7. Although this demonic army is constrained by what God allows them to do, they do have a leader. According to verse 11, who is he?

8. The **sixth** angel sounds his **trumpet**, and a voice coming from the golden altar commands what?

9. The river Euphrates had long separated Israel from her enemies, Assyria and Babylon, who eventually invaded and took the people captive, an event God had predicted before His people became inhabitants of the Promised Land. From Leviticus 26:14-17, 33, why would this happen?

From Leviticus 26, read verses 14, 18, 21, 23, and 27. What can we say about God's patience and desire for His people, then and now, to do right?

Do you see any similarities between these verses in the Old Testament and what God is doing through the actions following the opening of the seals and the sounding of the trumpets?

10. What will the 4 angels do (v. 15)?

What is the number of their troops?

11. How are they different from the locust army?

Are they similar in any way to the locusts?

12. What, specifically, are the weapons of this army (v. 18-19)?

13. The last 2 verses of this chapter are very important. Why, according to these verses, has God allowed these "plagues" to afflict mankind?

14. What are the dangers of refusing to repent?

The use of the word “plagues” in this chapter makes us think of the Egyptian plagues. Although God knew in advance what Pharaoh would do (Exodus 3:19), He gave Pharaoh multiple chances to repent and let His people go. What was Pharaoh’s attitude the first time Moses and Aaron talked to him, in Exodus 5:2?

What happened right before the first plague (Exodus 7:13)?

What happened in Exodus 7:22; 8:15, 19, 32; and 9:7?

What different thing happened in Exodus 9:12?

15. In whose image are the people of Revelation 9:20 (and all people) made (Genesis 1:27)?

Given this truth, why is the worship of idols especially tragic?

God’s Protection for His People

The last 3 trumpets are called “woes” in Revelation 8, but these woeful happenings are specifically for those “who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads” (v. 4). What has God given believers for assurance and protection?

1. Romans 8:38-39

Revelation 10

In Revelation 9, 2 armies are let loose on the earth as part of God's ongoing effort **to get people to repent**. The first army is demonic, and some scholars believe the second may be also (sulfur of verse 17 and 18— and see 14:10, 19:20, 20:10, 21:8— and snake-like tails of 9:19). Whatever the verdict, both groups were under God's control and were being used to bring people to Him. Very hard times tend to polarize humans—to drive them to God or even farther away from Him than they were. The very last chapter of this amazing book reminds us that God does not force anyone to choose Him (22:11) but that He will continue to invite people to come to Him until the end (22:17).

1. In verse 1, a “mighty” angel from heaven descends, carrying what?

2. Where/how does this mighty angel stand?

3. As the angel shouts, the “seven thunders” speak, but what restriction does the voice from heaven place upon John?

4. With the seals, thunder sounded right before the last seal, when the series of warnings were almost over. Now, as we approach the end of the trumpets, the angel raises his right hand and relays what mighty promise from God?

5. Depending on who the listener is, “no more delay” could be a welcome or unwelcome announcement. If the trumpets and their events have represented God's warnings to mankind throughout history, who would want more delay before final judgment?

Who would welcome the end of our time and the accomplishment of God's mystery?

6. What might this mystery of verse 7 be? (The seventh trumpet is sounded in 11:15-19.)

To whom had God already spoken about this mystery?

7. What does the voice from heaven tell John to do with the scroll?
8. What does the angel tell John to do?

When we take something in this manner, it becomes part of us. Jesus uses a similar metaphor in John 6:25-58. After reading this passage, tell ways in which believers can “feed on” Jesus. Give verses to support your answer.

9. Why might the contents of the scroll taste “sweet as honey” but then turn “sour” in John’s stomach? (Read Ezekiel 2:1-10 and 3:1-15.)

10. The last verse of the chapter says that John's messages from God will continue. Whom will his prophecies (telling of God's word) concern?

Not Just Here and Now

The last verse of Revelation 10 has an angel reaffirming John's role as prophet: "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings." This universal emphasis is seen elsewhere in Revelation. The song of praise to the worthy Lamb says, ". . . with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" (5:9). The "great multitude" in heaven in Chapter 7 is from "every nation, tribe, people and language" (v. 9).

Readers of Revelation are ethnocentric and time-centric: because we cannot see eternity as God can and we cannot know all that God knows, our interpretations are, naturally, influenced by when and where we live. For example, we will be introduced to a "beast" in 13:1 who receives his power from the dragon, Satan. One traditional interpretation is that the beast's 7 heads represent the empires of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Holy Roman Empire. The first 6 are historical enemies of Israel, but the last did not come into existence until hundreds of years after Revelation was written. Some questions to think about when studying this passage: Should the interpretation take into account ancient Far Eastern cultures and their rulers and religions? What about other places, times, oppressive regimes not addressed by traditional interpretations? Does the 7 perhaps stand for a complete measure of something instead of 7 specific people or empires (and see 17:7-11)?

From what you know of Revelation so far, could a person from an isolated culture who does not know much history beyond that of his own people and time learn anything from Revelation? If so, what would the basic message of the first 10 chapters be?

Write Revelation 21:23-26.

Revelation 11

In Chapter 10, we are again reminded of the power and majesty of God by seeing the awesomeness of one of his servants, an angel, who stands on both the earth and the sea at once and whose shout sounds like the roar of a lion! Although we are not allowed at this time to hear what the 7 thunders say, thunder does remind us of God's ongoing warnings and ultimate judgment. John's eating of the sweet then sour scroll reminds us that God's word can be both pleasant and painful. What do we want to receive from God—the temporarily painful yet ultimately sweet conviction and correction of His word, or the pain of eternal separation and punishment when we reject His word?

1. What 2 things is John told to do in the first verse of this chapter?

(Measuring and counting are a “taking stock” of God's faithful. Since the physical temple in Jerusalem may have already been destroyed when John wrote, this temple could refer to God's faithful, as the 144,000 of Chapter 7 do.)

2. Why is John **not** to measure the outer court?
3. A period of time, 42 months, is mentioned in verse 2. If we assume months of 30 days, this amount of time is also referred to in other places as 1,260 days, 3 ½ years, or “a time, times, and half a time.” If this number, half of 7, carries symbolic meaning, what could we conclude about this period of time? (Remember that 7 usually represents powerful completeness.)
4. We will learn more about this “broken 7” time period later in Revelation, but verse 3 tells us of 2 important figures who will play a role for “1,260 days,” possibly the same time period mentioned in the first 2 verses. According to verses 3 and 4, who are these 2 people?

According to verse 3, from where do they receive their power?

What is their “job” (v. 3 and 7)?

5. What power do they have over those who want to harm them (v. 5)?

6. What power do they have over the natural world?

What 2 Old Testament prophets had similar powers from God (1 Kings 17:1 and Exodus 7:14, 16-19)?

7. When they finish the job God gives them, who attacks them, and what happens?

(This is the first explicit mention in Revelation of this creature, whom we shall see much of later.)

