

**VICTORY!**

**To “...the ones  
who follow the  
Lamb wherever  
He goes.”**

***(Rev. 14:4)***

**A Study of Revelation**

by Larry Brown

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# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

(an overview by Homer Hailey)

Patmos, an insignificant rocky island of approximately fifty square miles, lying about twenty-four miles west of Asia Minor and about seventy miles southwest of Ephesus, has been made immortal by the vision shown John there in the long ago. As we share with him the wonders of that moment in time, we are introduced to the scope of Jesus' ministry and the present glory of His reign. We behold the Lord as He walks among the lampstands, and we listen as He dictates letters to seven churches in provinces as Asia Minor, and we try to grasp the full significance of the picture.

At this point we behold a door opened in heaven, and in the vision revealed to John we see the throne of the universe, and all creation in heaven and on earth doing homage to Him who occupies the throne. Amid the praises of the heavenly beings, one like unto a lamb takes a closed, sealed book from the throne-occupant's hand. John weeps because no one in heaven, on earth, or under the earth is able to open the roll, but he is told that the Lion of the tribe of Judah can open it. We look to see a lion, when lo, a lamb takes it and begins to loose the seals. We are filled with awe and wonder at what follows the opening of the seals: Horsemen come forth, each playing a role in the drama before us; souls cry out from beneath an altar for the avenging of a cause for which they have been sacrificed. There follow the terrors of judgment; servants of God receive a seal upon their foreheads, and a great white-robed multitude stands before the throne, serving God day and night.

This scene of such action is followed by a moment of silence in heaven as prayers of the saints are presented before God. Then trumpets in the hands of angels begin to blast, and wonderful and terrible events follow, affecting all nature and the inhabitants of earth. A strong angel cries with a great voice as a lion roars, to which seven thunders respond by uttering their voices. After this John is told to eat a little book, the temple is measured, and two witnesses are put to death because of their testimony about Jesus. But tragedy is turned into triumph when these two are called to come up to heaven. At last the seventh angel sounds his trumpet, and with this the curtain falls on part one. We are excited with what we have seen and heard, but what is it all about?

As the second division of the book opens, we see a radiant woman, arrayed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and twelve stars upon her brow, who is about to bear a child. She gives birth to a man child, while before her stands the devil waiting to devour it. But instead of being devoured, the man child is caught up to God and to His throne and the woman flees into the wilderness. In the vision there follows a great conflict between Michael's heavenly forces on the one side and Satan's diabolical army on the other. In the conflict the dragon, Satan, is cast down to the earth and stands upon the seashore. And, while the dragon stands upon the seashore, a terrible beast arises out of the sea. The beast, who is endowed with Satan's power, throne, and authority, wages war against the woman and her seed. Soon a second beast, who comes up out of the earth, exercising all the power of the first beast, begins an attempt both to deceive and to destroy the servants of God, but succeeds only in deceiving the earth-dwellers. Next, our view is focused on the glorious Lamb of God and a victorious host of 144,000 persons standing with Him on Mount Zion. The second division of this scene concludes with a harvest in which earth is reaped and is cast into the wine press of God's wrath.

Scene follows scene. Bowls of wrath are poured out upon the earth, resulting in plagues of blood, death, and destruction. A great harlot appears, enticing the earth-dwellers to commit fornication with her; but she is judged and destroyed. Hallelujahs are heard in heaven. All are rejoicing over the fall of the harlot. There follows a great conflict between the beast and his forces and the King of Kings and His forces. The beast and his helper, the false prophet, are cast into the lake of fire. Satan is bound, and saints reign on thrones for a thousand years. At the end of a thousand years Satan is loosed for a little time, during which he makes a final effort to destroy the saints of God. But instead of victory, Satan is defeated and he, too, is cast into the lake of fire.

After the resurrection and universal judgment which follows Satan's destruction in the Lake of fire, we see a new heaven and a new earth with God among His people, and His people at home with Him. The picture that follows the judgment is one of a great and glorious city where the inhabitants have all tears wiped away, and who inherit all that is glorious and precious. The whole scene, from first to last, is breathtaking, awesome, and majestic.

## SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF REVELATION

By David Holder

The Book of Revelation is an audio-video event - a series of scenes and sound bytes that the apostle John first saw and heard on the Island of Patmos in the first century AD. God's people in Asia were hurting because they were Christians, and God had a message for them. God showed the message to John (1:2, 4:1, etc.), who was to show it to God's people (1:1). To show what he saw, John was to write the message (1:11, 19; etc.) so Christians could read and heed it (1:3). The combination of John's seeing and writing results in Revelation being a series of word-pictures recorded so we may "see" and "hear" the drama.

Use your imagination when reading Revelation. This does not mean to go wild and see things that aren't there or make up things as you read. Use your imagination to re-envision the scenes John describes, to see the sights and hear the sounds. This way the book's important message will have its intended impact on your senses, as well as on your mind and heart.

### **Revelation's Four Visions:**

If you've ever hiked a trail through the woods, you know how important markers are. It's always reassuring to read a sign that indicates you're going in the right direction. John supplies some markers that help guide us through the scenes of Revelation.

One important marker in Revelation is a phrase John uses four times in a way that it sets off the major divisions of the book. The phrase is "in the Spirit," and it indicates the four visions of Revelation. John first describes himself as "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day on the island of Patmos (1:9-10). Then these identical words are repeated at three strategic places in the book (4:1-2, 17:1-3, 21:9-10).

Not only is the same phrase used four times, but with each usage a change of location also occurs. First, John is "in the Spirit" on Patmos (1:9-10). Second, he is "in the Spirit" in heaven (4:1-2). Third, he is "in the Spirit" in the wilderness (17:3). Fourth, he is "in the Spirit" on a great and high mountain (21:10).

"In the Spirit" is like a trail marker setting off the four main visions of Revelation, guiding the reader through the scenes. In addition, "in the Spirit" indicates John's condition as he saw the message he recorded. Revelation is a message directed by the Spirit of God, a divinely-directed drama. This chart shows the four visions of Revelation:

Vision 1	1:9-3:22	The Lord Among the Lampstands
Vision 2	4:1-16:21	The Lord and the World
Vision 3	17:1-21:8	The Lord and the Devil
Vision 4	21:9-22:5	The Lord and His Own

When you read and study Revelation, consider the limits of the four visions indicated by the marker John supplies. Try as much as possible to view an entire vision at once. You will have to study and consider individual panels within the vision, but try first to view a whole vision. In the paragraphs that follow, we will consider each vision as a whole and try to see what John saw.

### **Vision One (1:9-3:22) - The Lord Among the Lampstands -**

Vision One is composed of an initial portrait of Jesus (1:12-20) followed by His speaking to seven churches respectively (chs. 2 and 3). Jesus introduces Himself to each church in a significant way. Parts of the initial portrait of Jesus (1:12-20) are included in the opening statements to the churches. Jesus, for example, presented Himself to Ephesus as "The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands" (2:1). We have already seen these features of Jesus in the opening view of Him (1:12-13, 16).

This technique of including part of the portrait brings to the mind of each church that the glorious Lord is present with them, He knows and cares about them. Some significant lessons may be learned from this.

- The Lord knows and cares about each church. He is aware of a church's faith and its failures. He commends and condemns. He cares about His people. Jesus tells each church what it needs to hear and do.
- The Lord is the judge of each church. Each congregation stands or falls before the Lord. Each church's status is determined by the Lord, not by others.
- The Lord speaks to each church. Jesus addresses each church with a message tailored just for them. We must try to see ourselves as He sees us, and make improvements and corrections accordingly.

