

*A People of the Book*  
*8-Year Curriculum*  
*Year 8 Quarter 3*

A Study of  
Selected Texts from

# Revelation

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# *The Book of Revelation*

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**Study Purpose:** To gain a deeper knowledge of our Lord and Savior through the eyes of John and his letter of Revelation. To seek understanding of the rich and wonderful visions given to John by the Lord. To be encouraged and strengthened by reading about what the seven churches of Asia went through. To gain a deeper understanding of how we at Summit can apply everlasting hope to our lives that we see in our Lord's resurrection and victorious triumph over sin and death.

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*I gratefully acknowledge and credit to the following brethren and sources for material that went into my study and preparation of these lessons:*

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Strong's Concordance

*Various internet sites for historical information on the seven churches of Asia*

## *Acknowledgement*

I freely and humbly admit that I do not have all the answers to all the questions about the book of Revelation. As I have studied it over the years, I have had many varied and different ideas about what the Lord revealed to John at Patmos. The world's view of Revelation varies from it being a total allegory in nature to being totally literal in composition. Some view Revelation as prophesy already totally fulfilled while others view it as prophesy yet to be fulfilled. The body of Christ has itself expressed a myriad of viewpoints about it. I do not profess to be a scholarly man nor have all the answers to Revelation.

In spite of our viewpoints and thoughts about the complete meaning of Revelation, I am firmly convinced that it is a book to be studied and understood, not avoided. It is a book rich in imagery, hope, promise, inspiration and instruction. Revelation should be embraced and always be a challenge to us to dig deeper not only in Revelation, but in the whole word of God. For when Revelation is read and placed in context with the whole counsel of God, we see the culmination of our Heavenly Father's wondrous plan of salvation.

With that in mind, I do have thoughts and opinions as to the meaning and purpose of the book of Revelation. As we proceed through our study together, I will endeavor to lay out what I see as to the meaning of the book by digging into the rest of scripture, for it shines the best light on what I believe is the simplest meaning of the book. We will examine together what I see is the purpose and reason for the Lord giving John such an awesome revelation.

I readily accept and acknowledge that the viewpoints I express may not be in agreement with the viewpoints of some brethren in the class. That's OK. If I portray scripture incorrectly, I expect my brethren to teach me the whole counsel of God in love. My hope for this class is to foster discussion and sharing that will help trigger a deeper study of God's word. I pray that we can agree to share with one another as brothers and sisters striving to sharpen one another as iron sharpens iron.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

To God be the glory and honor.

Bruce

# *The Book of Revelation*

## *Introduction & Background*

*Revelation 1:1-3* – <sup>1</sup>The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw. <sup>3</sup>Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. *ESV*

### **INTRODUCTION**

When studying the book of Revelation, it is important to understand the context of when, where and why it was written. As Neville always says, “context is king.” This is especially true when attempting a serious study of Revelation and understanding its meaning for our lives as Christians. So much of what we think we understand from this beautiful letter to the seven churches of Asia has been polluted by the world and our culture.

### **THE UNIQUE NATURE OF THE BOOK**

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is a revelation that was given to the apostle John to write to the seven churches of Asia. It was a revelation of things that God had done, was in the process of doing, and would do very shortly in a physical and spiritual sense from heaven. The churches of Asia would be encouraged as it was revealed how God was caring for them in spite of the tribulations they were suffering. Their persecutions would last only a short time. Then God would come in judgment against their persecutors and those who were faithful to the end would be rewarded with an eternity with God.

Revelation is certainly different from other books of the New Testament. It is also very different from any kind of writing that is familiar to most people today. It was written in apocalyptic language very familiar to Jews and Christians of the first century. This has caused some people to shy away from the book or to misuse it in teaching wild and imaginative doctrines. Revelation was written to make things clearer for the first century Christians. The word ‘revelation’ in Greek is ‘*apokalupsis*’, which means ‘an uncovering’ or ‘unveiling.’ The Lord had John write Revelation to uncover or unveil, not conceal.

### **AUTHOR**

The author identified himself as the apostle **John** (1.1), who bore witness to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. He was the brother of James and the author of the gospel of John and three letters. His authorship of Revelation is supported by the testimony of Justin Martyr (165 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (220 A.D.), Hippolytus (236 A.D.), and Origen (254 A.D.).

Internal evidence examples in scripture also show that the author was the apostle John. One example would be “the Word” as it is used to describe the Son of God. The ‘Word’ is from the Greek ‘*logos*’. It is found three times in John 1.1 and once in John 1.14 in a description of Jesus. It is also found in 1 John 1.1 where Jesus is referred to as “the Word of life.” It is also found in Revelation 19.13 where “His name is called The Word of God”. These are the only places where Jesus is called the Word.

Another word found in the book of Revelation and the gospel of John is ‘*Lamb*’ where it is translated from the Greek word ‘*arnion*’. Jesus used it to describe His disciples in John 21.15. It is used in Revelation 27 times to describe Jesus. Jesus used the Greek word ‘*nikao*’ to refer to Himself when He said in John 16.33, “be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Revelation uses that word 17 times to mean ‘*overcome*’ or ‘*conquer*’. The apostle John used it seven times in 1 John. It is only used three times in all of the rest of the New Testament.

## THE DIFFICULTY IN UNDERSTANDING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The early church likely did not have the problem understanding the book we do today since they were very familiar with apocalyptic language. They were living at a time when the symbols of the book were probably familiar to them. Revelation was intended to be easily understood by the seven churches of Asia through a casual reading and hearing.

*Revelation 1:3 - Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.*

This verse suggests a setting in which one is reading while others listen. The listeners were expected to understand enough to be blessed by what they heard. They would not be confused and wonder what John was trying to say. Our struggles with Revelation are due to us being unfamiliar with apocalyptic language as a way of communicating a message and inserting our own bias. We are far removed from the historical and cultural context of the times which makes the language easier to understand. To properly understand Revelation, we must try to understand its historical context.

- \* The book was written specifically to seven churches in Asia which is in modern Turkey (1.4)
- \* Its purpose was to uncover or reveal *'things which must shortly come to pass'* (1.1, 3 & 22.6, 10)
- \* *'Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand'* (22.10)

Compare the last two points with Daniel 8:26, where Daniel was told to *'seal up'* his vision, *'for it refers to many days in the future'*. Yet we know that his vision was fulfilled within several hundred years. John, however, was told *'do not seal'* what he had seen, *'for the time is at hand'*. If most of Revelation refers to future events almost two thousand or more years later, does that mean the Lord was mistaken in His commands to John?

This is not to say there are no elements of the future in the book. I believe chapters 20-22 deal with the ultimate destiny of those who are in Christ, which would have brought great comfort to the Christians suffering in the first century.

## HISTORY OF THE WAR & THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

The war between Rome and Judea broke out in Caesarea in 66 A.D., when Greeks sacrificed birds in front of the Jewish synagogue there, leading to a violent riot. The Jews in Jerusalem rebelled and staged a successful attack on the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. The Roman governor of Syria, Cestius Gallus, marched to Jerusalem to attack it, but after initial resistance, his nerve failed him and he ordered a retreat. Roman armor was not designed for fighting a retreating battle in difficult terrain, and Jewish pursuit turned the retreat into a rout, with nearly the entire Roman twelfth legion being destroyed. In political and military terms, this defeat convinced the Romans of the seriousness of the Jewish revolt. The Jews may have felt that God was on their side and they were about to finally throw off Roman rule and occupation.

Rome responded to their initial setback by sending to the province a huge army under Vespasian. Vespasian concentrated first on reducing Jewish resistance in the Galilee area, and several extremely violent battles were fought there. The war went on hold for a year in 68 A.D. when Nero died. The ensuing struggle for succession in Rome eventually brought Vespasian to the throne, with his son Titus taking over the military campaign in Judea.

While the war with the Jews was on hold, Christians in Jerusalem fled to Pella in Jordan. Eusebius states: *"But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella."* [Eusebius, *History of the Church*, 3.5.3]

After subduing the Jewish rebellion elsewhere, Titus returned to Jerusalem in the spring of 70 A.D. A violent struggle for leadership among the Jews in Jerusalem had greatly weakened the city, which fell to the Romans on July 29-30 of that year. Jerusalem and the temple in it were burned. After Jerusalem was destroyed, the Jews were not allowed to rebuild it or inhabit it. The temple was never rebuilt. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple marked the permanent end of the Jewish system of sacrifices, along with the role of the priests and Levites in temple worship. The Jewish economy collapsed. Jews would survive through the years in the dispersed Jewish communities as a rabbinic/synagogue led religion. Even with all of this, they never stopped persecuting Christians. (*From <http://www.datingthenewtestament.com/Jerusalem.htm>*)

In his writings, *Wars of the Jews*, Josephus recorded the besieging of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. Casualties among the Jews were massive, with Josephus citing a figure of 1.1 million killed in the overall campaign (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 6.9.3) In his account, he also spoke of numerous phenomenon including signs in the skies during the Roman campaign. "*Thus it was that the wretched people were deluded at that time by charlatans and pretended messengers of the deity; while they neither heeded nor believed in the manifest portents that foretold the coming desolation, but, as if thunderstruck and bereft of eyes and mind, disregarded the plain warnings of God. So it was when a star, resembling a sword, stood over the city, and a comet which continued for a year.*" (Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 6.9.3)

#### **WHEN WAS REVELATION WRITTEN?**

The date Revelation was written is controversial and often debated. How someone dates the book will usually have a bearing on their interpretation of the book. Two dates are usually debated:

\* A **'late date'**, around **95-96 A.D.**, during the reign of the Roman emperor, Domitian

\* An **'early date'**, around **64-68 A.D.**, toward the end of the reign of the Roman emperor, Nero

The 'external evidence' (evidence outside the book itself) is inconclusive. Most people that favor the 'late date' will usually quote Iraneaus who lived in the late 2nd century A.D. His statement in *Adversus Haereses* 5, 30, 3 is rather ambiguous, however, and can be understood in several ways

"For [it or he] was seen not very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign." - Iraneaus, *Adversus Haereses* 5, 30, 3

I checked the Greek text preserved by Iraneaus and it's ambiguous. The part about 'being seen' could be translated in three ways:

#### **Option #1**

For it, that is the **vision**, was seen not very long ago, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.

#### **Option #2**

For it, that is the **written book**, was seen not very long ago, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.

#### **Option #3**

For **he**, that is **John**, was seen not very long ago, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.

This statement, even with all of this uncertainty, is the main evidence most people use to support the 'late date' theory. It has been accepted by generations of people without really questioning it or examining it in light of the book itself. The late date has been passed on to us in the same way it was passed on to Eusebius, '...it [was] handed down by tradition...' Tradition is not the way to interpret Scripture.

### **IN SUPPORT OF THE EARLY DATE**

*17.10 - they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while.*

John clearly states that the sixth king is reigning as he is writing the Book of Revelation. The date of Revelation must fall within the reign of the sixth king. Who are the first five Roman emperors who died before Revelation was written? Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius. Who is the sixth king in this line? Nero. Who was the seventh? When Nero died, it set in motion a bitter and deadly power struggle that saw three different Caesars come and go in less than a year, just a little while until Vespasian became Caesar.

Another reason for suggesting an early writing is John mentions some men were calling themselves 'apostles' (2.2). To imagine that one could be an apostle like the original ones selected by Christ was seldom, if ever, imposed upon churches after 70 A.D. This is because there were special New Testament requirements to become an apostle that later people had no hope of meeting. For one, each apostle had to have 'seen' Jesus (1 Corinthians 9.1) and there had to be miraculous signs shown in their ministries (2 Corinthians 12.12). After 70 A.D., no one met the qualifications of an apostle. But before 70 A.D., this was a major problem (2 Corinthians 11.13-15). So, the reference to false apostles of Revelation 2.2 would tend to place the writing of Revelation before the fall of Jerusalem.

