

The Revelation of Jesus Christ



The Triumph of the Suffering Church

By Paul R. Blake

FORWARD

I began writing this study on the Book of Revelation in 1981 while I was sharing a pulpit as a boy preacher with Almon Williams at the Castle Heights church of Christ in Tampa, FL. I had not turned twenty-one when the brethren asked Almon to teach a class on Revelation. He told them that he had a number of matters that needed his attention and recommended that they ask me. I accepted, not knowing how large an undertaking I had just accepted. I asked for eight months to study and arrange the class material to my satisfaction. Thirty years later, I am still not completely satisfied. This work has undergone five revisions over the years; each time I teach this class, I modify, edit, and expand the lessons.

However, I am nearing the limit of my willingness to update this study and now approaching the point where I am ready to have it published. I have every intention of releasing it for publication eventually, but after a number of requests from fellow disciples, I am posting this pdf encrypted version of it for your own personal studies. **I ask that you do not copy and distribute this lesson book.**

I have included the list of resources I used over the years in study and preparation of these lessons on Revelation. As I was producing this material for local use, I did not integrate MLA citations. However, to be fair I believe it is necessary to recognize those sources that influenced my thinking and writing on The Revelation over the past thirty years. This list is included at the end of the forward.

Let us not pretend that disagreement does not exist among good brethren regarding the date of writing for the book of Revelation. Honorable and serious Bible students have come to different conclusions regarding when it was written, whether in the late sixties AD or in the early to mid-nineties AD. Accommodatively speaking, precision in the date of writing means little to most readers of scripture; however, a thirty year difference in the time when Revelation was written has a significant impact on how one understands the prophecies in that book. If the book was written in the late sixties, then the prophecies would seem to be Jerusalem-centric in application and meaning. If the book was written in the nineties, then it seems clear that Rome is the most likely focus of John's prophecies.

After considerable study of Revelation and books written about it by devout men who take the Rome-centric view, I found myself struggling more and more with trying to fit the square peg of Rome into the round hole of Revelation prophecy, so to speak. It was not until I shifted my thinking of the date of writing nearly thirty years earlier that it began to make more sense. The Jerusalem-centric applications of Revelation prophecy seemed not only to harmonize well with the events of the first century, but appeared to resonate better with Old Testament prophecy than the Rome-centric view. Hence, this study pursues an understanding of the prophecies of Revelation from the early date, Jerusalem-centric perspective.

In addition, after carefully and objectively examining both of the modified preterist views of Revelation (early date Jerusalem centric vs. late date Rome centric), I discovered that both views of the book support the theme and message John was inspired to deliver. There is no significant difference to disciples today when it comes to applying the principles delivered to us in the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The Lord and His Church will triumph over all enemies, spiritual and secular.

At the same time, I have been gravely troubled by the attitudes of a few advocates of both the early and late date views. While I find nothing objectionable or potentially harmful to the faith in either view, I do see behaviors that could possibly sunder brethren. This ought not to be. Charges made by some "early daters" that one cannot understand the Bible if he doesn't accept the early date are unfounded, unhelpful, and ungodly. Equally sinful is the spirit that motivates a few militant "late

daters” to charge those who disagree with them with ignorance, some even attempting to attach the stench of the 70 AD heresy to them. In point of fact, I find myself quite well equipped to answer Realized Eschatology as a result of an early date viewpoint.

Please be a good steward of the time the Lord has given us in this world and do not waste it fussing over non issues. Let’s spend our time constructively by seeking souls for Christ and confronting the Adversary when he attempts to steal them away from the Kingdom of our Dear Lord. I offer this study with the hope that it will stimulate thinking, generate Bible discussions, and edify disciples everywhere regardless of when they believe the book was written.

THIS AUTHOR GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE FOLLOWING SOURCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS STUDY:

The Bible
 The Book of Revelation, Foy E. Wallace, Jr.
 The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets, Arthur M. Ogden
 St. John's Revelation, Lenski
 Revelation, John T. Hinds
 A Commentary on Revelation, Homer Hailey
 Worthy Is the Lamb, Ray Summers
 Revelation: A Message from Patmos, Weldon Warnock
 The Revelation, Eerdman's Pulpit Commentary
 God's Prophetic Word, Foy E. Wallace, Jr.
 The Twelve Minor Prophets, George L. Robinson
 The Minor Prophets, Homer Hailey
 A Commentary on Isaiah, Homer Hailey
 The Fourfold Gospel, J. W. McGarvey
 Commentaries on Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John, Eerdman's Pulpit Commentary
 Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament
 Vine's Expository Dictionary
 Hendrikson's Interlinear Bible
 The New Bible Dictionary, Tyndale Press
 The Works of Flavius Josephus
 The History of The Jews, Chaim Potok
 Ecclesiastical History, Eusebius
 Executable Outlines by Mark Copeland

RECOMMENDED READING LIST FOR THIS STUDY

The Book of Revelation
 Isaiah 1, 6, 13, 40, 66
 Ezekiel 16, 22, 23, 37
 Daniel 2, 11, 12
 Zechariah 12, 14
 Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21

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Lesson One: The Revelation of Jesus Christ, The Triumph of the Suffering Church

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

I. THE VISIONS OF TRUTH - 1:1 - 3:22

- A. Introduction and Salutation - 1:1-8
- B. Vision of the glorious Son of Man - 1:9-20
- C. Letters to the seven churches of Asia - 2:1 - 3:22
 - 1. Ephesus, strong, but unloving - 2:1-7
 - 2. Smyrna, persecuted & poor, yet pleasing to the Lord - 2:8-11
 - 3. Pergamos, trying to please everyone - 2:12-17
 - 4. Thyatira, tolerating sin and corruption - 2:18-29
 - 5. Sardis, an empty shell of religion - 3:1-6
 - 6. Philadelphia, a new name for faithfulness - 3:7-13
 - 7. Laodicea, neither cold nor hot - 3:14-22

II. THE VISION OF THE CONQUERING CHRIST - 4:1 - 11:19

- A. The Great Throne Vision - 4:1 - 5:14
- B. The opening of the seven seals - 6:1 - 8:6
 - 1. First seal; conqueror on a white horse - 6:1-2
 - 2. Second seal; warmonger on a red horse - 6:3-4
 - 3. Third seal; famine on a black horse - 6:5-6
 - 4. Fourth seal; death on a pale horse - 6:7-8
 - 5. Fifth seal; plea of the martyred - 6:9-11
 - 6. Sixth seal; upheaval among governments - 6:12 - 7:17
 - a. Sealing of Israel - 7:1-17
 - 7. Seventh seal; silence and thunder - 8:1-6
- C. The blasts from seven trumpets - 8:7 - 11:19
 - 1. First trumpet; an attack on plant life - 8:7
 - 2. Second trumpet; an attack on salt water life - 8:8-9
 - 3. Third trumpet; an attack on fresh water life - 8:10-11
 - 4. Fourth trumpet; an attack on the sky - 8:12-13
 - 5. Fifth trumpet; an attack by locusts - 9:1-12
 - 6. Sixth trumpet; an attack on 1/3 of humankind - 9:13 - 11:14
 - a. The interlude of the bittersweet book - 10:1-11
 - b. The death and resurrection of two witnesses - 11:1-14
 - 7. Seventh trumpet; the triumphant Christ - 11:15-19

III. THE VISION OF THE VICTORIOUS CHURCH - 12:1 - 22:5

- A. The vision of the woman, child, & dragon - 12:1-17
- B. The vision of the beast from the sea - 13:1-10
- C. The vision of the beast from the land - 13:11-18
- D. The vision of the 144,000 - 14:1-5
- E. The fall of Babylon - 14:6-13
- F. Visions of harvest - 14:14-20
 - 1. Harvesting the earth - 14:14-16
 - 2. Harvesting the grapes of wrath - 14:17-20
- G. The bowls of judgment - 15:1 - 16:21
 - 1. Judgment from heaven's perspective - 15:1 - 16:1
 - 2. First bowl; disgusting lesions - 16:2
 - 3. Second bowl; a sea of coagulated blood - 16:3
 - 4. Third bowl; bloody drinking water - 16:4-7

5. Fourth bowl; scorching sun - 16:8-9
6. Fifth bowl; suffering in darkness - 16:10-11
7. Sixth bowl; preparation for battle - 16:12-16
8. Seventh bowl; unparalleled upheaval - 16:17-21
- H. The scarlet woman and her beast - 17:1-18
- I. The fall of Babylon the Great - 18:1 - 19:10
 1. The vision of plagues - 18:1-8
 2. The vision of worldly sorrow - 18:9-19
 3. The vision of emptiness - 18:20-24
 4. The vision of heavenly rejoicing - 19:1-10
- J. Scenes of Triumph - 19:11 - 20:15
 1. The triumph of Christ - 19:11-16
 2. The defeat of the beast - 19:17-21
 3. The victory over Satan - 20:1-10
 4. The vision of heavenly rejoicing - 19:1-10
- K. All things made new - 21:1 - 22:5
 1. The new Jerusalem - 21:1-8
 2. The bride, the Lamb's wife, the great city, the holy Jerusalem the glorious church - 21:9-27
 3. The river of life - 22:1-5

IV. CONFIRMATION OF THE VISIONS - 22:6-21

- A. Invitations, authentications, warnings, promises

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Revelation. The name calls to mind a thousand images, many in severe conflict with one another. Some Bible class teachers fear to examine the book, believing it too difficult and controversial. In addition, Satan has been active in developing within humankind the hunger for the unknown and the occult.

Why does Revelation cause so much doubt, fear, and digression? It is a beautifully inspired book about the triumph of Christ over Satan, of the church over oppressors, and of good over evil. Revelation bears a great deal of similarity to the books of the major prophets of the Old Testament, in that it pronounces woes on the enemies of God's people and speaks of the ultimate triumph of the righteous. It is the Revelation of Jesus Christ given to John who wrote it down verbatim for the benefit of God's suffering children, no more and no less. When one studies an Old Testament prophet, he accepts the prophetic language, figurative speech, and symbolism as something that can be interpreted by examining the fulfillment of the prophecy. One does not fear studying Isaiah or Ezekiel even though both abound with apocalyptic terms. If he were to study Revelation as if it were simply another book of prophecy, the fear and doubt would be eased. This author makes no pretense of having all of the answers to the prophecies of the Revelation, nor is it suggested that a study of this book will be as easy as a study of Philipians or John. What is asserted:

- 1) Revelation can be understood, and its symbolic language interpreted in light of Old Testament prophecy.
- 2) Commentaries, histories, and other study aids on Revelation can be helpful, but the ultimate authority on the book is what is written therein.
- 3) The book fills a legitimate and necessary place in the New Testament. It is inspired by God and answers a need of Christians then and now.
- 4) It is acceptable to say, "I don't know the answer to that question." With continued study and growth, one can learn the answers to difficult matters; however, it is

both honest and humble to ask for help. This author will not hesitate to admit his own limits in this area.

5) Revelation, as a part of the Bible, will not contradict, nor be in conflict nor be inconsistent with any other part of Holy Writ. If one should find an inconsistency, the problem lies with his understanding of the text and not with the text itself.

THE NAME OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"Apokalupsis 'Iaesou Xristou," or "the revelation of Jesus Christ," make up the first words of the book of Revelation. The word apokalupsis translates as revelation or vision, and the vision of this book belongs to Jesus Christ, given to Him by His Father. It is not "The Revelation of St. John," nor is it Revelations (plural). Actually, the author of this book is God, given through Jesus Christ, who sent His messenger to John, who in turn penned down the words for posterity.

THE INSPIRED WRITER OF REVELATION

Although some scholars might dispute it, John claimed to have written this revelation of Jesus Christ. A word for word translation of Revelation 1:1: "A revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him to show the slaves of Him things which it behooves to occur with speed, and He signified sending through the angel of Him to the slave of Him, John." John names himself, "I, John," on three other occasions in the text of Revelation (1:9, 21:2, 22:8). As the text is the final authority, John is necessarily the author. Based on the similarities in writing style of the Gospel according to John, 1John, 2John, 3John, and Revelation, it can be assumed to be the same John.

THE DATE OF WRITING FOR REVELATION

Much has been written over the years concerning the date of the writing of the book of Revelation. Two dates stand out as the focus of the dissension: the end of the reign of Domitian at 96 AD, and the end of the reign of Nero at 64 AD. The evidence for the 96 AD date depends heavily on the opinions of scholars and historians. For example:

1) Irenaeus, a church historian of the second century, is said to have spoken with Polycarp who is said to have spoken with John who is said to have told Polycarp of the apocalypse during the reign of Domitian.

2) Some scholars do not believe the apostasies in the churches of Asia had appeared before the reign of Domitian.

3) Some historians do not believe that emperor worship appeared until the reign of Domitian.

4) Some scholars do not believe that the persecution under Nero was as severe as that under Domitian's regime. To be fair, most historians and scholars accept the 96 AD date as the time of writing for Revelation.

However, the internal textual evidence is in conflict with many of these historians. The issue of whether the book was written at the earlier or the latter date has a great deal of bearing on both the question of what the prophecies mean, and when the prophecies were to be fulfilled. Consider the following methods of interpreting Revelation:

1) The Futurist Method -- all prophecies have yet to be fulfilled. The book of Revelation is a foretelling of future world calamities before the end of the world.

2) The Continuous-Historical Method -- states that the book of Revelation is a forecast in symbols of the history and future of the church. The central theme is the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church.

3) The Philosophy of History Method -- there is no historical fulfillment of Revelation. It is simply a list of principles that illustrate every age of man.

4) The Preterist Method -- states that all events in Revelation occurred within the first hundred years of its writing.

5) The Historical Background Method -- the book of Revelation had application only for the people of the first century. It is not possible for the modern person to understand it because he or she did not live back then. Therefore, one interpretation is as good as another.

Each of these methods has its strengths and weaknesses. However, the truth does not lie at the extremes of human beliefs and position; the truth is where God put it, in His word. The following evidences support the likelihood that Revelation was written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem:

1) The Syriac Version of the New Testament contains the date 68 AD, before the destruction of Jerusalem.

2) The distinctive Hebrew style of Revelation, written by John (Hebrew background) to Christians of a Hebrew background using Hebrew symbology, indicates the direction that the interpretation of this book must take.

3) Robert Young, author of Young's Analytical Concordance, stated: "It was written in Patmos about 68 AD, whither John had been banished by Domitius Nero."

4) The mistakes of early historians Sulpicius and Orosius in thinking Domitius Nero was Domitian.

5) According to William Hurte of Scotland: "That John saw these visions in the reign of Nero, and that they were written by him during his banishment by that emperor, is confirmed by Theophylact, Andreas, Arethas, and others. We judge, therefore, that this book was written about 68 AD, and this agrees with other facts of history. There are also several statements in this book which can only be understood on the ground that judgment upon Jerusalem was then future."

6) All of the scholars who assign the Domitian date of writing express uncertainty, admitting that some of the internal evidence is in conflict with the later date.

7) The ambiguity of Irenaeus' statement makes it impossible to determine whether Polycarp saw John or the apocalypse in 96 AD.

8) The tremendous amount of persecution suffered by Christians (2:10, 3:10, 6:9). The Neronian persecution was unprecedented.

9) The boldness and prominence of Jews. Following the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews were few and self-effacing.

10) The immediacy of the language in Revelation (1:1-3). Phrases like "at hand" or "shortly come to pass" mean just what they say (Matt. 3:2, 4:17, 26:45; John 2:13, 7:2, 11:55). In the original text, "shortly come to pass" translates literally as: "things which it behooves to occur with speed."

11) The exhortation to read, hear, and keep indicates the impending nature of these events; this closely parallels the Lord's warnings of Matthew 24.

12) The persecution of and opposition to the church by Jewish authorities. They were afraid to raise their heads after 70 AD (2:9, 3:9).

13) The activities of Judaizers in 2:1-6, 11:13. After the destruction of Jerusalem, Judaizers were nearly non-existent.

14) The definite existence of a Jewish state (6:1-17, 9:1-21).

15) The temple of Herod was still standing (11:1-19).

16) The implication that other apostles may have been alive and preaching (2:2). If John had written Revelation in 96 AD, all of the other apostles would have been dead.

17) The time of John's writing was assigned to the sixth emperor (17:10-12. 1 - Julius, 2 - Augustus, 3 - Tiberius, 4 - Caligula, 5 - Claudius, 6 - Nero; Nero's reign covered 54-68 AD).

18) The existence of only seven churches in Asia sets the date before the destruction of Jerusalem (1:4-11). In 60 AD, the cities of Colosse and Heiropolis were destroyed by an earthquake, never to be rebuilt. The inhabitants moved to Laodicea which was only a few miles away and was rebuilt. Following the destruction of Jerusalem, there were numerous churches in Asia due to the scattering of Christians from Palestine. It is believed that the church in Ephesus died out of existence by 95 AD.

19) The expressions used in the letters to the churches indicate that they personally would see the events described.

- a) "He that overcometh" indicates imminent trials of faith.
- b) "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer."
- c) "Ye shall have tribulation..."
- d) "Be thou faithful until death. . ."
- e) 3:10 - The personal promise to protect the church at Philadelphia in the trials they would face.

20) John was told that he would preach Revelation before various nations (10:11). However, Jerome testified concerning John in 92 AD that he was so weak, aged, and infirm that "he was with difficulty carried into the church and could speak only a few words to the people." Such a preaching schedule would have been impossible.

21) Various allusions to parts of Revelation in Galatians and Hebrews indicates that it was written before these books.

22) The reference to Jerusalem as the apostate harlot calling her a once faithful city turned harlot identifies her as the Babylon of the apocalypse (Rev. 17:5; Isa. 1:21; Ez. 16, 22, 23; 1Peter 5:13) (the actual city of Babylon was no longer in existence, and Peter had never been in Rome; Rome was never referred to as "the once faithful city").

23) Parallels between Revelation and Zechariah, who speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1-2, 12:1-2).

24) If the 96 AD date is accurate, why would John, writing to mostly Gentile Christians, use Hebrew symbology? Only those of a primarily Jewish heritage would profit from the coded language. Note the references to Israel in the seven letters.

25) Parallels to the Lord's prophecies concerning the fall of Jerusalem in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 indicate that Revelation speaks to the same era.

- a) Matt. 24:34 - Rev. 1:1
- b) Matt. 24:21 - Rev. 7:14
- c) Matt. 24:2 - Rev. 11:8
- d) Matt. 24:16-21 - Rev. 12:6
- e) Matt. 24:7-8 - Rev. 6, 18:8
- f) Matt. 24:31 - Rev. 11:15
- g) Others in Mark 13 & Luke 21

26) In Matthew 24:14 and Colossians 1:6,23, Jesus said that the Gospel would be preached in the whole world and then the end would come. Paul said that by 63 AD, the Gospel had been preached in the whole world. The stage was set for the fall of Jerusalem.

27) The warnings of Revelation are given to the original recipients of the book. Phrases like "at hand," "shortly come to pass, come quickly, et cetera, demonstrate this. Would the recipients be warned in this manner if the events were hundreds of years in the future?

- a) Matt. 3:2 - John the Baptist preached that the Kingdom is at hand. Three years later it came into being.
- b) Matt. 4:17 - Jesus preached the same thing, and it came to pass in the same manner.