### **Vision Two (4:1-16:21) - The Lord and the World -**

Vision Two is long and complex, but it's not too hard to see the major features. The entire vision is viewed from the throne room of heaven. The scenes get ugly and disturbing, but God is still on the throne. Never forget this. This vision is dominated by three series of sevens, each series involving a different action:

- Breaking seven seals, 6:1-8:5
- Blowing seven trumpets, 8:6-15:4
- Pouring out 7 bowls of wrath, 15:5-16:21

These series have other scenes around them and some interwoven with them. The effect of this arrangement is to present actions occurring simultaneously/. We are guided through the scenes to see what is happening on earth and in heaven at the same time. Occasionally, it is as if God pulls a curtain back to show us what is going on behind the scenes.

To get the full effect, read all Vision Two at one time. Imagine several opened windows on a computer screen. The first window depicts the opening of seven seals, revealing evil at work in the world. For a moment, a window within the window pops up showing what is happening in heaven (ch. 7). Evil is at work in the world, but God is still in control.

The screen transitions to a second main window which pictures the blowing of seven trumpets, announcing the partial judgment of evil. God allows evil to take its toll. Another window within the window appears showing God's mercy (10:1-11:14). Though He uses evil for the purpose of judgment, God also gives people time to repent. The sad fact is the world doesn't repent and a window emerges depicting an intense spiritual war ultimately directed against Christians (11:15-15:4). Judgment grows intense as God's wrath is stirred up.

Finally, the screen transitions to a third main window showing the pouring out of the bowls of wrath. God judges evil in ferocious judgment. He governs and uses evil in the world for His own righteous purposes. God doesn't keep His people from being hurt by evil, but He is always with them holding them up and giving them strength.

### **Vision Three (17:1-21:8) - The Lord and the Devil -**

This vision is described as "the judgment of the great harlot" (17:1-2). Babylon, the harlot, is the epitome of evil, reigning over the earth and terrorizing God's people. The great harlot wages war against the Lamb by means of blasphemy, immorality, and deception. But the Lamb overcomes the cohorts of evil (17:14-18) who are systematically removed:

- Babylon is doomed and thrown down (18:1-19:9)
- Two beasts are defeated and thrown into the lake of fire (19:11-21)
- The dragon is bound and cast into the lake of fire (20:1-10)

Evil is real and strong, and at times God's people intensely feel its pressure. We feel like giving in and giving up. We need to know how the battle turns out. Babylon, the essence of evil is doomed, while Jerusalem, representing God's people is brilliantly arrayed as a bride adorned for her husband (21:2)

### **Vision Four (21:9-22:5) - The Lord and His Own -**

Vision Four is described as "the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (21:9). Vision Three is Babylon, Satan's evil city while Vision Four, in striking contrast, is Jerusalem, God's holy city. By the moment of Vision Four, all traces of evil so graphically described have been thrown into the lake of fire; nothing remains except the triumphant people of God. This short but powerful vision is a close-up view of the Lord and His own. How are God's people, who are beaten up by the world, to think? God's people, pressed and pressured by evil, are to see themselves as a city in regard to its:

- Beauty and symmetry (21:11-21)
- Life and light (21:22-27)
- River and ruler (22:1-5)

This is a brilliant, breathtaking scene. The city is beautiful, glorious, perfect. This is how God's people should think of themselves because Jesus has won the war and will carry His people to victory.

Revelation is an video-audio panorama that stretches far, vividly portraying various scenes of the Great Conflict between God and Satan, the church and the world, Christians and their enemies. A view closer up depicts the people of God pressed and persecuted, yet graciously, powerfully protected by God. Another close-up look shows the devastation of God's enemy who falls under His wrath. Then by stepping back to take in the larger view, it becomes clear that though the opposition is fierce Jesus decisively wins the war. On whose side are you?

# THE BOOK OF REVELATION

(An Outline)

## I. PART ONE: CONFLICT AND JUDGMENT WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE CHURCH (ch 1 -11).

### A. CHAPTER 1: CHRIST AMONG THE LAMPSTANDS.

1. Vs. 1 - 3 > Introduction; With the purpose of the Book stated.
2. Vs. 4 - 8 > Salutation and seal, with original readers identified.
3. Vs. 9 - 11 > John's commission to write the Book.
4. Vs. 12 - 20 > What John was to write; A vision of majesty and glory of Christ.