In Revelation 11.1-14 the temple, which was destroyed in August of 70 A.D., is described as still standing. Some believe it is a spiritual reference to the church, but I disagree.

The persecutions that were experienced by Christians in Revelation are similar to the persecutions experienced by Peter. He wrote to the Christians in Asia Minor also, just a few years before (1 Peter 1.6, 4.12, 5.9). Persecution by the Jews with the help of Roman authorities had been going on since the days of Paul's first missionary journey.

In support of the early date, the Syriac version of the New Testament (2nd century A.D.) says Revelation was written during the reign of Nero. But because of the contradictory nature of the 'external evidence', I place more weight on the 'internal evidence' (evidence from within Revelation). I believe the book itself supports a date before the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman and its mercenary armies.

Patmos was used by the Romans as a penal colony. Prisoners were forced to work in the mines. John would have been useless in the mines if he was an old man. Therefore, it is my belief he was sent there when he was younger, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

So if Revelation was indeed written before 70 A.D., what was the most likely date? The apocalyptic nature of the book fits best in the late 60's. James, Peter and Paul had been martyred and the church in Rome was undergoing persecution. Rome had been burned. Finally, Rome was locked in a death struggle with the Jews in the land of Israel. Since Nero died in June of 68, I believe John had written Revelation by 66 A.D.

# Seven Churches of Asia





# *End of the Age in 'This' Generation*

## *Matthew 24 and Luke 17 and the End of Time*

Unfortunately the KJV and ASV translate *'the end of the age'* to be *'the end of time'* in Matthew 24.3. Therefore, for many years, many have taught that there are two events in. In reality, I believe Matthew 24 teaches that the *Jewish age* would end at the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

However, as noted above, many brethren believe that Matthew 24.4-34 describes the coming *'destruction of Jerusalem'* in 70 A.D. I have designated those as Part **A** on the right side. They also believe that Matthew 24.36 begins a description of *'the end of the world.'* I have designated those as Part **B** on the right. Luke 17.22-37 is shown in its entirety on the left. Now note where the parallel verses of Matthew 24 compared to Luke 17 are found in Part **A** or Part **B**. Then we will analyze what we find.

### **LUKE 17**

22 Then He said to the disciples, 'The days will come when you will desire to see **one of the days of the Son of Man**, and you will not see **it**.

23 'And they will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or or follow them.

24 'For as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven shines to the other part under heaven, so also the the Son of Man will be in **His day**.

25 'But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

### **MATTHEW 24**

23 'Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.

**(Part A)**

27 'For as the lightning comes out of the east and flashes to the west, so also will the **the coming** of the Son of Man be.

**(Part A)**

26 'And as it was in the days of Noah,  
so it will be also in **the days of the Son of  
Man.**

27 'They ate, they drank, they married  
wives, they were given in marriage, until  
the day that Noah, entered the ark, and the  
flood came and destroyed them all.

28 'Likewise as it was also in the days of  
Lot. they ate, they drank, they bought,  
they sold, they planted, they built;

29 'but on the day that Lot went out of  
Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from  
heaven and destroyed them all.

30 Even so will it be in **the day** when the  
Son of Man is revealed.

31 'In **that day**, he who is on the housetop,  
and his goods are in the house, let him not  
come down to take them away. And like-  
wise the one who is in the field, let him  
not turn back.

32 'Remember Lot's wife.

33 'Whoever seeks to save his life will

37 But as the days of Noah *were*, so also  
will **the coming** of the Son of Man be.

**(Part B)**

38 'For as in the days before the flood,  
they were eating and drinking, marrying  
and giving in marriage, until the day of  
that Noah entered the ark, **(Part B)**

39 'and did not know until the flood came  
and took them all away, so also will **the  
coming** of the Son of Man be. **(Part B)**

17 'Let him who is on the housetop not  
come down to take anything out of his  
house. **(Part A)**

18 'And let him who is in the field not go  
back to get his clothes. **(Part A)**

lose it, and whoever loses his life will  
save it.

34 'I tell you, in **that night** there will be  
two men in one bed. the one will be taken  
and the other will be left.

35 'Two women will be grinding together. 40 'Two men will be in the field. one will  
the one will be taken and the other left. be taken and the other left. (Part **B**)

36 'Two men will be in the field. the one 41 'Two women will be grinding at the  
will be taken and the other left. mill. one will be taken and the other  
(Part **B**)

37 And they answered and said to Him, 28 'For wherever the carcass is, there the  
'Where, Lord?' So He said to them, the eagles will be gathered together.  
'Wherever the body is, there the eagles (Part **A**)  
will be gathered together.'

If you were Theophilus, would you have been able to interpret Luke 17 to mean that there were two different events described and that they would be separated by what is now almost 2,000 years? Of course not! God is not the author of confusion. Would Theophilus have later understood that idea through Luke 21? Of course not! Theophilus would have had to read Matthew 24 in order to even speculate that there ***might be two completely separate events taught by Jesus in Luke 17***. Luke 21 does not provide any clue that there were two completely separate events in either Luke 17 or 21.

#### **'THIS GENERATION' VERSES**

Jesus often condemned the generation of Jews because of their hard hearts and stiff necked unbelief. He would often pronounce judgments against the generation of His time. His hearers would have understood that Jesus was speaking to the generation that was alive at that time.

***Matthew 12.41*** - *The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.*

***Matthew 12.42*** - *The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*

*Matthew 23.36 - Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon **this generation**.*

*Matthew 24.34 - Truly, I say to you, **this generation** will not pass away until all these things take place.*

*Mark 8.38 - For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in **this adulterous and sinful generation**, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

*Mark 13.30 - Truly, I say to you, **this generation** will not pass away until all these things take place.*

*Luke 11.31 - The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with the men of **this generation** and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.*

*Luke 11.32 - The men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with **this generation** and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.*

*Luke 11.50 - so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against **this generation**,*

*Luke 11.51 - from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of **this generation**.*

*Luke 17.25 - But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by **this generation**.*

*Luke 21.32 - Truly, I say to you, **this generation** will not pass away until all has taken place.*

A careful comparison of Luke 17 and Matthew 24 shows how Jesus was talking about **ONE** event. Jesus was talking about one event that would happen in the generation of those He was speaking to.

## **THE END OF TIME**

So often we look at a verse and see in it what we want to see without examining the context of what is written or who it was written to. People spend a great deal of energy, and sometimes money, in trying to understand, prepare and watch for the end of time.

There have been some people who have believed and taught that when Jesus came in judgment upon Jerusalem that it was the final time of a promised return. I **strongly** reject that teaching as incorrect and false doctrine. It is a teaching that robs of the hope of the resurrection and final judgment.

There are many that teach Jesus will return and reign from Jerusalem a thousand years from a rebuilt temple. Some even teach He will even reinstitute the sacrificial system of the Law of Moses. I **utterly** reject those false doctrines in view of Jesus Himself being the perfect sacrifice doing away the need for the blood of bulls and goats.

Beware of those who teach either of the above doctrines.

## CLEAR PASSAGES OF THE END OF TIME

I contend that there are actually very few verses in scripture that clearly point to the end of time.

*1 Corinthians 15.20-28* - <sup>20</sup> But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup> For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. <sup>22</sup> For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. <sup>23</sup> But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. <sup>24</sup> Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. <sup>25</sup> For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. <sup>26</sup> The last enemy to be destroyed is death. <sup>27</sup> For "God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "all things are put in subjection," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. <sup>28</sup> When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

*1 Corinthians 15.50-54* - <sup>50</sup> I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. <sup>51</sup> Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup> in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. <sup>53</sup> For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. <sup>54</sup> When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

In Revelation 20.14, Death is thrown into the lake of fire. Death is swallowed up in victory!

*1 Thessalonians 4.13-18* - <sup>13</sup> But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. <sup>14</sup> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. <sup>15</sup> For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup> For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup> Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, **and so we will always be with the Lord.** <sup>18</sup> Therefore encourage one another with these words.

*2 Peter 3.10-13* - <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. <sup>11</sup> Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, <sup>12</sup> waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! <sup>13</sup> But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

I contend that the only passages in Revelation that specifically address the end of time is chapter 20.7-15, which we will address in our study of that chapter.

I will agree that there may be others, but these are the most clear and. The important point is that Jesus has told us many times to be ready and always vigilant.

# *The Day of the Lord*

## *A Closer Look at “the Day of the Lord”*

### OBJECTIVES IN THIS WEEK’S STUDY

1. To have a better understanding of what the phrase *the day of the Lord* means.
2. To understand that it is vital to read scripture in the view of who it is written to and what is the context of the passage.
3. To appreciate the fact that God is truly not the author of confusion but gives scripture so that the man of God is thoroughly equipped for every good work.

### SUMMARY

There is often great confusion and great concern about the phrase *the day of the Lord* in all of scripture and, in particular, the letters to the Thessalonians. Does it mean the end of time? Does it mean a particular apocryphal event? Does it refer to one day? Does it refer to final judgment? The confusion and concern about the phrase *the day of the Lord* can lead to unsettledness and uncertainty about faith. The lack of knowledge and study of God’s word because of the confusion and concern can lead to an acceptance of doctrines contrary to the will of God. This leads to all manner of speculation and conjecturing about *the day of the Lord*.

### PASSAGES CONTAINING ‘DAY OF THE LORD’

*Isaiah 2.12* - For *the day of the LORD* of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up— and it shall be brought low—

Isaiah is speaking about the Messianic age when the Lord establishes His house upon the mountains. It did *not* refer to the judgment at the end of time.

*Isaiah 13.6* - wail, for *the day of the LORD* is at hand. It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

This *day of the LORD* referred to the coming judgment against Babylon. This *day of the LORD* was ‘at hand.’ It did *not* refer to the judgment at the end of time.

*Isaiah 34.8* - For it is *the day of the LORD's* vengeance, the year of recompense for the cause of Zion.

Note that *the day of the LORD's* vengeance referred to the vengeance that God was going to bring on Edom. Isaiah 34.5 says, “For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; indeed it shall come down on Edom, and on the people of My curse, for judgment.” It is *not* about the end of time.

*Isaiah 58.13* - If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy *day of the LORD* honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words—

The holy *day of the LORD* is referring to a day of worship and *not* to the end of time.

*Jeremiah 46.7* - For this is *the day of the Lord* GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; it shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates.

This **day of the Lord God** refers to vengeance that would be poured out upon Egypt and those in that area. This **day of the Lord God** was **not** referring to the end of time.

**Lamentations 2.22** - *You have invited us to a feast day the terrors that surround me. In **the day of the LORD's** anger there was no refuge or survivor. Those whom I have borne and brought up My enemies have destroyed.*

The **day of the LORD's** anger referred to what had brought these Israelites into Babylonian captivity. It did **not** refer to the end of time.

**Ezekiel 13.4** - *You have not gone up into the gaps to build a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle on **the day of the LORD**.*

This refers to **the day of the LORD** when some from Judah had been taken into captivity by the Babylonians in 606 and 597 BC while Jerusalem was about to be destroyed in 586 BC. This **day of the LORD** did **not** refer to the end of time.

**Joel 1.15** - *Alas for the day! For **the day of the LORD** is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty.*

Punishment was coming upon Judah and Jerusalem at this **day of the LORD** in the form of a locust plague, a drought, a famine, and destruction from the Lord. It was a day of judgment and it was "at hand." It did **not** refer to the end of time.

**Amos 5.18** - *Woe to you who desire **the day of the LORD!** For what good is **the day of the LORD** to you? It will be darkness, and not light.*

Israel would be taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 734 to 721 BC. Their **day of the LORD** was **not** at the end of time.

### **Zephaniah 1.4-2.3**

Here in Zephaniah "**the day of the LORD,**" "**the day of the LORD'S sacrifice,**" "**the great day of the LORD,**" "**the day of the LORD's wrath,**" "**the day of the LORD's anger,**" was speaking of a day of devastation and desolation that was soon coming upon Judah and Jerusalem. It was "at hand." It was "near." The city of Jerusalem and the temple would be utterly destroyed.