- c) Matt. 26:45 - Jesus told His disciples that the hour of His death was at hand. The next morning He was crucified.
- d) 2Tim. 4:6 - Paul said his departure was at hand. One year later he was executed by Nero.
- e) John himself used this phrase to mean the immediate future (John 2:13, 7:2, 11:55).

28) The parallel between the "coming of the Lord" in Matthew 24 and in Revelation. Connotations of "the coming of the Lord" in the Bible:

- a) His birth - Gen. 49:10; Matt. 2:6; Rom. 11:26
- b) His second coming - Acts 1:11; Heb. 9:28
- c) To His chosen apostles through the Spirit - John 14, 15, 16
- d) To the coming of His kingdom on Pentecoste - Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1
- e) To a Christian at his passing from life - Psalm 23:4; 1Cor. 1:7-8
- f) To the end of time - 1Cor. 11:26; 1Thes. 4:15
- g) To the last judgment - Matt. 25:30-31; 2Thes. 1:6-10
- h) To the destruction of Jerusalem - Zech. 14:1-2; Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27; Matt. 26:64
- i) Bringing rewards and judgments to the scenes described in Revelation and to the letters to seven churches of Asia - Rev. 2:5,16,25, 3:3,11,20

To assign any other date to this book, or to give it any other meaning than the coming end of the Jewish order (Heb. 8:13) and the triumph of Christ and His Church would invite speculation on a grand scale. It is possible that so many have difficulty understanding this book and struggle for answers in the fight against doctrinal error is because they have weakened their reasoning by assuming that Revelation is talking about the Roman Empire, Russia, the United States, the European Common Market, the Catholic Church, or some other equally complex viewpoint.

THE SYMBOLOGY OF REVELATION

The word of God is ever consistent; even prophetic language and symbols remain consistent from the beginning to the end of the Bible. This is a genuine boon to the student of the book of Revelation. A knowledge of Old Testament prophecy reveals the meaning of New Testament prophecies. There are numerous similarities between the prophetic utterances in scripture.

- 1) Isaiah's vision of the throne - Isa. 6 - Rev. 4
- 2) Ezekiel's vision of the creatures - Ez. 10 - Rev. 4
- 3) The valley of dry bones - Ez. 37 - Rev. 19
- 4) The kingdom that would stand forever - Dan. 2 - Rev. 11
- 5) New heaven and earth - Isa. 66 - Rev. 21
- 6) Multi-colored horses - Zech. 1 - Rev. 6
- 7) Measuring Jerusalem - Zech. 2 - Rev. 11
- 8) The ruling priest/king - Zech. 6 - Rev. 5
- 9) Siege and fall of Jerusalem - Zech. 14 - Rev. 14
- 10) Vision of the Holy City - Zech. 14 - Rev. 21
- 11) Vision of seven golden candlesticks - Zech. 14 - Rev. 1
- 12) Vision of living waters - Zech. 13 - Rev. 22

GENERAL SYMBOLS

- 1) Air - refers to life and influence; Eph. 2:1
- 2) Earth - place of nations; Palestine
- 3) Earthquakes - the shaking up of nations; upheaval and conflict

- 4) Sea - Society in general; tossed sea - troubled society; calm sea - peaceful society
- 5) Heaven - existing governments, authorities, and dominions; official positions
- 6) Stars - designations for rulers and government officials
- 7) Wars - states of hostility between nations
- 8) Colors - conditions:
 - a) White - purity or righteousness
 - b) Black - distress or calamity
 - c) Red - war or bloodshed
 - d) Pale - aura of death
 - e) Purple - royalty or luxury
 - f) Emerald - Divine grace, mercy, patience, and goodness
- 9) Beasts - various persecuting powers
- 10) Calamities, pestilences, and famine - various persecutions
- 11) Altars - martyrdom
- 12) Armageddon - a metaphor of the conflict between pagan powers and the church
- 13) Sun - A king of importance
- 14) Moon - Religious leaders
- 15) Blood - atonement or defilement, depending on context
- 16) Precious stones - Holy attributes:
 - a) Jasper/Diamond - righteousness
 - b) Sardine stone - mercy
 - c) Sapphire - Divinity
 - d) Emerald - Grace, mercy, and patience
- 17) Angels - Messengers; beings used to carry out a specific purpose; can be used by good or evil
- 18) Measurements - judgments passed on the object measured; if a size is given, it shows the worthiness of the judged object (Not to be taken literally unless the context requires it)
- 19) Babylon, Egypt, Sodom - a wicked city; usually indicates Jerusalem; actual Babylon no longer in existence
- 20) Thrones - demonstrate authority of the occupant
- 21) Dragon - Satan
- 22) Horns - power
- 23) Eyes - multiplicity of eyes indicates great vision and prophetic insight
- 24) Numbers - seldom literal:
 - a) Three - Divine nature; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
 - b) Four - Earthly nature; "four corners of the earth"
 - c) Six - incompleteness; potential evil
 - d) Seven - Completeness or goodness; comprised of three Deities and four corners of the earth (directions N.E.W.S.)
 - e) Ten - when connected with a beast, it indicates power; when referring to duration, means a limited time period
 - f) Twelve - a holy number
 - g) 100 - a defined period of time
 - h) 1000 - a great, holy number; when connected to time, it indicates a great period of time, seemingly unending
 - i) 10,000 times 10,000 - uncountable number; an unimaginable multitude
- 25) Rainbow - covenant
- 26) Glass - placid, peaceful, smooth

Lesson Two: Revelation 1:1-20

INTRODUCTION AND SALUTATION - 1:1-8

Chapter 1:1 - "The revelation of Jesus Christ" is a revelation made known by Jesus; it is not necessarily a revelation about Him. The apocalypse was given to Him by God; Jesus in turn gave it to John by means of His messenger. The vision was designed to prepare the disciples for what was to take place in the immediate future. Though it came to us by means of four beings (God, Jesus, His messenger, and John), it is indisputably the inspired word of God.

Vs. 2 - The book of Revelation came to John by three means: 1) direct revelation of the word of God, 2) direct testimony of Jesus Christ, and 3) the eyewitness testimony of the visions John saw himself.

Vs. 3 - John admonishes the readers and hearers of this revelation concerning the imminence of its fulfillment. Reading means more than just scanning words, hearing means more than just listening to discourse, and keeping it means more than just remembering the message. The readers, hearers, and keepers will be blessed if they actively seek to profit by the warnings. If the phrase "for the time is at hand" concerns the remote future, there is very little need or application for such warnings.

Vs. 4 - John was well known to the disciples. It was not necessary for him to add any other identification. Though this letter is addressed to the seven churches of Asia, all churches can read these letters and benefit from them. According to Colossians 4:16, it was not uncommon for letters to one church to be shared with other churches. "From Him which is... was... and is to come" is a reference to the eternal nature of God. The seven spirits symbolize the seven churches, later described as seven golden candlesticks (2:1) and seven lamps before His throne (4:5). Light has always been symbolic of a spiritual, godly nature (1John 1:5-7; John 4:24). To speak of the spirits, candlesticks, or lamps of the churches before God is simply a means of saying that spiritually the churches are in fellowship with God.

Vs. 5 - Three descriptions of Jesus are given: 1) "The faithful witness" shows that Jesus did not shrink from the testimony that God had given Him, making Him first among those who stand for truth. 2) "The first begotten from the dead" does not mean He was the first to rise from the dead, but rather, the first to return from death never to die again. 3) "The prince of the kings of the earth" expresses His dominion over all earthly governments.

After describing who Jesus is, John then tells us what He did: 1) "loved us," 2) "washed us from our sins in His own blood," and 3) "made us kings and priests." It is interesting that only in Christ do we find the offices of royalty and priesthood combined, as prophesied in Exodus 19:6.

Vs. 6 - As kings and priests with Christ, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, all disciples as well as Christ Himself are subject to God the Father (1Peter 2:9; 1Cor. 15:28, 11:3).

Vs. 7 - "Behold, He cometh with the clouds" is not a reference to the second coming of Christ at Judgment, but to the coming events of destruction upon Jerusalem as the Lord said to the high priest in Matthew 26:64. The clouds do not signify His physical presence, but instead, show Divine retribution on the enemies of the Lord (Isa. 19:6; Ez. 38:16; Matt. 24:30). "They also which pierced Him" is a clear reference to the actual murderers of Christ being eyewitnesses of the Lord's retribution on Jerusalem. All of the dispersed Jews would suffer at that time.

Vs. 8 - Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and correspond to the Yea and Amen of the Hebrew. Christ is putting the seal of Deity upon this apocalypse.

VISION OF THE GLORIOUS SON OF MAN - 1:9-20

Vs. 9 - Tradition claims that John was banished by the Roman Empire to Patmos; however, there exists no concrete scriptural or historical evidence to prove it. John said he was on Patmos for the sake of "the word" and "the testimony." This is supported by the preaching mission he was to be sent on in 10:11. As a prisoner, John would not have been permitted this kind of freedom. The use of the past tense indicates that John did not write this book at the same time that he received the vision. The suffering and tribulation spoken of was common to all Christians of that era (Heb. 10:31-39).

Vs. 10 - John's use of "in the spirit" is similar to that of Paul in 2Corinthians 12, and that of Peter in Acts 10, whereby all three describe a visionary state.

Vs. 11 - From a direction in which John was not looking, he heard a voice. The use of the trumpet symbol denotes a loud, far-reaching announcement. This voice declared John's mission of recording the vision for the benefit of the churches. That the Lord listed the seven specific churches limits any speculation as to who were the intended recipients of the warnings.

Vs. 12-13 - John turned to see the one who spoke to him and discovered that it was Jesus in His ascended form. John had seen the Lord incarnate and in the glory of His ascension; he would certainly be able to recognize Him in that vision of majesty and power. The floor length robe and golden sash are royal garments. The sash or girdle is symbolic of truth (Eph. 6:14).

Vs. 14 - The whiteness of His hair is symbolic of sinless purity (Isa. 1:18). The eyes like flame shows His Divine Omniscience and that He can discern all things.

Vs. 15 - Feet like refined brass symbolizes the untainted and unalloyed nature of the truth of the message Jesus brings. The refining process represents the trials that shaped Him (Rom. 10:15; 1Peter 1:7; Isa. 1:25). The voice like many waters is symbolic of rhythm and harmony of utterance.

Vs. 16 - The sharp two-edged sword symbolizes divine judgment and justice (Gen. 3:24; Heb. 4:12). The face like the sun shows that Jesus is truly the light of the world and of life (Mal. 4:2).

Vs. 17-18 - The use of the right hand to comfort John also connotes acceptance of John and of his worshipful fear. John had strong cause for reverence as he is in the presence of Deity who became flesh, died, and arose from the dead (1Cor. 15:3-4). Jesus will never die again; for, He defeated His own death, the realm of Hades, and Satan himself (1Cor. 15:20-26; Heb. 2:14-15).

Vs. 19-20 - "The mystery of the seven stars" does not carry the suggestion of the dark and mysterious, but rather, a spiritual truth that could not be known until it was Divinely revealed (Rom. 11:25, 16:25; Eph. 3:3-9; Col. 1:26). The gospel of Christ is itself a mystery, that is, it was merely unknown until God decided to reveal it. The seven stars are angels, symbolic of the character, attitude, nature, or spirit of each congregation. Interpretation of the word "angel" is not limited only to celestial beings. There are many usages of the term "aggelon" which translates as angel or messenger.

- 1) Matt. 24:31 - messengers of the gospel,
- 2) Heb. 1:14 - spiritual beings that carry out divine missions,
- 3) Luke 7:24-27; Matt. 11:10 - Jesus, in speaking of John the Baptist, called him an angel, yet it is translated messenger. Angels could simply be humans sent with a message,
- 4) Gen. 18:19 - heavenly beings appearing as humans,

- 5) Ez. 10 - beings of power with attributes of a beast,
- 6) Matt. 18:10; Acts 12:14 - interceding spirits,
- 7) Jude 4 - ministers of Satan,
- 8) 2Cor. 11:14-15 - the devil and his demons,
- 9) Rev. 20:1 - Jesus Christ Himself.

The context will determine how the word messenger is to be understood. In the case of Revelation 1:20, angel describes the moral, emotional, spiritual influence of each church. It is most fitting to portray Christ as the central figure in these churches, as He must be in each and every sound church today. This vision of the Glorious Son of Man was to inspire John who would write Revelation, the seven churches who desperately needed its instruction and comfort, and the church today surrounded once again by the enemies of truth and right. The vision of the all-seeing and all powerful Son of God gave (and will continue to give) strength.

SUPPLEMENT TO REVELATION CHAPTER ONE

Verse 7 - "Behold he cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also that pierced him."

Homer Hailey - "Although this passage includes His second coming and the great judgment of that hour, it also includes the idea of His coming on clouds in all judgments before that great event. The idea of coming on clouds or a cloud was also used to describe Jehovah's coming against Egypt (Isa 19:1; Ez. 30:3, 32:7), and against His own people (Ez. 34:12. Jesus promised that He would come on the clouds of heaven in judgment against Jerusalem (Matt. 24:24-30; Mark 13:24-30). John used Zechariah 12:10 to describe the action of the Jews against Jehovah in nailing His Son to the cross (John 19:37). (pg. 102)

Weldon Warnock - "Clouds depict judgment (Isa. 19:6; Ez. 38:16; Matt. 24:30). His coming in judgment would be upon the persecutors (Romans) of the saints. This would be through natural means, just as he came in judgment upon the Jews by the Roman armies. The destruction of Jerusalem is referred to as a coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven which would be seen by all tribes of the earth. Likewise, the impact and import of the events surrounding the judgment on Rome would be universally known. Every eye would see it and all kindreds would wail because of it." (pg. 21)

Foy E. Wallace, Jr. - "The reference here is not to the second advent, or return of Christ, but to the coming events about to be delineated (Matt. 26:64)... Both the impact and the import of the occurring events would be of universal knowledge. The siege and fall of Jerusalem would be known to the entire population of the Roman Empire both Jewish and pagan." (pg. 71)

Verse 9 - "I, John... was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God..."

Wallace - "The English preposition "for" in this passage is "dia," by established usage with the accusative means "for the sake of" the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. It gives the ground or reason for John's presence on Patmos: that the reason for being there was no other than to receive the revelation, that is for the vision itself... The coupling of the testimony with the vision in verse 2 supports the view that he was there to receive the things he saw... A further evidence of this concept in John's own statement in 10:11, of his intention to leave Patmos for an active itinerary among the people of many nations, to carry to them in personal evangelism the testimony of this apocalypse." (pg. 74)

Robert Harkrider - "Although no official record exists that John was exiled as punishment, reliable traditions strongly support this position." (pg. 9)

Verse 10 - "In the Lord's day"

Wallace - "It is not a reference to the first day of the week, but to the day in which the Lord accomplished these events, as used in Isa. 13:9 in which Isaiah described the destruction of Babylon as the day of the Lord; and in Zech. 14:1 where Zechariah referred to the destruction of Jerusalem as the day of the Lord... In this sense the phrase in the Lord's day is used in Rev. 1:10; it means in the day of the rapture into which the Lord had placed John, that he had been transported into the midst of the scenes of the vision as though he was himself in the day of their happening." (pg. 77)

Warnock - "The Lord's day is either the first day of the week or it is the day in which the Lord would accomplish these acts of judgment set forth in the book. Most commentators take the position that the Lord's day in this passage is Sunday, the first day of the week. Wallace, however, takes a different view... This writer is inclined to concur with Wallace, although neither position can be absolutely established." (pg. 25)

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 1:1-20

1. List the beings through whom Revelation passed in the process of its writing.

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

2. In what three ways did John receive the Revelation?

a _____

b _____

c _____

3. What is the meaning of "shortly come to pass" and "the time is at hand?"

4. List the seven churches of Asia.

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

f _____

g _____

5. According to 1:5, what three descriptions are given of Jesus?

a _____

b _____

c _____

6. According to 1:5-6, what three things did Jesus do for us?

a _____

b _____

c _____

7. What does "Alpha & Omega" signify?

8. Where did John receive the Revelation? _____

9. Find a parallel text to 1:18 elsewhere in the New Testament.

10. What did John say was his reason for being on Patmos?

11. List two verses from chapter one that emphasize the eternal nature of Deity.

12. What is the name of the last book in the New Testament?

Lesson Three: Revelation 2:1 - 3:22

LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA

Ephesus: Strong And Unloving - 2:1-7

Chapter 2:1 - Clearly it is the Lord and not John who is addressing the seven churches, especially since He refers to Himself as central in presence and authority in the churches (see comments for 1:19-20 concerning the symbols of stars and candlesticks). The city of Ephesus was located on the west coast of Asia Minor and was the chief city for commerce and religion in that area. Although various pagan gods were served there, Diana the Huntress was the chief goddess of the city (Acts 19:23-41). The city of Ephesus had numerous persecutors and false prophets. The apostle Paul spent three years trying to establish a sound church in that place.

Vs. 2-3 - Christ praises the church at Ephesus for its good qualities. They had labored tirelessly in fighting against false doctrine and false teachers. They had struggled against the enemies of the Lord and expanded the church in that city. They never gave up.

Vs. 4-5 - After acknowledging the good the Ephesians had done, the Lord addressed their spiritual needs; that is, He rebuked them for leaving their first love and work. It is not uncommon for Christians in the war against doctrinal error to forget the first principles, or to forget to exhibit a Christ-like spirit when dealing with error. Ephesus had drifted so far that the Lord counted them as fallen. They would not be restored to His favor without a genuine repentance. If Ephesus delayed in making repentance, the Lord would cease to acknowledge fellowship with them.

Vs. 6 - After rebuking Ephesus, the Lord both reminded them to continue in striving against error and to declare His enmity for the digressions of the Nicolaitans. It is uncertain who the Nicolaitans were. Some speculate that the name was derived from Nicolas of Acts 6:5. However, the name may be symbolic of the Liberty party in many of the Asian cities. Nicolaitan means "victor over people."

Vs. 7 - As the eye is the organ of enlightenment for the body, so the ear is the organ of spiritual discernment. Ephesus could only benefit from hearing and obeying what the Lord said in this letter. To eat of the tree of life is the reward promised to all who hold out against sin. The tree of life was removed from the paradise of man (Eden) and placed in the paradise of God (heaven).

Lessons from the letter to Ephesus: 1) Do not become so focused on combating error that love for people, and first principles are forgotten, 2) when rebuking another, find some good thing to praise, and conclude instructions with a worthy goal or purpose, 3) and that it is acceptable to hate error.

Smyrna: Persecuted And Poor, Yet Pleasing To The Lord - 2:8-11

Vs. 8 - Smyrna was located forty miles north of Ephesus on the seacoast. It was second only to Ephesus in commerce. They claimed to be the foremost Asian city in beauty, literature, and in loyalty to Rome. "He who was dead and came to life" in this context can only refer to Christ (1Cor. 15:20). Death did not vanquish the Lord, and it would not defeat the saints at Smyrna.

Vs. 9 - The Smyrna Christians could have been poor for more than one reason: 1) many Christians in that day came from the poorest classes; the middle class and the wealthy were not interested in salvation, 2) their possessions could have been taken away by their persecutors. Regardless, the Lord described them as rich. No Christian is truly poor who enjoys the blessings in Christ, and no sinner (no matter what his income)

can consider himself wealthy without the Lord. The pseudo-Jews were old Israel actively persecuting their countrymen who converted to Christ (Rom. 2:28-29; Matt. 24).