### B. CHAPTERS 2 - 3: LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES, EXHORTING THEM TO FAITHFULNESS.

1. Each letter contains a command, a commendation and/or condemnation, a correction, and a challenge. We can find ourselves in one or more of these seven churches.
2. Let us work and pray to have all the good qualities here commended, and avoid the bad ones here condemned.

### C. CHAPTER 4: THE FATHER'S HEAVENLY THRONE; WORSHIP AROUND IT.

1. Jehovah is on the throne of the universe: Glory, and Power, and Grandeur, and Worship are all His.
2. Man may say the universe is sun-centered; the Bible teaches it is God-Centered.

### D. CHAPTER 5: THRONE SCENE; EMPHASIS ON THE LAMB AND THE BOOK OF SEVEN SEALS.

1. Vs. 1 - 4 > Jehovah holds a book which no man is worthy to open and read.
2. Vs. 5 - 14 > The Lamb is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals. WORSHIP HIM!!

### E. CHAPTER 6: THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SIX SEALS.

1. Vs. 1 - 8 > The First Four Seals show problems of the church
  - a. A White Horse            Conquest            (vs 1-2)
  - b. A Red Horse             War                    (vs 3-4)
  - c. A Black Horse            Famine                (vs. 5-6)
  - d. A Pale Horse             Death                  (vs. 7-8)
2. Vs. 9 - 11 > The Fifth Seal (souls of those slain) shows those suffering, crying to God to vindicate the Church.
3. Vs. 12 - 17 > The Sixth Seal (earthquake, terror) shows the beginning of judgment against the enemies of the Church.

F. CHAPTER 7: AN INTERLUDE, SHOWING THAT GOD KNOWS HIS PEOPLE IN PERSECUTION.

1. Vs. 1 - 8 > The 144,000 are sealed (marked) for identification / protection (God will overlook none of the saved; Heb 4:13).
2. Later in the book ( in chapter 14) we see these protected ones in heaven, after the persecution is over.
3. Vs. 7 - 17 > The victorious multitude who are already through the ordeal of suffering.

G. CHAPTER 8: THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPETS.

1. Vs. 1 - 6 > The Seventh Seal shows an angel of judgment; prepares for Seven Trumpets.
2. Vs. 7-12 > The First Four Trumpets: Vivid symbols of catastrophe in the world.
  - a. First Trumpet = Hail and fire, vegetation struck
  - b. Second Trumpet = Great mountain burning, sea struck
  - c. Third Trumpet = Great star fell from heaven, waters struck
  - d. Forth Trumpet = Heavens struck (moon, stars)
3. Vs. 13 > An eagle warns the last three trumpets will be worse than the first four.

H. CHAPTER 9: THE BEGINNING OF THE THREE WOES MENTIONED IN 8:13.

1. Vs. 1-12 > The fifth trumpet = Locust (1st woe): The beginning of Rome's downfall; Confusion.
2. Vs. 13-21 > The Sixth trumpet = Euphrates (2nd woe): God sends invasion upon Rome.

I. CHAPTER 10: AN INTERLUDE - THE ANGEL AND THE LITTLE BOOK.

1. Vs. 1-4 > Angel - Book; Seven Thunders spoke; John was not to write what they said.
2. Vs. 5-7 > The angel told John the Seventh Trumpet would be the final doom of Rome.
3. Vs. 8-11 > John was to eat the Little Book; then the prophecy of God's judgments.

J. CHAPTER 11: THE VISION CONTINUES, WITH FURTHER INSTRUCTION FROM THE ANGEL.

1. Vs. 1-14 > The church measured (protected), and allowed to preach the Word, even in danger.
2. Vs. 15-19 > The Seventh Trumpet (3rd woe) shows the final overthrow of Rome.
3. Victory is now assured, but more visions will show the contents of the Little Book, and will emphasize that Christ eventually will conquer all enemies.