8. Where do their bodies lie?

Christ was not crucified in Sodom or Egypt, so those terms are being used symbolically (“figuratively” in verse 8), perhaps for the “headquarters” of those who oppose God and His people.

9. For how long will the onlookers “refuse them burial”?

Write Jesus’ words to his disciples in John 15:18.

From verses 9 and 10 of Revelation 11, who is glad to see the 2 witnesses die?

What is meant by “these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth” (v. 10)?

10. “Three and a half days” once again carries the implication of a broken completeness, and “days” is much shorter than the 3 ½ years earlier in the chapter. What happens after this relatively short period of time (v. 11-12)?

11. Contrast the attitude of their enemies before this resurrection (v. 10) and after (v. 11).

12. After the 2 witnesses are called to heaven, what severe event takes place?

13. Previously (9:20-21), we have seen man’s continued sin and stubbornness in the face of God’s multiple warnings, but what do the survivors of this disaster do now?

From your experience, do natural disasters or tragedies tend to turn people’s hearts towards God?

Does God enjoy punishing people? (See Lamentations 3:33 and Ezekiel 18:23, 30-32.)

Read 2 Peter 3:8-15. Whom does God want to “come to repentance”?

Do you believe that the 2 witnesses’ 3 ½ year ministry influenced the people’s reaction in verse 13?

What would it have been like to witness the events of verses 11 and 12 (followed “At that very hour” by the earthquake of verse 13)?

14. Verse 14 says that the **sixth trumpet**/second woe has taken place; that woe could have included both the second army of Chapter 9 and the death and resurrection of the 2 witnesses, followed by the mighty earthquake. When you see the 2 witnesses experiencing their hearers’ anger, completing God’s task for them, and then being killed and quickly resurrected, whom else do you think of?

Read Revelation 6:9 again. What in this account of the 2 witnesses shows God’s love for and protection of those who proclaim His word even in the face of death?

15. One idea that runs throughout Revelation is that evil **does** have power and may **appear** unbeatable at times, but God wins. There is no question about God’s superiority over evil; the only question is which side we humans will be on when the warnings—and earthly time—cease. What in this story of the 2 witnesses makes evil look powerful?

16. What shows the superiority of God over evil?

17. The **seventh**, and last, **trumpet** brings a time of praise and worship from those in heaven. In verse 15, what is the praise?

18. When will God's rule/kingdom extend everywhere, fulfilling Daniel 7:13-14, Zechariah 14:9, and Matthew 6:10 completely and eternally?

19. Verse 18 says, "The nations were angry; and your wrath has come." How does this relate to the first 14 verses of this chapter?

Read Psalm 2. Against whom are the nations raging, according to this passage?

What is the psalmist's inspired advice to those revolting against God and His "Anointed One" in verses 10-12?

20. When the time mentioned in verse 18 comes, God will be ready to do what 3 things?

List phrases from this verse and others in this chapter that show the universal emphasis of the message of Revelation—that God deserves the loyalty and worship of **all** people on earth.

21. Knowing what you do about the 2 witnesses, do you have a guess as to who they might represent?

How important is it for us to name them specifically?

God's Kingdom

In Revelation 11, Christ's final judgment and triumph are anticipated, beginning with these beautiful words from verse 15: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

By definition, a kingdom must have a supreme ruler. God earns that title by being the Creator and Sustainer (4:11) of the Universe. The one "place" that God is not automatically king is our hearts: although he made us and sacrificed His Son for us, He does not force us to worship and love Him. Such is the nature of love and the mystery of free will.

The idea of God's kingdom occurs several times in the Bible, and simply put, it is God's reign, wherever it occurs—in individual hearts, in churches, in His heavenly court. As we have already seen in Revelation, God's reign is continuously and completely acknowledged by heaven. However, in Chapter 11, the voices in heaven are anticipating that time when all creation everywhere will acknowledge God as King, whether as defeated enemies or as loyal subjects (Romans 14:10-12 and Revelation 22:3).

While the kingdom is promised for the future, it is also a present reality among God's people. What do the following verses tell you about God's kingdom?

Psalm 103:19

Daniel 4:3

Luke 17:21

John 18:36

Colossians 1:13

1 Corinthians 6:9

Hebrews 12:28

Revelation 5:9-10

Revelation 12

We have finished half of our journey through John's revelation "of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place" (1:1). For each chapter, write 2 verses or phrases that were especially encouraging or enlightening to you.

Chapter 1—Jesus Among the Lampstands of the Churches

Chapter 2—To the Churches in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira

Chapter 3—To the Churches in Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea

Chapter 4—God's Throne Room

Chapter 5—The Lamb Who Is Worthy To Open the Scroll

Chapter 6—Six Seals Opened

Chapter 7—144,000 Sealed and the Great Multitude in Heaven

Chapter 8—The Seventh Seal and Four Trumpets

Chapter 9—Last Trumpets/Woes

Chapter 10—Mighty Angel with a Small Scroll for John

Chapter 11—The Two Witnesses

In chapter 11, the seventh angel with his trumpet announces that the end has come and it is time for judgment, but we still have half of Revelation to go! This is a reminder that John's vision is not a chronological, first-to-last account of events leading up to that final day. We see God's warnings, punishments, attempts to get mankind's attention multiple times down through history, events that possibly overlap and possibly happen multiple times. Chapter 12 begins a different way of looking at those events: It's as if a curtain has been pulled back to allow us to see the spiritual battle that is behind the events on earth.

1. Describe the woman in verses 1 and 2.

Why do you think this picture is called a “sign”?

2. Describe the being who waits for her to give birth.

In earlier passages, 7 has been a positive number, standing for completeness. Why might this menacing creature be shown with 7 heads (and 7 crowns on those heads)?

What does the dragon want to do to the woman’s newborn baby?

3. Describe the baby to whom the woman gives birth.
4. What is the significance of the iron scepter? (Psalm 2 and Revelation 19:11-16)
5. Does the dragon even get to touch the child?

What happens to the child (v. 5) and his mother (v. 6, 14)?

Who do you think this child is? Why?

6. The dragon has been defeated once in this chapter. What happens when he and his angels fight Michael and his angels in heaven?

Did you notice that the dragon doesn't even face God directly? He is not strong enough to defeat God's servants, the angels, in this battle!

7. What more do you learn about the dragon's identity in verse 9?
8. This second conflict is recounted by "a loud voice in heaven" in verses 10-12. Who is the "accuser of our brothers" in verse 10?

What do you think he might try to accuse the faithful of in front of God?

9. Even though we've just seen the accuser lose in the battle against Michael and his angels, according to verse 11, who overcomes the accuser?

How?

Why is "the blood" of the Lamb mentioned first?

What encouragement! Because of what the Lamb has done (5:9-10), **believers can participate in the defeat of Satan** by their testimony and willingness to die for him who died for them.

In Luke 10:18, what does Jesus see happening as he obeys his Father and his disciples obey him?

10. In this chapter (Revelation 12) and the one before it, “testimony” is mentioned at least 3 times. Read the following verses, and tell the meaning and importance of testimony: 11:7, 12:11, and 12:17.