Vs. 10 - "Tribulation ten days" refers to suffering for a defined, limited period of time. Motivated by Satan, officials would imprison some of them, and their strength would be sorely tested. The Lord admonished them to remain faithful even if it means that they must die, and that they must not be overwhelmed by fear. The Lord wanted them to view death, not just as an exit from suffering, but also as an entrance to reward and bliss.

Vs. 11 - The Christian who remains faithful even unto death, will not suffer the second death, which is eternal separation from God.

Lessons from the letter to Smyrna: 1) As Jesus said, "A man's life does not consist of the things he possesses," so God's people measure wealth in terms of their relationship with Him (Luke 12:15), 2) the faithful Christian cannot lose when persecuted. If he survives, he is made stronger; if he dies, he goes to his reward, 3) the second death is to be feared more than the death of the body.

Pergamos: Trying To Please Everyone - 2:12-17

Vs. 12 - Pergamos was located 30 miles north of Smyrna, 15 miles from the sea, and on a great hill. It was the royal and political capitol of Asia. It had a library second only to that of Alexandria. The Christians there faced Asiatic gods, classical Greek gods, pagan Roman gods, and emperor worship. The two-edged sword was a symbol of Roman authority and judgment. Christ is saying that He has the power, not Rome.

Vs. 13 - The throne of Satan refers to city as the seat of Roman provincial rule. Throughout Revelation, persecuting powers are referred to as servants of Satan. The name Antipas means "against all," possibly a symbolic name for martyrs who were against all forms of paganism, or that all men were against the martyrs. The Lord paid the highest compliment ever given to a human when He called Antipas, "My faithful martyr."

Vs. 14 - Balaam comes from the Hebrew term that means "swallower or devourer of people," which is precisely what Balaam tried to do in the Old Testament by conspiring with the enemies of the Lord for Israel's overthrow. In addition to Balaamites, Pergamos also had Nicolaitans who advocated liberty in Christ to the point of licentiousness (Rom. 6:1-7).

Vs. 15 - Christ spoke twice of His hatred for the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Two things are clear: 1) that doctrinal error is not tolerated by the Lord and is not to be tolerated by His followers, 2) and that Christ hated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, not the people themselves.

Vs. 16 - Repentance was required; it was not possible to remain in the Lord's favor without it. Furthermore, the Lord would actively combat the church if it continued to tolerate false teaching.

Vs. 17 - The hidden manna in the Old Testament was the pot of manna placed in the ark of the covenant. Not even the priests were permitted to eat of this manna. The Gnostics claimed access to the hidden manna of a higher knowledge and state than ordinary Christians. Christ refuted this by offering the hidden manna to ordinary Christians who simply overcome. In ancient courts of law, a verdict was given to the accused by means of a black or white stone. Jesus told the faithful that in spite of the false accusations made against them, He will give them an innocent verdict. One's name is representative of who he is; Christ would give the faithful a name that only the faithful would fully understand, that of Christian.

Lessons from the letter to Pergamos: 1) doctrinal error is not to be tolerated, even to keep the peace. It is only a step from error to immorality, 2) having a few dedicated Christians in fellowship does not ensure the soundness of the local church, 3) Jesus Christ is not tolerant of denominationalism.

Thyatira: Tolerating Sin And Corruption - 2:18-29

Vs. 18 - Thyatira was a city midway between Pergamos and Sardis, about 40 miles southeast of Pergamos. It was a small, wealthy city whose main product was expensive dyes (see eyes of flame and feet of brass in chapter one notes).

Vs. 19 - The Lord addressed the good done by the Christians of Thyatira, and acknowledged that they are working even harder than they did at first.

Vs. 20-21 - Jezebel is a symbolic name for the apostate teacher at Thyatira. Although the Lord certainly used women as prophets, Jezebel was a false prophet. Just as Jezebel of the Old Testament seduced Israel into idolatry (1Kings 16-19; 2Kings 9), so the Jezebel of Thyatira was leading God's people astray. Fornication in this context is that of the spiritual form; that is, when the Bride of Christ goes chasing off after other religions or doctrines and becomes unfaithful to Christ the Bridegroom. The Lord was more than gracious in allowing her time to repent.

Vs. 22 - Instead of a bed of sensuality, Jezebel and those she seduced would suffer on a bed of pain. Even the misled disciples must repent or share in the consequences of Jezebel's error.

Vs. 23 - The Lord declares He will not permit this error to spread. There is no record of any remnant of the religions of Balaamites, Libertines, Nicolaitans, nor of the followers of Jezebel. This triumph of truth over error demonstrates to the churches that Christ is the one who can read the hearts and minds of His followers and that He is the one who rules in the Church.

Vs. 24-25 - The Lord addressed those at Thyatira who did not participate in the error of Jezebel, by saying that He would not burden them with anything else (1Cor. 10:13). Jesus is not deceiving these people into believing that He is coming back in their lifetime. He is not referring to His second advent but rather to His coming in judgment against Jezebel.

Vs. 26-29 - The power and rod given to the faithful is not a reference to a future millennium but is speaking of the powerful force of the gospel. Compare this text to others that show the chastening power of the truth (Jer. 1:10; Isa. 11:9; Psalm 2:7-9, 110:2; 1Cor. 6:2). In this context, it refers to the victory of the Church emerging from its sufferings and witnessing the demise of its persecutors. In prophecy, Christ is called the "morning star" (Num. 24:17; Rev. 22:16). Following the persecution, the gospel would have tremendous impact on the pagan world.

Lessons from the letter to Thyatira: 1) even Churches that are growing can have serious problems, 2) do not take a teacher at face value; test him or her, 3) the Lord's side will ultimately and inevitably win.

Sardis: An Empty Shell Of Religion - 3:1-6

Chapter 3:1 - Sardis was the ancient capitol of the province of Lydia and was located 30 miles southeast of Thyatira. It was a well-fortified city, not easily attacked by enemies. The kings who ruled there were known for their personal wealth and luxury. The people worshipped the nature goddess, Cybele. At the time of John's writing, Sardis had been known for its splendor, but it was in a state of decay and decadence. The Lord used the condition of the city to describe the church within its walls. A contemporary historian compared the city of Sardis with the Church at Sardis thusly: 1) both had a name that they lived, but were dead, 2) each would promise, but fulfill none of its works,

3) both had to keep watch, but were often caught by surprise, 4) both were defiled by rampant immorality. The church there was not plagued by external enemies like paganism, false teachers, or persecution. Their enemies came from among themselves.

Vs. 2 - The church had begun works but had lost interest in completing them. All was not lost. Sardis could pick up where they left off and complete their works, but if they waited much longer it would be too late.

Vs. 3 - Sardis could be restored through repentance and a return to fundamentals. Otherwise, they would continue in complacency until the Lord moved against them as if they were an enemy like Jezebel, Balaam, or persecutors.

Vs. 4 - Garments are symbols of one's spiritual character; therefore, a defiled garment describes the state of one with un-repentant and un-confessed sins. Yet even at Sardis there were some who had not indulged in sin.

Vs. 5 - Those who are faithful will be found clean and pure, and they will be known by the Savior in the end. One who is defiled by sin risks having his name removed from the list of the saved.

Vs. 6 - "He that hath an ear to hear" has been said to all of the churches. Whether faithful or not, all of these churches and their members needed to listen with the intent to profit by it.

Lessons from the letter to Sardis: 1) a past reputation for good works does not justify present laziness, 2) A pattern has arisen throughout history of the Church; that is, during tribulation the Church would grow and Christians would be strong, but when times were easy churches were weakened and torn apart by internal troubles, 3) high walls do not guarantee safety unless those who dwell behind them watch vigilantly.

Philadelphia: A New Name For Faithfulness - 3:7-13

Vs. 7 - Philadelphia was located on the Cogamus River, 28 miles southeast of Sardis. It was named after its founder, King Attalus Philadelphus II, out of love for his brother and predecessor Ecumenes II. The name literally means "love of brother." It was located on a main trade route and became an important commerce center. The city was also famous for its fine wines which led the city to make Dionysius, god of wine, its patron deity. Philadelphia had so many other temples to pagan gods, it was often called the "little Athens." However, opposition to the church here came chiefly from the Jews, who had a beautiful synagogue there and seemed to prosper among the pagans. Jesus identifies Himself with God, calling Himself "ho hagios" or THE Holy, and "ho alethinos" or THE True (Isa. 1:4, 5:16-24, 6:3; John 1:9, 5:20, 6:32, 15:1).

The throne of David was Christ's by right of lineage, and the key symbolizes His authority over law. He established His own credentials over that of even Moses, and what He had to say superseded all that had ever been spoken or taught. Christ can open the door to salvation and no pagan, Roman, or Jewish persecutor can close it.

Vs. 8 - When the small strength of the faithful is combined with the might and authority of Christ, there is no force on earth that can stand against it.

Vs. 9 - The Jews in the flesh who were often the instigators of persecutions of the faithful will fall by the same Romans they incited against the Christians. When Rome finally turned on the Jews, physical Judah would know who God truly favored and that they were no longer His children.

Vs. 10 - Although the Lord did not promise to protect Christians from trials, He did promise to preserve them from the holocaust that was to come. Because they persevered through what they could overcome, Christ would help them to survive what they could not overcome.

Vs. 11 - The Lord was not deceiving them into believing He was coming again in the immediate future; rather, He was telling them to hold on until He comes in judgment

against their persecutors. How sad it would have been if this commended congregation had given up just moments before the Lord destroyed their enemies.

Vs. 12-13 - In each of the seven letters, the Lord began by talking to each church as collectivities and ended by admonishing them as individual Christians. The Christian who overcomes will receive a permanent place in the new spiritual Temple of Heaven that no one will ever have to leave. Certainly, this means after one's death, for how can anyone expect permanence on the earth? Each would receive a new name; a name indicating possession by God, citizenship in the Kingdom, and a part in the glory of Christ.

Lessons from the letter to Philadelphia: 1) the righteous must know that it is the Lord's strength and not their own that they must depend upon for the true victory, 2) the Lord's promises to protect the faithful is conditional upon the faithful remaining so, 3) it is possible for even the finest to lose their reward if they give up before the battle is over.

Laodicea: Neither Cold Nor Hot - 3:14-22

Vs. 14 - Laodicea was located 55 miles south of Philadelphia and 90 miles east of Ephesus. The city was founded by Antiochus II who named it after his wife Laodicea. It was originally built as a garrison to protect the trade routes, but it soon became a center for Greek culture. The main pagan deity worshipped was Zeus, king of Greek gods. Laodicea was known to be the wealthiest city of its region. Their main business was banking, black wool, and medicines. Because of the easy life in the city, it became famous as a retirement center for the wealthy. The self-sufficient, complacent attitude of the city was reflected in the church. Neither felt any compulsion to become active in the issues facing their society. Jesus introduced Himself as the one who would have the final word, as He was the one to have the first word.

Vs. 15 - It is important that one does not make a metaphor say more than its intended purpose. To state that cold is bad and hot is good declares more than what is written or implied in this passage. The Lord was condemning their indifference by using a common illustration. One is warmed on a cool night by hot broth, one is refreshed in the burning desert by cool water, but what pleasure or comfort is given by that which is tepid. The Laodiceans were neither comforting nor refreshing; rather, they were indifferent. Remember, the Lord said, "I could wish you were cold or hot." Would Jesus wish anyone to be cold if it were a lost condition?

The city of Laodicea had a water problem. Three miles southeast was the city of Hierapolis that had famous hot springs, Colosse was just three miles northwest that had cold, clear water. Laodicea, however, was stuck with tepid, mineral-laden water that tasted like sulfur. Not hot. Not cold. Terrible tasting lukewarm water. Near Laodicea are the remains of an aqueduct, starting near the summit of a low hill to the south, and extending into the hill above the city. The water must have been heavy with calcium and sulfur, as several of the remaining arches are covered with a thick incrustation.

Given these facts, the words of Jesus to the Laodicean believers in Revelation 3 must have really hurt. Jesus rebuked them for being "neither cold nor hot" (v.15 - just like their water). And when He thought of them, He felt like vomiting (v.16) -- like the effect of their drinking water. What was their problem? It was the sin of self-sufficiency. The Laodiceans had become so affluent and comfortable with the life they made for themselves that they had forgotten how much they needed Jesus (v.17).

Vs. 16 - It is the state of lukewarmness that is rejected. It appears that the Lord is implying that He accepts cold and hot as a drink, but a lukewarm beverage, like the absence of interest or emotion, is universally disliked. The belief in the absolute and unconditional security of the believer is destroyed by the Lord's statement: "I will spew you out of My mouth."

Vs. 17 - Laodicea is the opposite of Smyrna, who was poor in possessions and wealthy in spiritual blessings in Christ. Like many of the smugly rich, Laodicea thought money was everything and that they needed nothing more, not even God. Wealth dulled their understanding of just how dependent they truly were on the Lord. They could not see that in really important matters, they were in abject poverty.

Vs. 18 - The Lord admonished them to obtain heavenly treasure instead of what can be destroyed on earth, to wear spiritual garments rather than the rags of riches, and to medicate their spiritual sight, not just the physical.

Vs. 19 - By implication, the Lord says that He loves even the church at Laodicea, but that He would not hesitate to punish them if they did not repent (Heb. 12:6-11).

Vs. 20 - Jesus offered to restore His affection and fellowship to Laodicea through the metaphor of a meal. The ancients viewed eating together as a manifestation of brotherhood. The criterion for this relationship with Christ is to simply open one's heart to Him and to yield to His will.

Vs. 21-22 - Those who overcame their trials as did Christ would be granted to share in Christ's dominion (Eph. 2:6; Rom. 5:17, 8:16-18; 1Tim. 2:11-12).

Lessons from the letter to Laodicea: 1) material self-sufficiency tends to make one believe himself spiritually self-sufficient, i.e. money makes one forget God, 2) idleness and indifference will cause one to be lost, 3) the stern warnings and promised punishments to wayward Christians are a manifestation of love, not malice.

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 2:1 - 3:22

1. From memory, list the seven churches addressed in Revelation 2-3

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

f _____

g _____

2. List the two churches for which the Lord had nothing but praise and encouragement.

a _____

b _____

3. Name one good thing and one bad thing about the five remaining churches:

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

4. What four statements of the Lord were repeated to all seven churches?

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

5. What do YOU believe is the most important message given to:

Ephesus _____

Smyrna _____

Pergamos _____

Thyatira _____

Sardis _____

Philadelphia _____

Laodicea _____

6. How can churches today benefit from reading about the problems of seven churches from 1928 years ago?

7. From reading Revelation 2-3, can you discern any differences between the Christians then and now? If so, list them.

8. If the Lord were to write a letter unto the "angel of the church" at this place, what would He say?

Lesson Four: Revelation 4:1 - 5:14

THE GREAT THRONE VISION

Chapter 4:1-3 - The Great Throne Vision is revealed to John by means of a vision through the Holy Spirit. The door standing open in heaven is symbolic revelation of "mystery" that was about to take place; John was about to be given access to Divine knowledge. As a throne is a symbol of authority and dominion, therefore, a throne in heaven is symbolic of Divine authority and rule. The jasper stone (clear, transparent diamond) and sardius stone (flesh-red, opaque precious stone) represent attributes of the one who sits on the throne, namely, righteousness and mercy. The rainbow is a symbol of covenant between God and man (Gen. 9:11-17); the appearance like an emerald is symbolic of grace and patience. John has been called by means of a vision to view the source of Divine power and authority and to receive reassurance to be given to the faithful. The aura surrounding the Great Throne is that of righteousness, mercy, and grace in judgment.

Vs. 4-5 - Twenty-four seats and elders are symbolic of the totality of God's people within His kingdom. Twelve patriarchs and twelve apostles constitute the whole of the redeemed of all dispensations. White robe are indicative of the righteous character of the elders; golden crowns show their royal aspect; thrones project their authority and dominion with God. Two facets of Deity show from the Great Throne: 1) the lightning thunder, etc. show Divine omnipotence, and 2) the lamps and spirits once again are representative of Divine omnipresence and fellowship. John sees that God is all-powerful, all-seeing, and everywhere, and he sees Divine approval and authority delegated to the faithful of all dispensations.

Vs. 6-9 - As a sea symbolizes a given society, and glass represents placidity or tranquility, therefore a sea of glass indicates that those who dwell before the Great Throne are a peaceful, untroubled people. A multitude of eyes symbolizes great vision and intelligence. Note: the beasts of this text differ from the persecuting powers. A better rendering of beasts in this text would be beings of power. The appearance of each being showed something about its nature and power. The lion was a symbol of ferocious strength; the calf (ox) demonstrated great endurance under burden; the man showed intelligence, reason, and wisdom; the eagle symbolized penetrating vision and swiftly executed judgment. The wings indicate the speed with which they carry out the instructions of the Lord. These beings of power endlessly wait on and praise the Lord (Isa. 6; Ez. 1,10). These beings seem to be a special order of heavenly creatures that are of the highest nature and closest to the Great Throne, who directly serve God's will.

Vs. 10-11 - The worship by the elders is performed in unison without any discord. As they are casting their crowns before the Throne, they are showing their submission to His will.

Chapter 5:1 - The right hand holding the scroll is an indicator of the acceptability and value of the book. Books in those days were still being written on scrolls of parchment, tied with a band, and a clay or wax seal was placed over the knot. Only qualified persons were permitted to break the seal and read the contents of the scroll. The written word was considered a potent force and was regulated by the government; it was not taken lightly as it is today. A book written on both sides suggested that it was too small to contain the message. No book would be able to contain all that could be said about the coming judgment against the enemies of the Lord.

Vs. 2-3 - No created being was qualified to open and reveal the contents of this book.

Vs. 4-7 - John grieved that the great matters contained in the scroll were sealed forever from human knowledge unless someone qualified could open it. One of the elders comforts John by pointing out that his disappointment is premature, that there is One who is worthy to read the book. Jesus Christ is the Lion, or powerful, offspring of Judah (Gen. 49:9-10; Isa. 29:1). The Root of David is a paradox: though Christ sprang from David, He is also the Lord of David and the foundation of the royal lineage of God's people on all dispensations (Isa. 11:1,10; Rom. 15:12; Zech. 3:8, 6:12). What John sees on the Throne is not the expected Lion, but rather, the sacrificial Lamb. The slain Lamb is risen and is now become the conquering Lion to deliver His people from the oppressors. Symbols of horns, eyes, and spirits given in groups of seven indicate complete power, vision, and presence of the Savior. Only Jesus Christ was qualified (deserved) to open up the revelation of coming judgment on the enemies of God and read it to the world. He was the only one ever to be killed by His enemies to later rise to greater power than ever. It is ironic that in death He gained the means to destroy His oppressors.

Vs. 8-10 - The opening of the scroll was a time of great rejoicing for the righteous. It meant the end of the great persecution was nearing. The elders demonstrate their joy in worship through song and prayers. The use of harps symbolized praise to God; the use of incense represented prayers to God. These are merely symbols of the apocalypse, and are not to be taken literally. Harps and bowls of incense were used physically under the Law of Moses to symbolize Christian worship under the Law of Christ, which takes place in the heart. There are two other reasons why this text does not authorize the use of mechanical instruments of worship in the Church today: 1) examples from heavenly visions are not necessarily binding authority on earth. There are things in heaven that are not in the church and vice versa, 2) if one wishes to incorporate Old Testament elements into the Church, one must use all of the Old Law requirements (Gal. 5:3). The new song is the theme of salvation by the blood of the Lamb, as opposed to the song of Moses by the sea concerning the servitude of Israel after their salvation from the Egyptians. Israel was freed to become a servant; Christians are freed to become rulers (1Peter 1:19, 2:5-9; Heb. 13:15-16; Rom. 5:17, 8:17).