## II. PART TWO: TOTAL WAR AND VICTORY OF THE SAVIOR AND THE SAINTS (ch. 12-22)

### A. CHAPTER 12: THE WOMAN; HER CHILD; THE DRAGON; PERSECUTION.

1. This begins the second series of visions, with new symbols; it continues through Ch. 20.
2. 12:1-6, Introduces a woman (who is Israel), her child (Who is Christ), and the dragon (Satan).
3. 12:7-12, Great spiritual war, represented as conflict in heaven; the saints win.
4. 12:13-17, The conflict continues in the wilderness, where the dragon persecutes the woman (the woman now seems to represent spiritual Israel, which is the church).

### B. CHAPTER 13: SATAN CALLS ON TWO WILD BEASTS TO BE HIS ALLIES IN THE WAR.

1. 13:1-10, The beast of the sea has political authority; the beast is worshipped by the un-saved.
2. 13:11-18, The beast of the earth has deceitful religious power (perhaps this is emperor worship).
  - a. His number (666) is imperfection (short of 7).
  - b. He is just human, nothing more, so do not fear (Matt. 10:28).
  - c. Thus it represents evil, but is still human in nature, and therefore cannot conquer God and His people.
  - d. The followers of the beast are marked (identified) as those who trust in man in opposition to God.

### C. CHAPTER 14: TRIUMPH OF SAINTS OVER THE ENEMIES IS ASSURED BY GOD'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.

1. 14:1-5, the 144,000 who were sealed earlier are now safely at home on Mt. Zion, with the Lamb.
2. 14:6-20, Angels warn of God's judgments against the enemies of His people.

### D. CHAPTER 15: SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH ARE TO BE THE LAST PLAGUES AGAINST THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

1. 15:1, Final punishment for the enemies - God's wrath is filled up.
2. 15:2-4, Saints may be killed, but not defeated; they praise their King.
3. 15:5-8, Preparation for the judgment is complete; full bowls are to be poured out.

### E. CHAPTER 16: SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH ARE Poured OUT UPON ROME.

1. Seven angels cover the field by pouring out bowls on the earth, the sea, fresh water, the sun, throne of the beast, the Euphrates River, and the air.
2. This is the final blow against Rome; the next three chapters will give the details.

### F. CHAPTER 17: ROME (ALSO CALLED BABYLON) IS PICTURED AS A GREAT POLITICAL POWER.

1. 17:1-6, Rome is a harlot who is the mistress of the world.
2. 17:7-18, Explanation about the woman (Rome) and the beast (political power).

G. CHAPTER 18: ROME, REPRESENTED AS A HARLOT, IS OVERTHROWN.

1. 18:1-19, Heaven says Rome is fallen; men (non-Christians) mourn because of her fall.
2. 18:20, The voice of rejoicing; the fulfillment of 6: 9-11. (It was not done as soon as they wanted, but was done in God's time. He knows better than we.)
3. 18:21-24, Power of the Roman Empire to be broken forever; the forces of evil totally defeated; nothing left of them but the silence of the tomb.

H. CHAPTER 19: THE KING OF KINGS OVERTHROWS HIS ENEMIES IN A GREAT VICTORY.

1. 19:1-16, All heaven sings "Hallelujah" as Christ comes forth to conquer.
2. 19:17-18, The angels call to the supper of God; the enemies are totally defeated.
3. 19:19-21, The decisive defeat of the beast (political power) and of the false prophet (religious power) marks the national judgment against the Roman Empire.
4. This sets the stage for chapter 20; the beast and the false prophet could not stand against Christ; now only the dragon (Satan) is left.

