

The Book of Revelation

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Introduction to the Book of Revelation

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The New Testament opens with the four Gospels telling of the FIRST coming of Christ. The Revelation closes the New Testament with the theme of the SECOND coming of Christ. Within the confines of the book, the Second Coming of Christ and the years immediately preceding it are revealed more graphically than in any other book in the Bible.

There are many ways Revelation has been interpreted:

1. The ALLEGORICAL or non-literal approach.
2. The PRETERIST approach: They regard the book as a symbolic picture of early church conflicts that have been fulfilled.
3. The HISTORICAL approach: They view the content of the book as a symbolic picture of church history in the present age.
4. The FUTURIST approach: They believe chapters 4 through 22 deal with future events. More specifically, they believe, with good reason, that chapters 4 through 18 describe the last seven years preceding the literal coming of Christ to the earth. Chapter 19 gives the most graphic portrayal of the Second Coming in the Bible, chapter 20 describes the millennial reign of Christ, and chapters 21-22 describe the eternal state.

Revelation: Chapter 1

The Veil is Rolled Aside

Revelation 1:1-4

Note the blessing, “Grace and Peace Be Unto You,” in Rev. 1:4. This is noteworthy, because this book deals primarily with judgment; it shows how God will judge wicked men. It tells us that the floodgates of God’s wrath, dammed back since Calvary, will burst their banks and pour forth in all their fury. Despite these unalterable facts, God begins the book by telling men and women that they can have what they do not deserve - GRACE. Multitudes will respond to this message, see Rev. 6:9-14. Not only is there grace, but there is also PEACE.

The book deals with the opposite of peace. There is war and bloodshed, conflict and carnage, earthquakes, famine, pestilence, and woe. It tells of war in heaven and wars on earth. It tells of a horrible beast, driven by the devil, torturing and killing the believers. Thunders crash, stars fall, plagues emerge from the abyss, and demons take control of human affairs. Armies are conscripted, consisting of countless millions of men. Yet in the midst of all this war, confusion, and tragedy, God offers PEACE.

Eventually GRACE and PEACE emerge victorious. At the end of the book, the war clouds roll away, the tumultuous conditions quiet, the earth is purged, and a new heaven and a new earth is established in which righteousness dwells and where all is GRACE and PEACE. See Rev. 4:5. The source of this blessing is God -

Who is, who was, and who is to come. This signifies an existence derived from no other; He is the self-existing One.

And from the seven Spirits before the throne. This is the Holy Spirit. See Isaiah 11:2. The phrase describes the perfections of the Spirit's person and the plentitude of His power.

And from Jesus Christ, [...] In this verse we have: God in the greatness of His being, the Spirit in the greatness of His power, and Jesus Christ, in His impeccable humanity, now glorified. These three unite in blessing the saints with grace and peace. Notice the three titles given to the Lord: (1) He is the faithful witness. In relation to God, He is faithful from the manger to the cross. In this respect, He is the Prophet. (2) He is the firstborn of the dead and the first to be resurrected with an everlasting body. This speaks of priority and sovereignty in relation to the dead. In this respect, He is the Priest. (3) He is the ruler of the kings of the earth; in relation to world powers, He is King of kings and Lord of lords. This attribute will be seen during the millennium. In this respect, He is the King. The One who was born in a barn and crucified on a cross is coming again to reign. See Rev. 19. Chapter one is all about the Triune God and in particular God the Son.

Revelation 1:5-6

Notice the three things the Lord has done for us:

He loves us. (Present continuous tense) He loves with a changeless love. It is Calvary love. It is a love that many waters cannot quench.

He loosed us. He loosed us from our sins in His own blood. Thinking of sin as a chain, He breaks the power of cancelled sin, etc. Only the redeemed can sing this song.

He made us. He made us into a kingdom of priests unto God, His Father. Now and forever we shall serve God. He bestows upon us the majesty of a prince and the ministry of a priest. He gives us power with God and with man. Because of the description of the majesty of the Lord and the characterization of His work for the believer, all heaven breaks out into the Hallelujah chorus. Unto Him who loves us, loosed us, and made us a kingdom of priests unto God - to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen - so be it.

On this great occasion, the Lord's glory will outshine the sun. The glory that He had before the world began will shine forth in incomparable resplendence. The saints will rejoice in the supremacy of His power. The Lord will regain the power that was lost by Adam. As world leader, He will manifest Himself to the world as the only Potentate, Kings of kings, and Lord of lords.

Notice the ever-increasing crescendo of adoration given to the Lord as His character unfolds. Here it is twofold: glory and dominion.

- In Rev. 4:11, it is threefold: glory, honor, and power.

- In Rev. 5:13, it is fourfold: blessing, honor, glory, and power.

- In Rev. 5:12, it is sevenfold: power, riches, and wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing.

- In Rev. 7:12, it is also sevenfold: blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power and might, unto the ages of the ages.

Notice how the verse begins and ends with Amen. So Be It.

Revelation 1:7

Behold He is coming in clouds with His saints. Nowhere does it say that He comes in clouds for His own. On the contrary, they go up in clouds. See 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18.

Every eye shall see Him. His coming will be visible. (Contrast His First Coming and The Rapture) Even “those who pierced Him shall see Him.”

All peoples of the earth shall mourn because of Him. His coming will be victorious.

Revelation 1:8

Jesus Christ is “the Alpha and the Omega.” This is mentioned three more times in Rev. 1:11, Rev. 21:6, and Rev. 22:13. He is the Omniscient One. He is also “the beginning and the ending,” the author and finisher, the Omnipresent One. He is who was and who is to come, the eternal One, the ever-existing One, and The Almighty One. He is the All-Powerful One (used nine times in the book). He is the Omnipotent One. He is the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible, and the only Wise God. See 1 Tim. 1:17.

Hitler boasted that his Third Reich would last 1,000 years. It was birthed on Jan 30th, 1933 and lasted 148 months (just over 12 years). The Lord Jesus will reign for 1,000 years as King of kings and Lord of lords. See Rev. 11:15 and Rev. 19:6. Then, after the thousand years, the earthly kingdom will be dissolved and we shall enter the everlasting kingdom.

Revelation 1:9

John wrote from Patmos to the seven churches in Asia Minor. Notice his humility. He took his place with them as a “brother” in the Lord. He was their “companion” in tribulation and was a “sharer” with them of the kingdom. He was like them, patient in his endurance and suffering for Christ.

John was a prisoner for two reasons: (1) His faithfulness to the Word of God. John was uneducated, but Spirit filled. He preached the Word of God fearlessly and faithfully in Ephesus. (2) He proclaimed Jesus as Lord. Rome could not stand this message. For preaching the same message, Rome had crucified Peter, beheaded Paul, and now had banished John. He was sent to work in the mines of Patmos by Domitian, the Roman Emperor, on account of his faithful preaching. When Domitian died in A.D. 96, he was liberated by Nerva, his successor, and returned to Ephesus.

Revelation 1:10

John was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” Notice the various phases that John went through while in the Spirit: “He heard a great voice.” This would give credence to the importance of the message. “He turned” to see the source of the voice. (Rev. 1:12) “I saw...” He saw one of the greatest revelations of Jesus Christ ever given to man. (Rev. 1:12-16) “I fell at his feet.” The reason he fell at the feet of the Lord was because he was overwhelmed by the mind shattering revelation of the Glorious Christ.

Revelation 1:11

While in the Spirit, John heard this loud voice; it sounded like a blast from a trumpet. The voice said, “Write the things which you see in a book and send it to

the seven churches.” The command to write is the first of 12 similar commands.

Revelation 1:12

In Rev. 1:12-16 is a nine-fold description of the glorious Christ. The revelation is in two parts. He saw seven golden lamps. These represented the seven churches in Asia Minor. The golden lamps signify divine righteousness. In v. 16, he also saw seven stars in the hand of the Lord. These represented the seven messengers of these churches. The second thing he saw was “one like a Son of man.” This title is used 70 times. As Son of man, He is the Judge. Then follows the nine-fold description of Him. Notice the Lord is standing in the midst of the churches.

Revelation 1:13

He is dressed in a long robe, which reached down to His feet. Dignified, priestly judgment is expressed here. There was a “golden girdle across His chest.” This would speak of Him as the dispenser of divine righteousness.

Revelation 1:14

His hair on His head was white like wool, as white as snow. This reminds us of the Ancient of Days. It also speaks of His divine wisdom and His unimpeachable purity.

His eyes were like a blazing fire. This describes His piercing judgment of sin. Nothing can or will escape the scrutiny of those eyes. He is the one who cannot be deceived. The fire of His eyes bore into the darkest recesses of the human heart. Contrast his eyes here with when He was here on earth. Recall Peter’s experience.

Revelation 1:15

His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace. The bronze altar speaks of divine judgment. See Isaiah 61:1-6. See also Rev. 19. He will trample the nations of the world. Finally, He will trample and crush the Serpent's head. At one time, Satan bruised the Lord's heel, but in the triumph of His universal victory, He will crush Satan's head.

His voice is like the sound of many waters. His voice thundered like waves crashing against the shore. Or like the rumble of the raging cataract. Try to argue with the Niagara Falls, where twelve million cubit feet of water pour over the precipice and crash on the rocks below. It was this voice that brought order out of chaos, light out of darkness, and life out of death. It was the same voice that calmed the angry Galilean Sea.

Revelation 1:16

Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword. The Lord is depicted here as The Unconquerable One. He is no longer the Babe of Bethlehem, the man of Sychar's well, or the Stranger of Galilee. He is not the Man of Sorrows crowned with thorns, nor the Man of Calvary. He is the Lord of Glory. He is the Almighty Conqueror. He never lays a hand on His enemies. He speaks in that awesome voice and world rulers are vanquished.

His appearance was ablaze, as the sun shining in its meridian glory. No mortal eye can gaze upon the sun. No mortal eye will be able to look on the supreme glory of the Lord Jesus. Saul saw something of the awesome glory of the Lord and was blinded. Contrast this vision of the Lord with the one in the Gospels. He was tender, holy, loving, and kind. Here, in His majesty and power,

He is the unapproachable one. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Revelation 1:17-18

When John saw Him, he “fell at His feet.” This vision was overwhelming. John knew the Lord in the days of His flesh and had laid his head on the Savior’s breast. He outran Peter to the tomb, worshipped Him risen from the dead, and witnessed His ascension. John had this remarkable experience twice. For the transfiguration, see Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1:28. Could there be a thought of worship here? From the shock of this vision [“Do Not Be Afraid”], the Lord brings John back to reveal three more of His attributes.

- “I AM the first and the last.” He is before all and is after all.

- “I AM He that liveth.” I am the living One, the living God in contrast to all dead gods.

- “I AM alive forevermore.” Note the I AM’s. He lives in the power of an indissoluble life.

As the ultimate conqueror over all His foes, He proclaims that He has possession of “the keys of death and of Hades,” the unseen world. Death demands the body, Hades the soul. For believers, ‘Hades’ is to be with Christ. For unbelievers, Hades is to be in torment. Hades is the state that exists between death and resurrection. Having the keys of death and Hades, the Lord has complete mastery over the souls and bodies of all mankind. Possessing the keys is the symbol of His undisputed authority.

Revelation 1:19

In this verse, John is instructed to write about the three aspects of the vision of Christ: (1) the things he had already seen and heard. (2) "The things that are," referring to the actual conditions prevailing in the seven churches. (3) "The things that shall be thereafter," referring to the period covered in Revelation 4 through 22.

Revelation 1:20

This verse explains the mystery of the seven stars and the seven golden lamp stands. The seven stars are the seven messengers of the seven churches. They witness for God in the church. They would be the channels of divine communication. The seven golden lamps are the seven churches. Note that the Lord is walking in the midst of these churches. He is among them for reproof, correction, and encouragement. He who neither slumbers nor sleeps knows every thought, sin, and action.