Vs. 11-12 - The positions of the beings around the Great Throne appear to be as follows: God upon the Throne, Christ at His side, the beings of power at the four corners of the Throne, the twenty-four elders surrounding the beasts, a host of angels around the elders, and around the angels are all created beings. A literal computation of the number of angels would be one hundred million plus several more millions (100,000,000 + [n x 1,000,000]). This number symbolizes an innumerable host.

Angels offer seven (completeness) blessings upon the worthy sacrificial Lamb: 1) power - Matt. 28:18, 2) riches - Psalm 24:1, 3) wisdom - Col. 2:3, 4) strength - Psalm 93:1, 5) honor - Heb. 4:15 (integrity), 6) glory - James 2:1, 7) blessing - Rom. 9:5.

Vs. 13-14 - The whole of creation joins in this song of praise (Psalm 148). It is to be understood that whether one obeys or rebels against God, God will be glorified. Obedience gives glory to God through praise as well as example (Rom. 12:2). God is glorified through disobedience in that all of creation will witness His judgment over the wicked. Obey or disobey, God cannot lose; but, humankind can.

Lessons from chapters four and five: 1) that God is all-powerful, all-seeing, all-knowing, and everywhere. He has the authority and dominion, 2) that in spite of God's great power, He is a God of mercy and grace toward the faithful, 3) the indescribable majesty of the Great Throne vision; ALL are gathered all about God praising Him in magnificent splendor that human speech fails to completely capture. Imagine the grand thrill of hearing the beings of power seal the praise with one mighty AMEN. Oh, to be in heaven someday to add our voices to that of the angels!

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 4:1 - 5:14

1. What does the Great Throne in heaven symbolize? _____

2. In what ways can the righteous draw comfort from the Great Throne Vision?

3. Why does the sea of glass characterize God's people so well?

4. What faces do the beasts of power wear, and what do the faces represent?

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

5. Why do the 24 elders cast their crowns before the Great Throne?

6. Why could no one be found to open the seven-seal scroll?

7. Is Jesus Christ a powerful lion or a slain Lamb? Explain your answer.

8. Explain why Revelation 5:8 is not authority for instrumental music in the church.

9. Describe the difference between the old song of Moses and the new song of Christ.

10. What blessings are pronounced upon the sacrificial Lamb?

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

f _____

g _____

11. How can disobedience glorify God?

True or False

a _____ Since harps are used to glorify God in heaven, we can use an organ when we worship Him today.

b _____ Jesus Christ literally has seven eyes and seven horns.

c _____ A sea of glass represents a peaceful society.

d _____ Only the Lamb deserved to open the seals of the scroll.

e _____ There are only twelve legions of angels in heaven.

f _____ Golden bowls full of incense represent burnt offerings.

g _____ The beasts of power worship and serve God day and night.

Lesson Five: Revelation 6:1 - 8:6

OPENING THE SEVEN SEALS

Following the magnificent Great Throne Vision showing the greatness of God and the worthiness of the Lamb, Jesus Christ is about to begin opening the seven seals of the book. As each seal is broken, it depicts an event in the lives of the suffering Christians and their oppressors in the first century. Each event apparently succeeds the previous one with no clear gap between them.

Chapter 6:1 - As thunder is the ominous announcement of a coming storm, so this being's proclamation carried dire overtones.

Vs. 2 - The horse in the Old Testament is a noble beast reserved for the use of nobility and the military (Job 39:19-25). In each case, the color of the horse and the weapon of its rider indicate the nature of the suffering it brings. The white horse and rider is symbolic of Christ. White is the color of purity, the crown is a symbol of authority, and Christ is the only one to have conquered and continues conquering. The bow indicates that the battle is one of great duration. A battle with swords could only last as long as the wielder had strength. A battle fought with arrows usually ended up being a lengthy siege. Christ's war against evil will last until the end of time.

Vs. 3-4 - In Zechariah 1:8-11, the red horse was a symbol of the nations around Jerusalem currently at peace with them, but who would soon arise against her at the command of God. Here it represents the slaughter that would come against the fleshly Jews who had persecuted Christians. The sword shows justice, and it is only fair that the Jews who had used the swords of Rome against Christians should die by the same means (Matt. 26:52).

Vs. 5-6 - The black horse is the color of distress and terror at the coming calamity (Joel 2:6; Nahum 2:10; Jer. 8:21). A famine is coming to the land, and the scale in the hand of the rider indicates the scarcity of food. It had to be weighed out by the quart and paid for with a denarius, or a day's wages (about 36 cents). Although the food is diminished, the oil and wine are not, and the rider is commanded to leave them alone. The combination of oil and wine was commonly used as a medication in that time (Luke 10:34). Though physical gratification through abundance was not possible, the Jews still had available spiritual healing through the Gospel of Christ if they would but accept it.

Vs. 7-8 - Death has now come to Palestine. Christ came and conquered and established His kingdom; the Roman generals attack Jerusalem and kill thousands; siege is laid against the land, and many die from hunger. There is nothing left. The Gospel of Christ, the attack of the Romans, and the pestilence of starvation all serve to usher in the pale rider. Bodies lay everywhere and were often consumed by dogs, wild animals, and even hungry people. Josephus and Pliny refer to cannibalism resorted to by people who had nothing left to eat.

Vs. 9-11 - The opening of the first four seals represents what happens to the oppressors of God's people. Seal number five is the cry of the martyrs who implore the Great Judge to carry out this plan to its uttermost immediately. The altar is a symbol of the martyrdom of the saints. They had been sacrificed for the cause of Christ by those who worshipped with sacrifices on altars, the Jews. In the Old Testament, the blood of the offering was poured out at the base of the altar, for the life was in the blood (Lev. 17:14).

The blood of Abel cried to God from the ground (Gen. 4:10); it was not a disrespectful cry, but rather a tangible petition for justice from the Great Judge to execute His judgment swiftly (Luke 18:7-8; Ecc. 8:11). The martyrs are told that they must wait until others have joined them. The Lord was not being cruel or arbitrary; the

time was not yet full; the wicked had not yet completed their wickedness. Who knows the mind and wisdom of God? The righteous cannot lose, even if they are killed (Phil. 1:21-23; 2Tim. 4:7-8).

Vs. 12-14 - In Old Testament prophecies, the following symbols find these interpretations: earthquakes represent unrest between nations, the sun is a great political leader, the moon is a great religious leader, stars are lesser officials, mountains represent people who worship God, islands represent pagan Gentile nations, the sky would be the existing government over all. In summary, there would be a complete and utter collapse of Judean society in and around Jerusalem.

Vs. 15-17 - In Luke 23:28-30, Jesus quotes from Hosea 10:8 concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. Revelation 6:15-17 is a continuation of that same prophecy (Nahum 1:5-6).

Chapter 7:1-3 - There is a lapse between the opening of the sixth and seventh seal that corresponds with the season between prophecy and fulfillment (6:11). The angels are the destructive forces sent against Jerusalem. The angel, authorized by God, commands them to wait for the servants of the Lord to be made manifest (marked or sealed); it was common in those times to brand a servant to indicate ownership. The mark on a servant of the Lord is his or her Christian example (2Tim. 2:19; 2Cor. 1:21-22). The sealing that they would receive would save them from the slaughter of the Jews by Romans, but would not spare them from tribulation. The old Israel would perish, but the new Israel would be spared, just as God preserved the righteous in Judah as a remnant from captivity.

Vs. 4-8 - Paul and James both refer to the Church as the twelve tribes, which is simply another way of describing the Church as spiritual Israel (Acts 26:7; James 1:1). Because Christians are now spiritual Israel, the names that once applied to fleshly Israel now refer to spiritual Israel. Christians are now the remnant that will be saved from the world (Rom. 9:24-31). The number of those sealed for preservation is simply a great holy number. The seal is not a literal seal, the tribes are not literal tribes, the wind and angels are not literal, but rather, representative. Therefore, how can one insist that the number is literal? In addition, there is no mention of the word "rapture" in this text or anywhere else in scripture.

Vs. 9-17 - This great multitude consists of people who have remained faithful throughout the tribulation, who had died (perhaps as martyrs) and gone on to their reward. Many Christians would suffer along with their persecutors when the Romans came. Yet, one must realize that the "preservation by the Lord" does not always mean one's life is preserved physically; these were preserved spiritually that they might receive their heavenly reward. (See the promises made to the seven churches in Asia: Rev. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:5, 12, 21)

The Jews were a condemned race. As far back as Isaiah, it was prophesied that they would be destroyed as a nation, and a new kingdom of Israel would begin that was to have no end. They could not accept this idea and were unwilling to conform to the new laws set down by the King, Jesus Christ. Therefore, they killed the King thinking that it would end the new kingdom. The Lord knew these things were going to happen, and He prophesied accordingly. He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem and the downfall of the Jewish race in Matthew 23:33 - 24:35; Mark 13:1-30; Luke 21:5-33. He also said that these great events would be witnessed by the persons to whom He was speaking (Matt. 23:36; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32). At the time of His trial, He told a young high priest that he would see the Son of Man coming with power. This was to be the vengeance of the Lord God on those who had abandoned His precepts and had slain His Son.

Occasionally, the visions repeat themselves. The visions seen by John sometimes describe different views of the same event. The four horses sent against

Jerusalem show the downfall of Jerusalem, but each from the different perspectives of the conquering powers. Christ brought them down, Rome brought them down, starvation brought them down, death killed them off (Matt. 26:64; Luke 18:7-8).

Chapter 8:1 - The scene of the punishment of Jerusalem begins all over again from a different viewpoint. The silence here corresponds with the same period of waiting that the saints had to endure before the persecutors were punished. The Lord was withholding His vengeance until the fullness of time.

Vs. 2 - The seven angels are commissioned to carry out a task; the number seven indicates the thoroughness with which they will accomplish their work. Seven must not be taken literal; it means perfection. Seven horns is all powerful; seven eyes is all seeing; seven churches, but one Church; seven spirits, but one Spirit of God; seven seals are completely beyond human qualification, etc. Seven trumpets indicate a great announcement that will be heard everywhere is about to be made. What God did to Jerusalem by of Christ, Rome, starvation and death was known around the world.

Vs. 3 - The nature of the prayers is easily surmised from the response of God to their petitions.

Vs. 4 - God has vowed to hear the prayers of the righteous.

Vs. 5 - The prayers were the same as those of 6:9-10, imploring the Lord to bring His judgment upon the persecutors. The answer to those prayers came in the form of the angel who began the upheaval among the nations of the earth. The resulting disturbances were merely the beginning of God's punishments (Isa. 29:6; Joel 3:16).

Vs. 6 - Another view of the triumph of Christ over His executors is about to begin in detail. The trumpets will signify various events in the destruction of Jerusalem.

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 6:1 - 8:6

1. Briefly describe what happened at the opening of each seal:

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

f _____

g _____

2. What were the colors of each of the horses and the meaning of each color?

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

3. How many persons are going to be "raptured" in chapter seven? (Be careful!)
4. Where is chapter 6:16 repeated in the Bible?
5. How far back in Old Testament prophecy did God speak of the destruction of the Jewish nation?
6. Who are the 144,000 of chapter seven?
7. What question did one of the 24 elders ask John? What was the answer?

Lesson Six: Revelation 8:7 - 9:19

BLASTS FROM SIX TRUMPETS

As with the seven seals, the seven trumpets are divided into two groups of four and three. The first four are physical symbols that describe judgments upon the various persecutors of Christians. These symbols characterize the differing rulers and powers that fall within the scope of God's justice upon the enemies of His kingdom. It is possible that we may not be able to interpret many of these symbols for two reasons: 1) we were not raised as Hebrews familiar with the concepts and figurative language, 2) and we do not presently enjoy the miraculous gift of interpretation had by first century Christians. One can attempt to name a person or thing for each symbol, but to do so without precedent or parallel in other scriptural prophecies and fulfillments would require a journey into the realm of speculation, and any speculation would be un-provable by the Word. Suffice it to say that this chapter deals with the judgment of the Lord upon the oppressors of Christians.

Chapter 9:1 - The sounding of the fifth trumpet brings about the fall of an important official from power. In Isaiah, there is an example of a Babylonian ruler who falls from power and is called Lucifer (daystar or bright star - 14:4-23). Lucifer does not mean Satan in the Bible. This connection did not come about until hundreds of years after the Bible was written. The idea was developed by Catholic scholars. The fall of the ruler in Revelation 9:1 precipitates the successive events.

Vespasian and Titus, Roman generals, were commissioned by Neron Ksar (Nero) to take Jerusalem. They began this task by laying a three and a half year siege to the city in order to weaken it. This strategy was standard procedure for taking any walled city of that day. After the people were decimated by hunger, thirst, disease, in-fighting, and terror, the soldiers would swarm the gates and walls easily overwhelming the remaining defenders. This is precisely the manner in which Jerusalem was taken in 70 AD by Titus. Chapter nine is a repetition of chapter six in that it describes the siege (Vs. 1-12) and the fall of Jerusalem by sword (Vs. 13-21).

Vs. 2-3 - Locusts were a destructive force of great number; Egypt was plagued by them; the prophet Joel uses them to describe the size of the army that was to invade Judah (Joel 1, 2). In this case, locusts characterized the Roman army that laid siege to Jerusalem. History records that when the Romans first laid siege to the city, they killed no one; rather, they simply bided their time until the Jews were weakened, and then they killed them. Consider the scorpion's sting: it bites a man, and he suffers for hours, possibly days, before dying in great agony. One wishes that his life would quickly end, but there is no relief to be found, for the poison must work its slow course before death brings relief. Many of the Jews wished for a rapid end to their suffering; however, the Romans waited long before taking the city by sword.

Vs. 4-6 - No child of God was to be destroyed in this conflict; only the Jews and pagans would be killed. Those that were the Lord's would have long departed due to the warnings given by Jesus (Matt. 24:15-30; Luke 21:18, 25-28). The enemies of God's people would suffer the siege before dying. Five months out of the year was the period of time locusts were active. They could wipe out an entire countryside in that amount of time. To say that the siege would last five months simply meant that the invaders would completely strip the land and people of everything.

Vs. 7-10 - These verses describe the power and nature of the invading army. In a battle, horses were used to get soldiers into combat quickly, and to give them an advantage of height over the enemy. The crowns indicated both that they would have authority over their enemies and victory over their adversaries. The faces of men

denotes intelligence; the hair of women denotes glory (1Cor. 11:15); the teeth of lions shows fierceness; breastplates of iron would make them difficult to kill; when they charged swiftly into battle (wings denote speed), they made a mighty noise. John is not seeing Russian tanks or helicopters in a mid-East battle; he is seeing a Divine symbolic vision of the Roman army destroying the Jewish nation that oppressed Christians.

Vs. 11-12 - The leader of this destroying force is called the "angel of the bottomless pit," "Abaddon," and "Apollyon." He is a servant or messenger from the unending source of evil; he serves Satan. Both Abaddon and Apollyon mean "destroyer." Vs. 12 marks the end of the siege and the beginning of taking of Jerusalem by sword.

Vs. 13-14 - In the Old Testament, the river Euphrates was both a boundary and a barrier. Nations could not cross it to invade others without great difficulty. Here is a symbol of the force (orders) that held back the Romans from invading the city. The sixth angel releases the barrier, and the Roman army pushes into the city.

Vs. 15-16 - The enemies of Jerusalem had waited a long time to take the city, and the long delay increased their thirst for blood. The vast number is a description of the overpowering size of Jerusalem's enemies and God's judgment on her.

Vs. 17 - The army wears the colors of cleansing: fire and brimstone were used to burn out the iniquity of Sodom, and the brilliant hardness of the eastern jacinth or amethyst denoting the determined nature of the army. Like Sodom, the Lord used a potent cleansing agent to remove a sinful influence (Ez. 38:22; Psalm 11:6; Job 18:15; Isa. 36:9).

Vs. 18-19 - The triad of ultimate suffering is used to describe what took place when the Romans finally took Jerusalem by sword. Israel and Judah had never experienced so vicious and deadly an enemy as Rome. The Romans had inflicted intolerable anguish by the siege (scorpion's sting), and now they will bring death and suffering to an extreme with the sword (flaming mouth).

Vs. 20-21 - The Jews always had problems with idolatry. At Sinai, they worshipped a golden calf; they worshipped Baal, Astarte, Ashtoroth, Molech, Dagon, Marduk, etc. At the time of Christ, they were no different; they were worshiping money and power more than Jehovah. Even though their city and way of life was being destroyed, they refused to repent and return to God. They were not sorry for murdering the saints, whoring after other gods, countless deceits, fornications, thievery, and dabbling in the occult.

Note: when the word "earth" is encountered in prophecy, it usually means a specific kingdom or nation. Though there may be a few cases where it is literal, more often than not it will mean a certain country; the context will determine its usage. "Earth" in the following texts means:

- 1) Isaiah 13:10-13 - Babylon would be destroyed as a kingdom, never more to rise. The world as they knew it would be destroyed.
- 2) Isaiah 14:24-26 - The same is said of Assyria.
- 3) Isaiah 26 - The nation holding Judah captive is called the earth. The Lord says He will punish them.
- 4) Isaiah 33:9 - Judah is referred to as the earth mourning when they are no longer God's people.
- 5) Isaiah 42 - Judah is referred to as the earth.
- 6) Isaiah 45:8 - The Medo-Persian empire is called the earth.

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 8:7 - 9:21

1. Describe the effects of a locust horde. How does this fit the Roman army?
2. Describe the effects of a scorpion sting. How does this characterize the siege against Jerusalem?

3. What do the following mean?

Abaddon _____

Apollyon _____

4. Name the Roman emperor and generals at this time.

a _____

b _____

c _____

5. Discuss modern pseudo-prophets' explanations for Revelation 8-9.

True or False

- a _____ This passage is discussing an attack on Israel by Russians using tanks and rocket launchers.
- b _____ When the second angel blew his trumpet, a great burning mountain was thrown into the sea.
- c _____ Although the angel used incense before the Lord in heaven, it does not authorize Christians to use incense in worship to God today.
- d _____ Because there is a golden altar before the Lord in heaven, golden altars are required for worship today.
- e _____ In the Bible, when the earth is mentioned, it always means the literal planet earth and the soil that covers it.
- f _____ In spite of the horror of the locust army, humankind refused to repent of their sins.

Lesson Seven: Revelation 10:1-11

INTERLUDE OF THE BITTERSWEET BOOK

The prophecy begins again, examining yet another aspect of the judgment of the Lord on Jerusalem. This time the vision starts with the waiting space that had to be endured by the saints (Rev. 6:9-11). Chapter ten is a lengthy description of that waiting period.

Chapter 10:1 - John sees a vision of a powerful messenger of God. This angel is not the same one of 5:2, and his aspect shows the nature of his being and message. The cloud indicates Divine majesty; the face glowing like the sun suggests that he had been in the presence of God (like Moses); a rainbow symbolizes Divine covenant and promise; feet like fire shows leadership and guidance (Psalm 119:105). He was sent as a result of a promise to John (4:1), and he guided John throughout the apocalypse.