11. Where is Satan hurled (v. 9, 12-13)?

For how long (v. 12)?

12. In his anger over this second defeat, whom does Satan now pursue?

13. What help is the woman first given (v. 14)?

14. When Satan continues to pursue her, what happens (v. 15-16)?

15. Because the dragon/Satan cannot defeat the woman, whom does he go after next (v. 17)?

This chapter contains multiple attempts by Satan to defeat God and thwart His purposes. God and His servants win the first 3 conflicts, and we will see the outcome of verse 17 soon.

Symbolism in Revelation

Revelation 12 is a good example of the highly symbolic nature of apocalyptic writing. The very first verse gives a clue that the woman is probably symbolic when it refers to her and what happens to her as “a great and wondrous sign.” We have to read the whole chapter and look for more clues to get the complete picture of who the woman might be.

To whom does she give birth (v. 5)?

How does God treat her after this event (v. 6, 14, and 16)?

The woman has other children. Who are they (v. 17)?

A literal reading might identify the woman as Mary, but she could represent Israel (12 stars = 12 tribes), through whom the Messiah came physically. She could also represent those faithful to God through Christ, as the last verse of the chapter seems to indicate. The purpose of the symbol—God’s protection of the Messiah and his followers—is more important than the person of the symbol.

Another example of complex symbolism in the Bible comes from the Old Testament and involves another boy and his mother. Read Isaiah 7:1-16. To reassure Ahaz, King of Judah, that the allied rulers of Aram and Israel would not defeat him, God tells him He would give Ahaz a sign: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel” (v. 14). The boy and his name, which means “God with us,” would symbolize God’s presence with and protection of Ahaz and his people. That boy, born in Ahaz’s time, would later come to symbolize whom (Matthew 1:23)?

What reassurance does the boy born in Matthew’s day bring from God?

This same person, as a baby, is mentioned in Revelation 12, and the reassurance that he brings from God is mightily present throughout this final revelation from God. Write Revelation 21:3.

Revelation 13

The account of the woman and her baby versus the dragon in Chapter 12 is a dramatic one, but even though Satan tried to destroy the baby, God easily defeated Satan (not once, but 3 times) and protected the baby and his mother. That baby grew into a man who would become the Savior of the world, and through his redemption and the power given by his Spirit to remain faithful, believers too (12:11) can play a role in the battle against Satan, who continues to wage war against Christ's brothers and sisters (12:17). Revelation leaves no doubt that God easily defeats Satan; the battles that remain are those in the souls of people.

1. We already know that Satan has angels (12:9). Now we will meet 2 more "helpers" that he recruits in the battle to win the souls of those on earth. Where does the first beast come from?

2. What does the dragon give this first beast?

3. What about this beast astonishes the whole world (v. 3)?

4. What great sin are men now committing (v. 4)? (See also 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

5. Whom does the beast blaspheme?

The beast's rule will be limited to how long? (See question and notes on 11:2.)

If the 42 months are the same time period referred to in the previous 2 chapters, what other things will happen during this relatively short period of time, this 3 ½ years (a "broken" 7)? 12:6, 14

11:2-3

And what picture of God's knowledge and protection of His saints is given in 11:1, before this time period is mentioned?

6. With the power that the dragon/Satan gives him, this beast seems to rule the world. What do you think the phrase "power to make war against the saints and to conquer them" (v. 7) means?
7. Verse 8 says that all inhabitants will give allegiance to what 2 forces?

What does this verse imply about trying to remain neutral in this situation?

8. The last part of verse 8 tells us what about the Lamb? (Ephesians 1:4-6 and 1 Peter 1:18-20)
9. Verse 10 seems to remind John's readers that those destined for death as punishment will indeed meet that punishment. Another interpretation is that those who are destined to be martyrs will indeed be martyrs (as in 6:11). Either way, what 2 traits must the saints have to persevere during this seeming all-earth allegiance to this beast?
10. A second beast comes from where?

He has 2 horns like a _____ but speaks like a _____.

11. Is there any significance to this beast appearing like the Lamb?

12. What is this beast's role (v. 12)? (And see 16:13 for another name for this land beast.)

13. According to verse 13, Matthew 24:24, and 2 Thessalonians 2:9, those devoted to serving Satan may be able to do what?

14. What does the second beast cause the inhabitants of the earth to do to honor the first beast?

15. What further power does he have (v. 15)?

16. In verses 16 and 17, this second beast takes another step to demand allegiance for the first beast. What does he do?

17. What does this mark consist of?

18. Knowing that 7 is the number of completion, what does the discovery that the beast's number is 666 and the words "it is man's number" say about the nature of the power represented by the mark, especially compared to the power of God?
19. Some of the words and phrases used to describe the first beast are "power," "great authority," "wound," and "make war." Words used to describe the second beast include "lamb," "worship," "authority," "great and miraculous signs," "deceived," "image in honor of the beast," and "worship the image." What might these tell you about the different roles of the sea beast and the land beast?
20. What mark do God's people have on them? (Ephesians 1:13-14)
21. The last verse of this chapter says that what is required for the understanding of the beast's mark?

Revelation 17:9 says, "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits." Wisdom is required to understand the symbolism of this verse. Why do you think wisdom is required to understand "the number of the beast" (13:18)?

Do you think symbolism is once again involved?

How do believers obtain the wisdom to understand such passages?

22. Skim Chapter 13 again. How do the dragon and his 2 beasts obtain people's loyalty?

What is the nature of that loyalty?

How are their methods and expectations different from God's?

The Dangers of Compromise

There is more than one list of sins in the book of Revelation, but some stand out as particular dangers to the readers of this book. One is hard-heartedness, the refusal to repent, a sin seen in many Bible events, including Pharaoh's repeated refusal to release God's people from slavery, a stubbornness that resulted in the death of all of Egypt's first-born sons and animals (Exodus 12:12). Another sin that would have been an issue for John's readers is compromise with evil, trying to remain faithful to Christ while placating the forces of evil. In John's Revelation, it is clear that there is no gray area: we either belong to God, or we belong to Satan.

The verb "compromise" comes from a Latin word that means to promise mutually; to compromise religiously is about as easy as promising 2 people in 2 different places that you will do something with them at the same time.

God is patient with His people who are struggling under difficult circumstances, as the letters in Chapters 2 and 3 show. There is a point, however, past which God's people cannot go and still belong to Him (2:5). One danger in compromise is that we do not know when Christ will come back (3:3) to claim those who have remained loyal to him and to punish those who have not.

The temptation to compromise is still a powerful one today. For example, a group of believers who live in a community where followers of another religion live may be tempted to compromise to get along, to accept those other "gods" along with Jesus. Such a compromise may seem to make life easier, at least temporarily.