The Church at Ephesus

Revelation 2:1-7

The condition that existed in the churches in Ephesus has always existed in local churches. Ephesus sets before us the issue of fundamentalism, which is the appearance of a bustling church outwardly sound, but lacking in love for Christ. The Ephesian church could have possibly been an affluent church in need of nothing, and also perhaps had a number of intellectuals and influential people in the community. Ephesus had the busy, structurally sound and active church standing up to its task. We can also imagine that there were all kinds of meetings for all kinds of people in the church, much like our churches have today. Corporately and individually they were fully occupied. However, while there was plenty of activity, there was no blessing. The church of Ephesus had works, labor, and patience, but it had lost the faith, the hope and His love. By contrast, Paul commended the thriving church in Thessalonica for their work of faith, their labor of love and their patience of hope. (See 1 Thessalonians 1:3)

In Revelation 2:2 John reports, "Thou canst not hear them which are evil." Ephesus had been standing for the truth. The conduct of some believers in Corinth at that time would never have been tolerated in Ephesus. No man impure in conversations, living immorally, or convicted of lying would have continued in fellowship. They would have been judged and, if necessary, put out of the fellowship of believers, because high standards of discipline would be maintained.

In Revelation 2:3, John says, “and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for my name’s sake and have not become weary.” The Ephesian church was also standing the test. It was not easy to do this in Ephesus, because opposition and persecution were a reality, but they kept persevering year after year despite the lack of fruit and poor results. They may not have been fruitful, but they were certainly faithful. They had struggled on and God had commended them for it. When Paul had written to the Ephesians he remembered that they were made alive with Christ, raised with Christ, and seated in the heavenlies with Christ. (See Ephesians 2:5-6)

In Revelation 2:4-5, John says, “Thou art fallen” and “You have left your first love.” How sorrowful might this knowledge have been to the Ephesian church, that the one who commended them saying, “I know and appreciate your works, labor and perseverance,” also looked behind the extraneous and external trappings of their church and said “I have something against you. You have left your first love.” The one who walked in their midst and who held the messenger of the church in his hand was disappointed. While we should note that here it does not say “lost,” rather “left,” the Lord still indeed saw and felt the absence of the fresh, fervent and foremost love they once had. God was the enthusiasm, excitement, exuberance and energy of their first love. There is no doubt that they had been fond of the Lord. They loved him with a *phileo* love. But the fervor, order, and passion of their former *agape* love had gone. The Ephesians had become more occupied with their service than with their Savior, and were so busy working for the Lord that they had no time for loving the Lord. This

meant that there was a lack of fruit bearing in their church. Any service or worship for God that is not born of a devoted passion for the Lord Jesus is therefore worthless and has no fruit bearing potential.

Let us look back at the use of the phrase “Thou art fallen” in Revelation 2:5. Remember that this fallen state is the case for all of humanity, as we learn from the Fall in the Garden of Eden. (See Genesis 3) In this one terse statement in Revelation, the Lord sums up the problem of the world and all humanity! As an example, note the story of when Rehoboam became king of Israel in 1 Kings 12. He acted as a fool by ignoring the advice of his father’s trusted advisors, seeking the advice of inexperienced younger friends. To humble him, God allowed the Egyptians to invade Judea and carry away the golden shields that Solomon had provided for the temple guard. Rehoboam took the loss in stride. He made shields of brass instead. They would do - they looked like gold! The shields would shine in the sun just the same. (See 1 Kings 14:25-28) This is similar to what had happened at Ephesus and what has happened in many fundamental churches and assemblies. The enemy had thieved away the gold of their first love and substituted the brass of service. In 1 Corinthians 13:1 Paul describes duty devoid of love as a “sounding brass and clanging cymbal.”

Here in Revelations 2:5-7, John issues quite a solemn warning to the Ephesians: “Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” Except where there is repentance, then, there can be only one result: the testimony of the gospel will be extinguished,

and their lamp of light to the darkness will be allowed to go out. So we can see from this passage that agape love for Christ is paramount, predominant, and preeminent for fruitful service for Him. The church's existence depends upon this love, and to try and function without it is worse than useless!

Revelation: Chapter 6

Introduction

This chapter has to do with the opening of six of the seven seals. It is also the beginning of something known in the Bible as the “Day of the Lord.” This “Day” begins with the seven years of tribulation and ends with the Great White Throne of Judgment before which all the unsaved shall stand. See Rev. 20:11-15. This period of seven years is also called, “The Time of Jacob’s Trouble.” Jacob’s name was changed to Israel in Gen. 32:28. So, “The Time of Jacob’s Trouble” is really “The Time of Israel’s Trouble.” The events of this period are recorded in chapters 6 through 19 of Revelation. These same events are also covered in Matthew 24:25.

The conditions that we will describe to you here cannot happen in the world today. The reason for this is that the Restrainer, who is the Holy Spirit, is still in the world. He will remain here until the rapture of the church (see 2 Thess. 2:7). “For the mystery of iniquity is already at work; but He who now hinders will continue to hinder until He is taken out of the way.”

Toward the end of the Church Age, things will grow worse and worse (see 2 Timothy 3:13). Paul, writing to Timothy, said that in the last days, “evil men and seducers shall proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.” When the residence of the Spirit and the Church are removed from the earth, the whole world will practice their evil without restraint. Even though men run amok, God will still be in control and His

judgments will fall mercilessly on those who refuse to believe in Him.

Before we proceed to explain Rev. 6, let me point out something that is very interesting: The Tribulation begins with the appearance of a rider upon a white horse. He is the Antichrist in disguise. He bursts onto the scene with flattering words and false promises of peace. The Tribulation ends with another rider on a white horse, Jesus Christ Himself. He is depicted as one coming to destroy the rebellious on the earth with His heavenly armies and establish His kingdom (see Rev. 19).

Please notice the parallel between Matt. 24 and Rev. 6. Matt. 24:5 says, "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." This corresponds to the first seal, where the Antichrist comes in disguise riding upon a white horse. Matt. 24:6-7 says, "And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: See that you be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in diverse places." These verses parallel the other riders in Rev. 6. "The wars and rumors of wars" is the work of the rider on the red horse. The rider on the black horse produces "The famines". "The pestilences" (which naturally follow famines) result from the rider on the pale horse.

The Opening of the First Seal

Read Rev. 6:1-2. John saw a white horse; victorious generals rode on white horses. The rider of the horse is an imitation of the white horse rider of Rev. 19, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the judgment of the first

seal is a judgment of great delusion. 2 Thess. 2:9-10 says, "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing."

At this time the world will be longing for some world ruler to come and bring peace and order out of chaos [describe]. Nations will be at each other's throats, each with its own stockpile of modern weaponry. A war would be disastrous for any of them, but no one can be found to stop the tragedy and bring peace. Into a scene like this the white-horse rider will come.

This rider will come in power. He is a conqueror and has the power to conquer. He will usher in a false peace. Daniel 11:21-23 says, "He shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood they shall be overthrown before him, and shall be broken; And after the league made with him, he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up and shall become strong with a small people." Daniel 11:36 says, "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every God, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished, for that that is determined shall be done." The Antichrist will be the most powerful leader that the world has every seen.

The rider has a "bow," but no mention is made of any arrows. This indicates a "cold war," rather than actual fighting. The crown that he wears is the victor's crown. He is the leader of the nations of the world. Because of what he promises, the peoples of the world will think

that they are about to enter the Millennium, when, in actuality, they will be entering the Tribulation. Hundreds of millions will be deluded and deceived by him. Israel will sign a covenant with him for seven years. They will accept him as their Messiah. The ecumenical church will also fall for the program of the Antichrist and later will be destroyed by him. Since the church and the Spirit have been removed, Satan is free to use his full power. The period of the white horse and its rider will last for 3 ½ years.

The Opening of the Second Seal

The abomination of desolation (See Rev. 13:14 and The Book of Daniel)

Read Rev. 6:3-4 and Rev. 12:7-17. The horse of the second seal is “red.” The rider is the same one as he who appeared on the first horse. Red speaks of war and bloodshed. When the red horse and its rider go forth upon the earth, it is the fulfillment of 1 Thess. 5:3. “For when they shall say, ‘Peace and safety,’ then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”

The Antichrist’s real character will be revealed in the opening of the second seal. He will “take peace from the earth,” not give it. War seems to engulf the world. They will “kill one another,” according to Rev. 6:4. A great sword was given to the Antichrist (Rev. 6:4). In my opinion, this seems to be the first battle in the greatest global conflict the world has ever seen. This conflict will culminate in the last great battle of Armageddon, which will be brought to an end by the return of Christ Himself.

Sinners are destined to appear before the Great White Throne where all unsaved will stand. For those who would defy God, there is no way of escape from His wrath. Think now for a few minutes on the closing words of Rev. 6, "For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" Only those who know Christ, as Savior, will escape the judgment of God.

The Opening of the Third Seal

Read Rev. 6:5-6. The Lord said in Matt. 24 that there would be wars and famines followed by pestilences. In verses 5 and 6, the aftermath of war is seen. The same rider is seen on a "black horse." The picture here is that of uncontrollable inflation which is followed by famine. The Antichrist riding on the black horse is seen with "a pair of balances in his hand." This speaks to the weighing out of food or rationing. This will certainly be true of the Tribulation period. The people will need to have the mark of the beast before they can buy or sell, (see Rev. 13:16-17).

We are given a glimpse of the severity of this famine. A measure of wheat will cost a day's wages; this measure is what a man would eat for one meal. (Denarius = a day's wages for a laborer). This being the case, how will a man feed his family? The Antichrist will bring the world under his control as he disperses the food. Perhaps the image will have been erected in His temple – people will worship him to live. At this point, it is reasonable to think that most of the money gathered in taxes will be appropriated for military use. Mostly the working class will feel the famine. The escape of the rich is only temporary. When the sixth seal is opened, they, too, come under the judgment of God.

The Opening of the Fourth Seal

Death

Read Rev. 6:7-9. (Deception – War – Famine – Death) The rider (The Antichrist) is now riding a pale horse.

Literally, this word means "pale green." The horse that the Antichrist is now riding looks like a corpse. This is very fitting, because Rev. 6:8 says that the one who sat on the horse is called "Death." This verse also tells us that Hell or Hades follows death. These two are inseparable companions.

Allow me to divert for a moment: There is not only physical death, but there is also spiritual death and the second death. When a believer dies physically, his body is placed in the grave, but his soul and spirit go immediately to be with the Lord (see 2 Cor. 5:8 and Phil 1:21-24). Absent from the body, etc. To be with Christ, which is far better. When a person dies, who is spiritually dead (that is to say, dead in sins, because he has not received Christ as Savior), his body is placed in the grave, but his soul goes to a place called Hades. See Luke 16:19-31. The Second death, which has to do with the unsaved only, is when death at the grave (where the body, the material part of man, has gone) and Hades (where the immaterial part of the unsaved man has gone) will be cast into the lake of fire. See Rev. 20:14-15.

As a result of the opening of the fourth seal, a fourth of the world's population will die (Rev. 6:8). Figuring on the basis of the world's population of three billion, this would mean that 750 million people would die at this time. This number is 15 times greater than the number of people who died in the last war. This would represent the greatest destruction of human life ever recorded in

history. The population of the human race in Noah's day was undoubtedly far less than the figure here cited as dying. This figure is more than the population of Europe and South America. By any standard of comparison, this judgment is by far one of the most awesome catastrophes that will ever befall this earth of ours.

Our Lord, in Matt. 24:21-22, said of this period, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should be no flesh saved: but for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." This is the slaughter that takes place when God deals with the King of the North and the South. Let me project your thoughts for a moment to consider what happens when God deals with the King of the East and the Prince (or Beast) of the West. In Rev. 9:18, we see that 1/3 of the world's population will die. The two battles will take the lives of 7/12 of the world's population.

The Opening of the Fifth Seal

The martyred souls in heaven

Read Rev. 6:9-11. The scene shifts from earth to heaven. John sees a vision of those who had been martyred for the Word of God and for the testimony they held of Christ (see Rev. 6:9). In identifying these martyrs, we feel that they are the saints who have been slain during the first 3½ years of the Tribulation when the four horsemen stalled the earth (describe the conditions). These souls are certainly not the martyrs of the Church Age, for they would have been raptured with the Church, see 1 Thess. 4. These verses show conclusively that the martyrs are from the Tribulation, because their

prosecutors are still living on the earth when the fifth seal is broken.

Rev. 6:10 depicts the martyrs asking God, with a loud voice, how long it would be before He would avenge their blood on them that dwell on the earth. In Rev. 6:11 lies the answer. In effect, God says to them, "Be patient and rest for a little while, for there are many more of your brethren and fellow servants to be slain." The time when God will avenge the blood of the martyrs is when Christ comes to the earth in great power and glory - "in flaming fire taking vengeance on them who obey not the gospel of Christ," (2 Thess. 2:7-8).