Zephaniah was **not** describing **the day of the Lord** at the end of time.

**Malachi 4.5-6** - *5Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of **the great and dreadful day of the LORD**. 6And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.*

We know that "Elijah the prophet" referred to John the Baptist. (Matthew 11.13-14; 17.10-13; Mark 9.11-13; Luke 1.17) John the Baptist was not literally Elijah (John 1.21), but, he came in "the spirit and power of Elijah." (Luke 1.17) So John the Baptist came before **the great and dreadful day of the LORD**.

If we believe that **the great and dreadful day of the LORD** refers to the judgment at the end of time, then we are led to believe that Malachi 4.5 was prophesying John the Baptist would come just before the end of time. But, what significance would such a prophecy have? Therefore, **the great and dreadful day of the LORD** of Malachi 4.5 does **not** refer to the judgment at the end of time and refers to a judgment that was near at hand when John was on earth.

**1 Corinthians 5.4-5** - *4In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in **the day of the Lord Jesus**.*

In the passages that we have already seen, ***the day of the LORD*** had to do with physical punishment on physical bodies and the deliverance of God's people from that anguish. Here it is the spirit of the man that needed to be saved. Therefore, we must conclude that this "***the day of the Lord Jesus***" in verse 5 does refer to the end of time judgment.

**2 Peter 3.10-13** - *10But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12looking for and hastening the coming of ***the day of God***, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

There should be no doubt that this ***day of the Lord*** is indeed that of the end of time.

**1 Thessalonians 4.13-5.3** - *13But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

There is no doubt that 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18 refers to the end of time, but note that it is ***not*** referred to as a ***day of the Lord***. However, it may be that 1 Thessalonians 5.1-3 refers to the end of time. Note the contrasting "But" of 1 Thessalonians 5.1.

**1 Thessalonians 5.1-3** - *1But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. 2For you yourselves know perfectly that ***the day of the Lord*** so comes as a thief in the night. 3For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.*

## ‘COMING IN CLOUDS’

It is interesting to note how ***the day of the Lord*** often happens with clouds. ***The day of the Lord*** is often characterized or described in terms of natural events or disasters.

**Ezekiel 30.3** - For the day is near, even ***the day of the LORD*** is near; ***it will be a day of clouds***, the time of the Gentiles.

The ***day of the LORD*** concerned the plundering about to come upon Egypt by the Babylonians and did ***not*** refer to the end of time.

**Joel 2.1-2** - *1Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for ***the day of the LORD*** is coming, for it is at hand. 2a day of darkness and gloominess, ***a day of clouds*** and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations.*

Punishment was coming upon Judah and Jerusalem in this ***day of the LORD***. It was a day of judgment and it was "at hand." It did ***not*** refer to the end of time.



*Joel 2.10-11 - 10The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. 11The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For **the day of the LORD** is great and very terrible; who can endure it?*

*Joel 2.30-32 - 30"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth. blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of **the great and awesome day of the LORD**. 32And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls.*

Note that nothing is said here about this particular **day of the LORD** being "near" or "at hand." So we are not surprised when we see Joel 2.28-32 quoted hundreds of years later at the beginning of the church in Acts 2.16-21. We see that **the great and awesome day of the LORD** prophesied by Joel was in connection with Zion and Jerusalem.

*Joel 3.12-16 - 12"Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. 13Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow-- for their wickedness is great." 14Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For **the day of the LORD** is near in the valley of decision. 15The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness. 16The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; But the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.*

This describes a day of doom and gloom and decision and judgment that was near for those who would defy God and persecute God's people. But, God would shelter His people who were the strength of the children of Israel. This **day of the LORD** was *not* the end of time.

*Zephaniah 1.14-16 - 14The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. 15That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, **a day of clouds** and thick darkness, 16a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.*

*Acts 2.14-21 - 14But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. 15For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. 16But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel. 17'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. 18and on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. 19I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath. blood and fire and vapor of smoke. 20The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome **day of the LORD**. 21And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.'*

Peter quoted from Joel 2.28-32. Acts 2.19-20 speaks of the same type of events that Jesus described as He discussed the destruction of Jerusalem that would immediately follow the tribulation that He described in detail in Matthew 24.15-28. There Peter said that the things occurring on that day were the things prophesied by Joel and that they were **preceding** the coming of the great and notable **day of the LORD**. Peter was *not* speaking about the end of time.

Note carefully then what Jesus said in Matthew 24.29-31.

**Matthew 24.29-31** - 29Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man **coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory**. 31And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

I believe that **the great and notable day of the LORD** in Acts 2.20 had its primary fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Some conjecture that it will also have a fulfillment for all of the earth at the end of time.

## CONCLUSION

We have seen from the Old Testament and the New Testament that **the day of the Lord** always referred to a time of punishment upon evil persons or nations and generally a time of relief for the true children of God. Sometimes it was on nations such as Babylon or Egypt or Edom and others. But, numerous times **the day of the Lord** referred to a judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem. In fact, the evil persons of Judah and Jerusalem were threatened with **the day of the Lord** more than any other group of people.

We have seen that less frequently, **the day of the Lord** referred to the judgment that will come at the end of time. It will result in punishment for those who rebel against God. It will be a day of eternal blessings for the children of God. The specific meaning of **the day of the Lord** must be determined by the context in which it is found.

The central point for us, indeed, the **ONLY** point for us, is are we ready and prepared for **a day of the Lord**? Whether He tarries or comes in judgment on clouds of glory at the end of time, we must be ever watchful and ever faithful to His will for our lives and trust in Him.

**An interesting note:** Scripture **never** describes the Lord's return as a '**second coming**'.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of clouds in prophecies about **the day of the Lord**?
2. Generally, what does the world think of when people speak of **the day of the Lord**?
3. If **the great and awesome day of the LORD** in Joel 2 is not about the end of time, what event is Joel prophesying about?
4. If John the Baptist was the Elijah as spoken about by Malachi, then did his coming mean a **day of the Lord** was at hand?
5. Why would there be many **days of the Lord**?

# *The Glory of Our Lord Revealed*

## **OBJECTIVES IN THIS WEEK'S STUDY**

1. To get a glimpse of the awesome glory of Jesus in revealing Himself to John.
2. To understand that Jesus is in control of life and death, and Christians need not fear.
3. To realize that Jesus knows our struggles sees the details of our lives.

## **HOW I UNDERSTAND REVELATION**

My views of Revelation are tied to what I see are internal evidences in scripture that it was written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem. For me, it is the only way to see all the parts fit together as a whole. Here are the parts that I see in Revelation:

- 1 – Chapter 1 - The Glory of Our Lord Revealed (beginning)
- 2 – Chapters 2-3 - Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia
- 3 – Chapters 4-11 - Earthly Struggles & the Church
- 4 – Chapters 12-19 - Heaven Struggles with Satan
- 5 – Chapter 20 - Judgment Day
- 6 – Chapters 21-22:5 - A Glorious Church
- 7 – Chapter 22:6-21 - The Glory of Our Lord Revealed (ending)

## **POINTS TO CONSIDER ABOUT REVELATION CHAPTER 1**

The Revelation of Jesus Christ begins with this clear statement of origin and purpose.

*Revelation 1:1-2* – <sup>1</sup>The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, <sup>2</sup>who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

Revelation was given to Jesus by God to show His servants things which must soon take place. It was designed to bless those who read, hear and keep the words of the prophecy. John then speaks to the seven churches in Asia which is in today's western Turkey, offering grace and peace.

We often focus on the writings to the seven churches of Asia or spend much time speculating on the prophetic language of John. We tend to overlook chapter 1. Indeed, the visions given to John are fantastic and wondrous, at times puzzling. Being a visual person, I love special effects. As I read what John saw, I often find myself trying to visualize everything. Filtered through my life's experiences and my propensity to daydream, it would be easy for me to stray from the truth and incorrectly interpret Revelation. That is why it is so important to start with Revelation chapter 1, using it as an anchor for understanding the purpose of the revelation given to John and see it as the launching point in understanding the rest of the book.

John explained how he was commanded to record the Revelation. He was on the island of Patmos. He was most likely exiled there for preaching the word of God. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day when he heard a loud voice behind him. The voice commanded John to write what he saw to seven churches in Asia. When he turned to see the voice, John saw seven golden lampstands and in their midst the Son of Man. Describing the awesome appearance of the Son of Man and his own reaction, John describes how Jesus comforted and then commanded him to write what he has seen and will see. The chapter ends with the Lord explaining that the seven stars in His right hand represent the angels (messengers?) of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands represent the seven churches themselves.

As you study Revelation chapter 1, be in wonder of the glory and majesty of our Heavenly Father and the One who was dead and lives forevermore.

1. God gave Jesus the revelation to show His servants. (1.1)
2. The revelation was things that must soon take place. (1.1)
3. Jesus made it known by sending His angel to His servant John. (1.1)
4. John had borne witness to the word of God and Jesus' testimony. John personally knew Jesus and had been with Him. (1.2)
5. The one who reads the words of the revelation is blessed. Those that hear and keep the words of the revelation are blessed. (1.3)
6. The time was near. (1.3)
7. John wrote to seven churches in Asia, extending grace and peace from God and from seven spirits before His throne. (1.4)
8. John extended grace and peace from Jesus who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead and the ruler of kings on earth. (1.5)
9. Jesus loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood. (1.5)
10. Jesus has made us a kingdom of priests to God the Father. (1.6)
11. Jesus was coming with the clouds. (1.7)
12. Every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him. All men will wail because of Jesus. (1.7)
13. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (1.8)
14. John identified himself as a brother and partner with the servants of God in tribulation, the kingdom and patient endurance in Jesus. (1.9)
15. John was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and testimony of Jesus. (1.9)
16. John was in the Spirit on the Lord's day and heard a voice *like* a trumpet behind him. (1.10)
17. The voice told John to write what he sees to seven named churches. (1.11)
18. When John turned, he saw seven golden lampstands and one *like* a son of man with a long robe and a golden sash around His chest. (1.12-13)
19. John described the man as having white hair like snow with eyes like flame and feet of bronze. He also had a roaring voice. (1.14-15)
20. There were seven stars in the man's right hand and a sword came out of His mouth. (1.16)
21. The man's face was like a blazing sun. (1.16)
22. When John saw the man, he fell at His feet. (1.17)
23. The man touched John with His right hand and identified Himself as Jesus.
24. Jesus told John to write the things he had seen, things that are, things that are to take place. (1.19)
25. Jesus explained that the mysteries of the seven stars are the seven angels and the seven golden lampstands are the seven churches. (1.20)

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What was Jesus intending to show His servants? (1.1)
2. What did John bear witness to? (1.2)
3. Who was this book sent to bless? Why? (1.3)
4. Who was the book addressed to? (1.4,11)
5. How is God described in the greeting from John? (1.4)
6. How is Jesus described by John in this greeting? (1.5,6)
7. How did Jesus describe Himself? (1.8,17-18)
8. How does John describe himself? (1.9)
9. Where and when did John receive the Revelation? (1.9,10)
10. What did John hear a loud voice say? (1.11)
11. When John turned to see the voice, what did he see? (1.12,13)
12. In what ways did John describe the Son of Man? (1.13-16)
13. What was John's reaction when he saw Him? What was he told? (1.17)
14. What three things was John told to write about? (1.19)
15. What did the seven stars and seven golden lampstands represent? (1.20)

## **THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

1. Why do you suppose Jesus did not have John write to only these seven churches?
2. If each of the seven churches had an angel, does that mean there is an angel of Smyrna?
3. Can you think of other books of the Bible that have similar prophetic language or visions like Revelation chapter 1?