The following is a description of what daily life may have looked like for many of John's earliest readers:

Not long after this time, some local officials introduced a formal requirement that unless you had offered the required sacrifices [to Caesar] you weren't allowed in the market. There were various kinds of marks and visible signs which were used to set people apart either as "able to trade" or "not able to trade". From quite early on the Christians were faced with a stark alternative: stay true to the lamb and risk losing your livelihood, the ability to sell; or buy or capitulate to the monster, sacrifice to Caesar at the behest of the local officials, and then everything will be all right—except your integrity as one of the lamb's followers. (Wright 121)

How, specifically, might the Christians in this situation have been tempted to compromise to make their daily life easier?

What compromises does your culture tempt Christians with today?

What help does God give believers who are tempted to compromise?

Revelation 14

Satan's 2 helpers, the sea beast and land beast, appear in Chapter 13. The first seems to be a very powerful ruler who can even kill God's people. The second beast works to make the earth worship the first beast. However, the "worship" that he promotes and the allegiance he demands are based on deception (13:14) and force (13:15-17). How much greater is our God, the one true God who, because of His great love for us, offered the best of Heaven for our redemption! Our allegiance to Him is based on truth, faith, and love.

1. This chapter begins with a heavenly scene. Mount Zion was part of the early Jerusalem and later came to be identified with the eternal "city of the living God" (Hebrews 12:22). Where else have we seen a group of 144,000 who have a mark of God's ownership on them?

John sees that the group in 14:1 has the names of the Father and the Lamb on their foreheads. This scene is a beautiful contrast to what picture of evil in the last verses of Chapter 13?

2. What is this group doing (v. 3)?
3. If verse 4 is symbolic, what could their chastity stand for?
4. Whom do they follow "wherever he goes"?
5. How else are they described, in verse 5?

Why is this trait important? (Keep remembering the contrast with Chapter 13.)

6. In verses 6-13, 3 angels are “flying in midair” with messages to proclaim. These are very public messages—audible, visible, and easy to comprehend. According to verse 6, what does the first angel proclaim?

Whom is this message for?

What does this very public, powerful proclamation of the gospel say about God's desire and power to save people?

7. What is the second angel's message?
8. According to the third angel, what will happen to anyone who “worships the beast and his image and receives his mark”?
9. How long does the punishment for these people last?
10. Verse 12 says that believers must have what, as they read of, and possibly experience, these things?
11. Verse 13 gives a blessing for whom?

12. Is verse 13 a comfort to you? Why or why not?
13. Several times in Revelation we have heard reminders that the final judgment is near (10:6-7; 11:15, 17-18; 14:17). Now we will see a picture of that judgment, using harvest/reaping and picking of grapes (vintage) metaphors (as in Joel 3:13). Who is the first person we see, and what is he holding?
14. What does he do with the sickle at the announcement that “the harvest of the earth is ripe”?
15. Two angels appear. What does the second angel tell the first to do (v. 18)?

Write Jesus' words recorded in Matthew 13:49.

16. Where do the grapes go?

How is this place described in 19:15?

17. According to the last verse of Revelation 14, what, and how much of it, comes from the winepress?

The Life Is in the Blood

Blood has been mentioned several times in Revelation already, and it plays an important part in the upcoming chapters. Why is blood important? We instinctively know the value of blood—if a person begins bleeding profusely, we do our best to stop that flow. But, not surprisingly, here in Revelation, blood is symbolic at times: it can represent life and it can represent that (the Lamb's sacrifice) which saves our lives.

Early on in His relationship with His people the Israelites, God explained to them why they were to treat blood in a special way: "For the life of a creature is in the blood . . ." (Leviticus 17:11). The same verse says that the blood of an animal would be used to atone for, or cover, their sins; in other words, something would have to die for their sins.

How would you feel about sinning if, each time you committed a sin, someone killed an animal in front of you?

What if that animal was a person instead?

Write 1 Peter 1:18-19.

A person---the very best one!--has died for our sins, and we should hold the picture of that great death before us always. Write the last sentence of Acts 20:28.

According to Revelation 7:14, what amazing thing does this blood do for those faithful to Christ?

Before the final judgment and the appearance of the new heaven and earth, we see a picture of Jesus as a conquering victor (19:11-16). Why would this conqueror be wearing “a robe dipped in blood”?

Revelation 15

Chapter 14 contains strong encouragement for believers and strong warnings for unbelievers. Those marked with the names of the Father and the Lamb sing a special, unique praise. They are firstfruits, an offering hinting at much more “fruit” to follow. The Lamb stands with them (14:1). God’s angels continue to preach (14:6-7) the truth and give explicit warnings about worshipping the beast (14:9-11). And in the end of the chapter, angels will take part in the final “harvest” on earth. This chapter emphasizes the truth spoken by our Lord in Matthew 12:30—“He who is not with me is against me.” There is no compromise, no middle ground. But it also points out the blessings of living a faithful life—the Lamb’s mark of verse 1, the new song of verse 3, the presence of the Lamb with his people in verses 1 and 4, and the rest for those who die in the Lord (v. 13). These stand in sharp contrast to the blasphemy, persecution, forced worship, deception, evil miracles, and murder of Chapter 13. To whom do you want to give your loyalty?

1. This chapter introduces the last of 3 series of events that serve to warn and punish those who do not believe in God. According to verse 1, why will this series be the last?

2. Whom does John see standing beside what looks like a “sea of glass mixed with fire”?

3. What song do they sing?

What mighty act of deliverance of God’s people did God, through Moses, perform?

Whom did Moses give the credit to for this mighty act (Exodus 15:1-18)?

What mighty act of deliverance of God's people did God enable the Lamb to perform?

4. Write out this song (Revelation 15:3-4).

5. In heaven, what is opened?

Who then comes forth?

6. One of the 4 living creatures (first seen in Chapter 4) gives what to the angels?

7. What is wrath?

"Wrath" is a strong word, and one of the themes of Revelation concerns whether God's wrath against humans is reasonable, justified. Read Romans 1:18-20. In this passage, the godless and wicked have done what with the truth?

From the same passage in Romans, what do verses 19 and 20 tell us about what **all** people can see about God?

Read 1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 5:8-9. What is the good news about wrath for those who give their loyalty to God?

Is God's wrath taught about today? Should it be?

8. What fills the heavenly temple (v. 8)?

For how long?

9. This chapter contains several reminders of Moses as the deliverer of God's people from slavery in Egypt, including the mention of plagues and the song of Moses and of the Lamb. What event in Exodus 40:17, 34-35 is similar to the last verse of Revelation 15?

Victory

In this chapter, John describes "those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name" singing praises to the Lamb. In that song (v. 3-4), they give all the credit to their Savior, so how is it that believers themselves are called victorious? How do they overcome? Chapter 12, verse 11 gives more information: "They overcame

him [Satan] 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.” These people were willing to confess their faith and to die for it, but first, they were saved by the sacrifice of Jesus’ blood. As mentioned in the conclusion to last week’s lesson, life is in blood, and the only sacrifice that can cover the sins of the world is the perfect blood of Christ. Revelation 7:14 gives a picture of sins being washed away by Jesus’ blood. Normally, blood does not cleanse; it stains horribly. But Jesus’ blood is pure because he is the sinless Son of God (1 Peter 1:18-19).