With the opening of the fifth seal, one half of the Tribulation is over. Many, many more will be killed for their testimony of Christ during the second half. It may very well be that the majority of those who trust Christ as Savior in that day will be put to death. Read Matt 24:9-13. John confirms this in Rev. 7:14. Rev. 13:15 says those who do not worship the beast will be killed. "These are they which came out of the great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

John's vision reveals to us that martyrdom in those days will be as common as it is uncommon today.

Earthquakes, war, and pestilence will kill many of those who have accepted Christ. Others will be the objects of special persecution by the Antichrist. They will be hounded to death (Jews in Germany). Those who accept Christ will be faced with the solemn alternative of both renouncing their faith in Christ and worshipping the beast or being slain. The result will be tens of thousands of martyrs. These are whom John saw in heaven.

The Opening of the Sixth Seal

Read Rev. 6:12-17. The opening of this seal introduces the “day of God’s wrath,” see Rev. 6:17. God now speaks to the nations through natural means; Rev. 6:12-14 describes these. There are six elements of divine judgment foretold in the prophetic scriptures: (1) Christ predicts a great earthquake in Matthew 24. (2) Joel 2 predicts earthquakes and the sun becoming black. (3) The heavens departing as a scroll is mentioned in Isaiah 34. (4) The moon will take on a deep red color. (5) The stars of the heavens (meteors) will fall upon the earth. And, (6) Mountains and islands will be moved out of their places. The result of all this is described in Rev. 6:15-17.

The unbelieving masses are terrorized. Previous to this, they have been defying and rejecting God. Now, they are terrified and want to escape from Him (no Atheists in fox holes). Read Rev. 6:15-16. These people realize that the day has come when they must meet God face to face, but they do not turn to Him in faith and repentance. Instead of pleading for mercy, they turn from God hoping they can hide from Him.

What is worse than an atomic hydrogen bomb or even a “ bacteria bomb?” The wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6:16). The day of wrath is contrasted with the day of grace. Some may find fault with God for dealing with man in this fashion. The day of His wrath lasts for seven years. His mercy has extended over 6,000 years. In this proportion, 6,000 years of grace to 7 years of wrath, we see the mercifulness of God.

[Describe the matchless grace of God] When the sixth seal is opened, it has its effect upon the whole world and

on every strata of society (Rev. 6:15). Instead of turning to God in repentance, men look for a place to hide. All of these people could be saved – some will be saved – but the majority will try to hide. This hope is futile. Death is not an escape, but only an exchange of existence from one state into another. Those who do escape the immediate judgment of God at this point will spend eternity with Him.

Revelation: Chapter 7

The Redeemed of the Tribulation

Revelation 7 gives us a ray of light against the backdrop of gloom as the six seals have been opened. [Describe the grace of God in all the judgment - explain both the parable of the wicked husbandmen and the parable of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Silver Coin, and the Lost Son in Luke 15]. Rev. 7 answers, once and forever, the question, "Will anyone be saved during the tribulation?" It is also a description of what has happened and a preview of what will happen.

The latter question is often asked in view of the fact that the Holy Spirit has been removed from the earth. Will anyone be saved during the Tribulation and Millennium? (Explain what some believe relative to salvation in the Tribulation). It is important that we understand in what sense the Holy Spirit will be removed. We must distinguish between His presence and His residence. Christ ascended 40 days after His resurrection. Ten days later the Holy Spirit descended to earth and took up His residence in the life of every believer. The Holy Spirit who had been with them would now be in them. See John 14:17.

When the rapture of the Church occurs, the residence of the Holy Spirit changes. He goes with them. But being God, and therefore omnipresent, He will continue to convict of sin and bring many to Christ during the Tribulation. [Discuss the Holy Spirit's work]

The Choosing of the 144,000

How did these hear the gospel so they could be saved? It is likely that they heard the preaching of the two witnesses of Revelation 11. Many others will be saved through the preaching of these two witnesses and also through the testimony of the 144,000.

Every Jew who turns to Christ will turn against the Antichrist, who has signed a covenant for seven years with the Jews for their protection. So many will turn against him that he will break the covenant. (Explain why the Antichrist will break His covenant) This brings intense persecution on Israel during the last 3½ years of the Tribulation. Temple worship will have been setup. He will have set up his image and will demand worship and obedience.

There will be more Israelites saved than just 144,000, but 12,000 out of each tribe are sealed from the wrath of Satan and the Antichrist. Satan will not be able to hunt them or take their lives. The twelve tribes will be in the land at this time. The so-called lost ten tribes will be there – 12,000 from each tribe.

We read in this chapter of another group (see Rev. 7:9-10). Who is this group? They are not the Church. The answer is given in Rev. 7:13-14: Martyrs (Gentiles-Jews). These are they who come out of the great tribulation (the last 3½ years). So then, the great multitude, which no man could number (Rev. 7:9), describes the saints who are saved and martyred during the last half of the tribulation.

Revelation: Chapter 8

The Seventh Seal and the Golden Censer

Rev. 8:1 - "And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour." This is a startling statement. It was the awesomeness of the opening of the seventh seal that caused the hosts of heaven to pause in silence, for they had received a panoramic view. The judgment of the six seals in Rev. 6 was terrible in their content, but with the blowing of the trumpets, the judgment increases in intensity.

If I may direct your thoughts for a moment, to the judgment given through the pouring out of the seven bowls: there is a definite progression in the intensity of the judgments. This knowledge brings "silence in heaven for half an hour." Rev. 5:4-5 shows us that Heaven is a happy place. The angels, the four living creatures, the 24 elders (whom many believe to be the church) - everyone in heaven, whom we have seen there, is rejoicing in jubilation, but now they are silent. It seems as if heaven gasps in horror at the prospect of such judgment about to fall on mankind.

After the judgment of the six seals, one would have thought that mankind would have repented. But, no, seal six repented not. Why don't men and women repent today? How easy it is to do so (see John 5:24). "God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked." "He is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," (2 Peter 3:9).

Rev. 8:2-6 - Seven high-ranking angels were given seven trumpets. As each angel sounded his trumpet, certain judgments fell on the earth. In Rev. 8:3, another angel came – in all probability Christ, Himself. He had a golden censer. The incense would represent the sweet savor of His life and work. This, He was to offer with the prayers of the saints. In Rev. 8:4, the smoke of the incense was mingled with the prayers of the saints; that is the prayers of the saints in tribulation, which ascended to God. A picture of Christ as our High Priest: “To all our prayers and praises, Christ adds His sweet perfume.”

In Rev. 8:5, the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar. This is very interesting, because this censer filled with fire was cast into the earth. The censer is used as a clear symbol of judgment, apparently in response to the intercessory prayers of the suffering saints in the midst of the great tribulation. When the contents of the censer reached the earth, there were voices, thundering, lightening, and an earthquake. “Coming events cast their shadows beforehand.”

The Trumpets

The Judgment of the First Trumpet

Rev. 8:7 - This judgment was directed particularly on the trees and grass. The third part of the trees was burned up as well as all of the grass (wheat, oats, etc). We interpret this in the literal sense. See Exodus 9:18-26. Though this judgment is particularly directed against the planet’s vegetation, hail will fall, fire will run along the ground, and there will certainly be great bloodshed mixed with blood.

The Judgment of the Second Trumpet

Rev. 8:8-9 - The second judgment fell on the sea, the things that live in the sea, and the ships that sail on the sea. This huge object that fell from the heavens appeared like a great mountain to John. Imagine the terrible catastrophe as this huge burning mass plunges into the sea and destroys 1/3 of all life in it and 1/3 of all ships (think of the chemical reactions, a tidal wave, etc.). The sea became red by the blood of dead naval concentrations. The way I see this, at the moment, is that all life and ships in the area closest to the point of impact of this burning mass will be destroyed and will amount to 1/3 of the life and ships.

The Judgment of the Third Trumpet

Rev. 8:10-11 - Once again, notice the language of comparison. "The great star was burning like a torch." This star seems to be a heavenly body from outer space. When this mass reaches the earth's atmosphere, it will burn like a torch. It is possible that as this great object reaches the earth's atmosphere, it will disintegrate and become like dust and fall on the rivers and fresh water sources. As a result of this, many people will die from drinking the contaminated and bitter waters. [Reflect on: the contaminated water - sin - "the living water" - The waters of Marah were made sweet by casting in the tree]

The Judgment of the Fourth Trumpet

Rev. 8:12 - With the sounding of the fourth trumpet the sun, moon, and stars are affected. As a point of interest, contrast the first three judgments with this one. The first three have to do with the land, sea, rivers, and fountains of waters respectively. The fourth judgment has to do

with the heavens themselves. A third part of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened. Some think that the light of these heavenly bodies will be decreased by one third. The daylight hours will not be so bright. The night will be even darker. Others think that the day will be shortened from 24 hours to 16 hours. Mankind is totally dependent on the sun for light and life. Vegetation is also dependent on this. It seems as if God will change the functions of nature; this will have a tremendous effect on all life on this planet.

In Luke 21:25-26, our Lord speaking of the great tribulation says, "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." The judgments of the four trumpets will fall one night after another. Judgment has been poured out on the trees, grass, marine life, shipping, fresh water, and heavenly bodies. The picture up to this moment is: land & sea. Food is destroyed, its distribution is completely crippled, the water supply is limited, and the production of life is hampered. As fearful as those judgments will be, they are only the beginning of God's dealing with the earth. This is indicated by the announcement of "the three wars" which are to follow.

Rev. 8:13 - This verse describes an angel flying through the air crying, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth." The first four trumpets were directed toward the earth's ecology, but the last three are against man. God appears to be putting more pressure on man to repent and turn to Jesus for salvation. The word woe, according

to Webster, means sorrow, calamity, and affliction. If only men would repent, these judgments would not be necessary. But also, the indications are that instead of repenting, men become greater rebels than ever before. (See Matthew 11: Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Capernaum, etc.)

God's Grace and God's Judgment - [Describe] No greater contrast can be found than the contrast between God's love and God's wrath. This contrast is presented in a single verse. Take John 3:36 as an example: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." The contrast here is obvious. If you have received Christ as your Savior then you have nothing to fear. You have everlasting life. But, if you neglect or reject God's provision for your sin penalty, you will experience the wrath of God for eternity in the lake of fire. [Describe eternity, Luke 16]

In our own day, we see God's love displayed toward mankind. We also see His long-suffering and mercy. Since the crucifixion 2000 years ago, God has been waiting patiently for men to receive Christ as Savior. "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9.

The day will come when God will no longer be able to hold back His wrath against unbelievers. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." It seems to me that in the seal judgments and the first four trumpet judgments, while God is certainly punishing rebellious man, His punishment is mixed with mercy. These judgments will be poured upon the earth in an effort to bring man to Himself. They will be in the form of a warning.

Revelation: Chapter 9

Revelation 9 begins a new phase of God's dealings with men. He now begins to pour out His great wrath on unrepentant sinners and Christ's rejections. Rev. 6:17, "For the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand." The angel of Rev. 8:13 introduces these as "Woes."

The Fallen Star (Revelation 9:1-12)

The Fifth Trumpet

"And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I beheld a star fall from heaven unto the earth." The identity of this star is obscured a little in the language of our King James Version. The star is described more accurately in other translations as "fallen," rather than "falling." It is written in the perfect tense, which signifies an already completed action. The star had already fallen.

That this is not a literal star is obvious from the fact that "to him was given the key of the bottomless pit." I believe that the star mentioned here is "Satan himself." Rev. 12 describes the war in the heavens and Satan and his angels being cast upon the earth (chronologically this has already happened). So then, what we have here, at the blowing of the fifth trumpet, is Satan in possession of the key of the Abyss.

Satan and The Bottomless Pit

The key to the bottomless pit (or Abyss) really belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. See Rev. 1:18, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive

forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." The keys of the "bottomless pit" belong to Jesus Christ, but He gives them to Satan at this time.

What is this bottomless pit? The phrase could be interpreted, "the pit of the abyss" or the "well of the abyss." This place must be in the center of the earth and is reached through a shaft - like a mineshaft. The abyss is the abode of some of the fallen angels, too fierce to be allowed to roam the earth (at this point they are set free).

The demons free on the earth dread this place. In Luke 8:31, they besought Christ that He might not send them "out into the deep." The demons here were pleading with the Savior not to torment them before the time - not to send them to the "bottomless pit" or "the pit of the abyss." (Tartaros, Hades, Gehena).