# *Ephesus, Smyrna & Pergamos*

## OBJECTIVES IN THIS WEEK'S STUDY

1. To see and know that Jesus knows our faithfulness, failings, fears and doubts.
2. To understand that Jesus demands that Christians put Him first above all else.
3. To realize that even a little sin we tolerate in our lives can put us in spiritual jeopardy.
4. To comprehend that Jesus commands Christians to seek spiritual wealth and health.

## SUMMARY

When John is instructed to write to the churches in Asia, the Lord generally follows the same format: He instructs John to write to the angel of that church and describes Himself, He then gives commendations, condemnation and related warnings, exhortations. Jesus then gives a promised blessing for those who hear and heed what the Spirit says.

The churches were encouraged to remain faithful or to repent if they were not faithful. The unfaithful congregations were warned that Jesus would come quickly upon them in vengeance and remove their lampstand if they did not repent. That is, they would be removed as a church.

Each letter closes with the admonition, "***He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.***" This suggests the letters were not just for the personal benefit of the churches addressed, but to all who would listen.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THIS LESSON

1. The condition of each church: their strengths and weaknesses, the warnings and promises given.
2. The ease at which a congregation and Christians can stray from our 'first love'.
3. What would Jesus command John to write to the angel of Summit?

## EPHESUS

### **The Lord's description of Himself -**

*'Him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.'*

### **The Lord's faithful reward -**

*'To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'*

On Paul's second mission journey, he briefly visited Ephesus after leaving Corinth. On his third mission journey, Paul spent at least two years teaching in the city (Acts 19:8-10). He spent his time weeding out false doctrines and pagan practices. The Temple of Artemis (also called Diana) was in Ephesus. It was there that the silversmiths caused a near riot while blaming Paul for their loss of business when people were turning to the one true God.

Sometime after the church had been started, Paul wrote a letter to the Ephesians commending their faith and love. Paul's letter to the Ephesians shows that they had done well. They appeared well organized and busy. During these early years they had been growing, expanding and doing the will of God. He commended their sincerity (Ephesians 6:24). Timothy (1 Timothy 1:3-4), Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:25), and Apollos had all spent time watering the Ephesian church. It should have been one of the most thoroughly taught congregations in the early church. The picture painted of Ephesus is that it was a well-watered and self-sufficient church.

When Paul passed Ephesus later because he was eager to reach Jerusalem in time for Pentecost and was determined not to be delayed by a stop in Asia. He called for the Ephesian elders to meet with him at Miletus (Acts 20:16-17).

*Acts 20:28-32* - <sup>28</sup>Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. <sup>29</sup>I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; <sup>30</sup>and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. <sup>31</sup>Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. <sup>32</sup>And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Paul was right. He later wrote to Timothy, whom he had instructed to remain on at Ephesus in order to deal with those who were teaching false doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3-7). Of particular concern in the first epistle to Timothy was the matter of church leadership. 1 Timothy 3 is devoted to the qualifications of elders and deacons. It would seem that some wished to be teachers of the law. The warning he gave the elders at Miletus was already coming true.

Of particular interest is the Lord's comment to the Ephesians (2.6): *Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.* I was curious, who were the Nicolaitans? There are two possibilities:

1. Ireneus and Hippolytus, two leaders in the early Church said the Nicolaitans were the spiritual descendants of Nicolas of Antioch, who had been ordained as a deacon in Acts 6:5. Some Bible commentators believe Nicolaitans followed the teachings of Nicolas, who they say may have denied the true faith and became part of a group holding 'the doctrine of Balaam', who taught Israel 'to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality.' Clement of Alexandria said, "They abandoned themselves to pleasure like goats, leading a life of self-indulgence." Their teaching taught that it did not matter what you did in the flesh because grace and mercy would always cover your sins.

2. The name "Nicolaitans" is derived from the Greek word *nikolaos*, a compound of the words *nikos* and *laos*. The word *nikos* is the Greek word that means *to conquer* or *to subdue*. The word *laos* is the Greek word for *the people*. These two words form the name *Nicolas*, which literally means *one who conquers and subdues the people*. Perhaps some men were striving to gain dominion over other Christians. If so, the 'teaching of the Nicolaitans' could refer to those seeking dominion over the church. John discusses domination within the church in 3 John 9-11. Dominating the people goes against the teaching of Jesus (Matthew 20:25-28). Some commentators suggest this was perhaps the beginnings of a hierarchy of bishops.

The Lord not only demanded repentance from those who believe and practice the 'doctrine of the Nicolaitans' but also threatens severe punishment if they did not obey. While the Lord

commended Ephesus for its steadfastness, especially against false apostles, they had lost their first love. The Lord exhorted them to repent and remember from where they had fallen by doing the 'first works'. If not, they are warned that their 'lampstand' would be removed if they did not repent (1.7).

## **SMYRNA**

### **The Lord's description of Himself -**

*'The First and the Last, Who died and came to life.'*

### **The Lord's faithful reward -**

*'Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.'*

The only mention of the church in Smyrna in the New Testament is in Revelation. In all probability the church at Smyrna was started by Paul during his third mission journey (53-56 AD). This would agree with Acts 19:10, which says *'so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.'* It is believed from church history that John went to Smyrna after being released from Patmos. Smyrna was apparently very influential among other congregations in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century into the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

The church faced strong Jewish opposition in Smyrna. When Christians would refuse to burn incense to the emperor of Rome as god, the Jews would accuse them of treason to the Romans to stir up persecution. Polycarp, an elder of the church at Smyrna who had been student under John, was martyred for this crime.

The Jews of Smyrna were more antagonistic than the Romans to Christians. Christians were going to endure the blasphemy, slander and lies of the Jews who showed contempt against the church in Smyrna. The Jews considered themselves as the *'synagogue of God'*, but were actually the *'synagogue of Satan'* according to the Lord (2.9). Judaism was a legal religion and, by offering prayers to the emperor, they escaped the fate of the Christians.

**Romans 2.28-29** - <sup>28</sup>*For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. <sup>29</sup>But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.*

Christ conquered the worst that life can do to us. He triumphed over pain and death and He offers us the way to victorious and faithful living. His letter was intended for the benefit of the Christians in Smyrna to encourage them to be faithful until death, or martyrdom, with no fear of the consequences.

The church at Smyrna is commended for being 'rich' despite their tribulation and poverty telling them 'but you are rich' (2.9). Unlike most churches, there are no words of condemnation directed toward it. While they would experience a little persecution, they were encouraged by the Lord to not fear and to remain faithful to death (2.10-11).



## **PERGAMUM (ALSO CALLED PERGAMOS/PERGAMON)**

### **The Lord's description of Himself -**

*'Him who has the sharp two-edged sword.'*

### **The Lord's faithful reward -**

*'To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'*

*'I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.'*

The religious climate at Pergamum was not conducive to the Christian life. That's because 'Satan's throne' was in the city (2.12). It probably refers to Pergamum as a major center of pagan religion, especially the imperial cult. The city symbolized secular power and civil religion working together to corrupt the church in Pergamum.

Pergamum was a massive religious center where the pagan cults worshipping Zeus, Athena, Asklepios, Dionysius (which is another name for Bacchus, the god of drunkenness and debauchery). Pergamum was the first city in the empire to build a temple to Caesar and emperor worship reached the point of cult worship. Caesar was no longer seen as a political or military leader but he was seen as a god. Over time, the city had several temples of worship for Caesar and became the capital of Caesar worship.

As long as you worshiped Caesar, you could worship anything else. That made it tough for Christians since they didn't worship Caesar at all. They worshiped Christ and Him alone. One day a year they had to burn incense to Caesar and proclaim him as god. Refusal meant they lost their citizenship rights and often their lives as well.

Antipas is described by the Lord as a 'my faithful witness'. Church tradition says that Antipas was a physician suspected of secretly teaching the gospel. The Aesculapians (members of the medical guild) accused Antipas of disloyalty to Caesar. Upon being condemned to death, Antipas was placed inside a copper bull, which was then heated over a fire until it was red-hot.

While the church did not deny the faith when Antipas was killed among them, Pergamum was a church engaged in compromise. Pergamum was mostly a church made up of Gentiles primarily who had been converted out of paganism but over time apparently began to turn back to some of their sinful pagan habits. They were in danger of the judgment of the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 6.14-16 Paul says, <sup>14</sup>*Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*

<sup>15</sup>*What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?*

<sup>16</sup>*What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God.'*

But at Pergamum there were some that apparently believed you can be a Christian and live however you want. One could be a Christian and worship idols. One can be a Christian and commit sexual immorality. There are Christians today who think they're free in Christ to behave and live any way they want to.

The Lord rebuked the church of Pergamum for having some who taught the doctrines of Balaam and, 'in the same way', the Nicolaitans. It was Balaam who led Israel to moral corruption, just before they were due to cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land. The Nicolaitans had been rejected by the Ephesian church but were allowed by the church of Pergamum. Some believed that you could live your life any way you wanted, indulge in sin, uncleanness, and sexual immorality based upon a perverted understanding of God's grace. It was an abuse of freedom and the saints were doing nothing about it.

**Romans 6:1-4** - <sup>1</sup>What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

There can be no compromise.

**James 4:4** - *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

The church at Pergamos is praised for its steadfastness, but faulted for allowing false teachers and sin in their midst. The Lord threatens to come and war against those teachers with the sword of His mouth if they do not repent (2.16).

The meaning of the 'new name' written on the white stone (2.17) appears to have Old Testament roots. When speaking of Zion – a type of the church perfected – Isaiah repeated the promise of God to his people: '*and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.*' (Isaiah 62:2).

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What pattern is generally followed in these letters to the churches?
2. What is often the basis for the Lord's self-description in the letters? (2.1,8,12)
3. What does Jesus commend the church in Ephesus for? (2.2-3)
4. What does the Lord condemn them for? (2.4)
5. What solution does Jesus give for restoring their first love? (2.5)
6. What warning does Jesus give the church in Ephesus? (2.5)
7. For what does the Lord commend the church in Smyrna? (2.9)
8. Who was guilty of blasphemy in Smyrna? (2.9)
9. Why were they not to fear what they were about to suffer? (2.10)
10. For what does the Lord commend the church in Pergamum? (2.13)

11. What is said about where they dwell? (2.13)
12. What does the Lord condemn them for? (2.14-15)
13. What warning does Jesus give the church in Pergamum? (2.16)
14. What exhortation is given at the end of each letter? (2.7,11,17)
15. List the promises given in this chapter to those who overcome (2.7,11,17)

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

1. What are some teachings that would endanger Summit?
2. What kind of sins do we allow in our lives?
3. What is the balance between 'do not judge' and speaking out against sin?
4. Which of these three churches is most like Summit?

# Thyatira, Sardis & Philadelphia

## OBJECTIVES IN THIS WEEK'S STUDY

1. To see and know that Jesus knows our faithfulness, failings, fears and doubts.
2. To understand that Jesus demands that Christians put Him first above all else.
3. To realize that even the little sin we tolerate in our lives can put us in spiritual jeopardy.
4. To comprehend that Jesus commands Christians to seek spiritual wealth and health.

## SUMMARY

The Lord continues to instruct John to write letters to the churches in Thyatira, Sardis and Philadelphia. The pattern of instruction is the same as for the previous three churches. The churches were encouraged to remain faithful or to repent if they were not faithful. The unfaithful congregations were warned that Jesus would come quickly upon them in vengeance and remove their lampstand if they did not repent. That is, they would be removed as a church.

Each letter closes with the admonition, *“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* Even though the letters are not written to us, we can gain great insight as to what our Lord expects of us as His church.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THIS LESSON

1. The condition of each church: their strengths and weaknesses, the warnings and promises given.
2. The ease at which a congregation and Christians can stray from our ‘first love’.
3. Does pride prevent a church from repenting?
4. What would Jesus command John to write to the angel of Thyatira?