If a person believes Jesus is who he says he is and believes in the power of his blood, how can that person have her sins washed away by that blood? After Jesus died and was resurrected, the Spirit provided several stories of people who asked that very question. What were they taught to do to receive this forgiveness?

Acts 2:36-39

Acts 8:26-39

Acts 10:34-48

Acts 16:25-34

All these people realized they needed help and believed in the power of Jesus to save them. The apostles and other teachers urged them to repent, to turn from their sin and pursue pleasing God instead. They were baptized. Note that while “believe” and “repent” are active, “be baptized” is passive. God Himself supplies and applies Jesus’ blood, which takes our sins away when we are baptized in faith and repentance. He continues to forgive when we sin again (1 John 1:7). His Spirit then helps us to grow to become more like Him (Galatians 5:16, 22-25). Christians are free from guilt, fear, and condemnation and have the assurance that they will live forever with God (1 John 5:11-13). That is the good news that the world needs to hear!

According to Ephesians 2:8-10, who deserves all the credit for our salvation?

If you have any doubts or questions about whether you are saved through Jesus’ sacrifice, please talk to your group leader.

Just as the words of the old hymn say, saints enjoy “Victory in Jesus,” but there is no doubt about who won that victory. Read Romans 5:6-8, and tell what this passage means, in your own words.

How can we show our gratefulness to someone who gives us a life-saving gift?

Revelation 16

Chapter 15 contains a beautiful song of praise to God called “the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.” Moses was God’s human instrument to deliver His chosen people in the Old Testament from the Egyptians, who felt the full force of God’s plagues. The Passover lamb was part of Israel’s first religious holiday, memorializing their escape from the death of the firstborn (Exodus 12:12-13) and from Egypt itself. When that delivery was accomplished, Moses sang the first song recorded in the Bible. The Lamb is God’s perfect instrument now to deliver His people from the “plagues” of sin and death. Chapter 16’s 7 plagues represent God’s wrath, which is completely justified (15:3 and 16:7), against any who still refuse to believe in the face of God’s multiple warnings. But along with the wrath there is great hope for those who have remained faithful: all the enemies of God will be destroyed powerfully, quickly, and completely.

1. What does the loud voice from heaven tell the 7 angels to do?

2. What happens when the first angel pours out the **first bowl** of God’s wrath?

Whom, specifically, did the third angel of Chapter 14 warn (v. 9-11)?

3. The **second** angel’s **bowl** affects the sea and the creatures in it. How is this different from and similar to the events after the second trumpet in 8:8-9?

4. What happens when the **third bowl** is poured out?

5. At this point, the “angel in charge of the waters” praises God. What is the theme/main idea of the angel’s praise?

According to this angel, why is blood involved in the second and third plagues?

6. What happens when the **fourth** angel pours his **bowl** of wrath onto the sun?

What do the affected people do?

Verse 9 reminds us that God “had control over these plagues.” What does the people’s continued cursing and refusal to repent, in the face of God’s control over what was happening, tell you about their hearts?

7. Where is the **fifth bowl** poured, and what immediately happens?

Once again, what is the reaction of those affected?

This continued refusal to repent emphasizes what about God’s actions (v. 7)?

Can you find other Bible verses with this same theme?

8. The first 5 plagues have been punishments more than warnings, and as such, they portray part of the process of the final punishment and destruction of God's enemies. When the **sixth** angel pours out his **bowl**, what happens to the river Euphrates?

9. Who appears next, and where do they come from?

10. What do they go out to do, in verse 14?

11. A blessing from Jesus interrupts the grim scene at this point. What metaphor for spiritual preparedness does he use?

12. Where will the battle "on the great day of God Almighty" (v. 14) take place (v. 16)?

(Just as "Babylon" is used symbolically, this place name, the site of many battles, probably is too.)

13. Unlike the seals and trumpets, there is no delay/interlude before the final bowl of wrath. What pronouncement comes from heaven when the **seventh bowl** is poured out (v. 17)?

14. What happens?

15. What is the result?

16. Verse 19 mentions “the great city” and “Babylon.” The next 2 chapters of Revelation tell the fate of “Babylon,” but 17:1, 3, and 5 tell that Babylon is symbolized by whom?

According to 17:18, this woman stands for what?

17. From the last 2 verses of Chapter 16, what else happens?

What do those affected do?

Spiritual Warfare

Starting with Chapter 12, there is a shift in Revelation. It’s as though a curtain has been pulled aside to show the “big players” behind what’s been happening on earth. We are told directly that the sea beast gets his power from the dragon (13:2), who is Satan (12:9). Chapter 13, verse 14 says that “Because of the signs he was given power to do on behalf of the first beast, he [the second beast] deceived the inhabitants of the earth.” What lies do you think these people believed?

Deception remains one of Satan's main tools today, and believers can never forget that Satan is the true enemy (Ephesians 6:12), not the family member we can't get along with, not the neighbor who has strange political views, not the teacher who won't acknowledge God. What, besides deception, are some tools that Satan uses today to keep people from God?

In a different version of the Bible from what you usually use, look up and then write down the following verses:

1 Peter 5:8

2 Chronicles 16:9a

Revelation 17

The bowls of wrath in Chapter 16 tell, by their very name, that God's warnings are turning into punishments. For parts of 4 chapters, we will see enemies defeated by Him who sits on the throne (5:1) and by His Lamb. The longing for ultimate justice against evil voiced in 6:10 will finally be answered: "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

1. Verse 1 tells about the punishment of whom specifically?

("The Roman world which John knew thrived on sexual immorality"—Wright, 151).

2. What phrase in verse 2 describes how "the inhabitants of the earth" take part in her sin?

The last part of 16:19 is a preview of what happens in Chapters 17 and 18. What phrase in this verse describes the woman's just punishment for her sin?

3. In verse 3, the woman is pictured as sitting on a beast. Where have we seen this beast before?
4. The outwardly glamorous woman holds a cup with what inside (v. 4)?

N.T. Wright says that most modern readers don't get the full force of what these words, strong as they are, convey: human waste, blood, "disgusting, stomach-churning-filth" (151).

What message does the picture of glittering woman holding a golden cup full of filth send?

5. Continuing the intoxication symbolism of earlier verses, on what is the woman drunk, according to verse 6?

6. The title on the woman's forehead identifies her with what notoriously wicked city?

Write Revelation 14:8.

Multiple symbols are at work here. Why do you think a powerful city (v. 18) is represented by a prostitute? (Skim Chapter 18 and any other verses that are helpful.)

Why do you think participation in her sins is described as drunkenness (v. 2)?

7. One of the 7 angels from the previous 2 chapters begins to explain the "mystery" of the woman and the beast to John. What does the angel say about the beast in verse 8?

8. Who will be astonished when they see the beast?

Why will the beast's reappearance astonish these people?

9. Verse 9 tells us that, once again, wisdom is called for in understanding the beast. Its 7 heads are _____ and 7 _____.