Satan opens the bottomless pit. It is as if a great volcanic eruption has taken place. The sun is darkened and the smoke that comes up out of the pit pollutes the air. In Rev. 9:3, John says that the creatures released from the pit were like locusts in appearance. The description given in the following verses make them incomparable to any known species. These creatures are actually demons clothed in this form.

The locusts have a unique function (Rev 9:4). They were not to touch anything green (as was normal for locusts to do). Instead, they were to hunt men (which they normally would not do) - hunting those who did not have the seal of God. The believers on earth at this time will be exempt from this assault. These creatures were given the power to sting men with their scorpion-like tails and the pain lasted for five months (Rev. 9:5). In Rev. 9:6, we

see that those stung will want to die, but death will not be possible (murder nor suicide). Rev. 9:7-9 describes these creatures – it is an eight-fold description. These creatures are monstrosities. Instead of men repenting – they seek death. The king over this demonic hunt is Satan himself (Rev. 9:11).

The Second Woe (Revelation 9:13-21)

The Sixth Trumpet

Revelation 1:13-15 - After the sixth angel had blown his trumpet, four angels who were bound in the great river Euphrates were set free. Their release turned loose a flood tide of destruction upon the earth. The question naturally arises: Who were those angels? They are the powerful emissaries of Satan, extremely evil in character. God had bound them and kept them in chains for an hour – day – month – year. Now, the time has come, making world history, for its greatest crisis hour. He sets them free and they are given power to destroy 1/3 of the remaining world's population.

Another interesting question is: Why were these angels bound at this particular location? This is where history began – this is where it will all end. The Garden of Eden was once located in this area – this is where the sin of man began (see Gen. 2:14-15). The first murder was also committed in this area (see Gen. 4:8). This is where Nimrod lived and began his religion. The result was the building of the Tower of Babel, which brought God's judgment upon the people. The Euphrates area has been the fountainhead of sin, rebellion, and idolatry. God will bring His judgment on this area during the tribulation. The very place where Satan's empire began will have

the judgment of God poured out upon it during the Tribulation.

The Romans, Greeks, and Babylonians always considered the Euphrates River the boundary line between the East and West. Rudy and Kipling expressed it in this way: "East is east, and West is west, and never the twain shall meet." This has been true in world history, but during the Tribulation, there will be a full-scale invasion of the West by the Orient for the first time.

When these four wicked angels are given this liberty they will cause the greatest catastrophe in history to fall on the human race - 1/3 part will be slain. Now, notice the progression in the intensity of God's judgments. When the fourth seal was opened, the rider on the pale horse was given power to destroy 1/4 of the human race (Rev. 6). This is the day Russia, Egypt, and their allies will die. In Rev. 8 a third part of the various elements of creation was destroyed, but not man. In the judgment of the fifth trumpet, men were tormented by demons for five months, but they were not killed (Rev. 9:5 - Demon possession). Now, with the blowing of the sixth trumpet, one third of the remaining world's population will be slain.

The Great Army

Revelation 9:16-21 - 200 million strong - the troops will be from the East. As for the conditions, the river Euphrates will be dried up (see Rev. 9:12-16). Rev. 9:17-19 describes this huge army. A little bit of sanctified imagination would lead us to believe that this is a description of the equipment of a modern army, including thermonuclear weapons. Rev. 9:18 says that

1/3 of the world's population are slain by fire, smoke, and brimstone. All three of these elements are present in modern warfare. Fire from atomic explosions - smoke - immense clouds of radioactive fallout - brimstone is simply melted earth and building materials. [Describe briefly the battle that will take place. See Zech. 12:1-9, "He will cut them in pieces."]

Revelation: Chapter 10

The Mighty Angel and the Little Book

Chapters 10-14 in the Book of Revelation are parenthetical. They do not advance the chronology of the book. Instead, they give us some facts that help us to better understand the total prophetic picture. In this interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets, we are introduced to three personalities: the mighty angel and the two witnesses.

The Mighty Angel

Revelation 10:1-7 - The angel: came down from heaven, was clothed with a cloud, had a rainbow upon his head, had a face that was like the sun, and had feet that were like pillars of fire. In Rev. 1:2, we see "He had in his hand a little scroll" - the title deeds of the world. It also contained the revelation of future prophecies. "He also set his right foot on the sea and his left on the land." The sea is referring to the masses - the Gentiles - and the land is referring to the nation of Israel.

This angel is claiming universal authority for Jesus Christ. The angel sat on the rolled away stone. Christ's work was finished. "The angels' work was about to begin." Christ stood triumphantly. "The Kingdom of this world is about to become the kingdom of the Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." See Rev. 11:15. [Describe the coming glory of the reigning King.]

In Rev. 10:3-4, the angel cried with a loud voice like a lion; then there were seven thunders. These thundering

voices evidently conveyed a message. John was about to write it down, but was told not to do so. What the messages were remains a mystery.

The Little Book

Revelation 10:8-11 - John was told to go and take the little scroll from the hand of the angel and eat it. It would be sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his stomach. John did not literally eat the book, but he was asked to read it and understand it. Note the words of the prophet Jeremiah: "Thy words were found and I did eat them," (Jer. 15:16). In Ps. 119:103, the Psalmist also writes, "How sweet are thy words to my taste."

The contents of the book were sweet, as John understood the purposes and will of God - His final triumph. Prophecy is sweet when we read of the coming of Christ. It is sweet to see that, in the end, God will be completely glorious. But, when John saw the price the world would pay and what it would cost the nation of Israel for the kingdom to be set up on the earth, it made the prophecy become bitter to him.

Although John was told not to write down the message of the thundering voices, in Rev. 10:11, he is told that he will prophesy again. Peoples, nations, tongues, and kings will hear John's message. The great and the small must hear. What a message John had to proclaim. He undoubtedly shuddered at the awesomeness of the judgments that were to follow. With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the bowls of God's wrath are poured out. Man has never equaled the awesomeness and intensity of these judgments. Not even man's self-destruction, as depicted in the pouring out of the seal judgments, can compare with the bowl judgments of

God. Neither can Satan, in the trumpet judgments, equal God's judgments in the bowls of wrath.

God's wrath is as great as His love. God's wrath touches every part of the universe. Turn this around - "God's love is as great as His wrath." "Herein is love - not that we loved God, but that He loved us," (see 1 John 4:10). Note John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." This verse is the metropolis of Gospel truth. It is the hub of the Bible - the heart of the Gospel. All the great truths of the O.T. converge towards it. All the great doctrines of the N.T. emerge from it. The great distinctive truths of redemption revolve around it. God loves - God gives - God saves.

The Apostle Paul prays that the Ephesians would know the unknowable length, breadth, height, and depth of God's love. [Describe Bethlehem - Gethsemane - Calvary] This love was not for His friends, but for His enemies. See Romans 5, "Greater love hath no man than this [...]". See also Jn. 15:13. As poet Thomas Kelly wrote, "Love that no tongue can teach, love that no thought can reach, no love like His." God's love is deeper than that. Or as Frederick M. Lehman wrote, "Could we with ink the ocean fill?"

Sing in closing: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Revelation: Chapter 11

Introduction

Chapter 11 is a most interesting chapter. A careful reader will find it as difficult as it is interesting. The questions are often asked: Will the temple be rebuilt in Jerusalem again? Will the Jews go back to their former worship? The first two verses of this chapter would answer a positive “yes” to these questions.

After the Covenant goes into effect between the Anti-Christ and the Jews, they rapidly build the Temple and commence their temple worship. This moves along smoothly for the first 3½ years. Then the Antichrist breaks the Covenant, desecrates the Temple, and sets his own image therein. When this happens, Jerusalem will be in the hands of the Gentiles for 42 months or 3 ½ years. This time period is called: The Great Tribulation [The time of Jacob’s trouble]. Although Jerusalem is in the hands of the Jews at the moment, Revelation 11 tells us that it is only temporary and that the city and land of Palestine will revert back to the Gentiles for a short time (3½ years), until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

God’s Two Witnesses (Revelation 11:1-14)

In Rev. 11:1-2, John is seen measuring the temple for God. Like all man made systems, it falls far short of God’s standards. Israel’s previous temples were destroyed: Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Solomon’s temple in 586 BC. Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple after the Jews returned from the Babylonian captivity. Herod the Great enlarged and beautified it beginning about 20 B.C. This temple was destroyed in AD 70.

Questions for Reflection:

How does professing Christendom measure up to God's standards? [Describe]

How do I measure up to God's standards?

(Think about this in light of the following passages - Romans 3:23 "We all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and Daniel 5:27, "You are weighed in the balances and found wanting." Think of the rich young ruler - "One thing you lack" - and the Pharisee and the Publican.)

[Describe the two witnesses] These two will prophesy for 3½ years. Fire from their mouth will destroy those who attempt to hurt them. They have power over the elements (i.e. stop the rain - turn water into blood). They can also smite the earth with plagues. When their work is finished, Satan (the Antichrist) kills them. Their bodies lie in the streets of Jerusalem for 3½ days. The whole world rejoices at their death. After 3½ days, they are resurrected, and then they ascend into heaven in a cloud. It is a miracle that they are able to stay alive for 3½ years. It will be practically impossible for a Christian to remain alive during the second half of the tribulation.

Draw your attention to Rev. 11:11, "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them and kill them." When the ministry of the true witnesses has finished, God permits their lives to be taken. It is comforting for all God's people to know that their God will protect them as long as He has a ministry that needs to be finished. When Paul's ministry was finished, he could say, though he was

about to lose his life, that he had no fear of death (see 2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Our time on earth is appointed. See John 7:1 - "Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth?" Job 14:5 reads, "His days are determined - the number of months are with you. You have appointed his bounds, which he cannot pass." Job realized that he had an appointed time. Job 14:14 says, "If a man die, shall he live again?" We also have an appointed time. "Set your house in order for you shall die and not live." Those who do not realize this are like the rich fool of Luke 12 [describe]. Man not only has an appointment with death, but he has an appointment with God. Hebrews 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

Those who die without Christ will stand before Him at the "Great White Throne," (See Rev. 20). The whole world shall see the dead witnesses lying in the streets of Jerusalem for 3½ days (Rev. 11:9). In Rev. 11:11-12, we have the resurrection and ascension of the witnesses. Christ's enemies were not permitted to see His ascension. Neither will they see the rapture of the Church. But they will see the ascension of the witnesses - they will know that this is of God. But alas, alas they do not repent and believe. God's judgment on the city comes in the form of an earthquake. A tenth of the city is destroyed and 7,000 men are killed. The olive tree is testimony, the vine is fruitfulness, the fig tree is national Israel, and the two lamps are light in the darkness. The witnesses stand before the Lord of the earth. Thus, the testimony is one of power and light.

The Seventh Trumpet (Revelation 11:15-19)

Jubilee in Heaven

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and then a great symphony of voices began to proclaim the ultimate and absolute triumph of Christ. This envisions God consummating His judgments on earth and bringing in everlasting righteousness. After the sounding of the seventh trumpet, heaven's hosts announce what is coming. The seventh trumpet ushers in the period in which the seven bowls of God's wrath will be poured out upon the earth (Rev. 16). These will bring an end to the Tribulation. At this point in the chapter, the Second coming of Christ to the earth with His heavenly armies is just ahead. The final battle of the campaign of Armageddon and the disposing of all earthly enemies, including Satan, will come to pass.

When the seventh seal was broken, there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour (See Rev. 8:1). When the seventh trumpet is blown, there is great jubilation in heaven in anticipation of the termination of evil. The end is now in sight. God has allowed Satan to control the kingdoms of the world; now they are about to become the kingdom of our Lord. This causes the 24 elders to fall on their faces and worship God. They are representative of the Church (Rev. 11:16). They give thanks to the one who is - who was - and who is to come - the eternal God - the I AM.

The Wrath of God

Revelation 11:18 portrays the anger of the nations. Man is a rebel against God to the very end. Man's wrath reaches a crescendo just prior to the Lord's return (See

Psalm 2). Man's rebellion will be brought to an end when our Lord returns. Psalm 2:9 reads, "You shall break them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Thy wrath came (is come) - in the absolute and final defeat of the Gentile powers. [The Great White Throne - the giving of rewards to prophets and saints]

Rev. 11:18 emphasizes that the time has come for God to "destroy them which destroy the earth." This includes both man and Satan. Satan's two key instruments during the Tribulation are the beast and the false prophet. Their judgment comes when Christ returns to earth at the end of the Tribulation. They both were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with fire and brimstone." See Rev. 19:20. Then Satan himself is bound for a thousand years and cast into the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-3).