## THYATIRA

### The Lord's description of Himself -

*‘Who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.’*

### The Lord's faithful reward -

*‘The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star.’*

Thyatira was a prosperous trading town that had a major cult of the pagan god Apollo (son of Zeus). The city was famous for its dyes and was a center of the trading of purple. It was a city whose economic life was dominated by trade guilds in which pagan religious practices had become criteria for membership. To be part of a guild required participation in its pagan religious festivities. Christians would be faced with the problem of compromising themselves at least enough to allow participation in a common meal dedicated to some pagan deity. To reject participation could mean social isolation and economic hardship.

During his second mission journey Paul traveled to Philippi (Acts 16.13 - 15). On the Sabbath, he met a woman from Thyatira named Lydia praying near a river. Lydia is a seller of purple. She listens to Paul's preaching and is convicted by the Paul's message. She, along with her entire household, are baptized. It is likely Lydia, when she traveled back to Thyatira, helped spread the gospel throughout the city.

The Lord identified himself as the Son of God (2.18). While this title is previously implied, it is only used here. He praised the church for its love, faith, service and perseverance. The Lord gave tremendous praise Thyatira's spiritual status. It was the only church that the Lord said improved its spiritual works (2.19).

But the situation at Thyatira was similar to that at Pergamum, except the false teaching was from a single individual, Jezebel. Clearly, Jezebel is not a true prophetess in the eyes of Jesus. Like the Nicolaitans at Pergamum, she was urging sexual immorality and the eating of foods sacrificed to idols (2.20).

Jesus makes no distinction between prophets who condone idolatry and immorality and those who practice such things. He compares Jezebel to a prostitute. She has had time to repent, but has not done so. Her punishment is to be put to bed with sickness (2.22). Her followers at Thyatira still have time to repent, but are in danger of sufferings (2.22). Her children, perhaps anyone who participates in her teaching, will be struck dead by a plague (2.23).

Most of the church at Thyatira did not accept Jezebel's teachings. However, the church still apparently allowed her teaching to continue. It was perhaps like the church at Corinth which tolerated sin (1 Corinthians 5:1-7). The Lord commanded them to hold on to their spiritual understanding (2.24) and that He would lay no other 'burden' on them.

## **SARDIS**

### **The Lord's description of Himself -**

*'Him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.'*

### **The Lord's faithful reward -**

*'The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.'*

The message to Sardis lists no specific enemies, internal or external. There is no Balaam or Jezebel, no deep secrets of Satan, no synagogue of Satan, and no throne of Satan. So of all the congregations in Asia, we know least about Sardis and its problems. They were about to die as a church. This message is perhaps very damaging or at least more urgent than the other ones. Too often, when we encounter no spiritual adversaries, it is because *we* ourselves are the enemy.

A sermon by Melito, a Christian leader at Sardis, entitled *On the Passover* (Hawthorne 1975:147-75), speak about a spirited debate with the large Jewish community in Sardis during the second century. As far as commentators know, the problem of the church at Sardis in John's time was not with the Jews or with the Roman Empire, or even false prophecy, but with itself.

The church at Sardis was described as being "dead" (3:1). It appeared to be alive – had "a reputation of being alive" – looked spiritually vibrant on the outside – but was spiritually lifeless.

The church was Christian in name only. This recalls Christ's scathing rebuke of the Pharisees who "look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean" (Matthew 23:27).

What was dead about the church and what needed reviving? First, there was no indication of persecution or trouble from outside forces. There appears to be no any heresy, in contrast to some of the other churches. Things seemed to be peaceful and religiously correct. Perhaps it was a church that was too good to be true. Its religiously proper appearance may have only meant that it had fully and silently compromised with the truth and the pagan society around it. Maybe Sardis was a perfect model of Christianity that did not offend and sought to be politically correct. That might explain its calm outward appearance.

It is likely that the problem at Sardis was a strong tendency to compromise Christian faith for the sake of appealing to society and culture of the surrounding pagan Asian society and the Roman Empire. This spirit of compromise was linked not to one particular group in the church (like Pergamum and Thyatira) but to the majority in the congregation. The ones who had *not soiled their clothes* may have become pushed aside. This might explain the harsh tone of the message, but it is impossible to be more specific about the nature of the compromises made at Sardis.

Paul had described such Christians by saying they seemed quite religious but denied God's power in their lives (2 Timothy 3:5). Paul also said this the church at Ephesus:

*Ephesians 5:11-17 - <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup> For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup> for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.' <sup>15</sup> Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup> making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*

This church of the living dead needed the power of God to bring them back to life. Jesus gives Sardis a jolting command to **'Wake up!'** (3.2). He wanted to encourage the church to take action. The members were to strengthen what little remained, to obey, and to repent (3.2-3). Jesus told the church at Sardis to wake up or he would come like a thief does. He said, 'You will not know at what time I will come to you' (3.3).

While most in the church at Sardis were spiritually dead, 'a few people' were faithful to the Lord and had 'not soiled their clothes' (3.4). They were promised that they would walk with Jesus and be dressed in white (3.4-5).

## **PHILADELPHIA**

### **The Lord's description of Himself -**

*'The holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.'*

### **The Lord's faithful reward -**

*'The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God. Never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.'*

John wrote that Jesus is the One ‘who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open’ (3.7). Christ had set an open door before the church that ‘no one can shut.’ The Lord may have used prophesy by Isaiah to send an encouraging message to the church in Philadelphia and to all who are in Christ. Not only does Jesus open the door, He *is* the door to the kingdom (John 10:7-9).

*Isaiah 22:22 - And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.*

Christians of the first century always lived in an uneasy relationship with Judaism. At the same time, the church considered itself the rightful spiritual heir of Judaism, the new Israel (Galatians 6:16). The church saw itself as spiritual Jews who had received ‘circumcision’ through the Holy Spirit (Romans 2:28-29). This caused problems between Christians and Jews, as they both claimed to be God’s people. We will find as we continue our study of Revelation that it was the Jews, and not the Romans, that stirred up opposition to and persecution of the church.

The problem here, like Smyrna, is the presence of a *synagogue of Satan*, people who *claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars and a ‘synagogue of Satan’* (3.9). John’s vision here is that Jesus *will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you* (3.9). The promise reflects Isaiah 45:14, 49:23 and 60:14, where Gentile nations would come to pay homage to the God of Israel.

Because the church in Philadelphia has kept faith with Jesus, he will keep them from ‘the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth’ (3:10).

As we read earlier, the church at Smyrna was told it would receive ‘the crown of life’ (2.10). Philadelphia was told not to let anyone take its crown. In both cases, the word is *stephanos* – which refers to the wreath of victory awarded to winners of athletic contests. The Lord promised the faithful in Philadelphia that he would make them pillars in God’s temple (3.12). And, they would never again leave his presence.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What does the Lord commend the church for in Thyatira? (2.19)
2. What does the Lord rebuke them for? (2.20)
3. What does the Lord say about the woman who calls herself a prophetess? (2.21-23)
4. What exhortation does the Lord give the church at Thyatira? (2.25)
5. What does the Lord condemn the church for in Sardis? (3.1-2)
6. What does the Lord command those at Sardis to do? (3.2-3)
7. What was the Lord’s warning to the church at Sardis? (3.3)
8. What did the Lord find commendable at Sardis and what did He promise them? (3.4)

9. What did the Lord promise to those who overcome? (3.5)
10. What had the Lord done for those in Philadelphia? Why? (3.8)
11. What was the Lord going to do to those who claimed to be Jews but were actually the synagogue of Satan? (3.9)
12. What did the Lord say He would do for those in Philadelphia? Why? (3.10)
13. What warning and exhortation does He then give? (3.11)
14. What promise does the Lord give to him who overcomes? (3.12)

### **THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

1. How do we 'live in the world but not be of the world'?
2. What kind of sins do we tend to wink at and ignore?
3. What are the best ways we can remain faithful to the end?
4. Which of these three churches is most like Summit?



# Laodicea

## OBJECTIVES IN THIS WEEK'S STUDY

1. To see and know that Jesus knows our faithfulness, failings, fears and doubts.
2. To understand that Jesus demands that Christians put Him first above all else.
3. To realize that we cannot be lukewarm with our faith.
4. To comprehend that Jesus commands Christians to seek spiritual wealth and health.

## SUMMARY

The Lord continues to instruct John to write, lastly to the church in Laodicea. The pattern of instruction is the same as for the previous six churches. Laodicea is strongly warned about their condition and commanded to repent. Even so, the Lord expresses His love for them.

This letter, like the others, closes with the admonition, ***“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”*** Even though the letters are not written to us, we can gain great insight as to what our Lord expects of Summit as His church.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THIS LESSON

1. The condition the brethren at Laodicea: their weaknesses and spiritual blindness, the warnings and promises given.
2. The ease at which a congregation and Christians can become ‘lukewarm’.
3. Does pride prevent a church or a me as a Christian from repenting?
4. What would Jesus command John to write to the angel of Summit?

## LAODICEA

### **The Lord's description of Himself -**

*‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.’*

### **The Lord's faithful reward -**

*‘If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.’*

Like the church at Sardis, Laodicea was complacent. But the Laodiceans seem to also be spiritually arrogant in its self-satisfaction. It was the only church of the seven that the Lord did not commend for anything. Absolutely tragic!

**Revelation 3.15-17** - <sup>15</sup>*I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!* <sup>16</sup>*So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.* <sup>17</sup>*For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*

So begins the Lord's strongly worded rebuke of Laodicea. He knew them. He knew their works. He yearned for Laodicea to be hot or cold and not lukewarm! Laodicea was like someone who is obviously desperately sick and coughing with a very high fever. They insist they are OK and do not need any help or go to the hospital. They do not realize they may be very close to death.

The word 'lukewarm' means 'tepid'. Jesus emphasizes their 'lukewarm' and 'neither hot nor cold' nature three times. Jesus wants nothing to do with them and wants to 'spit them out', as the people of Laodicea would spit out the tepid water that flowed from the aqueducts to their city. Being lukewarm may not mean that the church is half-hearted or is not doing anything, but that its works are missing the power of God, the living waters of Jesus.

Most versions of Revelations 3.16 say that the Lord will 'spit' the Laodiceans out of His mouth. In my opinion, the NKJV has the correct translation of the Greek, which is ἐμέσαι (emesai). The NKJV says the Lord will 'vomit' them out of His mouth. We get our English word 'emit' from the Greek word for 'vomit'. We also get the word 'emetic' from this word. An emetic is a mixture that doctors give a person when they swallow poison. It makes them vomit.

Why was Laodicea lukewarm? The Laodiceans were perhaps being criticized for their 'political correctness' or lack of zeal. The words indicate perhaps an over-confidence in regard to spiritual wealth. They are unable to recognize how spiritually bankrupt they really were. However, the words of Jesus may also be drawing on the worldly wealth of Laodicea. The city was industrious, and according to history, a place of great finance and banking in the province of Phrygia in the Lycos Valley. They were heavily involved in financial transactions of trade in the region. In 60 AD the city was hit by a major earthquake. The city was so wealthy it refused help from Nero and the Roman Empire and rebuilt their city on their own.

Laodicea must have been closely connected with Colossae. The two cities were relatively close to each other. Laodicea is mentioned four times in Paul's letter to the Colossians (Col. 2.1 and 4.13-16). Epaphras may have been instrumental in starting the church at Laodicea. He worked hard to help the churches of Colossae, Laodicea and Hierapolis come to maturity and completeness. (Col. 4.12-13). In writing to the Colossians, Paul sends greetings to them through a Laodicean named Nymphas and the church at his\* house (Col. 4.15). He additionally greets Archippus, who may also be from Laodicea (Col. 4.17), and he instructs the Colossians to exchange his letter with one he has written to the Laodiceans (Col. 4.16).

\*Interesting side note - Translations seem to disagree whether Nymphas/Nympha was a male or female, depending on which translation of Greek is used. One translation simply says 'their house'. 😊

**Revelation 3.17** - <sup>17</sup>*For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.*

The Laodiceans claimed to be rich, blessed and needed nothing. Since the city of Laodicea was wealthy, perhaps they were rich in material things. But, spiritually, the Laodiceans were in a wretched and pitiful condition. They were spiritually blind. This made things even worse since they could not see their condition. Laodicea seemed to be filled with self-deception.