What ancient city was famously associated with 7 hills?

10. Who is the eighth king, according to verse 11?

According to this verse and verse 8, what will happen to the beast after he reappears?

In contrast, how is God described in 1:4 and 1:8?

11. Verses 12 and 13 say that 10 kings (represented by 10 horns) will rule with the beast and aid him for how long?

12. What will be the outcome of their alliance with the beast (v. 14)?

13. According to verse 16, what is the real relationship between the beast and the woman?

14. Whose purpose is behind the destruction of the woman at the hands of the beast and 10 kings (v. 17)?

15. Summarize, in your own words, the relationship between the woman, the kings, and all those who follow her **versus** the relationship between the Lamb and his followers.

16. A cup/drinking metaphor is present in these chapters in Revelation—and throughout the Bible. How is the woman's cup described (17:2 and 14:8)?

What drink will she and her companions ultimately drink (16:19)?

What cup did the Lamb chose to drink in obedience to his Father (Matthew 26:36-46)?

Because of Jesus' obedience, what cup(s) can believers also partake of (Luke 22:17-18, 20)?

Appearance and Reality

We humans do not always see evil behind beautiful appearances; in this chapter, the richly-dressed, powerful woman—who has a cup full of very nasty stuff—is one example. What other similar example do we see in the New Testament (Matthew 23:27-28)?

What is the deceptive appearance mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:14?

To Christians surrounded by sin and deceit, what truth did Jesus repeat several times in Revelation? (See 3:11, 16:15, and 22:7, 12, and 20.)

What other admonition did Christ give the believers who were living in a sinful world? (Skim the letters in Chapters 2 and 3 and read 18:4.)

Can you think of any more truths in Revelation that Jesus emphasizes to his followers?

Another possible tool of deception shown in Revelation is parodies, poor imitations of God's beautiful, complete truth. The mark of the sea beast in 13:16-18 on the foreheads of the people is an imitation of what event in Chapter 7?

The 2 beasts themselves may be parodies of whom in Chapter 11?

The second beast with "two horns like a lamb" (13:11) is an inferior copy of whom?

The woman on the scarlet beast (17:3) is no match for what mighty warrior on a white horse (19:11)?

Her jewels are far inferior to the precious stones we see where (21:11, 18-21)?

Do you think Satan can use these “cheap copies” of the pure and powerful truths of God? If so, how?

Revelation 18

As ugly and evil as the great prostitute is, Revelation has already foretold her destruction more than once. Many of the first people to have read this book were being viciously persecuted by Rome, the city of 7 hills. The picture of a gaudy prostitute riding a wicked beast while drunk on the blood of the saints is one of pure evil, but her destruction will be swift and sure.

1. God's ultimate victory over evil has never been in doubt, but now we begin to see the process in some detail. Tell who the enemies of God are in the following verses from Revelation:

1:18

12:9

13:1b

13:11

14:8

Who or what is banished/destroyed in the following verses from Revelation?

18:2-8

19:19-20

20:10

20:14

Do you notice any pattern in the order of the 2 lists?

Write 1 Corinthians 15:26.

2. What words describe the angel in verse 1?

What does this tell you about the God whose servant he is?

3. What pronouncement does this servant of the Almighty make concerning Babylon?

To review, read Revelation 17:1-5, 9, 18. What are the titles given to the woman, and with what city is she associated?

4. According to verse 3, what “advantage” did the merchants of the earth gain by participating in her sins?
5. God urges His people to do what, in verse 4?
6. Verse 6 says she will be paid back how much for what she has done?
7. She gave herself “glory and luxury” but will receive what?
8. What attitude is represented by her words “I sit as queen . . .” (v. 7)?

9. How quickly will her punishment come upon her (v. 8 and see verses 10 and 17)?

10. What will be the reaction of the kings “who committed adultery with her” (v. 3, 9) when they see her swift destruction?

11. Why will the merchants of the earth mourn (v. 11)?

12. What is the last “commodity” mentioned in verses 12 and 13?

What do you think this means?

N. T. Wright gives this sad historical commentary: “Slavery was to the ancient world, more or less, what steam, oil, gas, electricity and nuclear power are to the modern world. Slavery was how things got done. Life was almost literally unthinkable without it” (164).

Read 1 Timothy 1:9-11. How does God feel about slave traders?

13. According to verse 17, who else will mourn this woman?

14. According to verse 19, why are they sad that Babylon “has been brought to ruin”?

15. How can believers feel about her destruction (v. 20)?
16. Another mighty angel appears in verse 21. What does he do to symbolize the violence with which Babylon will be destroyed?
17. What are some things that will **never** be found in Babylon again?
18. Her destruction comes because what **was** found in her (v. 24)?
19. In Isaiah 47:5-15, God's prophet tells of God's displeasure with the physical nation of Babylon for the lack of mercy it would show the Israelites. What similarities do you see between this passage and Revelation 18?

Our Security

In the first 8 verses of this chapter, an angel and "another voice from heaven" announce the fall of the prostitute, or Babylon, the worldly empire that has no respect for God or His people. The announcement is not a sad one; the messengers see the just destruction of an enemy of God. However, the kings of the earth, the merchants, and those who travel and trade on the seas mourn her destruction. Describe their reactions in the following verses:

18:10

18:11

18:18

The kings, who have engaged in her “adultery,” are rightly terrified, perhaps imagining the same fate for themselves. However, the next 2 groups seem to be horrified because of the financial and cultural implications. Skim the whole chapter again. How many times do you see a word that has to do with money or profit?

Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10. According to verse 6, what is one good way to be “wealthy”?

What do you see in verse 9 that applies to the situation in Revelation 18?

From verse 10, what one desire can lead to all kinds of sin?

Read Matthew 6:19-21. Where does God tell us not to store up treasure?

Where, instead, should our “treasure” be? What does this mean?

How can we tell what things we truly treasure in life?

Romans 3:21-24

Philippians 3:7-9

5. "The Lamb" of verse 9 is Jesus, who never married during his earthly life but is promised some of the blessings of marriage because of his submission to his Father (see Isaiah 53:10). Just as adultery may represent spiritual unfaithfulness, marriage may represent the close relationship between Christ and his followers. Read Ephesians 5:25-32. God's design for marriage reflects what greater reality, according to these verses?

6. What event will be held to celebrate this final reunion of Christ and his bride (v. 9)?

The event mentioned in verse 9 is anticipated in Old Testament prophecy. Read Isaiah 25:6-8, and write 2 phrases from this description that especially encourage you.

7. John has seen angels perform mighty acts and make amazing proclamations. What is his reaction to the angel's words in verse 10?

What is the angel's reaction?

To whom does he redirect John's attention?

8. A rider on a white horse appears in heaven. What is his name?

What does he do (v. 11)?

9. Based on your answers to this question and his description in verses 12 and 13, who is this rider?

10. Why do you think this mighty warrior is wearing a robe “dipped in blood” (v. 13)?

11. Who is accompanying him?

We assume, correctly perhaps, that this heavenly army is made up of angels, but what clues tell us that these might be believers? (See v. 8 and 17:14.)