I. CHAPTER 20: THE BINDING OF SATAN;

1. 20:1-6, A passage often taken out of context, grossly misused to teach the errors of Premillennialism.
  - a. The Truth: 1,000 is emphatic completeness (10 times 10 times 10); the context and the subject is the defeat of Satan; he is completely bound for us if we are faithful.
  - b. Note seven things which are essential to the theory of Premillennialism which are not even mentioned here in this passage.
    1. The Second coming of Christ.
    2. Christ back on earth.
    3. Jerusalem (or even Palestine).
    4. The literal throne of David.
    5. A reign on earth (clear language elsewhere teaches that Christ reigns in heaven Eph. 1:20-23).
    6. A bodily resurrection (John sees souls - vs. 4).
    7. All the righteous (only martyrs who were beheaded are mentioned) (vs. 4).
  - c. It is much easier (also scriptural!) to see the verses in the light of the context (especially Chapter 19).
  - d. The dragon's power of 13:7 was curtailed by the overthrow of the persecuting emperors (the beast) and their religious cult (the false prophets).
  - e. Satan (the dragon) is captive, but not inactive (see 1 Peter 5:8); he cannot get us as long as we stay in the protection of the Savior's hand (John 10:27-29).
  - f. The martyr spirit is revived and has part in the power of Christ. Perhaps in the living and teaching of the word.
  - g. Remember: 1,000 is emphatic completeness (10 x 10 x 10). The context and the subject is the defeat of Satan. He is completely bound for us if we are faithful.
  - h. So it seems the "first resurrection" is the coming out of persecution by the faithful ones (compare Romans 5:17). The resurrection of a cause.
2. 20:7-9, This may be saying that if we do not overcome..
3. 20:10, The final overthrow and destruction of Satan.
4. 20:11-15, With the Defeat of Rome, Satan is defeated.

J. CHAPTER 21: THE ETERNAL GLORY AWAITING FAITHFUL SAINTS.

1. 21:1-8, The glory of being free from persecution is emphasis on the fellowship with God.
2. 21:9-27, The new order of things, the New Jerusalem. Its beauties reflect the glory of God; its citizens will be in the presence of the Father and the Lamb.

K. CHAPTER 22: FINAL WORDS AS THE DIVINE VOLUME CLOSES.

1. 22:1-5, Life in the New Jerusalem will be full and rich and forever unspoiled by sin.
2. 22:6-9, A reaffirmation of the inspiration of (and the importance of) the book.
3. 22:10-20, The Lord Himself shows the importance of our keeping His Word.
4. 22:21 - The concluding benediction is a summary of all that anyone could ever want.

**Main Verses:**

***Rev. 17:14 "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."***

***(compare Romans 8:37 - Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.)***

***Rev. 14:4 - These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being first fruits to God and to the Lamb.***

***Main thought: Victory.***

**LESSON ONE - THE BACKGROUND**

**THE BOOK OF REVELATION**

INTRODUCTION

**I. THE BOOKS NAME**

A. "Revelation" (apokalupsis) - An uncovering, a revealing, laying bare, making naked.

1. The books purpose was not to cover or hide God's message, but to uncover the message of Christ.
2. This book uncovers, or unveils through symbols, signs, imagery, and visions the impending persecution facing the church.
3. Just from the definition we can see John's purpose was not to cover up, but to UN-cover.

B. "Prophecy" - Does not simply mean predictions of the future events. Rather the word suggests the declaration of Gods mind and counsel, whether past, present, or future.

1. Thayer - "Prophecy is a discourse emanating from divine inspiration and declaring the purpose of God, whether by reproofing and admonishing the wicked, comforting the afflicted, or revealing things hidden (by foretelling future events).

**II. APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE**

A. Written in signs and symbols and was very common in Hebrew history.

B. The recipients surely did not find it hard to understand

1. *Rev. 1:3 - Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

C. Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah are also apocalyptic in nature.

1. Daniel and Ezekiel were written during the Babylonian captivity.
2. Zechariah was written during the Persian rule.

D. This kind of literature grew out of times of trouble, trials, suffering, and despair.

E. Through this kind of literature, God unveils to His people, His power and disposition to them.

1. The purpose was to encourage faith, and comfort the afflicted.

### III. MESSAGES OF REVELATIONS

- A. Warning to the Church - Keep yourself pure from worldly entanglements.
- B. Warning to enemies of the Church - Through Christ, the Church will triumph.
- C. Comfort to those who sorrow - The book reveals freedom from pain and sorrow in time.
- D. Hope for the discouraged - Lift up your heads, God has not abandoned His throne.