Vs. 2 - The book in the angel's hand was opened or unsealed, corresponding to the book unsealed by the worthy Lamb of God/Lion of Judah. By placing his feet on the land and sea, he is demonstrating his dominion over both. Later in Revelation, it will be determined that the land is the Jewish culture, and the sea is the dominant society of that day, the Roman Empire. Later, it will be shown that Rome is the sea beast and that the Jewish state is the land beast. But for now, suffice it to say that the angel has dominion over all.

Vs. 3-4 - The angel cries out with a voice of power, strength, and divine authority. Thunder represents a great, dire warning of an approaching storm or tribulation. Yet, these complete (7) warnings are to be kept secret for reasons known only to the Lord. We do not know the content of these divinely sealed warnings. To speculate would be an exercise in futility (Deut. 29:29; Job 11:6-7).

Vs. 5-6 - The glorious angel takes an oath by God that the end of the waiting period had come. Nothing would hold back the judgments of the book.

Vs. 7 - When the seventh angel sounded, God's mystery would be revealed in its entirety. This mystery is the Divine plan spoken of in Ephesians 1:9-10; it neared completion in Colossians 1:6,23 written in the year 64 AD which closely paralleled the writing of Revelation. When the gospel had been preached in all of the world, the end would come. The husk of Judaism would be swept away, and the work of redemption completed (Matt. 24:14; Isa. 2:2-5; Micah 4:1-4; Dan. 2:10; Zech. 14; Heb. 8:13).

Vs. 8-10 - John was instructed to take the little book and eat it, producing conflicting effects within him. This book is the embodiment of the visions of judgment against Jerusalem and persecutors of Christian, given to John. Upon hearing of the punishment of the Lord on His enemies and the triumph of the saints, John felt the sweetness of joy; but, when John contemplated the dreadful suffering and sorrow that would accompany the victory, the sweetness of joy would be changed to the bitterness of grief. Even when an oppressor suffers, a Christian is made sorry. When the wicked die, the Christian grieves, for there lies a soul that will never have another opportunity to repent and be saved.

Vs. 11 - This is clear evidence that John would leave Patmos in the future and continue to evangelize, disproving the theory that John was in permanent exile. John said he was in Patmos "for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9). Since John was to leave Patmos and preach, 10:6 cannot mean the end of the world.

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF TWO WITNESSES - 11:1-19

At this point, it is necessary to establish two principles:

First, that Jesus Christ is the angel of Revelation 10 - 11.

- a. Angel simply means one sent with a message or mission. Jesus fits this description.
- b. The description of the angel of chapter ten corresponds with that of the Son in chapter one.
- c. In 11:3, He exercised authority only given to Christ (Matt. 28:18) and never to a created being.
- d. The fact that Christ appears in other forms in the Bible and Revelation lends credence to His appearing as an angel here. A lion in 5:5, a lamb in 5:6, a rider in 6:2, a Son on the cloud in 14:14 and as a rider on a white horse in 19:11.
- e. It harmonizes with the purpose of the waiting period for Him to appear as a powerful agent, instead of as a judge or king.
- f. The open book of chapter ten is the sealed book of chapter five. No one but Jesus was qualified to open and read it (5:3,9).

Second, chapter eleven provides us with one of the rare occasions when a number in Revelation can be taken literally. The 42 months, or 1260 days, is an accurate time span. However, it is history (and not context) that shows it to be literal.

- a. Precedent: Isaiah spoke a prophecy against the northern ten tribes of Israel in the seventh chapter. He said that, as a result of their treachery, they would cease to be a nation in 65 years; it is a matter of historical fact that it occurred exactly that way.
- b. Vespasian received his commission from Neron Ksar (Nero) to begin operations against Jerusalem in February of 67 AD. Jerusalem finally fell to Titus in August of 70 AD, after a 42 month siege.

Revelation 11:1-14 follows the waiting period of chapter 10 with a description of the siege from within the city. The faithful of spiritual Israel will continue to be sealed, the gospel and judgment of the Lord will continue to be preached, and Jews will continue to starve to death un-repentant. Those who remained behind in the city to preach are killed and taken to Paradise. Following this, the city is over-run.

Chapter 11:1 - The reed of measurement was six cubits (about nine feet) and was used to measure distance. A rod or staff is also a symbol of authority; to have a measuring reed like a rod indicates authoritative discipline (Psalm 2:6-9; Job 9:34; Rev. 2:27).

John is to measure something for judgment in verse one. Some commentators believe this to be the true spiritual Israel and the true temple of God in heaven, and that the measuring is similar to the sealing of the saints in previous chapters. However, the location of this vision is in the city of Jerusalem, the event being described is judgment upon the city, and the symbology implies punishment. Furthermore, 11:19 shows the temple of God being revealed (11:8). If the former is correct, then the measuring is for preservation and those outside of the court, the Gentiles (unbelievers), are not to be measured for preservation. If the latter is right, then the measuring is to determine and demonstrate whether or not physical Israel "measures up" to God's expectations.

Vs. 2 - By divine decree, Jerusalem was to be made desolate, and the pagan Romans would be the instrument of God's wrath (Matt. 23:37-38; Luke 21:24).

Vs. 3 - "I will give power" is based on a promise of the Lord in Matthew 10:18-20; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:12. They would preach throughout all tribulations including the siege, trying to get people to repent. The two witnesses represent the prophets who were to preach the gospel before the end truly arrived (Matt. 24:14). The testimony of two is based on a requirement of the Law of Moses and the doctrine of Christ (Deut. 19:15; John 8:17; Luke 10; Heb. 10:28). The prophets are clothed in mourning garments

to show how truly sad a thing it was that so many would not repent. Further, it shows the suffering the witnesses brought upon themselves resulting from their testimony.

Vs. 4 - Lamps are symbols of light (light of God's word), and olive trees provide the oil that supply the lamps. Combined, these symbols show the living, unending light of God's word being proclaimed.

Vs. 5-6 - No power would be able to stop the preaching of the gospel; killing Christians, driving them into exile, and taking away children, lands, and possessions failed to stop the gospel. All efforts to destroy the fledgling Kingdom served to help rather than hinder its growth. Eventually, those who killed Christians were themselves put to death in the same manner.

Vs. 7 - The completion of their message corresponds with Matthew 24:14. After the gospel had been preached, the end of the Jewish world would come. The witnesses are slain by the Romans, who were incited to this activity since the beginning of the Church.

Vs. 8 - The scene of their dead bodies lying in the streets speaks to the openness of the shameful nature of this once faithful city turned harlot (Isa. 1:10). The two most wicked places on earth are now used to illustrate Jerusalem, the only city where Christ was crucified (Jer. 23:14; Ez. 16:46-52). As Egypt was the place of Israel's bondage, so Jerusalem is now the place of Christian bondage.

Vs. 9-10 - The people were so evil that they wanted the bodies of prophets to decompose in public in order to make a sport of them. They rejoiced that they would no longer be "tormented" by the word of God.

Vs. 11-12 - The rejoicing of the evil ones was only temporary, just as the suffering period for the martyrs was to be temporary. After a short time, the cause of the Lord is resurrected and taken to glorious heights. This resurrection is very similar to the resurrection of Israel in Isaiah 26:13-19 and Ezekiel 37:1-14. The wicked Jews feared the cause of the prophets and tried to end it by killing them. Yet, evil can only triumph over good for a very short time; God and His people will be vindicated and rise to greater power and glory than before.

Vs. 13 - Now the siege has ended and Rome sweeps into the city, killing multitudes. A great, complete number of persons were slain; those remaining of the old order of Israel gave glory to God out of fear.

Vs. 14 - Jerusalem had already suffered a siege and a devastating battle. Now they were to face the shame and despair of never again uniting into a nation with even a shadow of their former glory. Compare this with the three woes of literal Egypt. Egypt suffered plagues for holding Israel captive; Jerusalem suffered siege for persecuting Christians. Egypt's army was annihilated in the Red Sea for trying to recapture God's people; Jerusalem was over-run by sword for killing God's people. Egypt never again became a great nation; the Jews will never again become a great nation.

Vs. 15 - This is the fulfillment of the prophecy of Daniel 2:44.

Vs. 16-18 - This is the song of praise by the twenty-four elders. They praise the Lord for throwing down the oppressive kingdom of Judah and for raising up His own kingdom. They praise Him for rewarding the patient Christians and for punishing the wicked destroyers.

Vs. 19 - While the Temple stood in Jerusalem, it served as a focal point for the Jews much the same as the tower of Babel in patriarchal times. With the destruction of the Temple by the Roman army in 70 AD, there no longer remained that center of anti-Christ Judaism. All of the world would now know that the true Temple of God is in heaven. Evidence of that are the signs of God's presence known by Israel since Sinai.

REVIEW

We have come to the thematic center of the book of Revelation. We have seen the triumph of Christ over His enemies and the enemies of His disciples. We will now view these same events from the perspective of the triumphant Church.

Chapter one gave us the introduction to the book. We are introduced to the writer (John), the author (God), and the central character (Christ).

Chapters two and three allow us to visit with seven churches of that day, viewing their strengths and weaknesses, and hearing the Lord teach them.

Chapters four and five give us glorious vision of heaven and the majesty of God. John is shown the book of prophecy that can only be opened by Christ.

Chapter six finds the seals of the book being opened and a view of the judgment upon Jerusalem is seen. The four horsemen show us different aspects of that judgment: Christ's resurrection and ongoing cause, Rome coming in war to Jerusalem, siege and starvation in the city, and death from the over-running of the city. The fifth seal begins the vision again with the saints crying for relief. The sixth shows the fall of the Jewish government. The seventh begins again with the waiting period and introduces the blasts from the seven trumpets. Chapters seven through nine encompass these events.

Chapter ten begins again with the waiting period before the holocaust, and provides us with a view of the dual nature of the prophecies: sweetness of victory, bitterness of death.

Chapter eleven gives a view of the siege from within the city, showing the triumph of the prophets, the fall of the temple, the glorification of the Lord, and the revelation of the true Temple in heaven.

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 10:1 - 11:19

1. Who is the angel of chapters 10 and 11?

2. What is the dual nature of the little book?

3. What does each effect mean?

Sweet _____

Bitter _____

4. What is the little book?

5. What is the "mystery" of 10:7?

6. Was John to remain in exile until his death? Why or why not?

7. How long did the Roman siege of Jerusalem last?

8. On whose side were the two witnesses?

9. How do you know?

10. In what passage did Daniel discuss the Kingdom?

In one sentence describe what happened in each chapter of Revelation 1 - 11

1 _____

2 & 3 _____

4 & 5 _____

6 _____

7 - 9 _____

10 _____

11 _____

Matching

_____ Mighty angel of 10:1

_____ Spiritual Sodom and Egypt

_____ The true temple of God

_____ Must prophesy again before many

_____ Allowed to lie dead in the street

_____ Both sweet and bitter

a) In heaven

b) The little book

c) Jesus Christ

d) Jerusalem

e) Two witnesses

f) John

Locate The Passage In Revelation

1. _____ "To Him who loved us and washed us from our own sins in His Blood"
2. _____ "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day"
3. _____ "You have left your first love"
4. _____ "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life"
5. _____ "Behold I stand at the door and knock"
6. _____ "Before the throne there was a sea of glass"
7. _____ "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"
8. _____ "And the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"
9. _____ "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees"
10. _____ "And a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened"

Lesson Eight: Revelation 12:1 - 13:18

THE VISION OF THE WOMAN, CHILD, AND DRAGON - 12:1-17

Chapter 12 begins the second half of the book of Revelation, both physically and thematically. The first half addressed the triumph of Jesus Christ over the decadent children of Israel, and the visions of chapters four through eleven show the Savior as victorious and His crucifiers defeated.

In chapters 12 - 22, the Church (Bride of Christ and New Jerusalem) rises victorious over its persecutors. The land beast (Jews of Palestine) and the sea beast (Roman Empire) will cease harming the Church, and both go down into perdition. The visions take a different form than the first half of the book; instead of symbolic scenes of triumph and destruction, the nature of the visions will be in parable form. John continues to be inspired to repeat the visions from different perspectives, much the same as did Joseph, Pharaoh, Daniel, and Nebuchadnezzar. Genesis 37 - 41 and Daniel 2 - 7 address the same theme.

The contents of chapters 12 and 13 are of a highly symbolic nature and are under dispute by some of the finest Bible students known. It would be difficult to definitively determine the meanings of all of the symbols without undue controversy. However, it is consistent with the established theme of Revelation (the triumph of Christ over His executors, and the triumph of the Church over its persecutors) to interpret the Woman of chapter 12 as the Church.

- 1) In the Old Testament, Israel is portrayed as a woman (Jer. 2:32).
- 2) In the New Testament, the Church is shown as a pure woman (1Cor. 11:3; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 5:22-33; 2John 1).
- 3) The Church, as the Bride of Christ, produces fruit (children of God).
- 4) The children were hunted down and killed by Jews and later by Romans.

Chapter 12:1 - The great conflict between the Church and the forces of evil becomes evident from one end of the earth to the other. The Church will be seen as the Bride of the triumphant Christ, sharing in the same glory, honor, and purity as He.

Vs. 2 - The Church would produce fruit unto God (Isa. 66:7-8; Rom. 7:4; 2John 1). While under trial and persecution, the Church would continue to produce children of God who would suffer and die for the cause of Christ.

Vs. 3-4 - Throughout Old Testament prophecy the serpent has been a characterization of Satan and his work. Revelation 12 uses serpent, dragon, Satan, and Devil to mean the same thing: the Adversary of God and His people from the beginning of time until today. During the time of persecution of the Church by the Jews and Romans, the offspring of the Church would die at the hands of those who served Satan. Yet, no matter how hard Satan and his minions struggled to wipe out the Church, he would fail to kill all of God's children.

Heaven in this context is not the abode of God, but a struggle taking place among the principalities and powers of civil government; one that would be witnessed world-wide. Fiery red symbolizes ravenous death; seven heads show great reasoning power and control; ten horns show great power; crowns show authority. His tail casting down stars is a figure of his purging out anyone of authority who stood in his way. The "child" is used in the singular, collective sense to describe the martyred fruit or children of God produced by the Church (Ex. 1:16-22; Matt. 2:13).

Vs. 5-6 - Satan may have succeeded in killing the bodies of the early Christians, but he failed to destroy their souls. Their souls went to the presence of God; they were the martyrs crying out for justice from the altar (6:9-11). When the Church saw the signs of the coming destruction of Jerusalem given by Jesus (Matt. 24), they fled away into the

wilderness until the siege and destruction of Jerusalem ended (1260 Days). The Church did not perish or go out of existence during that period, but rather, the providence of God sustained it until the Romans had done their worst to Palestine.

Vs. 7-9 - Conflict arose between the forces of sin and the powers God used to protect the church. During the siege of Jerusalem, the Romans were distracted from pursuing their own persecution of Christians. The Palestinian siege and the unrest among all of Rome's subordinate nations made the Roman Empire truly an empire with feet of iron mingled with clay. God used the divided society of Rome to help preserve the Christians who had fled to the mountains of Pella to hide from the Roman attack on Jerusalem. Satan failed to mobilize Rome against Christians until it was too late; Satan lost the one chance he may have had to crush the early Church with the military might of the Roman Empire. Circumstances would never again make it possible (Dan. 2, 12).

Vs. 10-12 - Here is seen the true strength of the Church. Having lost his window of opportunity, Satan was assured that he would never wipe out the Church with force. The only other tactic left available to him is to corrupt it out of existence; this discussion will be reserved for chapter 20. The true strength of the Church can be seen in that fact that no force can win against the will of God. There was nothing the might of the Roman Empire, the wealth and knowledge of the Jews, or all of the powers of hell could do to overcome the Church. They could kill the children of God, but they cannot take away Christians' standing with God, nor destroy their souls, nor stop the spread of the gospel, nor prevent the growth of the Church.

The early Christians were not concerned for their physical lives. By seeking first the kingdom of God and not their own personal well-being, they won the kingdom and eternal life. By fighting against the people of God, Satan only succeeded in proving this point and glorifying God. How can one not realize the incredible futility of fighting against God?! When one rejects the Lord's side and joins forces with sin, he joins with the biggest loser in the universe, the Devil.

However, because Satan's defeat on this occasion, he intensified his efforts to persecute Christians. He knows his time is limited and that soon it will not be possible to use governments against Christians. Eventually, the Roman Empire will itself adopt a corrupted form of Christianity.

Vs. 13-14 - As a result of the increased persecutions at the local level, the Lord must continue to aid the Church. There would be several periods of persecutions in the future that the Church had yet to face, and God would give it the capacity to flee the persecutions and survive (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11-12).

Vs. 15-17 - Simply because Satan failed to destroy the Church with force, did not mean that persecution had ended for Christians. The Church will yet endure several periods of intense suffering at the hands of various Roman emperors (Domitian et al) yet to come. At times, the oppression appeared so great that it could be described as a flood, but the divided nature of the Roman Empire absorbed and diluted much of its intensity. The Church would survive, and the devil would continue to persecute for a limited time to come, but all in vain.

Chapter 13:1 - In chapter 12, the conflict between the Church and its persecutors is seen from the environs of Jerusalem. Chapter 13 affords an empire-wide view of Rome's part in the oppression of the Church. A description of the pagan Roman persecutors is rendered here.

The Roman empire entirely encompassed the Mediterranean Sea, controlling all traffic and commerce on it. A beast following Satan, having power over the sea can only be the Roman empire. They were the ones who controlled commerce, travel and troop movements by controlling the waterways. This beast is not the same as the dragon; instead, it receives power from the dragon. At the same time, he bears the same

characteristics as the dragon. The blasphemous name corresponds to the insistence of Roman emperors that they be addressed and worshipped as gods.

Vs. 2 - The composite of all the beasts of prey shows ferocity and savagery. The leopard is swift, vicious, and agile in its attack; the bear has huge claws and can crush the skull of an ox with one stroke of its paw; the lion's teeth can shred a victim in short order. The power of this beast comes from Satan. This is readily seen by reading secular history; the behavior of some Roman emperors could only have originated in hell.

Vs. 3 - The deadly wound corresponds with the earth helping the woman in chapter 12. Many of the Roman provinces were in open revolt at that time, and the empire appeared to be in danger of falling apart. Yet it recovered, albeit too late to stop the Church. Nevertheless, Rome's return to health surprised the rest of the world into submission.

Vs. 4-6 - It seemed that nothing could stop the Roman empire (or the emperor). They recovered from near collapse and returned to power. Out of fear, much of the world begins to worship the emperor. This blasphemy of the emperor was the worst of all. He took the name of God for himself, railed against heaven, and demanded that all men worship him. That the Lord was able to use such an one to serve His purposes is truly a wonder. But, this is not the first time God used the wicked nature of one nation to punish another (Isa. 10:5-7).

Vs. 7-8 - The attempt to destroy the Church was not confined to Jerusalem only; it was an empire-wide effort. All of the subordinate nations witnessed the slaughter of Christians. Due to their pagan pasts, it was not difficult for these nations to begin worshipping the emperor. Only the truly dedicated Christians refrained.

Vs. 9-10 - A break in the vision occurs here to give encouragement to the righteous and warning to oppressors. In short, one reaps what he sows.