12. What is this warrior’s weapon (v. 15, 21)?

What is the significance of this weapon coming out of his mouth (verse 13 along with Hebrews 4:12-13, John 12:48-49, and Revelation 1:16)?

13. What is this warrior about to do to the nations (v. 15)?

From the same verse, what metaphor of harvest shows that he is administering God's judgment and anger against the unbelieving nations?

14. What well-earned name does this warrior prominently wear?

15. Another angel appears, "standing in the sun," and announces an invitation to what event?

How can this angel issue an invitation to an event that will take place after a battle that hasn't even been fought yet?

16. Who gathers to fight against the warrior and his armies?

17. What happens to the 2 beasts?

18. What happens to "the rest of them" (v. 21)?

In this chapter, 2 feasts have been described. Which do you want to be a part of, knowing that the saints are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb (verse 9) and that God's enemies are the meal at the great supper of God (v. 17-18)?

The Invitation

As much of Revelation does, Chapter 19 serves as a promise and a warning. The 2 feasts symbolize the results of the choice all people will make: choosing to be on the side of the Lamb, or choosing not to stand with the Lamb. Not choosing—by choice, by delay, by denial, because of fear—is choosing to stand with Satan. There is no neutrality. We cannot say, “I was not going against God; I just wasn’t going with Him” or “Just because I didn’t support Jesus doesn’t mean I opposed him.” What does Jesus say about loyalty to him, in Matthew 12:30 and Luke 11:23?

In the following verses, there are 2 alternatives, 2 situations, a choice which we will make. Describe the 2 alternatives in each passage from Revelation.

2:5

2:13

3:5

6:16-17

11:18

12:11

13:8

14:5

14:11

16:15

18:4

21:7-8

21:27

22:11

22:14-15

Revelation 20

In these last chapters of Revelation, scenes of warning have given way to scenes of judgment and justice. Thanks be to our merciful God that while we still have life here, we still have a chance to come to Him! Why can it be unwise to delay in making a commitment to God and Christ? (See Ecclesiastes 9:12 and Matthew 24:36.)

As late as 18:4, God is admonishing His people to have nothing to do with Babylon; however, the time to respond and repent will not be last forever, as the consequences of that choice will. When the end of this life comes, heaven and those who belong to the Lamb will rejoice mightily while all others will face the consequences of rejecting God's call. Previous chapters have shown the punishment of Babylon and the 2 beasts and their armies; this chapter will show Satan's doom.

1. An angel coming from heaven holds 2 things. What are they?
2. Whom does he lock up, and where does he throw him?

(Remember that in apocalyptic symbolism a thousand years, a "millennium," would refer to a long, but limited period of time.)

3. According to the last part of verse 3, why must this being be "locked up for 1,000 years"?
4. Assuming the chaining of Satan is symbolic, what event/time period in history would have reduced Satan's power to deceive on earth? Keep in mind that, according to verse 3, Satan's main tool is deception. (See Luke 10:17-18 and John 8:32.)

5. What must happen after Satan's imprisonment (v. 3)?

6. Before the final battle when Satan and his armies attempt to fight God's people, we see a description of the martyrs in heaven during the 1,000 years prior to this battle. We have already seen that those who have died "because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God" have a special place in heaven close to the Lamb (6:9-11; 7:9-10, 13-14; 15:2-4). From verses 4-6, do you see any new information about this blessed group?

7. When Satan is released "for a short time" (v. 3), what 2 things does he do to the nations of the earth (v. 8)?

Just as "Armageddon" is an Old Testament battle site name used to symbolize the final battle site between good and evil, "Gog and Magog" (Ezekiel 38 and 39) are the names of Old Testament enemies of God's people that now represent the enemies Satan gathers. According to verse 8, how big is this army?

8. When happens when they surround God's people?

9. Consider the amazing implications of verse 9. This is the final battle, Armageddon. How long does it last?

What do God's people have to do in this battle?

Is this really even a battle, back-and-forth fighting?

That's it! In one verse, the much-dreaded battle of Armageddon is over when "fire came down and devoured them." God's victory is swift, powerful, and sure! Write Exodus 14:13-14.

10. What happens to the devil?

How does this truth differ from the common perception of Satan as the powerful, arrogant "King of Hell" sometimes portrayed in popular culture?

11. What does John now see?

12. Who stands before the throne?

13. What is used to judge the dead according to what they have done?

14. What great enemy is thrown into the lake of fire (1 Corinthians 15:26)?

15. Who will also be sent to the lake of fire, according to the last verse?

The Final Judgment

This chapter is the first in Revelation to present a picture of the final judgment of all people, not warnings or foreshadowings of it. From the following verses in this chapter, what do you learn about Judgment Day?

Who will be there (v. 12)?

Judgment will be according to what (v. 12-13)?

What is the destination of those whose names are not in the book of life (v. 15)?

What do the following verses tell about the final judgment?

Matthew 25:31-46

Romans 2:6

Romans 14:10-12

2 Corinthians 5:10

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

Even though this will be a day of great joy for believers, sometimes fear or doubt may creep in, for many reasons. We may be like the prophet Isaiah, who felt his own unworthiness deeply (read Isaiah 6:1-7) when confronted with the absolute purity of God in his own vision of the throne room. Truly, our only hope is in Christ's righteousness, which he has given us, and the wonderful forgiveness he bought for us on the cross.

Christian writer Max Lucado has written a book, *When Christ Comes*, that offers comfort to Christians by reminding us of the wonderful promises Christ has made about eternity. Here is a passage about Judgment Day from that book:

Still, the question remains, why must our deeds be exposed? According to Jesus, "Everything that is hidden will be shown, and everything that is secret will be made known" (Luke 12:2). Is Jesus saying that all secrets will be revealed? The secrets of sinners and saints alike? He is, but—and this is essential—the sins of the saved will be revealed as forgiven sins. Our transgressions will be announced as pardoned transgressions. That is the second reason believers will be judged. The first, so our acts can be rewarded and second, so that God's grace can be revealed.

You've probably heard the story of the couple who resorted to do-it-yourself marriage counseling. They resolved to make a list of each other's faults and then read them aloud So she made hers and he made his. The wife gave her list of complaints to the husband and he read them aloud. "You snore, you eat in bed, you get home too late and up too early" After finishing, the husband did the same. He gave her his list. But when she looked at the paper, she began to smile. He, too, had written his grievances, but next to each he had written, "I forgive this."

The list was a tabulated list of grace.

You'll receive such a list on judgment day. Remember the primary purpose of judgment: to reveal the grace of the Father. As your sins are announced, God's grace is magnified.

Imagine the event. You are before the judgment seat of Christ. The book is opened and reading begins—each sin, each deceit, each occasion of destruction and greed. But as soon as the infraction is read, grace is proclaimed. [Here the author gives an illustration of a list of sins, with the big word "PARDONED!" stamped across the list.]