### IV. THE PURPOSE AND THEME OF THE BOOK;

#### A. PURPOSE; VICTORY!!!!

1. To the First Century Christian - Revelation was written to show that even the great power of Rome was doomed to destruction.
  - a. In the end, the kingdom of God would triumph and Christ would reign supreme.
  - b. It is a call to maintain your faith at all costs - even in the face of death.
2. To Christians in our age - The message of Revelation is still calling us to choose the eternal, rather than the temporal.
  - a. To resist temptation.
  - b. To refuse to compromise with false doctrines.
  - c. To cherish the confidence of ultimate victory for the kingdom of God. Not only in the first, but also in the 20th century.
3. To any persecuted believer - The book of Revelation imparts comfort. The main purpose is to comfort Gods people who are fighting against the forces of evil. It abounds in consolations and assurances;
  - a. God sees their tears (7:17, 21:4)
  - b. Their prayers rule the world (8:3,4).
  - c. Their death is precious in His sight and their soul immediately ascends to heaven. A heaven whose glory far surpasses the intensity of earthly suffering (14:2, 20:4).
  - d. Their final victory is assured (15:2).
  - e. Their blood will be avenged (6:9, 8:3).
  - f. Their Christ lives and reigns forever and forever! It is He who governs the world in the interests of the church (5:7-8).

**B. THEME** - The victory of Christ and His church over the dragon (Satan) is assured.

1. *Rev. 17:14 - "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."*
2. *Rom 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*
3. Through-out the book Jesus is portrayed as the great Victor and Conqueror, and as Christ is victorious - so are His followers.

## **V. THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED, THE AUTHOR AND THE DATE;**

**A. THE PEOPLE ADDRESSED** - The Seven Churches of Asia (1:4,11).

1. The number "7" is symbolic for perfection, and indicates the book was written to all churches.
  - a. These "7" were selected because they were symbolic of all.
  - b. Other churches existed in Asia at this time; Troas (Acts 20:7), Colossae (Col 1:2), and Hierapolis (Col 4:13).

2. Asia - Asia Minor south of Bithynia, north of Lycia, west of Galatia, and east of Aegean.

3. These seven form a circle;

Ephesus to Smyrna	41.5 miles
Smyrna to Pergamum	64.5 miles
Pergamum to Thyatira	44 miles
Thyatira to Sardis	33 miles
Sardis to Philadelphia	28 miles
Philadelphia to Laodicea	47 miles
Laodicea to Ephesus	107 miles

4. In general its message can be universally applied to saints of every age for it still supplies our needs.
5. Specifically it was for the first century church which was then undergoing extreme persecution.

## **B. THE AUTHOR**

1. John the Apostle
2. He refers to himself as John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8)
3. Most evidence points to the Apostle John even though several prominent men went by this name.
  - a. External evidence - Many contemporary writers confirm that John the Apostle wrote this book.
  - b. Internal evidence - Many key phrases, only used by the Apostle in his gospel, are also used in Revelation's.
4. The name "A Revelation by John" is a misnomer, because it is God's revelation. John just wrote down what God revealed to him.

**C. DATE** - For our study we will use what is called the “Late Date” 94 - 96 AD

1. Political Conditions of the Time

- a. DOMITIAN was the Emperor of Rome. He has gone down in history as the one who “bathed his empire in the blood of Christians.”
- b. DOMITIAN was power hungry, ruthless, immoral, and claimed to be “Master” and “god”
- c. His persecution of Christians was for the purpose of enforcing Emperor worship. He wanted to be viewed as a god.
  - 1. Anyone who refused to worship his likeness was sacrificed, tortured, or exiled.
  - 2. Once a year each person would have to burn a pinch of incense to DOMITIAN in front of Roman priests.
- d. When persecuted some Christians gave in and worshipped the emperor - others were willing to die.
- e. It cost something to be a Christian back then.
- f. Suppose you had a family and could not buy nor sell for food or clothing (Rev. 13:17) without a certificate showing that you had burned a pinch of incense to the image of the emperor.
  - 1. What would you do?