Vs. 11-17 - The second beast that arose was subject to the first beast and acted on the first's power and authority. With only two horns instead of ten, it would have considerably less power. Association with a lamb and speaking like a dragon clearly indicates its deceitful nature; a semblance of purity filled with the word of the Devil. Coming out of the earth shows that it arises in Palestine or Jerusalem. The activities of this beast correspond to prophecies of Christ and the apostles (Matt. 24:11,24; 2Thes. 2:9-12). Both addressed the coming of false teachers performing false miracles and spreading false doctrines. They would lead Christians astray into following the edicts and religions of the Roman Empire. This was merely another tool of the Devil to destroy the Church. Everyone was forced to worship the emperor; and, as Christians could not worship a man, life was made difficult for them by the dominant Romans.

By means of economic warfare, everyone was forced to comply with the imperial edict. The law was "worship the emperor or die." Emperor worship became the mark, or badge, of those who followed the beast. Just as the mark of Christians is following God, the mark of the beast is following the devil-guided emperor.

Vs. 18 - John states cryptically that those who are faithful and need to know will understand who is under discussion. It would be extremely difficult to be absolute on the interpretation of the number 666 today. The context implicates Neron Caesar (Nron Ksr - Hebrew; Neron Ksar - Greek transliteration of Hebrew; Nero in English). There are many different speculations as to who is actually identified by this number. False teachers have tried to tack it on any number of significant historical figures. To ascribe 666 to any other person other than a powerful leader of that period would destroy the context.

To help reinforce the implication of Nero, note that Hebrew letters also stand for numbers. Nero's name in Hebrew adds up thusly: N = 50, R = 200, O = 6, N = 50, K = 100, S = 60, R = 200; total: 666.

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 12:1 - 13:18

1. Where is the main dividing point of Revelation?
 - a. What is the theme of the first half? _____
 - b. Second half? _____
2. Identify from chapter 12:
 - a. Woman _____
 - b. Child _____
 - c. Dragon _____
3. List the three forces tried to stop the church in its beginning?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
4. Did they succeed? What forces can stop the church today?
5. After the fall of Jerusalem, did the persecution of Christians cease?
6. What is the sea beast? Where does it get its power?
7. What was emperor worship? What happened to those who did not worship him?
8. What is the relationship between the first and second beasts of chapter 13?

True or False

- a _____ The dragon and the devil are the same being.
- b _____ A literal war was fought between Michael and the dragon in heaven before the throne of God.
- c _____ The offspring of the woman are those who keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Christ.
- d _____ The sea beast is Russia, and the lesser beast is Red China.
- e _____ Those who worship the beast will have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
- f _____ The number 666 is the number of a man in the 21st century.

Lesson Nine: Revelation 14:1 - 16:21

IDENTIFYING BABYLON

For the sake of understanding chapters 14-19, it is important to establish the identity of Babylon and the Great Harlot. Some Bible scholars would have us believe that Babylon and the harlot both describe Rome. However, that idea is in conflict with the Bible's own evidence.

- 1) In Revelation 17:16, the beast hates the harlot and seeks to destroy her. Why would Rome hate its self?
- 2) It is illogical to describe Rome as playing the harlot since Rome never was faithful to God (Isa. 1:1-21; Ez. 16). Jerusalem is the Great Harlot often unfaithful to God over the course of its history.
- 3) Apocalyptic names have often been given to Jerusalem throughout the Bible, even in Revelation (11:8). In First Peter, the author describes himself as being in Babylon. The Babylon of the Old Testament had been destroyed, and there is no evidence that Peter had ever been in Rome. He is speaking of Jerusalem as Babylon.
- 4) Revelation is not directly concerned with Rome. That city enters the picture as the instrument of God's wrath.

VISIONS OF:

- The Song Of The 144,000 - 14:1-5
- The Fall Of Babylon - 14:6-13
- Harvesting The Earth - 14:14-20

THE SONG OF THE 144,000 - 14:1-5

The visions now move to events immediately following the taking of Jerusalem by sword. Reward is given to the faithful in the Church, and suffering is given to its persecutors. The Jews, as the enemies of God's people, are destroyed by the instrument of God's wrath, the Romans. Yet this instrument is wicked and does not confine its destruction to the Jews only. Therefore, God will help the Church to triumph over it as well.

Chapter 14:1 - The Lamb standing on Mount Zion is Jesus Christ, and Mount Zion itself is the New Jerusalem which is the Church. A vivid contrast is made between the Jerusalem of old and the Jerusalem that is new. The New is envisioned as pure, righteous, and filled with harmony. Mount Zion is the dwelling of all of the Blessed (Heb. 12:22-23).

144,000 is the numerical symbol for that group of saints martyred before the destruction of Jerusalem (6:10-11). This large number of martyred saints would send a strong message to the world, i.e., that persecutors could kill a great, holy number of Christians, and they still would not stop the Lord nor His Church.

Vs. 2 - Each kind of sound shows a different characteristic of the heavenly voice: 1) many waters carries the rushing rumble of unstoppable might; 2) loud thunder is cause for terror; 3) harps represent harmonious singing.

Vs. 3 - This new song is not one of worship by earthly beings, but of the victory given those in the Lord's presence. Living persons have not yet enjoyed the bliss of eternal triumph over earthly suffering.

Vs. 4-5 - The spiritual purity of the martyrs is evident. They did not fall under the worldly, corrupting influences among humankind. They were virgins in the same sense

that Jerusalem was a harlot, spiritually. Their example is given to inspire living Christians to persevere in faithfulness.

Vs. 6-7 - The flying messenger represents the speed with which the gospel would be preached to all of the world. Just 31 years after the first gospel sermon was preached, the apostle Paul said in Colossians 1:6,23 that the gospel had been preached in all of the world (64 AD; Matt. 24:14,31). It was imperative that the gospel be obeyed quickly by everyone. Since God's judgment against Jerusalem meant many would die, therefore life was uncertain, death loomed large, and most would be unprepared.

Vs. 8 - A great city has fallen, and it is described as Babylon (the original Babylon was no longer in existence - Isa. 13). Babylon was used as a symbol of the ultimate in corruption. Jerusalem is the city characterized with this description. Jerusalem is the city where rebellion against God began. Persecution of Christians began in Jerusalem and spread to other parts of the world. Jerusalem is the only major city known to have fallen at this time.

Vs. 9-11 - Note that chapter 14 appears to be a summary of the book of Revelation: the faithful are preserved by God, Jerusalem falls, the Church is persecuted by the beast, and those who side with the beast will be punished along with it.

Wines for drinking were usually diluted with water, for in many cases the wine was too strong or bitter to drink straight. Sometimes spices, oils, etc. were added to make the wine smoother or sweeter. But, the wine of the wrath of the Lord would not be made more palatable; they would have to drink it in all of its bitterness.

Fire and brimstone represent suffering and punishment. Brimstone is mineral sulfur. To get sulfur to burn, one must first achieve temperatures in excess of 1000 degrees; when it burns, it gives off a poisonous, choking gas with a terrible odor. All of this contributes to the image of the unbearable nature of unending punishment.

Vs. 12-13 - No greater accomplishment can be aspired to than to die faithful in the Lord. No greater praise can be given than to say that one is asleep in Jesus.

Vs. 14-16 - The perspective now changes to that of Divine justice. Christ has returned to gather the faithful to Him during the tribulation. They are the harvest of grain cut down and garnered into heaven. They were the martyrs who died and were taken to their reward.

Vs. 17-20 - The other harvest is that of the wicked who perished during the Great Tribulation. As the righteous form the bread of life, so the wicked form the wine of wrath. Here follows another occasion when the "earth" represents the regions of Palestine. The Jews and those influenced by them would be caught up in the Roman onslaught of that area. The image of a lake of blood the length of Palestine and the depth of four feet represents utter carnage.

BOWLS OF JUDGMENT - 15:1 - 16:21

Chapter 15 begins where chapter 13 left off. Chapter 14 is a break in the continuity of the vision designed to provide reassurance to the saints. The vision of the great might of the sea beast and the great deceptiveness of the land beast would shake even the strongest of Christians, therefore John is inspired in chapter 14 to skip ahead to show that God will balance everything out.

From chapter 13, we learn that the sea beast is the personification of the power of the Roman emperor; the land beast is the personification of a Palestinian power that was trying to enforce emperor worship. The strength of the land beast was such that if anyone did not worship the emperor, he would be exiled or killed. Chapter 13 ends with further identification of the beast. The sequence of events picks up with chapter 15.

Chapter 15:1 - John sees another sign among the powers of government that will soon be carried out among the people. The seven angels with seven bowls parallel the

seven seals and seven trumpets with this exception, the seven seals and trumpets had Christ as the central figure, and the seven bowls have the Bride of Christ as the central figure. God sent preachers to the Jews to warn them of coming judgment and salvation; He granted them time to repent; and, they refused. Now is the time to pour out judgment from the wine bowls of God's wrath.

Vs. 2 - The sea of glass represents the nature of the Church comprised of all saints in that day. Who Christians are and what they stand for is as clear as glass. Christians are in harmony and at peace with one another. Those who love the Church find it to be a sea of glass; those who fight against it find fire (suffering). Those who spiritually survive the wickedness of the beast sing a great song of triumph and praise.

Vs. 3-4 - Singing the song of Moses is a type of what is happening to spiritual Israel here. 1500 years earlier, Israel suffered bondage in Egypt under Pharaoh Ramses. God told Pharaoh through Moses (preacher) to let His people go. Pharaoh refused, and God smote him with plagues. Israel was persecuting Christians, and by means of His preachers God said "let My people alone." Israel refused, and God brought plagues on them. It is only appropriate that spiritual Israel (the victorious Church) sing the song of Moses (Ex. 15).

Vs. 5-6 - The temple is no longer the physical temple in Jerusalem. It is a greater temple of a spiritual nature in heaven. It is only fitting that the tabernacle be the starting point of the undoing of Israel. The clothing of the seven angels is similar to that of the Son of Man in chapter one, demonstrating that their authority is from Christ.

Vs. 7-8 - One of the four beings of power near the throne of God (Rev. 4,5,6) commissions the seven angels to begin the plagues against the new Egypt (Jerusalem). As in the Old Testament (Ex. 40:34-35), so it is here that no one could enter the tabernacle when God's presence was manifested there. Once the sequence of events of the judgment of Jerusalem began, no one would be allowed in the presence of God to make intercession for them.

Chapter 16:1 - The bowls of wrath here correspond with the wine of the wrath of God in 14:10; it would be drunk unmixed with mercy. Those who drink it are worshippers of the beast.

Vs. 2 - It is to be remembered that John is seeing visions. He is speaking in symbols concerning the suffering of the Jews for their rejection of Christ and persecution of the saints. Just as the colored horses merely represent facets of suffering, so these plagues are not literal but rather symbolic. Secondly, John has drawn an analogy between the Jews of Revelation and the Egyptians of Exodus. The downfall of Egypt is a type of the downfall of Jerusalem.

The Jews had come full circle. The once oppressed righteous have now become the unrighteous oppressors. With careful examination, one can see parallels between the plagues in Revelation and the plagues upon Egypt (Ex. 9:8-12).

Vs. 3-6 - Parallels the Egyptian plague of changing the water to blood which to Israel was the ultimate in spiritual corruption. Note that the plagues closely follow the principle of 13:10.

Vs. 7-9 - This plague does not find a parallel among Egyptian plagues; however, it does resemble a burning that the Lord sent into Israel for rebellion and idolatry. Just as the plagues did not soften Pharaoh's heart, so they did not soften the hearts of the Jews. Signals the coming end of the emperors.

Vs. 10-11 - The plague of darkness is similar to that of Egypt in Exodus 10:21-23. This kind of darkness would completely destroy thought and reason. The darkness symbolizes the paralyzing despair, hopelessness, and anguish felt by the oppressors. A bully is always cowering and stunned when suffering is turned back on him.

Vs. 12-14 - Before the Babylonian captivity, the kings of the east were held back by a great natural barrier, the Euphrates River. A king who wished to conquer another nation to the west had a long and hard journey around the river. In this account, the obstacle would be removed. The invading army is not a literal Babylon; Babylon is no longer a nation. This example is given to show that no barrier would stand in the way of the great invading armies of Rome. The king of the east is nothing more than a symbol of a great, powerful warrior king.

The spirits resembling frogs come from the Devil and his two chief servants (the sea beast - Rome, and the land beast - collaborating forces in Palestine). The false prophet and the land beast are one in that they share the same mission (13:11-17). They both endorse and encourage emperor worship through false miracles.

The Roman army did not consist of Romans only. Conquered nations surrendered their armed forces to Roman control and usage. The Romans were not above using the soldiers of one province to overcome a rival province. The army that swept down on Jerusalem was comprised of soldiers from all over the known world. Note the reference to the day of the Lord; this day is the occasion when God comes against Jerusalem to pour out His wrath upon the crucifiers of His only begotten Son (Zech. 14).

Vs. 15 - John quotes the words and warnings of Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul reminding the saints to be prepared (Matt. 24:25; 1Thes. 5).

Vs. 16 - The name Armageddon comes from Mount Megiddo, a site of frequent battles between the people of God and the enemies of God. Here Deborah and Barak overcame the armies of Sisera, Jehoshaphat overcame the Moabites and Ammonites. Throughout history, wars have occurred here with Egyptians, Saracens, Druses, and Turks. Armageddon merely represents a conflict in which God clearly and purposefully aids one side against the other. In this case, God moved Rome against Jerusalem to punish them for killing His Son and persecuting His people (Zech. 12:11).

Vs. 17-19 - Another vision of the end of Jerusalem shows the rod of anger in the Lord's hand, i.e., the Roman army. The final attack on the city is incapable of being described any other way than that of an epoch ending, earthshaking cataclysm. The Jews now must drink the cup of wrath prepared for them by the Lord. The city was divided into three parts: the dead, those waiting to die, and those that would be left alive to live the rest of their days with the horrid memories of the butchery and carnage. Not only did Jerusalem fall, but so did any person, city, or region suspected of collaboration with Jerusalem.

Vs. 20-21 - Isaiah uses islands and mountains to represent Gentile nations and city-states. Here it is used to show that the Gentiles in or near the area fled from fear of what happened to the Jews. Hail is occasionally used to symbolize God's judgment among nations of the earth. Both the Gentiles and the surviving Jews should have been moved to repentance, but instead they were hardened by the grave, heavy punishment they witnessed.

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 14:1 - 16:21

1. What internal evidences suggest that Rome is not the Great Harlot or Babylon?
2. Which city most likely fits the description of the Great Harlot?
3. Who is the Lamb on Mount Zion?
4. Who is standing with Him?

5. How long was it until the Gospel was preached in all of the world?
6. What did Jesus say would happen after the Gospel was preached in all of world? _
7. What was the wine in chapter 14?
8. Who was to drink it?
9. How were they to drink it?
10. What do fire and brimstone represent?
11. Describe the effects of brimstone on a human being.
12. What are the two harvests?
13. How do they differ from each other?
14. List five similarities between the Egyptian/Israelite conflict of Moses' day, and the Jew/Christian conflict of John's day.
 - a _____
 - b _____
 - c _____
 - d _____
 - e _____
15. List the similarities between plagues upon Egypt and plagues of Revelation 16.
16. List two texts in which Jesus offered the same warning as John. Give a reference where Paul made the same kind of warning.
17. What is Armageddon?
18. Into how many parts was the city of Jerusalem divided?
19. What were these parts?

Lesson Ten: Revelation 17:1 - 18:24

THE SCARLET WOMAN, HER BEAST, AND THE FALL OF BABYLON - 17:1 - 18:24

Chapter 17:1-2 - Jerusalem is described as the harlot (Isa. 1:21). She was a great commercial center upon which many nations depended. Like the now extinct Babylon, she "sits on many waters" at a strategic crossroads for business. Rome may have been the political power of that day, but Jerusalem was the economic center. Therefore, it is not surprising that she involved in her apostasy all those who had commerce with her.

Vs. 3 - The beast the woman is riding upon is the Roman Empire. For some time, the Jews used the Romans to suit their own purposes, manipulating them into defending Jewish financial interests; even using them as a means of crucifying the Lord. By the time the chapter ends, the beast turns on the woman to kill her. The ride will soon be over (Jer. 51:12-13; Hosea 1-2).

Vs. 4-6 - The harlot is attired in worldliness and is reeling drunk with the blood-guiltiness of killing Christians. Jerusalem began the work of killing saints, and she incited the Romans to do the same. This incredible vision of wickedness is utterly astounding to John.

Those who want to understand just who the harlot and Babylon are can reason it out if they know the word of God. This is similar to the statement of Jesus, "he that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

Vs. 7-8 - The angel interprets the vision for John, not by giving him literal answers, but by giving him clues that bring John nearer to the literal truth. Since the beast is the Roman Empire, and the harlot is Jerusalem, and the time of writing is fixed, therefore the only conclusions one can draw concerning these events must fit within the parameters of the Roman/Jew relationship of the first century. The beast (Rome) is about to fall upon the harlot to kill her (Roman army attacking like hordes of locust out of an endless, bottomless pit). The threat of this beast has always existed, but it has not come to pass, though it will eventually ("was, is not, and yet is").

Vs. 9 - While it is true that Rome sits on seven hills, it is also true that Jerusalem sits on seven hills (Zion, Acra, Moriah, Bezetha, Millo, Ophel, and Antonio). Yet the mountains of this text are not literal. The angel is describing the seven Roman emperors that Jerusalem rode on in her ride to power and degradation.

Vs. 10 - The seven heads or seven mountains are actually seven kings or Roman emperors who had been used in one fashion or another by the Jews. According to history, there were seven true emperors during this period: Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, & Domitian. If five have fallen, and one is, Nero is implicated. Domitian would be the seventh who would continue a short span. This is a hint that the persecution of Christians would not end with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Vs. 11-14 - The beast, that is, the power of the Roman emperor, is part of all seven Caesars. Yet, even the great might of the emperor-ship would come to an end. Beyond Domitian, there would be ten more lesser emperors who would continue persecuting Christians for years to come. Historically, it was not until the reign of Constantine that persecution of Christians came to an end.

Vs. 15-18 - The waters represent all of the people who had dealings with the Jews and who had been brought down by their apostasy. Verse 16 shows why Rome cannot be the harlot. Why would Rome hate and attack itself? For years after the fall of Jerusalem, the Jews were hounded and persecuted by Rome. This text makes it clear that Rome was merely a tool used to serve God's purposes (Isa. 10:5-7). Thus falls the

Jewish nation, who as the people of God, ruled over all nations and was even ruling economically over the nations, was brought down.

Chapter 18:1-3 - John sees another vision of the fall of the city. While chapter seventeen talks of the once faithful city turned into a drunken, irreverent harlot, chapter eighteen shows the fall of Jerusalem from the viewpoint of neighboring, collaborating Gentile nations, and how her fall affected them.

The mighty angel is crying loudly against Jerusalem listing her crimes and describing her coming desolation. Note the similarities between the cry against Jerusalem and that against the literal Babylon of Isaiah's day (Isa. 21:9, 13:20-22). After the Roman attack, the city never did recover, and to this day remains a city inhabited by foreigners and is only of historical importance. In place of the Temple stands a mosque for Islamic worship.

Furthermore, the nations that participated in her sin would share in her suffering. Specifically mentioned are the merchants, who will suffer greatly from the collapse of the region's commercial hub. If one wanted to punish Jerusalem and her consort nations, the best way would be what the Lord did using the Roman army to lay a three and a half year siege cutting off all trade. The ensuing economic collapse would rival a great depression.