After Christ's millennial reign, Satan is released. He makes his final assault against God and is crushed and "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. It is here, where the beast and the false prophet are, that he shall be tormented day and night forever and ever. See Rev. 20:10. Finally, the last enemy that will be destroyed is death, 1 Cor. 15:25-26. After the great voices in heaven pronounce that the time of God's wrath has come, John says, "And the temple of God was open in heaven and there was seen in His temple the ark of His testament." (Rev. 11:19)

Revelation: Chapter 12

Introduction

This is one of the great prophetic chapters of the Bible. An understanding of its contents is essential to the correct interpretation of prophecy. Only a small part of the chapter fits into the sequence of events during the Tribulation. The chapter is really an inset providing the necessary information about the past, present, and future events concerning Christ, Israel and Satan. Chapter 12 reveals “the conflict of the ages.” This conflict involves Israel, Christ and Satan. There are four great passages brought to our attention in the chapter: (1) The Woman [Rev. 12:1-2], (2) The Great Red Dragon [Rev. 12:3-4], (3) The Man-Child [Rev. 12:5-6], and (4) Michael, the Archangel [Rev. 12:7-12]. It will be our purpose here to look at each of these more closely.

The Woman (Rev. 12:1-2)

There appeared a great “sign” in heaven. The appearance of this woman is a sign or symbol of an important truth. It is a miraculous signpost. Who is this woman? [Describe her at this point]

The Bible is its own best interpretation. In Genesis 37, at 17 years old, Joseph had a dream. He dreamt that the sun and moon and eleven stars bowed down to him. His family understood the dream and resented it, for it referred to his father (Jacob), mother (Rachel), and eleven brothers bowing down to him. Joseph’s dreams came true. They bowed down before him three times with their faces to the ground. The woman John saw here in Rev. 12 is clothed with the sun, the moon under

her feet, and crowned with a crown of twelve stars. This identifies her as the nation of Israel, the descendants of Jacob and Rachel.

Rev. 12:2 describes Israel as travailing in pain, awaiting the birth of her child. This child was to rule with a rod of iron (The Millennium) - The child is Christ. The words, "being," "travailing," and "pained" are in the present tense, emphasizing continuous action. So then, the picture here is of Israel, as a nation, continually travailing in birth, longing for the coming of the promised Messiah.

The Great Red Dragon (Rev. 12:3-4)

The second sign appeared in heaven. It was a great red dragon with 7 crowned heads and 10 horns. Its tail drew 1/3 of the stars behind it and cast them to the earth. It stood before the woman; ready to devour the child she would bear. The dragon can be easily identified (See Rev. 12:9). It is "red" in color; this undoubtedly emphasizes all the blood that he has spilled (the Christian martyrs and the Covenanters). The number of his heads undoubtedly identifies him with the revived Roman Empire. In Rev. 12:4, we see that "His tail drew 1/3 of the stars and he cast them to the earth." This seems to describe the fall of Satan. When he fell, he took 1/3 of the angels with him.

Read Isaiah 14:12-17. Note the phrase "I will" repeated five times, paying particular attention to the final one: (1) I will ascend unto heaven, (2) I will exalt my throne above the angels of God, (3) I will sit upon the mount of the congregation, (4) I will ascend above the clouds, and (5) I will be like the most High. Pride brought his

downfall and 1/3 of the angels fell with him (fallen angels - evil spirits).

The next thing we are told is that “the dragon stood before the woman to devour the child she would deliver.” Satan has a special hatred for the woman and her child. The attitude of Satan portrays his desire to both prevent the birth and destroy Him after He is born. The child mentioned here is the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan was waiting for Christ to be born, so that he might kill Him. This has been the conflict of the ages. Satan knows that he must destroy Christ or be destroyed himself. As Christ was promised through Israel, the fury of Satan has been directed at them before and after Christ’s birth.

The conflict began in Eden. There was enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the Serpent. The woman’s seed will bruise the head of the serpent; it will bruise the heel of the Lord (bruised at Calvary, crushed after the Millennium). A review of the O.T. shows that Satan was busy, seeking to destroy the royal seed. Read Ex. 1:16. The Egyptian midwives were instructed, “If it be a son, then you shall kill him; but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.” Saul tried to kill David - the royal line. In the book of Esther, Haman wanted to destroy the Israelites. Haman was the tool of Satan.

Furthermore, when Jesus was born, see how Satan tried to kill Him: through King Herod, by tempting Him for 40 days, through the people of Nazareth (they would have thrown Him over the precipice - they were the Devil’s tools), by the storm on the Sea of Galilee, and by the demon possessed man. The last great effort of Satan to destroy Christ was when he had Him crucified, but it

was “through death” that the Lord Jesus destroyed Him who had the power of death, that is the devil. Satan later attempted to keep Jesus in the tomb. He had the tomb sealed and guarded. But despite all this, Christ arose. He has ascended—is crowned with glory and honor, and is coming again. Jesus Christ is now seated at the Father’s right hand.

The Man-Child (Rev. 12:5-6)

In Rev. 12:5, we read that this woman brought forth a male child (Christ). He will rule over all nations with a rod of iron. He ascended 40 days after His resurrection; He was caught up unto God. He now sits on His throne. He is coming again. He will reign as supreme - Lord over all the earth. In this verse our attention is directed to the male child, whom we believe to be Jesus Christ. The predictions concerning Him were: (1) He would/will rule all nations with a rod of iron (the Millennium), (2) He was caught up to God and to His throne (He sits at the right hand of the Father), and (3) His world rule will take place after the tribulation.

In Rev. 12:6, the woman, having given birth to the male child, “fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and three score days.” [42 months or 3½ years] Between verses 5 and 6, there is a great time lapse. Verse 5 ends with the ascension of Christ. Verse 6 describes Israel fleeing from the presence of the Antichrist, during the Tribulation. This is already a difference of nearly 2,000 years.

After the Church began, Israel was temporarily set aside. Paul says in Rom. 11:25 that, “blindness, in part, is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles

be come in.” The events in this chapter take place when God is again dealing with Israel. Notice that Israel fled into the wilderness. God took care of her. She was there for 3½ years. The one who pressured Israel into the wilderness was the dragon. He is-has been-and always will be relentless in his presentation of this nation.

Previously, we described some of the many attempts of Satan to destroy the nation and the Lord, up to the time of Christ (Describe A.D. 70). Think also of what happened in Germany in our own generation. All this will fade in significance during the tribulation when Satan will try to exterminate the Jewish race (the final scene of Armageddon).

Michael, the Archangel (Rev. 12:7-12)

War in Heaven - Read Rev. 12:7, “and there was war in heaven.” This war was between Michael, with the unfallen angels, and the dragon, with the fallen angels. Satan and his angels will be defeated, cast out of heaven and thrown down to earth. The events of this verse will most likely take place approximately during the middle of the tribulation. When Satan and his minions reach earth, the first thing they will do is incite the king of the South and the king of the North to attack Israel. See Rev. 6. The result of this will be that ¼ of the world’s population will perish. Furthermore, the rest, who were not killed, repented not and continued to worship demons and idols; they continued to murder, use drugs, live immorally, and steal.

The reason for this upsurge of wickedness is found in Rev. 12:12, “Woe unto the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has but a short

time.” The awful picture presented here is that of Satan and his angels cast out of heaven; the aerial cast out of the stormy heavens and the atmospheric heaven to earth where they will possess people, torment them and seek to destroy them. See Rev. 9 (The locusts from hell).

We are introduced to Michael here. He is referred to in other scriptures as the “archangel.” He seems to be divinely commissioned to be the guardian of Israel. Previously, Michael had a confrontation with Satan over the body of Moses. At that time Michael would not oppose him personally, but said, The Lord rebuke you.” Now, in the middle of the tribulation, the time has come for Michael, with God’s help, to cast him out of heaven.

In Rev. 12:9, four names are given to the evil one: (1) The great dragon: This denotes his strength and power, (2) That old serpent: This takes us back to the Garden of Eden. It was here he appeared to Eve in this form, (3) The Devil: This means slanders. He accuses the brethren. Compare Christ as our Advocate here, and (4) Satan: This name means adversary (roaming lion and angel of light). This describes the person who was cast out of heaven to earth.

John says one thing more about him here; it is he “Who deceiveth the whole world.” There will come a time in the future when Satan will control the minds, life and actions of the world. It is much more important for us to recognize the power of Satan today. The Christian’s refuge is the armor of God. See Eph. 6. 2 Cor. 4:3-4 reads, “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God,

should shine unto them." 1 John 5:19 says "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." To illustrate this point, describe "the wages of sin" and "the gift of God."

When Satan is cast out of heaven in Rev. 12:10-12, there is great rejoicing in heaven. There is also a great "Woe" upon earth - The devil is angry and he knows that his end is near.

Revelation: Chapter 13

Introduction

In this chapter, we are introduced to the unholy trinity. In the Holy Trinity, we have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In Rev. 12:9, we see the imitation of the Father in the great red dragon. The first beast of Rev. 13 (the Antichrist) is the imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The second beast in Rev. 13:11-18), also known as the false prophet, imitates the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. In the form of this counterfeit trinity, Satan will launch his greatest effort to deceive the nations of the world, successfully. Paul describes the nature of this man, the Antichrist (explain). See 2 Thess. 2:9-10. "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness..."

It seems to me that when the Antichrist is at the zenith of his power, it will be virtually impossible for men to believe the truth. There will be strong delusions. They will believe a lie. The groundwork for this diabolical system has already been laid and is ready to burst forth in devilish fury. The Holy Spirit, whom Paul calls the Restrainer, is the One who prevents this evil system from breaking forth right now. In the first 10 verses of Rev. 13, we have a description of the Antichrist and the empire over which he will rule. Rev. 13:1-3 describes the kingdom-empire, while Rev. 13:4-10 describes the rules of the empire.

The Kingdom-Empire (Revelation 13:1-3)

Revelation 13:1 - In verse one, John sees a beast rising out of the sea. What sea is meant here? See Rev 17:15. Then there is the beast – What is this beast? The beast is the Roman Empire and John sees it as rising out of the midst of a troubled world. First of all, the phrase, “seven heads and ten horns,” refers to a kingdom of 10 nations (the Common Market in Europe).

Now, this kingdom not only had 10 horns, but it also had 7 heads. These are both past and future aspects of the empire. “There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. The beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.” (Rev. 17:10-11) The seven heads refer to seven successive phases of government and political history of the Roman Empire. At the time John was writing (AD 90) it could be said, “five are fallen.” “One is,” refers to the one under whom John was living. The seventh “is not yet come.” But it will come, and out of it will emerge the beast or the Antichrist, who will rule the world (Rev. 13:8).

By reconstructing a world government out of the ruins of the ancient Roman Empire, the Antichrist will be able to do what no one else has been able to do. Napoleon did his best to become a world ruler. Bismarck dreamed of making Germany the capital of revived Rome. Hitler envisioned the Mediterranean Sea as a German lake and the whole world as his empire. Though others have failed, in the not too distant future, the Antichrist will arise and will have worldwide power.

Then notice, “and upon his heads the names of blasphemy.” There are at least two ways by which the Antichrist will blaspheme God: (1) By making himself equal to God and exalting himself above all that is called God (2 Thess. 2:4), and (2) By slandering God and taking His name in vain. Daniel 11:36 says, “this king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper until the indignation shall come: for that that is determined shall come.”

Revelation 13:2 - In this verse, John says that this empire “is like a leopard, bear, and a lion,” referring to Daniel’s prophecy. This is to say that the revived Roman Empire will incorporate into it the smooth swiftness of the Grecian Empire, the new power of the Medo-Persian Empire, and the regal majesty of the Babylonian empire. As this tremendous empire emerges from the chaos of the world system, there arises with it the Emperor. He is depicted in Rev. 6 as “the rider on the white horse.” He is given super-human wisdom by Satan to temporarily solve earth’s overwhelming crises – poverty, hunger, and war. The sins of that day will be: Satan worship, murder, drugs, immorality, and theft. See Rev. 9:20-21. For approximately three years, the world will have a great measure of peace and prosperity. This is why the beast is worshiped and obeyed. Please note that it was “the dragon who gave him his power, his throne and great authority,” (see Rev. 13:2). This man could really be described as Satan incarnate.