The result?The devil will shrink back in defeat. The angels will step forward in awe. And we saints will stand tall in God's grace. As we see how much he has forgiven us, we will see how much he loves us. And we will worship him. (107-109)

Revelation 21

God's enemies have been destroyed! For those who belong to Christ, the last 2 chapters of Revelation are some of the most beautiful in the Bible. God's warnings to unbelievers have been plentiful, and His judgments have been just. Now He will restore the universe to the goodness that it had before humans corrupted it with sin. Read Psalm 96:11-13 and 98:7-9. How does the universe react to God's judgment?

1. Write 2 things that are new, according to verse 1.
2. Read 2 Peter 3:10-13. How will the old physical universe be done away with?

According to Peter, how should this knowledge affect our actions and attitude?

3. According to Revelation 21:2, what comes down from heaven itself?
4. What does the voice from heaven say in verse 3?

How does this fit in with the common perception of "going up to heaven" after we die?

5. What wonderful acts of God's grace and love have given believers a foretaste of this final blessing?

Matthew 1:23

1 Corinthians 3:16 and 2 Corinthians 3:3 and 6:16

6. What beautiful comfort is in store for God's people, according to verse 4?

How does the picture of God **Himself** doing this encourage you?

7. Verse 5 contains another encouragement—"I am making all things new"—that will be further illustrated in the upcoming verses. Not only is the message amazing, but so is the delivery. Besides the heavenly court praising God, whom do we usually hear from in the book of Revelation?

1:17-20; Chapters 2 and 3; 16:15; and 22:7, 12-16

5:2; 7:2-3; 10:5-6; 14:6-11, 15, 18; 16:5, 17:1-18; 18:1-3, 21-24; and 19:9-10, 17-18

9:13; 10:4, 8; 11:12, 12:10-12; 14:13; 16:1; and 18:4

How does hearing God speaking directly in this verse add to the picture of this wonderful new world?

8. In verse 6, what is the significance of "It is done"?

9. God continues to bless and reassure those with whom He will now dwell. List a couple of those blessings from verses 6 and 7.

10. A list of sins appears in verse 8. Knowing what God asks of His people who read Revelation, how is being “cowardly” an important sin to avoid?

The last sin mentioned, being a liar, involves deception. Do you see any connection between deception and the other sins in this list?

What is the last sin listed in 22:15?

11. As Chapter 19 describes the saved as the bride of Christ, their eternal home is described with similar language—“the wife of the Lamb” (v. 9). According to the first part of verse 11, what makes this bride beautiful?

12. What five 12’s are mentioned in verses 12-14?

13. Because the Holy City is a perfect square, it is reminiscent of what earlier holy dwelling (1 Kings 6:19-20)?

What impression do the measurements of 1,400 miles in length, width, and height give?

How might this picture be related to Jesus' words in John 14:1-3, as he was comforting his disciples before his death?

How thick is the wall surrounding the city?

14. The foundations of the walls of the city are decorated with how many types of precious stones?

Each gate is a single what?

15. What else is special about these city gates (v. 25)?

16. According to verse 22, what is not in the Holy City (versus 11:19), and why not?

17. What gives this city its light?

18. Verse 27 says that nothing "impure" will ever enter the city. According to verses 24 and 26, what will the saved of different nations bring to the New Jerusalem?

Heaven

As in other spiritual matters, popular culture has many misconceptions about the afterlife. In the following verses, what does God's word really say about the new heaven and new earth?

Will the saved be disembodied spirits? (1 John 3:2; John 20:24-27 and 21:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:35, 39-44, 49)

Will the earth be completely burned up, never to exist again? (1 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1-2)

Will God be an unapproachable being in the sky? (Revelation 21:3-4)

Will the new heaven be a misty, bright place of clouds and white? (Revelation 21:18-21)

Will the saved just be praising God with the angels? (Revelation 22:3)

Have you learned anything about the new heaven and earth that you did not know?

There is undoubtedly much about this new eternal home for God's people that we cannot yet know or even imagine, but we know that it will be good as God has always intended it to be! Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-10, and write verse 9.

Revelation 22

From before the creation of the world (1 Peter 1:20 and Revelation 13:8), God has been working to restore what our sin has corrupted. He worked to create a nation, the Israelites, who would reflect His values to the world and through whom He would bless the whole world (Isaiah 49:6-7) by His Son Jesus. Through His Son, He created a spiritual, global family who continues to reflect His light and tell His truth to the world. Evil has always battled God and His plan, but the ultimate victory of God over evil is assured in His word. The only question that remains is this: Do you want to share Christ's victory in God's beautiful new heaven and earth?

1. The same angel who has been showing John the "bride, the wife of the Lamb" (21:9), continues his tour of this beautiful city which has come "down out of heaven from God" (21:2). What feature does he show John in verse 1?

Why is this feature in the New Jerusalem (v. 17)?

2. "On each side" of this feature stands what (v. 2)?

What is its purpose?

The last place people were able to eat from this tree was in the Garden of Eden. What blessings lost or damaged because of sin in Eden will be restored in this new heaven and earth?

Genesis 3:8-9 and Revelation 21:3

Genesis 2:9, 16, 22 and Revelation 21:4 and 22:2

Genesis 2:25 and 3:9-10 and Revelation 21:27

Genesis 1:31 and 3:17 and Revelation 21:1

3. No longer will there be any _____ (v. 3) or any _____ (v. 5).
4. What will God's servants do in this beautiful place (v. 3)?
5. As was mentioned in Chapter 21, who will illuminate this city?
6. According to verse 5, what wonderful privilege will the faithful share with God and Jesus? (And see Revelation 2:26-27.)

For how long?

7. Verse 7 pronounces a blessing on the person "who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." How, specifically, can we do that?
8. Just as he had in 19:10, John falls at the angel's feet in awe of what he has just seen and heard. In both cases, what does the angel tell John he should do instead?
9. What word that reinforces the idea of urgency in spiritual matters is repeated in verses 6, 7, 12, and 20?
10. In verse 13, Jesus repeats an idea that has been used before in this book (1:8, 17-18 and 21:6). Knowing the "whole story" of Revelation now, how do you see these words to be true?

What additional titles does Jesus use for himself in verse 16?

11. Those who “wash their robes” (7:14) will have the right to do what 2 things mentioned in verse 14?

12. Verse 17 repeats God’s beautiful invitation that is still open as long as this earth exists. How are believers, according to this verse, involved in extending God’s invitation?

13. Verses 18 and 19 contain a warning. What will be added to anyone who adds to the words of this prophecy?

What will be taken away from anyone “who takes words away from this book of prophecy”?

14. Tell John’s response to Jesus’ final words—“Yes, I am coming soon” (v. 20).

The “Big Picture” of Revelation

Reread the first 3 verses of Revelation. Who is the ultimate author of this book?

What messenger does He use to send this revelation to its human scribe?

Who is that scribe/writer?

This a revelation about whom?

What have you learned about Jesus Christ from this study?

**List at least 5 other lessons, or themes, that you have learned from Revelation.
(See conclusion for Lesson 2.)**

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