**Revelation 3.18** - <sup>18</sup>*I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.*

However, all is not lost. Jesus implored them to do three things. He counseled them to buy gold from Him to be truly rich and white garments to cover their shame. He also wanted them to buy and apply a salve to their eyes so that they may truly see with spiritual eyes.

**Revelation 3.19** - <sup>19</sup>*Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent.*

The Lord's message to Laodicea is not a message of hopelessness. They needed to be zealous and repent. He is rebuking the Laodiceans for their lukewarm condition and He reaffirms that He loves those who He rebukes and is standing at the door waiting for them to let Him in. Jesus is pleading with them to repent so that they may obtain His grace and be clothed in His righteousness. Although the Laodiceans were in a terrible state, as long as they heeded the Lord's warning and rebuke, then their lukewarm wretchedness can be corrected.

**Revelation 3.20-21** - <sup>20</sup>*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.* <sup>21</sup>*The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.*

Jesus rejects lukewarm Christianity. A lukewarm, complacent church makes Jesus vomit and is repugnant. He spits out this kind of lukewarm spirituality because it makes Him want to throw up, to violently spew, as some commentators have described it. A church with no passion to fight sin, compassion for lost souls or urgency to do the will of Jesus will not last very long. Many congregations may have evangelism programs but may have little passion for saving souls. Many congregations may teach how to be saved but fall short of repenting and teaching against sin.

**Matthew 6.24** - *No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*

**Luke 9.62** - *Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.*

**Mark 4.18-19** - <sup>18</sup>*And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word,* <sup>19</sup>*but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What did the Lord rebuke the church at Laodicea for? (3.15-16)
2. What did the Lord say He would do to them? (3.16)
3. What had they claimed about themselves? What was their true condition? (3.17)
4. What did the Lord plead with them to do? (3.18)
5. Why did the Lord give them such a strong rebuke? (3.19)
6. What did He command them to do? (3.19)
7. What did He say He would do if they heard His voice and obeyed? (3.20-21)

## **THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

1. How easy is it for a Christian to become 'lukewarm'?
2. What would be a scriptural definition of someone or a church that is 'lukewarm'?
3. Why would the Lord prefer that Laodicea was 'cold' and not 'lukewarm'?
4. At what point would the Lord think of Summit as being 'lukewarm'?

# *Earthly Struggles & the Church*

## **CHAPTERS 4 – 11 - OBJECTIVE IN THIS WEEK'S STUDY**

To know and deeply understand that in the face of tribulations and trials, our heavenly Father is in control and promises spiritual protection for us if we are faithful.

## **SUMMARY**

This section covers the period of time from John's vision and until the hour of the destruction of Jerusalem was at hand. It discusses tribulations that would be brought upon the earth and the church during that period of time. But, with God's heavenly decrees, and actions, the church was shown to be protected and not overcome. The section closes with a glimpse of the victory of our Lord Jesus with a proclamation the kingdoms of the earth had come under His dominion.

## **THE EARTHLY STRUGGLE OVER THE CHURCH (CHAPTERS 4-11)**

This section covers the period of time from John's vision until the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. by the Romans.

## **CHAPTER 4**

John was called to come to the throne in heaven where he would see things that would encourage the seven churches.

1. He saw a vision of God sitting on His throne.
2. God was being praised by 24 elders and four creatures around His throne.
3. He saw seven lamps which symbolized the seven Spirits of God. The seven churches would be comforted to know that they were being represented by the seven Spirits in heaven.

## **KEY VERSE**

***4.1 - After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."***

## **CHAPTER 5**

John saw a scroll with writing inside and outside. It contained a description of things that the seven churches would soon see taking place on earth.

1. John was saddened for no one in heaven or on earth was able to open it.
2. But Jesus, "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David," was able to open the scroll, loose its seals, and read it.
3. The 24 elders and the 4 living creatures had bowls of incense, symbolizing prayers of the saints, and they sang a new song praising Jesus for redeeming people throughout the world and for making them kings and priests to God.
4. Millions of angels and every creature in heaven and earth joined in that praise and worship.

## KEY VERSES

**5.9-10** - <sup>9</sup> *And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,"* <sup>10</sup> *and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."*

## CHAPTER 6

Jesus opened the six seals of the scroll one after another. As each seal was opened, the scroll revealed something else that was going to take place shortly. The seven churches would see tribulations that would come upon the earth and sometimes upon them.

1. Seal 1. A white horse came out with a rider that I believe was Jesus. He was going out to conquer or overcome. That would encourage the seven churches. In 19.11 He will be shown on a white horse as the conqueror - the 'KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS'.
2. Seal 2. A rider on a red horse went out to take peace from the earth through a sword.
3. Seal 3. A rider on a black horse went out with scales to portray scarcity on the earth.
4. Seal 4. A rider on a pale horse went out to symbolize death coming on a fourth of the earth.
5. Seal 5. Martyrs slain for the word of God cry out for justice and are told to rest a little longer until more fellow servants and brethren are killed as they were.
6. Seal 6. Great cosmic disturbances occur. Men seek shelter "from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

## KEY POINT

As Jesus opens the seals, God begins to pour out His wrath.

## CHAPTER 7

This chapter answers the question asked in the last verse of chapter 6; "who is able to stand?" It provided encouragement to the seven churches even as it should today to all Christians as they see that God always cares for His people.

1. God's wrath would be held in check until He sealed His servants on their forehead. That seal would spare them from undue tribulations.
2. A total of 144,000 were sealed. Twelve thousand were sealed from 12 tribes of Israel.
  - a. They are described later as those who "were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." (14.4)
  - b. Jews were the firstfruits of Christianity.
  - c. These may be Jewish Christians who were in Jerusalem and Judea when John received the Revelation. They would heed the advice of Jesus in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and Luke 21 to flee when the Roman army began to surround Jerusalem 67 A.D. They would flee to the wilderness to be protected during the 3 1/2 year siege of Judea and Jerusalem as we will see in 12.6, 13-16.
3. Then a great multitude of God's people from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues was seen around God's throne praising Him. These were ones who "come out of the great tribulation" and were in God's presence. Verse 14 seems to indicate that the number was continuing to increase. The Zondervan and Green Interlinear say "coming out of the affliction."

## KEY POINT

The question of the saints in 6.10 is now answered as the Lord sealed the 144,000 Jewish Christians as well as Gentile Christians from all nations from horrible tribulations.

## CHAPTER 8

The seventh seal was opened to disclose terrors that would come on the heavens and earth at the sounding of seven trumpets.

1. Awesome events were about to take place. So there was silence in anticipation of the sounding of the trumpets.
2. But, seven angels offered incense with the prayers of the saints.
3. Then an angel filled a censer with fire from the altar before God and threw it to the earth and there were great physical disturbances on earth.
4. The first trumpet was blown. Earthly vegetation was struck.
5. The second trumpet was blown. The seas were struck.
6. The third trumpet was blown. Fresh waters were struck.
7. The fourth trumpet was blown. The heavens were struck.
8. A banner announcement was made concerning three woes that would come upon the inhabitants of the earth when trumpets five, six and seven would be blown.

## KEY POINT

The smoke of the incense and the prayers of the saints ascend before God from the angel's hand. When the angel takes the censer, fills it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth, the scene appears to suggest that the sounding of the seven trumpets and the things to follow is God's response to the prayers of the saints. This brings to mind Luke 18.7, "*And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?*"

## CHAPTER 9

Trumpets five and six were sounded for the first two woes.

1. The fifth trumpet sounded for the first woe. Locusts were sent on the land just as they were sent on Judea in the book of Joel. (I believe here that they represent the Roman army as it is released on Judea.)
  - a. Here they do not harm vegetation, but, they bring pain on the wicked people.
  - b. The king of the locusts was 'Abaddon' or 'Apollyon' which means 'destruction'. He was the angel king who controlled the release or imprisonment of persecuting forces in a bottomless pit.
2. The sixth trumpet sounded for the second woe that continues through 11.14. Four angels were released at the great river Euphrates.
  - a. They controlled an army of 200 million horsemen who would come across that river as the Assyrians and Babylonians did earlier in the history of the Jews. I believe this is symbolic of the great Roman army. It was composed largely of mercenaries from across the Euphrates River to the north and east. That army would devastate Judea and Jerusalem in 67-70 A.D.
  - b. Many in Judea would be slain by plagues of fire, smoke and brimstone from the mouths of the horses.
  - c. But those people who were not killed would still not repent.

## KEY POINT

In spite of being tormented and having massive armies bear down on them, Judea and Jerusalem would not repent of their idolatry, murders, sorcery or sexual immorality.

## CHAPTER 10

Even when the wicked did not repent when God warned them repeatedly, He still desired none should perish but that they might repent. God gave the wicked another opportunity to repent as John is told to warn the wicked through additional prophecy from a little book.

1. He sees another mighty angel with a little book in his hand.
  - a. The voice of the angel is like seven thunders but John is forbidden to write the things the seven thunders uttered.
2. An angel announces that there will no longer be any delay in the pouring out of God's total wrath when the seventh trumpet is sounded.
3. John ate the little book that was sweet to the taste but bitter in his stomach. The contents of God's word are always sweet, but, John was to prophesy bitterness about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings. The Romans would come to devastate Judea and Jerusalem as we will see.

### KEY POINT

At this point the mighty angel swears by God that there will be no more delay. When the seventh angel sounds his trumpet the mystery of God will be finished, as God declared.

***'that there would be no more delay, but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God would be fulfilled, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.'*** (10.6-7)

## CHAPTER 11

The awesome army was coming through Judea as we saw in chapter 9. Now the attention turns to Jerusalem.

1. An angel was sent with a measuring rod.
  - a. He was to measure the temple of God with the true worshippers in it. True worshippers (Christians) would be protected.
  - b. The rest of the city of Jerusalem would be tread underfoot for 42 months (3 1/2 years - 67-70 A.D.) by the mercenary Gentile army headed by the Romans.
2. Two witnesses would prophesy in Jerusalem for that same period of time, 1,260 days or 42 months or 3 1/2 years. (I believe that the two witnesses represented prophets and saints.)
  - a. A persecuting beast that we will study in later chapters, made war against them and killed them.
  - b. Their bodies would lie in Jerusalem, ***"the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified."***
  - c. Wicked tribes, tongues, and nations would rejoice and forbid their burial for 3 1/2 days.
  - d. But hope was not gone, the witnesses would be resurrected and ascend into heaven.
3. The second woe ended at 11.14 and the third woe was coming quickly.
4. The seventh trumpet sounded in 11.15.
  - a. At that time the kingdoms of the world had become the kingdom of our Lord and Christ.
  - b. Now the 24 elders before the throne of God worshipped and praised Him.
  - c. Then the temple of God was opened in heaven and the ark of the covenant was exposed for all to see. The physical temple in Jerusalem would no longer hold any spiritual significance.



## **KEY POINT**

If John wrote Revelation after the destruction of Jerusalem, then the instruction John was given to measure the temple makes no sense because the temple and altar are portrayed as existing.

## **CONCLUSION**

In Revelation 6.1-2, we saw Jesus riding out to conquer but we saw little of Him after that. We have not yet seen a picture of Him being totally victorious with His people in Revelation 4 through 11. In addition, we have not yet seen a picture of the enemies of God being utterly defeated, although we caught a glimpse of the victory in 11.15-19. However, Jesus is prominent in chapters 12-19. He is pictured in glorious victory with His people in chapter 19 and His enemies are seen as utterly defeated from 16.17 through chapter 19.

Understanding the context of Revelation and to whom and why it was written is key to understanding the purpose of God giving the visions to John. It was written to the seven churches of Asia for encouragement. While the Romans persecuted the church, it was the Jews that continually either persecuted Christians or stirred up the Roman authorities to do their bidding to persecute and kill the faithful.