Revelation 13:3 - In this verse, John sees one of the heads of the beasts, “as wounded unto death.” This deadly wound is healed and the entire “world marvels at

the beast.” There are many theories as to what this actually means. The one that strikes me as being correct is that the wounding of one of the heads in all likelihood is a reference to the seeming death of the Roman Empire toward the close of the fourth century. At this time, Satan receives one of his heads, described by Daniel as the “little horn.” John speaks of him as the beast, the Antichrist.

The Rules of the Empire (Revelation 13:4-10)

Revelation 13:4 - The world will be dazzled by this spectacular display of power. They will go after the Antichrist in amazement and admiration, as seen in verse 3. In verse 4, we see that they will worship the dragon - Satan - and the beast - the Antichrist. Note also the blasphemy here: Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?

Revelation 13:5-8 - These verses give a description of the character of the Antichrist. He is an out and out blasphemer. He hates God. He hates God’s people. He persecutes them relentlessly. His power is worldwide over kindred - tongues - nations. Those who worship him, says John in verse 8, are those whose names are not written in the book of life. The inference is that those who don’t worship him have their names in the book of life. This is when the world church and world government come into being (things will continue like this for 42 months or 3½ years).

Revelation 13:9-10 - These verses exhort everyone to hear and to understand these tremendous truths. Also, in order to encourage the harassed saints of the tribulation period, God is assuring them that this condition is only for a short while, and that ultimately

God will effectively deal with the great persecutor and killer.

The Second Beast (Revelation 13:11-18)

The False Prophet - The generally accepted theory is that this beast is a Jew, although this is difficult to establish from the scripture. This man has the same vile nature as the Antichrist:

- He looks like a lamb, but in reality he is like a dragon - the embodiment of all that is evil.
- He has unlimited power (humanly speaking).
- He establishes worldwide worship of the beast (Rev. 13:12-14).
- He has the power to do great miracles (Rev. 13:13).
- He makes fire come down from heaven (an imitation of Elijah's miracle - Pentecost - Two witnesses).
- He also has the diabolical power of deception (Rev. 13:14). This is not surprising when we read in verse 12 that he has all the power of the Antichrist, who derives his power from Satan.
- He also makes an image of the Antichrist, and then makes this image appear to live (Rev. 13:15). Since God alone has the power to give life, this is a great deception.

There are two possible explanations for this: (1) From what scientists of our day have been able to do with computers, we know that such things as movement and speech could be programmed into this image so that it would appear to live. (2) The word "life" in Rev. 13:15 could also be translated "spirit." It is possible that he

can order an evil spirit to inhabit and control this image. It will be a huge deception (a diabolical lie). Satan will be loose upon the earth. To make an image move or speak will be nothing to him. In Acts 16:16-18 the Devil spoke through a person. The young woman, who was possessed with the spirit of divination and who followed Paul, said, "These men are the servants of the most high God." (The confession of demons in the Gospels)

There is absolutely no evidence in Scripture that gives Satan the power to give life. But, Scripture attests to the fact that he has the power of death - the death of the drug addict, drunkard, sex maniac, or murder and suicide. One of the reasons the Lord came to earth was to destroy him that had the power of death; that is, the devil. "Do not fear him who can kill the body - fear Him who has the power to cast into hell," - Matt. 10:28.

The Mark of the Beast - Without this mark, no one will be able to buy or sell. This mark will be branded or tattooed on the forehead or right hand of every person. To accept this mark with its implications, obedience and worship of the beast, is an unpardonable sin and it seals ones eternal doom. Read Rev. 14:9-11.

The Unpardonable Sin - Let us look at the unpardonable sin for a moment from a different point of view. There are many who think they have committed the unpardonable sin. They have a vague idea of what the unpardonable is. Some have wept in my presence, because they felt that they committed some sin that was unpardonable. The unpardonable sin of Matt. 12 was actually against the Holy Spirit. The Pharisees said that the miracles that Jesus did were performed by the power of Beelzebub. In ascribing to Satan the work of the Holy

Spirit, they blasphemed and committed the unpardonable sin. The Lord said that this sin could not be forgiven in this age or in the age to come (The Age of Law - The Age of The Millennium). So, this was really a dispensational sin.

Can we commit this sin today? Not in the same way - but we can commit an unpardonable sin. It is possible to sin so much that the conscience becomes seared, then to lose all desire to repent. It is possible to shun or refuse God's offer of salvation so often that one passes over the deadline, never again to have the desire to accept Christ. Also, every time you hear the message and have a desire to accept Christ, and refuse, you are actually refusing the invitation of the Holy Spirit. Some day he will leave and never return. My Spirit shall not always stay with man (Gen. 6). Think about the following examples: (1) The rich farmer left God out, (2) The Pharisee - religious man, (3) A rich man - "easier for a camel [...] from Matt. 19:24, (4) Going your way or procrastination, and (5) indecision. Unbelief is the unpardonable sin.

Questions for Reflection - The first five verses of Revelation 14 give us a preview of the Millennium. The Lamb of God is standing in Jerusalem. With Him are the 144,000 whom He had sealed at the beginning of the Tribulation (Rev. 7). The Tribulation is over and there are still 144,000. Not one of them was lost. Rev. 13 gives us the mark of the beast. Rev. 14 gives us the mark of God. God's care and God's promises never fail. May I ask you, have you been sealed by God? Sealed by His Holy Spirit? (Eph 1:13) Sealed unto the day of redemption? (Eph 4:30)

Revelation: Chapter 14

The Seal of the Father (Rev. 14:1-5) - The chapter opens with a scene in Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus is standing in the city, surrounded by 144,000 who have the seal of the Father's name on their foreheads (in contrast to the seal of the Antichrist). This is a look at the triumphant Christ at the beginning of His Millennial reign. These were sealed at the beginning of the Tribulation and, despite the fury of the devil, not one of them was lost. God's omnipotent power or authority was behind the seal. Despite being hunted, imprisoned, hungry, naked, and thirsty, each one was preserved by God (Read John 10; it speaks of the believer's security and him never perishing). The seal of the believer is the Holy Spirit. See Eph. 1:13-14 [Sealed with the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption (the redemption of the body), the first resurrection]. See also Romans 8, "Nothing can separate us [...]".

The Everlasting Gospel (Rev. 14:6-8) - The message of the gospel never changes; it is everlasting. There is only one gospel (Galatians 1). Different aspects of it have been stressed at different periods; here, judgment is stressed. God has used different means to proclaim the gospel. During the Church Age, He uses men (2 Cor. 5:9). During the Tribulation, He will use the two witnesses. At this point, an angel is used. This angel preaches from the air, so everyone will hear it. Note that angels are indestructible, while thousands of preachers had lost their lives. [Stress the fundamentals of the Gospel as it applies to us today - 1 Cor. 15, death, burial,

and resurrection; this is the Gospel the Lord has commanded His servants to preach in the entire world]

The Doom of the Beast Worshipers (Rev. 14:9-13) - The burden of the message that the angel preached was “the hour of judgment is come.” Rev. 14:9-11 tell us of the reality of Hell. Those who rescue the mark of the beast, seal their eternal doom. When Christ returns to the earth, He will destroy everyone who has the mark of the beast. Their bodies will go to the grave. Their soul and spirit will go to Hades (place of torment). What is true of them is also true of unbelievers. After the Millennium, death and Hades will deliver up the dead in them (Rev. 20:11-15). They will stand before the Great White Throne, and then be cast into the lake of fire. The wages of sin is death.

Note the blessedness of those who die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13). Of those who die during the Tribulation, the Spirit says, “they rest from their labors.” They will exchange, at death, persecutions and toils of earth for the blessedness and rest of heaven. Apply this concept to present day saints. The tribulation saints had the prospect of death continually before them. It is not necessarily so with present day believers; we have the hope of “the rapture.” The gift of God is eternal life.

A Preview of Armageddon (Rev. 14:14-20) - Rev. 14:14 refers to the Lord Jesus’ return to the earth (Clouds - See Matt. 24:30, 26:64, Rev. 1:7. See also Rev. 19). An angel tells Him, in verse 15, to “thrust in His sickle, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.” In Rev. 14:16, “He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.” The angels gather the peoples of earth together for this great battle. See also Matt.

13:47-51. They have gathered the grapes of earth and cast them into the great winepress of the wrath of God. The words “winepress of the wrath of God” in Rev. 14:20 are symbolic [Describe a Palestinian winepress]. John uses this symbol to describe what will happen when the Lord treads the winepress of the wrath of God. This judgment will fall outside the city in the plains of Armageddon. As John looked at this carnage, it seemed to him that the whole area around Jerusalem was covered with the blood of the dead.

Revelation: Chapter 15

Seven Last Judgments (Revelation 15:1) - In this chapter we are introduced to the final judgments of the Tribulation. Chapters 15 and 16 record the consummation of events leading to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, as seen in Revelation 19. Rev. 15:1 introduces us to seven angels. Each one has the power to unleash a judgment upon mankind. These judgments are the most intense and devastating of all the judgments that precede them. The seal judgments showed man's wrath against himself. The trumpet judgments showed Satan's fury against mankind. The vial or bowl judgments reveal the wrath of God against rebels and enemies. God has been slow to anger, but at this point His long-suffering ends and His judgments fall on mankind.

John says in verse one, "for in them is filled up the wrath of God." That is to say, in these judgments, the wrath of God is brought to a conclusion: It is finished. At this point, it is God's wrath on those who have continued rejecting Christ that is to be finished. This is a sobering thought for anyone who continues to reject God's offer of salvation. There will come a time when God's patience and long-suffering will be exhausted and there will be no more opportunity to receive Christ as Savior; this happens to some in life, to others after death. The future for such persons is the lake of fire. See Rev. 20:11-15.

A Scene in Heaven (Revelation 15:2-8) - After the seven last judgments are introduced in verse one, there is an interlude in verses two through eight. This interlude is the last of its kind, for it seems to be an interlude of

invitation, before God strikes in judgment. The scene is set in heaven. The martyred believers of the Tribulation are in the presence of God, singing a song of victory. In Rev. 15:3, they declare God to be Almighty, just and true, and they declare God as the King of the nations or ages. Read Philippians 2:9-11, "Every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord."

In Rev. 15:5, God reveals "the ark of the covenant" once more. This reminded the Israelites of God's faithfulness, love, and mercy (O.T.). God, once again (and probably for the last time), is declaring that He is Love and that He will honor His promise; if man comes to Him, he will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16) - The message in the sky.

God's Impending Judgment - Does God pour out His wrath on mankind without warning? A careful study of God's dealings with men will show that before He sends judgment, there are great pauses to allow men time to repent. An example of this is found in Genesis 6:6, when "the Lord was sorry He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart." In Gen. 6:3, we read, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh; yet his days shall be 120 years." This is how long it took Noah to build the ark. This is the length of time God waited for men to repent before He sent His judgment (seven days of grace). After 120 years of waiting for men to repent, the flood came and destroyed them all (the graciousness of God).

Peter tells us that the scoffers laugh at the thought of coming judgment. All things continue as they are. Then, he says that this world will not be destroyed by a flood, but will be kept in store, reserved unto fire in the Day of

Judgment. In general, people do not believe that judgment is coming. Take the antediluvians as an example; but the flood came. Peter says, "the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."

Perhaps you do not believe this. Perhaps you will not believe it. Heed the warning of Proverbs 29:1, "He that being often reproveth hardeneth his heart, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." The Bible depicts God as waiting patiently for man to come to Him. Think of the prodigal son. Note verses like, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," and "He is not willing that any should perish," to name a few. How long has He waited for you? Alas, the day is coming when judgment will be withheld no longer. He who is your Savior now will become your judge.

God's Plan of Salvation - When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son to redeem them who are under the curse of sin. Jesus Christ came and bore our sins in His own body on the tree. Salvation cannot be bought or worked for; it can only be had through the precious blood of Christ. "Without His shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." Jesus said, "I am the way the truth and the life." God has provided salvation in our Lord Jesus Christ. Before He pours out His wrath against sin, He gives you the opportunity to repent. He will not always wait.

When will God exercise His wrath?