Vs. 4-8 - The second voice is the one that calls to the faithful, warning them to flee the city before judgment falls on her. This is but a repetition of the warning Jesus gave to the disciples in Matthew 24. Jerusalem's sins had finally grown to the point that God would take no more. God's justice would render to her as she had treated others. Note how far she has gone in her rejection of God. He called her unfaithful, a harlot. Instead of repenting, she swells with pride. In effect, "I will not be like an unfaithful wife and have a widow's sorrow; I don't need God. I am a queen" (Ez. 16). But for all of her power and pride, God can still bring her down.

Vs. 9-19 - These verses contain the lamentations of the kings, merchants, and transportation laborers. Their source of income is cut off and it won't be long until they fall into oblivion as well. It would be futile to try to get rich dealing with Rome, for the Romans were greedy and would eat up all of the rich profits of the merchants in taxes.

Vs. 20 - It appears that John is overwhelmed by the vision of lamentation, but he is swept away with joy, not grief.

Vs. 21 - The comparison between Jerusalem and literal Babylon is taken one step further (Jer. 51:63-65).

Vs. 22-24 - All of the signs of a healthy, prosperous, and peaceful city will never be seen in this place again. All of her former glory would be dust and ashes. As the Lord had said in Matthew 23:29-39, she had killed the prophets and that very generation would see the fruit of their own sins. They did not fully anticipate the impact of the curse they called on themselves: "His blood be on us" (Matt. 27:25).

Chapter 19 begins the rejoicing of the saints.

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 17:1 - 18:24

1. What does the clothing of the harlot indicate about her character?
2. List the seven Roman emperors.
 - a _____
 - b _____
 - c _____

d _____

e _____

f _____

g _____

3. If five have fallen, which one is reigning?

4. Which king is yet to come?

5. According to 17:17, who is really in charge of the kingdoms of men?

6. What are the faithful warned against in chapter 18:4?

7. Who is sorry that Jerusalem fell, and why are they sorry?

8. List the six things that will never be seen or heard in Babylon after her fall.

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

f _____

9. List the seven hills of Jerusalem.

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

f _____

g _____

Find the passage in Revelation

a _____ "For in one hour such great riches came to nothing"

b _____ "For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose"

c _____ "And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew,
Armageddon"d _____ "Render to her just as she render to you, and repay her double according
to her works"

e _____ "So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness"

Lesson Eleven: Revelation 19:1 - 20:15

SCENES OF TRIUMPH - 19:1-21

Revelation 19 is a chapter of rejoicing in that the old, unfaithful bride is now dead (Rom. 7:2-4); and now that she is gone, nothing blocks the vision of the true bride of Christ. Ezekiel 16:1-16 shows that the former people of God, embodied by the city of Jerusalem, were in a covenant relationship with God similar to that of a husband and wife. This principle is reinforced by Isaiah 1:21 in which Jerusalem is called the "once faithful city turned harlot." In the New Testament, the bride of the Lord is the Church (Eph. 5:22-33). Just as the old temple had to be removed before the new could be clearly seen (Rev. 11), and just as the remnants of the old law had to be removed before the new could be clearly seen (Heb. 8:13), so did the old Jerusalem need to be buried before the new bride, the new Jerusalem, the true spiritual Israel could be clearly seen.

The wedding feast of Revelation 19 is ongoing; every time one obeys the gospel, he or she becomes wedded to Christ. The wedding feast is not to be viewed chronologically; otherwise, those who became Christians before the fall of Jerusalem would be illegitimate.

Chapter 19 draws a stark contrast with chapter 18. Eighteen shows the sorrow of the world for the fall of worldly wicked Jerusalem, while nineteen shows the rejoicing in heaven and in the church over Christ's triumph.

Chapter 19:1-3 - The vision has shifted to the throne scene of chapters four and five, and God is praised for His righteous judgment against Jerusalem. Although the terrible visions of suffering from chapters six through eighteen may seem a bit heavy-handed, the reality is that Jerusalem earned it and much more. The city was not just personally evil. She encouraged others to participate in her sins, she killed the Son of God, and she was persecuting the true children of God. Her evil knew no boundaries nor limits, therefore her punishment needed to be severe. The fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD was so traumatic and epoch-shattering an event, that orthodox Jews still mourn it to this day. The smoke of grief still rises.

Vs. 4-6 - The great host of the great heavenly throne scene (Jesus, four beings of power, 24 elders, and untold thousands of angels) are all shouting praise to God for His great power. It matters not whether the nation be as militarily strong as Rome, or as economically potent as Jerusalem. God has all power. And even though He does not act when and how man thinks He ought, He always has and always will triumph.

Vs. 7-9 - (See introductory notes above on wedding feast. See also Luke 14:15-24) During the persecutions of the Christians by the Jews and Romans, evangelism was hindered and converts were made through much suffering. After the oppressors were defeated, there is a renewal of the interrupted work and fellowship.

The bride is given garments of righteousness and purity because of her steadfastness throughout the tribulation. While it is true that everyone is called to the wedding feast of the Lord, only a few answer the summons. More is the pity as there is room in the kingdom for everyone.

Vs. 10 - John is overwhelmed by the joy and glory of the victory, and so falls at the feet of the angel. The angel bids him stand, for they are both just messengers of the Lord, neither one worthy of the worship that belongs to Deity. Imagine the joy John was feeling; it appeared that the oppressors of the church would succeed in extinguishing it, and suddenly the enemy falls into oblivion. The great relief and happiness brought John to his knees.

Vs. 11-14 - Who else could this victorious rider on a white horse be other than Jesus Christ. He wears the names it was prophesied that He would bear; He sits in

judgment (Acts 17:31); He rides on a white horse (Rev. 6:2); He wears many crowns (crowns of victory, suffering, power, authority, etc.); He has a name only He knows, showing that there are yet to be things revealed about Him at the Judgment; His clothing is stained with His own sacrificial blood; He is the word (John 1:1-3); He is followed by the righteous hosts like unto an army.

Vs. 15-16 - These verses are the fulfillment of the prophecies of Psalm 2.

Vs. 17-21 - Even though Jerusalem had fallen, the Roman Empire was still around. Eventually the Lord does away with mighty Romans by giving them an ignominious death consumed by scavengers. When the Roman Empire fell, it was picked apart by barbarians and primitive tribes who stripped it like carrion birds. God's word will outlast any empire regardless of its wealth, military strength, or intellectual prowess.

TRIUMPH MADE COMPLETE - 20:1-15

Chapter 20 is a continuation of the scenes of triumph pointing toward other struggles of the Church and making it plain that the Church would be victorious just as before. Revelation 20 has been misused by Premillennialists, Post-millennialists, and Millennarians for years. The best way to understand this chapter and at the same time refute these false doctrines is to let the Bible speak for itself and follow the instructions of Revelation 22:18-19.

Chapter 20:1 - The angel that came down and chained up Satan is believed to be Christ for the following reasons:

- 1) Because of the nature of the term "angel," it cannot be denied that Jesus is one.
- 2) Christ is the only being to ever overcome Satan so decisively (Heb. 2:14-15; Gen. 3:15).
- 3) Christ was the only one who could precipitate the events of this book (Rev. 5); He was the only one with the "key" to control Rome.

Vs. 2 - Four names are given to Satan that there be no mistake as to who was behind the evil done against the church. It is necessary to determine to what extent Satan was bound:

- 1) It was not the power of death that was taken away. Christ took that when He rose from the dead. The binding in this text occurred many years later.
- 2) It was not Satan's power of temptation. He has always and will continue to entice humankind to sin until the end.
- 3) The one power that Satan had then but does not have now is the capacity to manipulate entire nations to do his bidding. He can no longer possess and control as he once did.

Satan has fought against the Lord from the beginning. He moved people to kill the prophets of old in order to prevent God's message from getting through. He tried through Herod to kill the infant Jesus; he filled the hearts of the Jewish leaders to discredit Christ's preaching; He succeeded in moving the world to kill Jesus on the cross. He proceeded to move the Jews against the church to disrupt it before it could get a firm start; failing that, he sent the Romans against it to kill it off in one sweep (Rev. 12), but the church escaped; finally, he tried to move the Romans to persecute the church out of existence. When that effort failed, he was then bound; he had used up all of his current resources. He could no longer use a nation to fight against God the way he once could. Since that time, he has been unable to use a country to kill off the church in a literal sense. He is bound in that the only influence he now has is that of temptation.

The thousand years is not to be taken as a literal period of time. In Deuteronomy 7:9, the Lord said He would keep His promise to Israel for 1000 generations. If this is to

be taken literally, then the Mosaic dispensation will not end until the year 26,603 AD. There is no indication of any kind that the thousand years is literal.

Vs. 3 - Satan was restrained and his power to deceive entire nations to do his bidding was taken away for a time. He is not bound permanently; the thousand years just indicates that he will be limited a long time.

Vs. 4 - John sees thrones, the promised rewards to those of Rev. 6 who overcame the great tribulation faithfully. Judgment was given to them, but it was not the power of passing Judgment; rather, it was a sentence passed on them, and their sentence (vindication, reward) was a glorious throne. John sees the souls of the martyrs, not the bodies. This defeats Premillennialism in that they are souls reigning with Christ in heaven, not bodies on thrones reigning on earth. The Kingdom is spiritual, not physical.

These souls were beheaded. If the thousand years must be literal, then so must the beheading. Therefore, if Premillennialism is correct, the earth will see headless martyrs sitting and ruling on earthly thrones. This error also states that the occupants of the thrones will "Live and reign on earth for 1000 years with Christ."

PROOFS AGAINST PREMILLENNIALISM

- 1) The occupants of the thrones are the martyrs of Revelation 6, not 20th century Premillennialists.
- 2) The verb tense used is past: "they livED and reigned (prophetic past tense), not "will live and reign" (future tense).
- 3) There is no mention of any kind that the reign will be on the earth. In fact, any such doctrine is in contradiction with what the apostles were told in Acts 1:11. Jesus will never again set foot on the earth, even when He returns for the faithful (1Thes. 4:17).
- 4) They live and reign WITH Christ from heaven, not the reign OF Christ on earth. Christ is already reigning from heaven; there is no earthly kingdom of Christ (John 18:36).
- 5) There are twenty figures of speech in the 19th and 20th chapters alone. In a series of symbols such as these, it is not reasonable to choose only one (1000 years) and make a literal application of it, and a figurative application of the rest of the symbols, without a contextual demand or historical reason.
- 6) In prophetic symbols, 1000 years is equal to a great period of time; it is not necessarily equal to a millennium. The word millennium is not used in scripture; it is not a Bible term.
- 7) Note what is missing from the context "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years":
 - a) There is no mention of a second coming of Christ
 - b) There is no mention of a bodily resurrection of the martyrs
 - c) There is no mention of a throne for Christ in Jerusalem or on earth
 - d) There is no mention of modern Christians in this text (Rev. 22:18)
- 8) Note what is definitively stated in this context "They":
 - a. Were the SOULS of martyrs.
 - b. Had been BEHEADED
 - c. HAD BEEN beheaded (past tense)
 - d. LIVED and REIGNED (past tense) (Rev. 22:19)
- 9) If the term "reigning" is limited by the 1000 years, then so is the term "living" limited in the same manner.
- 10) Why do no other Biblical texts speak of a 1000 year reign?

11) As all other end time texts speak of Christ's second coming followed immediately by the Judgment, any interpretation of Revelation 20 that inserts a millennium is out of harmony with scripture (Gal. 1:6-9).

Vs. 5 - To say that the rest of the dead were raised at the end of the 1000 years is saying more than verse five actually says. In 2Samuel 6:23, "Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death." Can it be assumed that after she died, she had a child? The same principle is involved in verse five. It simply means that no others lived again during the 1000 years. Just who are these dead? Of what kind is the first resurrection?

- 1) The first resurrection is that of a dead body, as in the case of Lazarus. This is not the final resurrection, for the body will die again.
- 2) The second resurrection is that of the soul, when the incorruptible form of 1Corinthians 15 will be given.
- 3) The third resurrection is that of the lowly, persecuted spirit as in the case of Israel (Ez. 37). This was not a literal resurrection of the body, but a renewal of spirit given them when freed from the Babylonian captivity. This is the same fashion in which the church was resurrected. When they were freed from persecution, they were as uplifted as if they rose from the dead. This is the resurrection of chapter 20.

As for the rest of the dead, they are not raised or renewed in spirit. The reason is that the rest of the dead are not part of the church. They are instead the enemies of the church: Romans, Jews, pagans, etc. They were cast down by the Lord and never rose again to persecute the church again.

Vs. 6 - All those who are part of this renewal of spirit are blessed. The second death holds no fear for them, and they will not have to worry about hell. Death in Greek is "thanatos" and is translated "separation." There are three kinds of death in the Bible:

- 1) Separation of the body and soul; known as physical death.
- 2) Separation of the soul from God; known as spiritual or eternal death.
- 3) Separation of the will from the body; Ezekiel 37 and the valley of dry bones. The death spoken of in this text is the separation of the soul from God.

HOW MANY RESURRECTIONS?

- 1) It is not a physical resurrection of the body to receive the incorruptible form. Nowhere else does the word speak of two physical resurrections to the incorruptible form. To concede two resurrections of the body supports "rapture" theology. All commentators recognize "this" as referring to the scene of Vs. 4. Those in Vs. 4 were souls, not resurrected beings with the incorruptible form of 1Cor. 15. These souls had no change of state from 6:9-11 of the martyrs; only a change in circumstances.
- 2) It is not a spiritual resurrection of the soul through baptism. This happens on obedience to the Gospel. This is not a simultaneous, collective event.
- 3) It is not necessarily linked to an equivalent death. John does not speak of a first death. The body dies, but the soul triumphs (Phil. 1:21; Rom. 11:15; Rev. 2:11, 6:9-11).
- 4) It is the resurrection of a cause (Ez. 37:1-14; Isa. 26:13-19; Hosea 13:14). Taking the martyrs from under the altar and putting them on thrones is a resurrection over persecution, suppression, oppression, and death. "It is a resurrection of a cause, figurative in nature" (Weldon Warnock, Revelation; Message From Patmos).
"Those expositors err who find in these verses a resurrection of the body. The vision portrays the victory of the martyrs underneath the altar, whose "little time" is

finished, whose cry has been answered, and whose victory is symbolized as a resurrection and being seated on thrones" (Homer Hailey, Revelation: Introduction and Commentary 1979).

"The resurrection of the 20th chapter of Revelation was a figurative or spiritual resurrection, and of the same character described by Ezekiel concerning Israel in captivity" (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., The Book of Revelation, 1966).

"This triumph of the martyrs is called the first resurrection. Their cause triumphs with them. They are victorious with the Christ for whom they died" (Ray Summers, Worthy Is The Lamb, 1951).

Vs. 7-9 - After the period of restraining Satan is over, he once again begins to wield considerable influence. Sometime has passed and the combatants have changed, but the outcome remains the same. Satan goes forth again to battle the church, but he will not use the same weapons as before (Jewish wealth, Roman military, persecution, etc.); instead, the tool he uses to destroy the church will be corruption. If he can't kill it or persecute it, he will try to corrupt it out of existence. Gog and Magog were pagan hordes that lived north of Palestine during Old Testament times. In Ezekiel 38, they attempt to go up against Jerusalem, just as corruption is going up against the new Jerusalem (the church) today, trying to pervert Christians. Gog and Magog represent any religion or faith that is not expressly from God. Satan will use these false teachers to try to change churches enough that they will no longer be sound and faithful. But even these efforts will come to nothing in the end. The word of God, an all-consuming fire, will destroy the error in the hearts and minds of the true children of God.

Vs. 10-15 - These verses need no explanation; they could not be more explicit.

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 19:1 - 20:15

1. Who is the bride of the Lamb?

2. What fabric represents the righteous deeds of the saints?

3. Who did John mistakenly attempt to worship?

4. What happened to the beast and the false prophet?

5. Where must one's name be written in order to avoid the lake of fire?

6. How does one get his name written there?

7. Make a list of the occupants of the lake of fire.

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

8. What are the names of the one who sat on the white horse?

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

f _____

True or False

a _____ The multitude in heaven wept at the fall of the great harlot.

b _____ John was told to worship God, and not to worship fellow servants.

c _____ Christians will live and reign 1000 years on earth with Christ.

d _____ Rich or poor, famous or unknown, powerful or weak will all be judged according to their works by the things written in the Books.

e _____ The Bible tells us that the mark of the beast is the number 666 branded into the forehead and hands of sinners.

f _____ Those whose bodies were lost at sea or destroyed by fire will not be resurrected.

Lesson Twelve: Revelation 21:1 - 22:21

ALL THINGS MADE NEW - 21:1 - 22:21

It is often thought that this chapter is a description of heaven as the eternal abode of the faithful dead for all of eternity; it would be easy to make this assumption, since that is what has been taught in for uncounted years. The descriptions found in this chapter are so beautiful and stirring as to seem far beyond this world.

However, a closer examination of this chapter will reveal that it is a portrayal of the nature of the true church as it is in the presence of God. John is inspired to use physical beauty to describe divine, spiritual concepts. That he is talking about the church in the presence of God and not the Christians' eternal reward is seen in 21:9-10. Lest one become guilty of holding onto tradition rather than truth, it is vital to let the Bible speak for itself. In verse nine, an angel tells John to come and see the "bride, the Lamb's wife." He then shows John the "great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." He then proceeds to describe it from verse eleven onward in Revelation 21. John is talking about the glorious church as it is in God's presence.

Chapter 21:1 - "New heaven and new earth" is not a "new" phrase; it has been seen often in the Old Testament (Isa. 65:17; Ez. 36:26-36). It signifies the end of an old order or era and the beginning of a new one. In this case, the last remnants of the Jewish order are taken away and order of Christ stands alone to rise in dominance. No more sea indicates that there no longer exists a troubled society that makes life difficult for the church.

Vs. 2 - John now sees the church, the new Jerusalem, the new order established firmly and ready to dwell with the Lord always. The old Jerusalem would not do for the Lord's wife; she had played the harlot. The church would not be that way, for she would be faithful to the Lord forever.

Vs. 3-4 - All men may now speak with God and dwell with Him. He no longer deals with humankind through earthly arks and priests. The promise given during the great tribulation is now come to pass (7:16-17). The faithful Christian need no longer be sorrowful for the things of this world. The suffering brought on by the Jewish and Roman regimes is now over; God has established His kingdom forever; and, all blessings are for those in Christ. There is no need for sorrow in the true church as it is in God's presence (Isa. 35:10, 51:11, 65:19). The context is discussing the glorified church, not heaven.

Vs. 5-7 - The Revelation is declared finished. What Jesus had set out to reveal to John about the tribulation and triumph of the church is now at an end. All that remains is a description of the glory of the church and a few final instructions.

Vs. 8 - Speaks entirely for itself.

Vs. 9-10 - The angel takes John to see the bride of Christ, the church. He shows him the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven. This makes two things evident: 1) that the church and the New Jerusalem are the same, and 2) that the descriptions contained in this chapter are of the church and not heaven itself (Isa. 2:2; Dan. 2:35).