It is my judgment that Chapter 11 ends with the 3 ½ year siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in progress as noted in 11.2-3. God's triumph is beginning to be seen. So concludes chapters 4 through 11 which describe the church in the middle of earthly struggles while the wrath of God is being poured out in judgment on Judea and Jerusalem.

## **THOUGHT QUESTIONS**

1. If God told John to write what he saw for the seven churches of Asia, what encouragement or knowledge can we gain for our lives today?
2. If John wrote Revelation after the destruction of Jerusalem, what would you think is the meaning of John being told to measure the temple and the altar in 11.1?
3. Why would it be difficult to attribute a vision like the locusts with the power of scorpions to modern day helicopters?
4. If John's visions are meant for us today or for future generations, how would you reconcile John's statement that 'these things must soon take place'?
5. Would persecution hinder or help the work at Summit?

# *Heaven Struggles with Satan*

## **CHAPTERS 12 – 19 - OBJECTIVES IN THIS WEEK’S STUDY**

To know and deeply understand that in the face of tribulations and trials, our heavenly Father is in control and promises spiritual protection for us if we are faithful.

### **SUMMARY**

Revelation chapters 12-19 somewhat parallels chapters 4-11 but with a different perspective. Chapters 4-11 related tribulations and events as they would be perceived by Christians on earth. While many writers believe that this section details judgments against the Roman Empire, it is my belief that chapters 12-19 describe the same type of events as 4-1, but from the perspective of heaven’s struggles against Satan and his followers.

### **HEAVEN'S STRUGGLE WITH SATAN (CHAPTERS 12-19)**

This section does NOT cover a period of time that follows Chapter 11 chronologically. It begins with the birth of Jesus. It ends with the 70 A.D. destruction of Jerusalem and the defeat of Satan's followers.

### **CHAPTER 12**

Four major characters are introduced.

1. A Woman. She represents Zion, true Israel, or Jerusalem above. God prepared a place of safety for her and part of her children in the wilderness. I believe that those children were the Jewish Christians who fled Jerusalem and Judea to the wilderness as Jesus commanded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and Luke 21 when they saw the Roman army coming to destroy Jerusalem.
2. A male Child. He was to rule all nations. Jesus was born of that woman and was eventually caught up to heaven.
3. A great fiery red dragon, Satan. He was foiled in his attempt to kill Jesus at birth. He was foiled again in his attempt to destroy the woman and her children in the wilderness.
4. The angel Michael. A war broke out in heaven between Michael's angels and Satan. Satan was cast to the earth. There was praise in heaven. Christians were able to overcome Satan from that time through the blood of Jesus the Lamb.
  - a. Then Satan went to make war with the rest of her offspring - Jewish and Gentile Christians outside of Judea.
  - b. Note that the "short time" for Satan (12.12), the "one thousand and two hundred and sixty days" (12.6), "a time and times and half a time" (12.14) of the woman, the "forty two months" (11.2) that the Gentiles would tread the holy city, and the "one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (11.3) all correspond to a period of 3 1/2 years. The Roman offensive against Judea began in early 67 A.D. It ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. - 3 1/2 years later. We will see the end of that period at the end of Revelation 19.

## **KEY VERSE**

*12.11 - And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.*

## **CHAPTER 13**

Evil forces are introduced. Two beasts appear and begin to work in partnership with Satan.

1. A beast rises out of the sea (Sea beast). In 17.15, a sea or many waters are said to be "peoples, multitudes, nations and tongues."
  - a. Studying chapters 13 and 17 along with Daniel, my conclusion that this sea beast represents a composite of the persecution powers of seven kingdoms. Five have fallen, one was at the time of John (Roman) and one was still to come.
  - b. The beast was given authority by Satan to continue for "forty-two months" (13.5). This was the same period of 3 1/2 years that we noted above for the assault upon Judea and Jerusalem. This beast will also be taken out of the way at the end of 19.
2. A beast rises out of the earth. (Earth beast)
  - a. It causes the earth and those who dwell on the earth to worship the sea beast.
  - b. It deceptively animates the image of the sea beast so that many worship it.
  - c. It is referred to as the "false prophet" (16.13, 19.20, 20.10).
  - d. It enforces worship of the sea beast. It represents religious persecution.

## **KEY POINT**

The earth beast had power of the saints but did not authority over them the way he had authority over anyone who was not written in the Book of Life.

## **CHAPTER 14**

Righteous forces are seen with Christ.

1. The 144,000 Jews that were sealed in chapter 7 are seen with Him at Jerusalem on Mount Zion. They are there to hear warnings against Jerusalem--spiritual Babylon--and to witness its destruction. They are not on Mount Zion at Jerusalem to see the faraway cities of Rome or Babylon destroyed. They are identified as being those who were redeemed from the earth and as being 'firstfruits to God and to the Lamb.' They are without fault before the throne of God.
2. An angel warns every nation, tribe, tongue, and people 'for the hour of His judgment has come.' Spiritual Babylon, physical Jerusalem, is particularly warned that she is fallen because of wickedness.
3. Another angel warns all those who worship the beast and his image.
4. The earth is seen as harvested for that which is good.
5. Then it is harvested for evil ones, the grapes of wrath, and blood comes out of the winepress.

## **KEY POINT**

Spiritual Babylon, physical Jerusalem always seduced the Romans or any other persecuting power to persecute the saints. Jerusalem's spiritual fornication (harlotry) would bring God's wrath upon her. She would drink that wine of wrath as she had made all nations drink of it.

## **CHAPTER 15**

This chapter is a prelude to the pouring out of seven bowls of plagues or wrath upon the persecutors of the seven churches and all Christians.

1. The seven plagues and seven angels are introduced. God's wrath would be completely poured out in the seven plagues.
2. This brings singing for those who now knew that they were being given the victory over the sea beast and his cohorts.
3. The seven plagues and the seven bowls containing them were issued and no one was able to enter the heavenly temple of God until the plagues were poured out on the earth.

### **KEY VERSE**

*15.1 - Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.*

## **CHAPTER 16**

The seven bowls of plagues are poured out.

1. Bowl 1. Loathsome sores came upon all those who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped him.
2. Bowl 2. The sea was turned to blood and every living creature in it died.
3. Bowl 3. The fresh waters turned to blood. An angel praised God because the evil ones of earth had shed the blood of 'saints and prophets'.
4. Bowl 4. Power was given to the angel to scorch those who blasphemed the name of God, but, they did not repent or give glory to Him.
5. Bowl 5. Darkness and pain was poured out on the throne of the beast and his kingdom of worshippers, but, they blasphemed God and did not repent.
6. Bowl 6. The bowl of the angel was poured out on the River Euphrates and a great army gathered at Armageddon (Megiddo) to attack Jerusalem.
7. Bowl 7. This bowl signified that time was up. God was ready to finish pouring out His complete wrath. 'It is done'. That wrath will be poured on evil Jerusalem. It is described as the great 'Babylon'.

### **KEY POINT**

One cannot try to make literal translation or interpretations of events. We need to understand that this is an apocalyptic vision that was meant to demonstrate to John and the seven churches of Asia of the magnitude of the power of God and of the intensity of His wrath that would soon to be poured out on the oppressors of the saints. We are reading from a book of Revelation and not a book of Concealment.

## **CHAPTER 17**

The mysterious Babylon the Great is described and identified.

1. Babylon the Great is 'that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth'. She is the mother of harlots who is guilty of shedding the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus. She is Jerusalem. Jesus said concerning Jerusalem that upon 'you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth'. (Matthew 23.35) She is shown as one who seduces the sea beast to do the persecution of the Christians of John's time.

2. The sea beast is the persecuting power being directed by the Roman emperors at the time of John. The sea beast is a composite of the persecuting powers of five kings or kingdoms that no longer existed at the time of John plus the persecuting power of the Roman kingdom plus the persecuting power of a kingdom that had not yet come into existence at the time of John. In my judgment, the latter persecuting power would be that of Gog and Magog to be discussed in 20.
3. The seven persecuting kingdoms are represented by seven heads of the sea beast.
4. The horns of the beast represent 10 kings that had no kingdoms but would lend their support as kings with the beast for 'one hour'. They represent 10 mercenary kings that would come across the Euphrates and gather at Armageddon for the attack on Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

### KEY VERSES

**17.5-6** – <sup>5</sup> *And on her forehead was written a name of mystery. "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations."* <sup>6</sup> **And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.**

**Matthew 23.34-38** – (from the seven woes) <sup>31</sup> *Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets.* <sup>32</sup> *Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers.* <sup>33</sup> *You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?* <sup>34</sup> **Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town,** <sup>35</sup> *so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.* <sup>36</sup> *Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.* <sup>37</sup> **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!** <sup>38</sup> **See, your house is left to you desolate.**

**Mathew 27.24-25** – <sup>24</sup> *So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."* <sup>25</sup> *And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"*

### CHAPTER 18

Jerusalem's (spiritual Babylon) fall is described.

1. Heaven gave a decree that 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird'. Jerusalem was doomed to total destruction and abandonment in that 'generation' and in 'one day' as Jesus prophesied it would be in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 17 and Luke 21.
2. The world is shown mourning because the Jews were masters of commerce with the nations. They mourned at the loss of trade with 'that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' Jesus prophesied this in Matthew 24.36 and Mark 13.32.
3. That great city 'shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore'. From the destruction in 70 A.D. until now, there has been no temple in Jerusalem in which to worship. It is still devastated. Why? Because "in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."

## KEY VERSE

**18.23-24** – ‘...for your merchants were the great ones of the earth, and all nations were deceived by your sorcery. <sup>24</sup> And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.’”

## CHAPTER 19

1. There is rejoicing in heaven over the destruction of wicked Jerusalem.
2. The marriage supper of the Lamb and His bride, the continually growing church, is announced. ‘The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’. It had been fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem.
3. Jesus is seen on the white horse that He rode out on in 6.1-2 to conquer. He is victorious over those who condemned Him to death.
4. The armies of heaven are with Him and dressed in white garments that are not suitable for physical battle. But Jesus has won the victory with the sharp sword that comes from His mouth. He strikes the nations with a sword that is sharper than a two-edged sword, the gospel.
5. Jesus is seen as ‘KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.’.
6. A battle ensues with Jesus and the sea beast and the kings of the earth.
7. Jesus wins easily. The sea beast and the earth beast are thrown into ‘the lake of fire burning with brimstone’. The armies of the kings of the earth are killed and the birds eat on their flesh.

## KEY VERSE

**Matthew 22.2-8** - <sup>2</sup> “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup> and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup> Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, “See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.”’ <sup>5</sup> But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup> while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup> The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup> Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy.’”

## CONCLUSION

The end of chapter 19 signified the end of the short period of time that Satan was granted to make war with the saints in 12.12. It was the end of the 42 month, 1,260 day, or 3 ½ year period ordained by God. The harlot was destroyed during that time. Then the sea beast and false prophet met their doom.

Understanding the context of Revelation and to whom and why it was written is key to understanding the purpose of God giving the visions to John. It was written to the seven churches of Asia for encouragement. While the Romans persecuted the church, it was the Jews that continually either persecuted Christians or stirred up the Roman authorities to do their bidding to persecute and kill the faithful.

It is my judgment that we will see in chapter 20 that Satan is cast into the bottomless pit and his ability to deceive the nations is halted for symbolic long period of time, one thousand years. Then he will be released to gather a great force only to be utterly destroyed by fire from God.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What's the most powerful message you can glean from God's victory?
2. If you think the harlot called 'Babylon the Great' does not represent Jerusalem and the Jews, who or what do you think she represents?
3. Various recorded histories indicate that Christians fled Jerusalem as the Roman armies first approached and then pulled back. Why do you suppose that happened?
4. What would the effect be to a devout Jew to survive the destruction of Jerusalem but knowing the temple and sacrificial system was gone?
5. Are Christians prosecuted today? Why?