- When His love is sneered at. See Gal. 6:7-8, “Be not deceived, God is not mocked [...]”
- When His gentle, merciful reproof is rejected. See Prov. 29:1.
- When His long suffering is ignored. The rich farmer of Luke 12.

James reminds us, that our life is but a vapor. “Therefore boast not of tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring forth.” Behold now is the accepted time – the day of salvation.

Revelation: Chapter 16

In Revelation 14, we saw God's reluctant, but final decision to close the gates of heaven to any further entrants. In His great foreknowledge, God knows that every unbeliever alive on the earth at that time will have hardened his heart against the Gospel and will never come to Him. Therefore, He prepares to release the final judgments on the earth.

The Bowls of Wrath

Revelation 16:1 - This verse depicts a great voice booming out of the smoke-filled temple. This voice gave the seven angels orders to pour out the bowls of wrath that had been given to them.

Bowl No. 1

Revelation 16:2 - "There fell a foul and painful sore open on those who had received the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image." This sore will be worse than anything man has ever experienced. It will be so foul and painful that cancer and leprosy will be trivial by comparison. No known drug will cure these sores. Even the Antichrist with his supernatural abilities will not be able to cure these malignancies. On the other hand, God will supernaturally protect the believers from this horrible plague. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Compare this with the plague of boils in Exodus 9:8-11.

Bowl No. 2

Revelation 16:3 - "The sea became like the blood of a dead man." In essence, the waters congeal like blood and every living creature that lived therein died. In Rev.

8, only a third of the sea became blood and only a third of the marine life died. In this judgment, all marine life is going to be wiped out. The whole earth will be affected. Sea transportation will be paralyzed. The former series of judgments (seals & trumpets) have increased gradually in measured progression. In the bowl judgments, all the stops are out.

Bowl No. 3

Revelation 16:4-7 - "All rivers and fountains of water become blood." This will create a horrible situation. Can you visualize a world without water? In Rev. 8:10, only a third of the fresh water supply is affected. At this point, all bodies of water and all sources of water will be turned into blood. The effect of this will be felt worldwide. Rev. 16:6 tells us that the reason for water being turned into blood and the ungodly having to drink it is because they have shed the blood of believers and prophets.

One thing that will stand out in the Tribulation is the slaughter of believers. As seen in verse six, those who follow the Antichrist will shed their blood. In fact, the suggestion has been made in the various readings that shedding the blood of the believers brings gratification to the killers. This slaughter will far exceed that of the Inquisition or of the Covenanters of Scotland. Note that in Rev. 16:5 an angel says that there is nothing unjust about God's ways of judgment. "You are righteous," he proclaims. In Rev. 16:7, another angel vindicates the actions of God, declaring that His judgments are true and righteous. Notice now that though the wheels of God's justice grind slowly, they grind surely.

Bowl No. 4

Revelation 16:8-9 - "Men are scorched by fire." When 1/3 of the sun was smitten in Rev. 8, it resulted in its power being diminished. Here, it becomes so hot that men are scorched with great heat. The word "great" occurs nine times in this chapter. At this time, God will make changes in the atmosphere or in some of the other laws of nature, so that the heat of the sun becomes more intense and scorches men. Add to this the fact that water is blood and you have some idea of the intense suffering and misery of mankind.

In verse 9, we read the result of this: men blasphemed the name of God and they repented not. Why can't they repent? Consider 2 Thessalonians 2 and its mention of the man of sin – the son of perdition. 2 Thess. 2:8 says, "And then shall that wicked one be revealed." This will occur after the rapture of the church and after the Spirit's dwelling place has been changed from earth to heaven. 2 Thess. 2:9-10 says, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceiveableness of unrighteousness in them that perish [...]." And verse 11 follows with "And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie." These people are hopelessly lost. They are beyond salvation. Satan will deceive them – God will delude them. These people can truthfully say, "The harvest is passed."

This brings up the age-old question: Is God sending these people to Hell without a chance? The answer is no! For this reason, up to this point, the 144,000 have been preaching the Gospel to every creature. This evangelization program will be worldwide. The two witnesses had preached for the first 3½ years. Believers had witnessed to Christ, even though it cost them their

life. Those who reject Christ and accept the mark of the beast seal their own destiny and doom.

Finally, note God's care for His own. Will the believers, alive at this time, be subjected to these great judgments? It is unthinkable. When Israel was in Egypt during the ten plagues, they dwelt in the land of Goshen, which appears to have been untouched by the plagues. The same will happen here. The judgments are poured upon those who have the mark of the beast (as seen in Rev 16:2).

It is interesting to note, in regard to men being scorched by the heat of the sun, that Psalm 121:6 says, "The sun shall not smite you by day, nor the moon by night."

Another illustration regarding men being scorched is the three Hebrew children in the furnace of fire. The furnace was heated seven times hotter than usual. Those who threw them into the fire were burned. When the king looked in, he "saw one like unto the Son of God walking with them." In this sense, they are a type of the Jewish remnant in the furnace of the Tribulation. [Also see Rev. 20, The Great White Throne]

Bowl No. 5

Revelation 16:10-11 - This judgment was poured out on the seat of the beast; that is, the throne of the Antichrist. Verse 10 tells us that his empire was full of darkness and his subjects gnawed their tongues in pain. The result: "They blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and sores." This is a terrible time for the beast and his subjects. The sores of the first judgment still torment the human race. The water (or the blood) situation remains unchanged. The scorching of the sun continues, but to make it all more fearful, a

shroud of impenetrable darkness is wrapped around this godless throng.

These conditions are the nearest to the description of Hell in all the Scriptures; excruciating pain, no water, great heat, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth (see Luke 16). These conditions are made possible by the judgments falling in rapid succession. While the Roman Empire is engulfed in darkness, the oriental forces take advantage of this situation and 200 million men move toward the Middle East.

Bowl No. 6

Revelation 16:12 - The pouring out of the sixth judgment will cause the great river Euphrates to dry up. This is God's final preparation for Armageddon. It was on the Euphrates River that civilization began, and it will be here that civilization will end. Civilization's birthplace was here and its grave will be here. This great river is 1,800 miles long and half of it is navigable. It is wide and deep. The great divide. East is east - West is west, etc. The Euphrates will be dried up and, for the first time in history, the East will invade the West.

Revelation 16:13-16 - These verses show us how the Western forces will be gathered. Evil spirits will proceed from the mouth of the unholy trinity: Satan - Antichrist - False prophet. These demons will work miracles before the rulers of the nations. They will be dazzled and mesmerized, and they will align themselves with the Antichrist - move toward Jerusalem for the final conflict. (Describe at this point the last battle of the campaign of Armageddon)

The Middle East is full of troops and weaponry. It is impossible for us to imagine the magnitude of what is

predicted here. At least 300 million soldiers strung out across the entire Middle East. The human waves of the East are pitted against the superior weaponry of the West. There is some preliminary fighting according to Zech. 14:1-3. The Eastern forces take Jerusalem. The doom of Israel seems certain, but at this point the Lord goes forth and fights against those nations that surround the beloved city. As they look up in helplessness to God, the Lord Jesus appears in person.

See Rev. 19. As His feet touch the Mount of Olives, it splits in two, leaving a great valley. Into this valley, the nation of Israel flees to Christ for refuge. There they will receive a revelation that will shock them and cause them great grief. Zech. 13:6 says, "What are these wounds in your hands?" Then He shall answer, "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." Then they will realize that Jesus, whom they crucified, was indeed their Messiah. This will be a great revelation to them and cause them great sorrow. As they turn to Christ, a nation will be born in a day. After the reconciliation, the Lord will turn His attention to His enemies.

The coming of the Lord causes a change of attitude between the forces of the East and West. They join together and unite their forces to fight against this new enemy. This is the fulfillment of Psalm 2. This is exactly what God wanted and, at this point, Bowl No. 7 is released.

Bowl No. 7

Revelation 16:17-21 - This is the final judgment - "It is done." The whole atmosphere will explode and the earth will go into convulsions. This earthquake will be the greatest that the world has ever experienced, according

to verse 18. "The cities of the nations shall fall." London, Paris, Rome, Berlin, New York, San Francisco, Tokyo... Islands and mountains will disappear (verse 20). Great pieces of ice, 100 lbs. in weight, will fall from heaven. This was the plague of all plagues.

The prophet Zechariah gives us further information regarding this time. Zech. 14:12 says, "And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth." No wonder John wrote that the winepress was trodden outside the city and blood came out of the winepress unto the houses bridles for about 200 miles (Rev. 14:20).

Judgment is coming. True is Matthew 7:13-14, which says, "Enter at the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."

Revelation: Chapter 17

[Describe the destruction of the apostate church]

In this chapter we are introduced to one described as the “great harlot.” We are also confronted with a weird seven-headed, ten-horned beast. To get the meaning of the chapter, we must identify these two.

The Great Harlot - The “great harlot” is the apostate church - a wicked religious system. In Rev. 17:1, we see that this woman sits upon many waters. Rev. 17:15 clarifies that these “waters” refer to peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. John’s description of this woman makes her both fascinating and repugnant. The most disgusting and horrible thing about her is that she is drunk, not with alcohol, but with the blood of believers (Rev. 17:6).

The Beast - John describes the weird beast with seven heads and ten horns carrying this woman. What a diabolical combination! This beast is symbolic of the Roman Empire or the Common Market nations. Bringing this picture into focus, we see the conditions that will prevail during the first 3½ years of the Tribulation.

The Destruction of the Apostate Church - The Antichrist of Rome finds it expedient to go along with the apostate church. The fact that the woman rides the beast indicates that, for a time, the religious system influences the political system. In the middle of the Tribulation, the Roman Antichrist and the Jewish False Prophet find that they have no more use for the apostate church, so they destroy her.

Revelation: Chapter 18

This chapter depicts the destruction of the political power of the Antichrist. John depicts great sorrow on earth over her destruction. In all likelihood, Rome will become the world's center for banking, finance, trade, government, industry, and culture. Men's fortunes will be both invested and lost here. That is the reason for the sorrow over her destruction. Read Rev. 18:9-19. We see in Rev. 18:20-24 that the attitude of heaven will be different. It will rejoice that Rome is utterly and completely destroyed, and that no trace of it will ever be found (Rev. 18:21-22).

Revelation: Chapter 19

Great Rejoicing in Heaven (Revelation 19:1-6) - The scene, again, is in heaven. Verses 1-6 depict great rejoicing in heaven. The reason for the rejoicing is the destruction of Babylon – both politically and ecclesiastically speaking. This was a tremendous occasion.

In verse one, John heard “a great voice.” This voice was like the voice of many waters, like the sound of many peals of thunders (Rev. 19:6). This voice was the voice of the redeemed in heaven. At instructions from the throne of God (found in verse 5), every redeemed heart cried out in fervent praise and worship: “Hallelujah.” [The Hallelujah chorus] Praise the Lord! “For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

The Marriage of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-10) - This is the event in which the bride and bridegroom, i.e. Christ and the Church, are brought together in a vital eternal union. This is a consummation of the marriage. The figure here is according to the pattern of oriental marriage, which had three stages: (1) The betrothal, (2) The coming of the bridegroom, and (3) The marriage and the marriage supper. Here, we see this picture presented through: (1) The betrothal of the believers to Christ, which took place at conversion, (2) The coming of the bridegroom that took place at the Rapture, and (3) The marriage supper, in connection with Christ’s coming to earth. Rev. 19:9 reads, “Blessed are they who are called into the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

Christ’s Second Coming to Earth (Revelation 19:11-16) - This is a bird’s eye view of Christ’s departure from

heaven. In verse 11, John saw Him riding on “a white horse.” His visible name was Word of God, Faithful and True. His eyes were like a flame of fire and there were many crowns on His head (Rev. 19:12). He is accompanied by the armies of heaven and will smite the nations. He will execute judgment on the nations (Rev. 19:14). He is called King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is the coming that the prophets foretold. This is the coming that is spoken of in the Gospels (except for one instance - John 14). Paul speaks of His coming in 2 Thess. 1:7-10. This is the coming our Lord spoke of in Acts 1. When John describes this scene, he has in mind the homecoming of the victorious Roman general. Riding on a white horse down the main street of Rome, His spoils of war are with him. John says the Christ is “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

The Rapture - “If I go, I will come again and rescue you onto Myself.” 1 Thess. 4:16-17 says, “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” 1 Cor. 15:51-52 says, “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” [Envision this: There shall be two in a bed - one shall be taken, the other one left. There shall be two grinding at the mill - one shall be taken taken, the other one left]

Revelation: Chapter 20

The Judgment

In my opinion, Revelation 20:11-15 is the greatest and most solemn announcement in the Word of God. This is the time of which the writer to the Hebrews warned us - "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment."