Vs. 11-23 - The description of the church is symbolic of its character. Each symbol shows something of the kingdom's nature. Jasper is an old word for diamond, which has a beautiful, prismatic light, perhaps symbolic of the light of God in the church. Clear as crystal is used to denote purity, having nothing to hide. A great wall shows security and safety. Several gates indicates accessibility; but, the existence of gates indicates something must be kept out, namely sin. The association of twelve tribes and twelve apostles shows God's people as a united whole. Twelve foundations indicates immovability. The city was 1500 miles high, wide, and long. Such vastness indicates room for all.

Composition of the city is symbolic of preciousness. Diamond is the hardest and most valuable of stones. Sapphire is sky-blue and ranks next to diamond in hardness. Chalcedony is a green carbonate of copper found only in the mines of Chalcedon; green precious stones symbolize mercy. Emerald was the most highly prized stone of the ancients. Sardonyx was highly valued as a cameo setting; it is a white onyx, laced with red. Sardius is a precious stone prized for its blood red color. Chrysolite is a yellow, sun-colored beryl. Beryl was commonly the color of the Mediterranean Sea, a pale green. Topaz was valued because its color resembled new green growth. Chrysoprase is a pale teal color. Jacinth is what is often called imperfect or star sapphire. Mideastern amethyst was wine colored, a purple-red. The portals of the city were of solid pearl symbolizing purity and beauty.

The street (singular) is of pure gold like unto transparent glass. As with all of the other descriptions, these are not literal attributes, but rather describe spiritual characteristics. Obviously, there is no such thing as transparent, glass-like gold. It simply means that path that traverses the city is precious, pure, smooth, and easily discerned.

There is no need for a temple in the church since all Christians are priests, and God dwells in them (Matt. 27:51; Eph. 2:21; 1Cor. 6:19-20, 3:16-17; 1John 3:24). The church does not need an earthly king or high priest, because Jesus fulfills those roles. The church does not need physical light, for the light that fills the church is the light of God's word (1John 1; Psalm 119:105).

Vs. 24-26 - This is an extension of 11:15 where all of the kingdoms of the earth are to become the Lord's. When the best people of every nation (and the saved are truly the best each nation has to offer) flock to the Lord, it will be as if the kings and rulers of those nations sent their treasures into the church. The mighty and glorious of this world cannot outshine the glory of the church, they can only add to it. Christians are the only true treasure that a nation has. Entrance into the city will always be available. No one who truly wishes to enter will be denied as long as they enter the Lord's way (John 14:6).

Vs. 27 - Sin will never enter the true church as it exists in the presence of God. Though erring Christians may have membership in an local congregation, that is no assurance that they have a part of the church universal and eternal. Only those whose names are in the Lamb's registry of the New Jerusalem are a part of the church as it is in God's presence.

Chapter 22 is the last chapter in the book of Revelation. The old order of corrupted Judaism has been done away with, and the church reigns triumphant. The first five verses of chapter 22 are contextually connected with the previous chapter. It is to be remembered that the term "Jerusalem" no longer refers to the old city, but rather the true church in the presence of God (Heb. 9:1-12, 12:18-24).

Chapter 22:1 - The symbols of flowing rivers and streams abound in the Bible as the source of life and supply to a city. Were a city's water to dry up or its river to change its course, the city would die. The Lord promised the woman at the well that she could have living water that would cause her to never thirst again. He was speaking of the saving power of the gospel. Salvation is in the church, and all who wish can come, drink, and be saved.

Vs. 2 - Part of the "way of salvation" is the fact that it brings eternal life. The tree of life was in the garden of Eden in the beginning. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, they were banished from the garden lest they eat of the tree of life and live forever. When the Lord told them that "in the day that thou eatest, thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17), He did not mean that they would die physically that day; instead, they died spiritually that day. Eternal physical life is not possible, for humans are formed of corruptible matter. The eating of the tree of life would have given Adam and Eve eternal spiritual life without the cleansing of their sins. This is what God wanted to prevent (Gen.

3:17-24). Eternal life (tree of life) is in the church, but one must be cleansed of his sins in order to get into the church. There is no access to eternal life outside of the church; and, there is no access to the church without being cleansed from sin. In short, the tree of life that man lost in the Garden of Eden near the beginning of the Bible is found by the righteous in the church triumphant as it is in heaven at the end of the Bible.

Twelve is a holy number; the fruit is the product of salvation, every month indicates year-round access. Simply put those who enter the kingdom partake of the blessings of salvation at all times.

In this time period, medicines were concocted from the crushing and steeping of the leaves of certain kinds of plants. This illustrates the healing power of salvation on people from all over the world. What kind of healing do people need more than the easing of their sin-sick souls?

Vs. 3 - "No more curse" has a three-part meaning:

- 1) Once one enters the church, he is free from the curse of sin in his life.
- 2) One is in a place where sin and its curse cannot enter.
- 3) One is free from the Old Law which was a curse to those who had to keep it.

Vs. 4 - The face of the Lord is said to be against the evil (1Peter 3:12; Rev. 6:16), but the righteous see His face through their faithful service to Him, and His blessings on them. This is not the literal sense of actually beholding His face in person.

Vs. 5 - There is no spiritual darkness in the church, for the Lord gives it the light of His word. Christians in turn reflect the light of the Father to the world in bringing the enlightenment of salvation to the lost (Acts 26:18; Eph. 5:11-14). The saints shall reign forever as prophesied in Daniel 2:44.

Vs. 6-7 - John returns to his own present time of actual writing. In 1:10, John began seeing these visions through the angel, writing a book filled with scenes of victory and defeat. He comes back from the future to the present in 22:6.

The warning to be prepared is repeated, for the day of wrath prophesied in Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, and throughout Revelation is in the immediate future. The Lord was not deceiving them into believing He was returning to take them to heaven, but was preparing them for His coming in judgment against Jerusalem.

Vs. 8-11 - Once again, John appears overwhelmed by the vision and falls down to worship the angel. The angel refuses John's adoration and declares that he and John are on the same mission. John is instructed to share this message throughout all of the church. It is vital that all Christians be aware of what is coming, for little time is left. In fact, so little time is left that the unrighteous would not have enough time to change their wicked ways; it is too late for them to make amends. The faithful too, have no time to dabble with indolence or temptation, for there is too much to do to get ready for the tribulation, and too little time left in which to do it.

Vs. 12-15 - The coming of the Lord against Jerusalem was imminent. The righteous would not have long to wait. Those who were faithful through the great tribulation would have their reward waiting for them; those who were wicked would have punishment in store. Blessing is pronounced on those who keep the commandments of the Lord, for only those who obey the gospel can enter the church and partake of the spiritual blessings in Christ. Anyone not a part of the church Jesus established is lost.

Vs. 16-17 - Jesus is the beginning and end of the line of David. He is the star that heralded the dawn of a new day for the children of God. The Lord has invited the lost into the church; now, the Spirit extends his invitation, the church invites, those who hear and believe even say "come with me." All who wish to be saved can enter the church and partake of eternal life. This is perhaps the most eloquent invitation in the Bible.

Vs. 18-19 - A warning in no uncertain terms is given to anyone who would tamper with the prophecies in this book. It was imperative that the saints receive these timely

instructions in unchanged form; else, how could they know what was in store and how to deal with it? It is always incumbent on Christians to let the Bible speak for itself and not to ignore principles or add creeds in order to fit what they want to see (Deut. 4:2; Josh. 1:7; Prov. 30:6).

Vs. 20 - Once again, Jesus reiterates His promise to come quickly, and John prays that it will be so.

Vs. 21 - Is it not interesting that the New Testament ends with a blessing, while the Old Testament ends with a curse?

QUESTIONS FOR REVELATION 21:1 - 22:21

Write down three questions about the book of Revelation, and bring them to class for discussion.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lesson Thirteen: Studies in the Nature of Heaven and Hell

Most new students of the Bible would be surprised to learn that more is said about hell outside of the book of Revelation than within it. Furthermore, nearly as much is said about heaven in other books of the Bible as one would find near the end of the book of Revelation. For this reason, I believe a study of Revelation would be incomplete without considering what the harmony of the scriptures has to say regarding these two places considered in the post Judgment portion of John's writing. To that end, I have included study outlines of lessons I have presented on heaven and hell as the thirteenth lesson in this class book (adapted from lessons originally developed by Mark Copeland).

Where Sinners Dwell Forever With Pain

Introduction:

- A. Ray Summers in *The Life Beyond*: "We would do well to remember that we are dealing with terms in an attempt to describe a condition that almost defies description."

I. WHERE WILL SINNERS DWELL?

- A. We know they will be separated from God
1. Matt. 7:21-23, 25:41-46; Eph. 5:5; Rev. 21:27, 22:15
- B. The eternal dwelling place is called hell
1. The Greek word is "geenna" (gheh'-en-nah); it is a transliteration of the Hebrew word "Ge-Hinnom"
 2. B. W. Johnson comments: "The term Gehenna arose from the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the Canaanites burned human sacrifices to Moloch. After the return of the Jews from the Captivity they made it a place of defilement, where the refuse of the city was thrown and burned. The name was applied to the place of future punishment by the Jews. The word is often used in the New Testament, and always denotes a place of future punishment."
 3. Jesus used the term to describe the final place of punishment
 - a. In His sermon on the mount - Matt. 5:21-22, 29-30
 - b. Sending His disciples on the limited commission - Matt. 10:28
 - c. Warning against stumbling blocks - Matt. 18:8-9
 - d. Perhaps the most vivid use of this term is in Mark 9:43-48
 4. Hell was originally prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41), but will serve as the place of punishment for all of the wicked as well
- C. The eternal dwelling place is called the lake of fire
1. Where the beast and false prophet of Revelation are sent - Rev. 19:20
 2. Where the Satan himself will one day be cast - Rev. 20:10
 3. The same is said for death and Hades, and all whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life - Rev. 20:14-15
 4. The future residents of this place are listed in Rev. 21:8

II. THE EXPERIENCES OF THE WICKED

- A. What such separation from God can be like, no one in this life can really know, for everyone in this life experiences a degree of God's presence - Acts 17:28

1. Physical blessings are all manifestations of God's presence in our lives
 - a. Matt. 5:45
 - b. The physical universe testifies to God's presence - Rom. 1:20
2. Perhaps Jesus experienced a sense of being forsaken by God, when He suffered that temporary separation from God while bearing the sins of the world on the cross - Matt. 27:46; Psalm 22:1
- B. The term commonly used to describe the experience of separation from God is eternal death
 1. The wages of sin is death - Rom. 6:23
 2. In Rev. 2:11; 20:14 it is called the second death, so we know that the experience of the wicked is not simply physical death, or the first death
 3. Since physical death is a separation of body and spirit, it is reasonable to conclude that the second death is separation of one's soul from God
 4. Explanation:
 - a. God supplies the physical world; we orient and stabilize our lives to the laws and facts of the universe around us. Take away indicators of reality, completely isolate a mind from its sensory organs and madness will ensue
 - b. God supplies the laws and structures of human interaction; abandon those laws for a short time and pain, suffering, and chaos will follow
 - c. God gives purpose for existence; take it away and life becomes meaningless and empty, and despair and immobility sets in
 - d. Whether men believe and accept it or not, it is a fact that they depend on God's presence for their own continued existence
 5. Now remove all of those things: the physical world by which we orient ourselves, rules of peaceable interaction, and any reason to go on living, and what do you have left? Nothing.
 - a. Now add darkness, loneliness, terror, pain, and the knowledge that this condition will never end. What do you have? Hell.
 - b. Now inform that lost soul that he will never again have the opportunity to ask for help from the only Being powerful enough to save him from the indescribable horror of his state, and what do you have? Eternal death.
- C. The eternal destiny is described as destruction
 1. An everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord - 2Thes. 1:9
 2. Whose end is destruction - Phil 3:19
 3. The concept of destruction does not demand annihilation
 - a. It can just as easily describe the condition of existing in a state of total ruin. Pompeii was destroyed by a volcano, but it exists to this day as a sad ruin of its former state
 - b. The sad state of a life in ruins in hell; a life that once held so much promise and enjoyed so many opportunities to go to heaven and to avoid hell, but chose to let ruin overtake it
- D. It is also described as everlasting punishment
 1. The punishment for the wicked is as everlasting as the life given the righteous - Matt. 25:46
 2. The wicked will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord - 2Thes. 1:9
- E. It is spoken of as outer darkness
 1. Matt. 25:30; 2Peter 2:17; Jude 13

- F. Other descriptions include weeping and gnashing of teeth
 - 1. Matt. 25:30, 24:51, 22:13
 - 2. When such terms as these are used, it is difficult to accept any view that suggests the wicked will simply cease to exist at death, or be raised for judgment and then annihilated, a la JW's
- G. It is fire
 - 1. The fires of Gehenna;
 - 2. The lake of fire and sulfur
 - 3. A fire that is never quenched - Mark 9:43-48
 - 4. Fire of indignation that devours but does not consume - Heb. 10:26-27

Conclusion:

- A. Since we are dealing with a non-physical realm, it is evident that some of these terms are not meant to literally describe the place, but to illustrate it
 - 1. These are terms anyone can recognize which describe something we cannot possibly comprehend with the finite mind
 - 2. It is a place of punishment reserved for those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ - 2Thes. 1:8-9
 - 3. It is natural to revolt against or outright reject the Bible teaching on hell.
 - a. "How could a loving God send anyone there?!"
 - b. What hubris! Judging God by your standard of love and fairness
 - c. But you cannot dismiss hell without mocking the terrible nature of sin, or the holiness, wisdom, and justice of God
- B. A much better answer to the troubling facts about hell is to obey the gospel and avoid the place altogether

Where God Dwells With The Redeemed

Introduction:

- A. Wonderful promises are given by Christ and His apostles
 - 1. Jesus speaks of the saved as being in the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world
 - a. Matt. 13:43, 25:31-34; 2Tim. 4:18; 2Peter 1:10-11
 - b. Matt. 25:21; John 17:24, 14:1-3; 1Thes. 4:17-18
 - 2. Indeed, promises such as these are comforting for the Christian, for they speak of unhindered and uninterrupted fellowship with our Lord
- B. But where will the righteous be?
 - 1. Will the abode of the redeemed be heaven itself?
 - 2. Or is it a place reserved for us in heaven?

I. THE ETERNAL ABODE OF THE REDEEMED

- A. Laid up and reserved in heaven - Col. 1:5; 1Peter 1:3-4
- B. As described in Hebrews
 - 1. A better and enduring possession in heaven - Heb. 10:34
 - 2. A city which has foundations, whose maker is God - Heb. 11:10
 - 3. For He has prepared a city for them - Heb. 11:13-16
 - 4. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come - Heb. 13:14
 - 5. Where will this city of the righteous be?

C. As described by Peter

1. New heavens and a new earth - 2Peter 3:7-13

D. As described by John

1. After describing the judgment scene in Rev. 20:11-15, John saw:
 - a. "A new heaven and a new earth" - Rev. 21:1
 - b. "The holy City, New Jerusalem - Rev. 21:2
2. The city is a distinct part of heaven, but it is not all of heaven, but can be distinguished from it.
 - a. "The New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God" - Rev. 3:12
 - b. "The holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" - Rev. 21:2
 - c. "The great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God" - Rev. 21:10
3. Rather than being heaven itself and in its entirety, it is but a part of it
 - a. A realm where there is the absence of death, sorrow, and pain - Rev. 21:4
 - b. A realm where there is complete fellowship with God - Rev. 21:3, 22-27
 - c. A place of perpetual life and perfect health - Rev. 22:1-2
 - d. A place where God's servants both serve & reign - Rev. 22:3-5

II. WHERE GOD WILL DWELL WITH THE REDEEMED

A. To be precise, we will be with God and Christ in the holy city, the New Jerusalem, the new heavens and new earth

1. Rev. 21:3, 22:3

B. The throne of God will be in the holy city

1. Before the Judgment, the throne God is said to be in heaven - Rev. 4:2; 7:9-17
2. After the judgment, the throne of God is said to be in the New Jerusalem - Rev. 21:22
3. Where God will dwell with us for eternity in this new holy city, new heavens and new earth

III. HOW CAN I KNOW THAT HEAVEN IS REAL?

A. More real than this world

1. No one outside of Christ knows this better than quantum physicists
2. Our apprehension of matter and energy is based on our perceptions, not necessarily reality
3. Which is more real: something that decays and is easily destroyed, or something that cannot be changed and lasts forever?

B. It is not a fairy tale made up to manipulate the gullible

1. Your senses are not designed to apprehend the spiritual realm
 - a. Mr. A. Square of Flatland
 - b. The Bible is the point of impact where the spiritual world intersects with the material world
2. John 18:36; Luke 17:20-21 - The kingdom of Heaven exists in us by faith in this world, the only means by which it impacts the physical world
3. It cannot be seen with a telescope or approached by the space shuttle, but it is still real.

- C. Ever think of the consequences of denying the existence of heaven?
1. A denial of the existence of heaven is an indictment of Jesus
 - a. Matt. 6:19-21; John 14:1-2
 - b. What kind of benevolent leader lies to his followers?
 2. A denial of heaven makes the apostles into superstitious fools
 - a. Col. 1:5; 1Peter 1:3-4
 3. A denial of heaven makes the Old Testament heroes of faith into bearded old men running around the wilderness in their bathrobes
 - a. Heb. 11:10, 15-16
 4. A denial of heaven makes your Christian friends into pathetic losers
 - a. 1Cor. 15:13-19
 5. A denial of heaven makes one a materialist with self-inflicted blindness
 - a. Even astro-physicists are objective enough to live by the motto: "If it can exist in theory, it must exist somewhere in the universe."
- D. The word of God treats heaven as a real place
1. The existence of Paradise implies the existence of heaven
 - a. 2Cor. 12:2-4; Luke 23:43; Rev. 2:7
 2. The prepared place - 1Cor. 2:9
 3. The New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven - Rev. 21:1-2
 4. New heaven and new earth - 2Peter 3:13
 5. The Bible is touted as a book of wisdom that has served as a guide for millions of people throughout history, it has been influential in the development of western civilization, and it is the basis of our understanding of civil rights.
 6. It also speaks of heaven frequently. If there is no heaven, it is suspect in its entirety. Accept it or reject it entirely.
 7. If one is not going to be spiritually honest with himself, at least do not be intellectually dishonest.
 6. Proving that there is no heaven is as futile an exercise as trying to prove there is no God.

Conclusion:

- A. Rev. 21:1 - 22:5, 14; 2Peter 3:13-14

This ends this author's study material for the book of Revelation. However, Kind Reader, do not let your study of this most fascinating of books end here. Please continue to search these scriptures for a better understanding. It is this author's hope that you will surpass him in absorbing this book and help him to better know what is written there.

Encapsulated, Revelation is a book of prophecy given by inspiration to John between 64 and 67 AD. It contains instructions to struggling churches in Asia, lessons that are very applicable to churches today. John is guided through many visions and told to write them down to help prepare the saints for coming trials. He writes of the unparalleled power of God demonstrated in His judgment against the evil and His protection of the good. The faithless wife, Jerusalem is cast down for her sins: killing the Son of God, enticing other nations to commit sin, and persecuting and slaying the children of God. The new Bride, new Jerusalem, the church, is lifted up by the power of God to reign forever with Jesus Christ. The glory of the church is beyond earthly description; in it is purity, safety, and eternal life. And best of all, anyone who will humbly obey the Lord can enter that city. May God grant all of us time and penitent hearts that we might share in the glory of the Kingdom of Christ. --Paul R. Blake