# Judgment Day & A Glorious Church

## CHAPTERS 20 – 22 - OBJECTIVE IN THIS WEEK'S STUDY

To know and deeply understand that in the face of tribulations and trials, our heavenly Father is in control and promises spiritual protection for us if we are faithful.

### SUMMARY

These chapters show what happens at the end of time and describes the beautiful glorious church.

### JUDGMENT DAY (CHAPTER 20)

It is my judgment that chapter 20 follows chapter 19 chronologically. It follows the destruction of Jerusalem and the defeat of Satan. It begins with the binding of Satan for a symbolic period of 1,000 years. It extends to the end of time and the final judgment.

### CHAPTER 20

Previous chapters have shown the defeat of powers used by Satan to persecute God's people. One by one, we have seen the fall of Jerusalem which is spiritual Babylon, the beast, the false prophet, and the armies they had gathered. What about Satan himself, the dragon who gave authority to the beast in his efforts to wage war against the saints (13.1-7)? In addition, what of those killed by the followers of Satan?

*20.1-3 – <sup>1</sup>Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup>And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, <sup>3</sup>and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.*

Satan was cast into the bottomless pit for a very long period of time symbolized by 1,000 years. He could no longer *deceive* the nations through Jerusalem, the false prophet, and the persecuting power of the sea beast. Peter said that our adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5.8). I am convinced that while he can still tempt us, Satan does not have the fearsome power he previously had before he was cast into the pit. I am also persuaded that Satan is now a toothless lion that makes a lot of noise. What power does he have over me? He has none, unless I give in to temptations. If I resist him, he will flee (James 4.7). Satan is chained and imprisoned, but has not yet been cast into hell.

*20.4-6 – <sup>4</sup>Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup>The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup>Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*



The binding of Satan for a 1,000 years shows a long period of time in which Satan is no longer able to deceive the nations as he did during the time of the Roman Empire (20.3). It began following the end of Roman persecution and would continue for some time in the future. During the 1,000 years, John sees souls reigning with Christ, those beheaded for their faithfulness to Jesus and the word of God. Scripture does not say they reign on the earth, so my conclusion is that they reign with Christ in heaven during the 1000 years (2.26-27; 3.21). We know that those who had been beheaded for their testimony of Jesus are 'blessed and holy' (20. 6)! Some teach they are anyone who had been resurrected in the 'first resurrection' as they became Christians. We do know they will not be harmed by the 'second death' (20.6) at the Judgment Day.

***A note on the 1,000 year reign.*** Many people teach and believe that Jesus will return and physically reign on earth for a thousand years. Scripture does not support that teaching and I do not accept it. The teaching and believe usually also includes the rebuilding of the physical temple with the Levitical temple worship along with the reinstatement of the Law of Moses and the sacrificial system. Some even teach that mankind will be given a 'second chance' to accept Jesus as Lord during a physical 1,000 year reign from the temple. We know that Jesus Himself said He came to fulfill the Law (Matthew 5.17). To keep the Law means to fall from grace (Galatians 5.4). ***To reinstate the Law of Moses essentially nullifies the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and the saving power of His shed blood for our sins. Truly, this teaching says the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and His spilled blood was unnecessary! BEWARE OF TEACHINGS THAT REMOVES THE SACRIFICE OF OUR LORD!***

*20.7-10 – <sup>7</sup>And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison <sup>8</sup>and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. <sup>9</sup>And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, <sup>10</sup>and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

If any section of Revelation teaches about the end of time prior to the Lord's final return, I believe it to be this one. The description is brief, for the book was written for the benefit of Christians in Asia Minor about things to shortly come to pass (1.1- 4; 22.6,10). Those Christians would not experience this last attempt of Satan. But to assure them (and us!) that Satan would ultimately be defeated, we have the description found in these few verses (7-10).

At some point, God will allow Satan to be released from his prison in the bottomless pit. Satan goes to deceive Gog and Magog. This persecuting power would be composed of the nations from the four corners of the earth - the absolute largest force that could be imagined. (Gog and Magog represented such a force in Ezekiel 39.) In my judgment, this was the kingdom that was 'the other has not yet come'. When he comes, he must continue 'a short time' (17.10). This persecuting power will certainly last for just a short time. As soon as it surrounds 'the camp of the saints and the beloved city' - New Jerusalem - God sent a devouring fire to consume that seemingly invincible power. So the devil is cast into the lake of fire where the sea beast and the false prophet were previously thrown. This is certainly the only kingdom mentioned in Revelation that followed the Roman kingdom. I believe it will be a time when the whole world is rising up to destroy the Lord's kingdom, His body the church. I will not speculate about who will be involved or when this will all happen.

**20.11-15** – <sup>11</sup>*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them.* <sup>12</sup>*And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done.* <sup>13</sup>*And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done.* <sup>14</sup>*Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.* <sup>15</sup>*And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

The chapter closes with a description of the final judgment. Before the great white throne and Him who sat on it, all the dead are judged. Books are opened, including the book of life, and judgment is based on what the dead had done in life. None escape the judgment, for the sea, Death, and Hades give up all the dead that are in them. Death and Hades are cast into the lake and fire, described as the “second death”. All not written in the Book of Life are also cast into the lake of fire (11-15).

### **KEY POINT**

Our Heavenly Father is an awesome and holy God. While He abounds in love, He is also righteous and just when He judges. We must never, ever treat sin lightly and continually humble ourselves to seek grace and mercy for forgiveness.

### **A GLORIOUS CHURCH**

This section does **NOT** follow Chapter 20 chronologically. It speaks of the church as it was in the time of John's writing and would continue to grow and exist.

### **CHAPTER 21-22.5**

John sees a vision of New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. It is not heaven that was coming down. God's faithful is described in terms that provided the greatest meaning and encouragement to the people that John was told to write to.

1. It is not seen touching earth at the time that John saw the vision. Old physical Jerusalem had not been destroyed yet at the time John wrote the vision. New Jerusalem would be the spiritual replacement of physical Jerusalem.
  - a. John wrote that the one on the throne said that the portion of sinners ‘**will** be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death’. The wording is future, not past tense. The judgment of chapter 20 had not happened yet (21.8).
2. The city is seen as coming to dwell with men on earth. It is seen as being made up of God's faithful people from all time.
3. God said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ (21.5) Make is present tense, not past tense nor future tense. It was a continuing process. The kingdom of heaven is seen to be growing.
4. The great city, the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven is called ‘the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’
5. The gates have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. The foundations have the names of the twelve apostles. I believe the city represents God's people, spiritual Israel.
6. The city is also called a beautiful city composed of precious materials and is absolutely massive being 12,000 stadia width, length and height, or about 1,380 miles on every side.
7. God and the Lamb are its temple and its light. They are shown to be dwelling with their people, the church, New Jerusalem.

8. The gates of the city are not shut night or day. Anyone is free to leave it. But only the undefiled may enter it - those written in the Lamb's book of life.
9. John is shown a pure river of water of life and the tree of life. Those in New Jerusalem have access to continual spiritual nourishment and healing.

**John 4.13** - <sup>13</sup>Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

**John 6.35** - <sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

**Matthew 11.28-29** - <sup>28</sup>Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

## **THE GLORY OF OUR LORD REVEALED**

This section does **NOT** follow the previous section chronologically but returns to the time in which John was receiving the vision.

### **CHAPTER 22.6-21**

The visions were coming to a close and pointed forward to when Jesus would come at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. With a reminder of the blessedness of those who obey His commandments, Jesus, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star, declares that He sent His angel to testify of these things to the churches. The Spirit and the bride join in with an invitation to let those who thirst come to drink of the water of life freely. John was reminded of '**the things which must shortly take place**' (22.6) because Jesus was '**coming quickly**' (22.7, 12, 20) for '**the time is at hand.**' (22.10) John responded with, '**Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**' Revelation ends with a fearful warning not to add to or take away from the book, a final promise of the Lord's coming, and a two-fold prayer calling for the Lord Jesus to come, and for His grace to be with all the brethren (6-21).

## **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

My views of Revelation are tied to what I see are internal evidences in scripture that it was written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem. For me, it is the only way to see all the parts fit together as a whole. Once again, here are the parts I see in Revelation.

- 1 – Chapter 1 - The Glory of Our Lord Revealed (beginning)
- 2 – Chapters 2-3 - Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia
- 3 – Chapters 4-11 - Earthly Struggles & the Church
- 4 – Chapters 12-19 - Heaven Struggles with Satan
- 5 – Chapter 20 - Judgment Day
- 6 – Chapters 21-22.5 - A Glorious Church
- 7 – Chapter 22.6-21 - The Glory of Our Lord Revealed (ending)

Filled with figurative and symbolic language, Revelation has been greatly abused by many who have tried to interpret it, especially by those who take the futuristic approach to the book. I am persuaded the key to understanding Revelation properly is to let the first three chapters set the context in which the book should be interpreted.

**In those chapters we learn these things in John's visions and writings.**

It was intended to be understood (a revealing) (1.1).

It could be understood even by an individual reading to a public audience (1.1).

It was about things that would soon take place, not thousands of years later (1.1,3; 22.6,10).

It is filled with signs and symbols, likely clearly understood by the original readers (1.1).

It was addressed to seven specific churches in Asia, so any interpretation must first be applicable to those churches and their times (1.4,11; 2.1-3.22).

It was written to churches who had already experienced persecution from unbelieving Jerusalem and pagan Rome, with more to come (2.9-10,13).

**The theme of the book is clear.**

Jesus is coming to judge! He now reigns as King of kings and Lord of lords! (1.5,7; 11.15; 17.14).

His coming judgment(s) as depicted in Revelation involve judging churches (1-3), unbelieving Jerusalem (Rev 4-11), Satan and his followers (Rev 12-19), Judgment Day (Rev 20).

Efforts to interpret the book should give special attention to clarifying statements found throughout the book like these.

“...where also our Lord was crucified” (11.8) - identifies the city being judged in the first half of the book as Jerusalem.

At some point Satan will be released once more to deceive the nations in a last attempt to destroy the church (20.7-10). If we are living at that time, let us never forget a key passage.

*17.4 - These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.*

Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

# ***A People of the Book***

## ***8-Year Curriculum***

	January - March	April - June	July - September	October - December
2007	<i><b>Matthew</b></i>	<i><b>Genesis</b></i>	<i><b>Galatians &amp; Ephesians</b></i>	<i><b>Isaiah</b></i>
2008	<i><b>Exodus</b></i>	<i><b>I &amp; II Timothy, Titus</b></i>	<i><b>Hebrews</b></i>	<i><b>Minor Prophets I (Hosea-Obadiah)</b></i>
2009	<i><b>Mark</b></i>	<i><b>Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy</b></i>	<i><b>Romans</b></i>	<i><b>Jeremiah &amp; Lamentations</b></i>
2010	<i><b>I &amp; II Thessalonians</b></i>	<i><b>Joshua, Judges, Ruth</b></i>	<i><b>James, I &amp; II Peter</b></i>	<i><b>Minor Prophets II (Jonah-Habakkuk)</b></i>
2011	<i><b>Luke</b></i>	<i><b>I &amp; II Samuel</b></i>	<i><b>I Corinthians</b></i>	<i><b>Daniel</b></i>
2012	<i><b>Acts</b></i>	<i><b>Special Study: The Foundations (Psalm 11:3)</b></i>	<i><b>Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther</b></i>	<i><b>Minor Prophets III (Zephaniah-Malachi)</b></i>
2013	<i><b>Gospel of John, I, II, &amp; III John</b></i>	<i><b>Job</b></i>	<i><b>Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon</b></i>	<i><b>Psalms</b></i>
2014	<i><b>Philippians, Colossians, Philemon &amp; Jude</b></i>	<i><b>Kings &amp; Chronicles</b></i>	<i><b>Revelation</b></i>	<i><b>Ezekiel</b></i>
2015	<i><b>II Corinthians</b></i>			

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