The Great White Throne - The word throne is mentioned more than thirty times in Revelation, but this throne is unique, because it is "a great white throne." For Rev. 20:11 says, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them." This judgment takes place in space, because the earth flees from the presence of the Lord Jesus. It cannot take place in heaven, because no unbeliever has access to heaven. See Rev. 21:8.

Truth and justice will meet with sin and rejection right here at this throne; and it is a Great White Throne. The judgment will be "great," because almighty power will be demonstrated. It also will be "great" because of the vast crowds that will be there: every unbeliever from the time of Adam, the fallen angels, and the great hosts of angels and believers - they will assist at this judgment (See 1 Cor. 6:2-3). This great throne is "white," emphasizing the holiness and purity of the Judge. This dazzling whiteness will be in contrast to the blackness of sin of those who stand before the throne.

The Judge - Let us consider the Judge: "From whose face the heavens and the earth fled away." The Judge is the

Lord Jesus; all judgment has been given to Him. Acts 17:31 says, "God has appointed a day in which He will judge the world - by that man whom He has ordained." The nail-pierced hands will carry the scepter of authority. His once thorn-crowned head will be crowned with glory, majesty and power. His once marred face will shine as the sun and the heavens and earth will flee away.

The Savior's exalted position, after the humility of the cross, is the fulfillment of Phil. 2:10-11. "Wherefore God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is God to the glory of God the Father."

The great white throne is where the spurned love of God turns to wrath. John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son has everlasting life; He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Rev. 20:12 says, "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God." Every unbeliever will be there. "The sea gave up its dead." They will stand face to face with Him whom they have rejected. There will be no hiding place - no caves or mountains to hide in (contrast with Rev. 6).

The Second Resurrection - Every unbeliever will be resurrected [Describe what happens to an unbeliever after death]. The body dies and goes to the grave. The spirit and soul go to Hades (Luke 16). This is a place of physical and mental torment, but is only an intermediate stage. At the final resurrection, death (where the body

has gone) and Hades (where the soul and spirit have gone) will give up the dead that are in them. The unbeliever's body, soul, and spirit will be reunited, then judged and cast into the lake of fire.

I am often asked, "Why is it necessary to resurrect the unsaved, if they are being punished already?" There are two reasons: (1) Hades is not the final destiny of unbelievers. Rev. 20:13 says, "The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done." They are there for the sin of rejecting Christ. (2) Their degree of punishment has to be determined.

This final judgment has to do with "works [according to these works]," (Rev. 20:12-13). The latter part of Rev. 20:12 says, "Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books." Records are kept in heaven. On this momentous occasion, these books or records will be opened, which will expose the works of each unbeliever. Every deed, action, and thought will be exposed. "God will judge the secrets of men's heart." Every mouth will be stopped. There is a difference of opinion as to when names are entered into the Book of Life. Some say names are entered at birth. Others say the name is entered at conversion. Those whose names were not written in the book were cast into the lake of fire. See Rev. 20:15.

Degrees of Judgment - I want to touch on a subject that we scarcely ever hear about, although it is clearly taught in the Scriptures: degrees of judgment. There will be different degrees of judgment. It will not be in

length of punishment, but in severity of punishment. The degrees of judgment are based on a person's works and knowledge. Jesus revealed this truth when He said, "Woe unto you Chorazin - Bethsaida - mighty works in Tyre and Sidon they would have repented. More tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you." Furthermore, in Luke 12:47-48, some of the servants were beaten with many stripes - others with few stripes. One final observation is that the sentence imposed at this time is called the "second death." This is terrible in its definition. It means separation from God for eternity, being tormented day and night forever and ever, as seen in Rev. 20:10.

For Your Personal Reflection: Is there someone asking this morning, "How can I escape this judgment?" You can escape it by reserving Christ as Savior. Jesus said that those who believe "have everlasting life and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death into life." Luke 3:7 says to "Flee from the wrath to come." Job 36:18 says, "Because there is wrath beware." As you are fleeing, Jesus is standing with arms wide open saying, "Come unto Me."

Revelation: Chapter 21

Read Revelation 21:1-8 - With the conclusion of Rev. 20, the events of time are all in the past. Beginning with Ch. 21, God unveils eternity before our eyes. The key phrase is found in Revelation 21:5, "Behold I make all things new." In this chapter and Rev. 22:1-5, we are introduced to all things new: A new heaven, a new earth, a new Jerusalem, a new relationship between God and man, new conditions for redeemed man, a new eternal home for the bride, a new glory, and a new temple.

First Heaven Destroyed - Rev. 21:1 refers to a "new heaven" and a "new earth." This statement has always intrigued me. I understand how there must be a new earth in the eternal state. Every vestige of sin and evil must be eternally destroyed. But why should there be a new heaven? Isn't heaven, God's house, perfect in every respect? Then, why should it be destroyed? Note the words in verse one, "The first heaven was passed away."

We read Gen 1:1 in our KJV, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." In the original language the word for heaven is plural - heavens. There are actually three heavens mentioned in the Scriptures. The first heaven (the atmospheric heaven) is the firmament of Genesis 1. It is the expanse that is just above the earth - the cloudy heavens. The second heaven is the heaven of the stars - the stellar heaven. The third heaven is spoken of as Paradise in 2 Cor. 12:2-4. This is undoubtedly God's dwelling place (Absolute Holiness).

When John says, "I saw a new heaven...for the first heaven was passed away," he is referring to the

“atmospheric heaven” around us. The stormy heavens probably come under this judgment, but certainly not the third heaven – Paradise – or God’s dwelling place. One of the reasons why the atmospheric heaven must be destroyed is because this has been the abode of Satan. [Note: Satan’s fall – 1/3 of the angels - Tartarus - the others are in the air around us - “He is the prince of the powers of the air.”] Peter describes the destroying of the first heaven in 2 Peter 3:10. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will vanish with a thunderous crash and the natural elements of the universe will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the work that are upon it will be burned up.”

Heaven and Hell - At this point I want to make a comparison between heaven and hell. See Rev. 20:14-15, “And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. And whoever’s name was not found in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” This is the second death. Now look at Rev. 21:8, “[...] shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” The first death is physical. The second death is spiritual.

To those who die in their sins, there is the fearful looking forward to of judgment. “It is appointed unto men once to die; after death the judgment.” We must all die and be prepared to meet God. Luke 16 is a vivid example of this. This is thought to be a true story. In it, Jesus gives exact details about the state of an unbelieving soul immediately after leaving this world. In it, we see:

- The lost soul suffers (Luke 16:27 - These people pray for their relatives and friends.)
- The lost soul is fully conscious (Luke 16:23-24)
- The lost soul is in full possession of its memory (Luke 16:25)
- The lost soul has no hope of ever leaving the place of torment (Luke 16:26 - Note the eternal character of this condition; it is a "great gulf fixed.")

On the other hand, look at what happens to the believer when he dies: The rich man died and was buried. Lazarus died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. His body was probably picked up on the street and burned.

John gives us some idea of conditions in heaven in Rev. 21:3-4. God is dwelling with men. He will wipe all tears from their eyes. There shall be no more death, crying, or pain [Describe the thought of "Abraham's bosom."] Paul was caught up into this place. He was caught up into the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:2). He was caught up into paradise (2 Cor. 12:4). He heard sacred secrets, which no human lips could repeat. He wrote 1 Cor. 2:9 with this experience in view: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, neither can the heart of man understand the things which God has prepared for them that love Him." Because of this experience, he could write to the Philippians' Church in Philippians 1:23-24, "[I am in a dilemma, I would like to stay with you, but my strong desire is to depart and be with Christ, which is far better]."

[Give an appeal here]

Revelation: Chapter 22

The Last Message of the Bible

Introduction - The Book of Revelation has been ridiculed by skeptics of all ages. Just as the Book of Jonah in the Old Testament is dismissed, Revelation has also been dismissed from the realm of facts into the area of fantasy. Spiritual man can only understand spiritual things. In Revelation 22:6, the angel who was introducing John to the final mysteries said, "These words are faithful and true." One must admit to the profundity of the revelation, yet by faith we can trust, comprehend, and appreciate something of its grandeur.

Rev. 22:7 says, "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." This statement is very important to the book. In fact, it is repeated seven times. The word "quickly" does not necessarily mean "soon." The idea here has not so much to do with when this event will take place. Instead, God is saying, there is an appointed day on which He will come, and He will come regardless of anything else. Nothing will stop Him. Note Hebrews 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, after this the judgment." Also note Acts 17:31, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."

All of God's programs are executed on schedule: His first advent - "When the fullness of time was come," (Gal. 4:4). The Holy Spirit's coming - "When the day of Pentecost was fully come." This took place 50

days after the Feast of First Fruits. Jesus was rescued up 40 days after the Resurrection; ten days later, the Spirit came to Pentecost. These events show us that there are events that God has appointed and He will execute them promptly or on schedule. He came on time at His first advent – He will come at the appointed time of His Second Coming.

Worship the Lord your God - In Rev. 22:8-9 John saw and heard these tremendous revelations and he was awestruck. His first reaction was to worship the angel who showed him these things. The angel would not accept his worship and admonishes him to “Worship God.” This is a divine principle that will never be altered. “You shall worship the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and Him only shall you serve.”

Worship is offering praise to God for who He is – for the greatness of His work – the greatness of His person. Worship is the overflow of a heart that has been nursing on Christ. To worship, we need time and quietness. Worship of God is necessary, because it brings “glory and honor to God.” The only worship that God receives is from redeemed lips. Examples of worship in Scripture are: The wise men (Matt. 2:1-11), the woman with the alabaster box of ointment (Matt. 26:1-3), and the worship by the cleansed leper (Luke 17:12-19).

The Condition of the Lost - The description seen in the first half of Revelation 22 adds to the awesomeness of the Great White Throne judgment (Eternal punishment – eternal state – separation from God – the second death). We must also keep in mind the condition of the saved – Oh, the blessedness of the eternal state for the believer.

We will not remain static in our spiritual lives. There will be a constant growing in understanding and appreciation. [Stress the importance of making the right choice here on earth. Discuss examples of the rich farmer, the rich man, Lazarus, and the thief on the cross]. "Choose you this day whom you will serve." (Joshua 24:15)

Rev. 22:14 describes the blessedness of the saved (in the city), while Rev. 22:15 describes those who are in the lake of fire (outside the city). [Contrast Matt. 25, "Those who were ready went in with Him and the doors were shut."] Rev. 22:17 is a great all-inclusive invitation. It says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The Spirit and the Church give the invitation - "Come." This invitation to come to Jesus Christ is given to him that hears. John 5:24 says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." It is also given to him that is thirsty. See Isaiah 55:1 and John 7:37. It is given to whosoever will (John 3:16).

The Return of Christ - Rev. 22:12 says, "Behold I come quickly - and my reward is with Me." The coming referred to here speaks of His immanent return. 1 Thess. 4:16-17 says, "For the Lord Himself shall descend [...]." Then occurs the Judgment Seat of Christ, before which every Christian will appear. Some will suffer loss (see 1 Cor. 3:13-15), while others will be rewarded (see 2 Cor. 5:10). We should live our lives in view of the

Judgment Seat. We should live as if Christ died yesterday and is coming tomorrow.

The Trumpets - Trumpets played a very important role in the life of Israel: They were sounded to gather the people. They were sounded when the camp of Israel was to proceed. They were used in time of war, as much as the bugle is used today. See, for example, the story of Gideon and the fall of Jericho. The trumpets of Revelation 8 are angel's trumpets [explain the "trump of God" in 1 Thess. 4 and 1 Cor. 15:51-52]. The trumpet of God will call us into His presence. The angel's trumpet will announce seven different judgments that will deluge the earth.

The Altar - The same altar brought salvation, blessing, and judgment. This is also true of the Lord Jesus. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are a savor of life unto life, to the other of death unto death, 2 Cor. 2:15-16. We must always remember, "God is a consuming fire." At this time God's wrath is hurled against a wicked world. On the cross His wrath was hurled against Jesus Christ, because He was the Sin-bearer.