2. The Moral Conditions of Rome (Rev 13:3-4).

- a. At this time Rome was at her zenith. Military power and economic achievements were abundant.
- b. Extreme poverty and extreme wealth were everywhere.
- c. Along with this - extremely bad morals, and feelings of self-sufficiency.

3. The Effect of These Conditions on the Church:

- a. *Politically* - Christians were being killed, exiled, robbed of property for their refusal to worship the emperor.
- b. *Morally* - The evils all around them would have the tendency to creep in among them. This moral corruption could kill a church.
- c. Certainly Christians would be asking “Why?” and “Is there any hope?”
  - 1. They felt they were about to be crushed.
  - 2. Revelation was badly needed to assure them of victory

4. **Why not accept the early date of 64 AD** - during Nero's reign, and the fall of Jerusalem?

- a. Although Nero's persecution was very severe toward Christians, it was more to divert attention of the fire in Rome from him, not because of the Christian religion.
- b. Nero's persecution was also more concentrated in Rome. Domitian's was more wide spread and involved emperor worship. In Revelation, persecution seems to be everywhere (not just in Rome), and Christians were persecuted for their religion and loyalty to Christ.
- c. There is no mention of John's exile to Patmos (1:9) in other books written about this time.
- d. Ephesus seemed to be a strong church when Paul was there and wrote to them around 62 AD.
  - *Rev 2: 1-7 - Does not give the picture of a strong church.*
- e. Emperor worship was not common under Nero, even though persecution was.
  - *Rev. 13:8 - World-wide emperor worship is Implied.*

## VI. THE USE OF SYMBOLISM.

- What makes this book tougher to understand - is that while most of the symbols are figurative (symbolic in nature), not all of them are. The trick is to know which ones are meant literally, and which are not. As a rule - assume it is figurative language unless clear contextual evidence tells you otherwise.

A. **PURPOSE**: They are used to express ideas.

1. Apocalyptic literature was usually written under times of danger.
2. The personal safety of both the writer and the readers would be endangered if the authorities understood what was being written.
3. Think of it as sort of a code.
4. The word "signify" (Rev 1:1) means to codify, or express by signs.
5. Other books used the same style of writing (plus many uninspired works).
6. In Revelation, John uses over 400 references to Old Testament symbols.. The Jew was no stranger to this style of writing, nor were they strangers to these symbols.
  - a. The Old Testament prepared the way for Christ - and so it also helped the seven churches to understand the Lord's encouragement in Revelation.



## **B. NUMBERS:**

1. "One" - Suggested unity, or that which was unique and alone.
2. "Two" - Twice one, came to symbolize strength, re-double your courage and energy. (Eccl. 4:9-11).
3. "Three" - Represented divinity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
4. "Four" - The four boundaries of the earth (north, south, east, and west). This number represented the whole world in which men lived, worked, and died.
5. "Seven" - Regarded as the perfect number. The world number "4" is combined with the divine number "3" expressing perfection or completeness. This was the most sacred number among the Hebrews.
6. "Six" - Represented failure because it falls short of the perfect number "7". It gave up when success was in its grasp. It was a bad omen (just like 13 is today).
7. "Ten" - Human completeness or fullness. Five fingers on each hand, and five toes on each foot.
8. "Twelve" - Among the Hebrews this represented organized religion in the world.
9. "144,000" - The number 12 re-duplicated represented the security of a perfect number.
  - Strength in numbers, you are not alone.
10. "1,000" - The number 10 is re-duplicated as though showing completeness upon completeness. Thus a whole, or full period of time.
11. "3 1/2", "42 months", "1260 days", "Time, times and half a time" - all mean the same thing - incompleteness. Cut the complete number "7" in half and you have an indefinite period of time, but it is far short of perfect, complete or the whole of time.

## **C. UNDERSTANDING THE NUMBERS AND SYMBOLS**

1. Much of the numbers in this style of literature do not have real numerical value - they are symbolic.
  - a. Many false religions seek to attach real value to the numbers in trying to predict the return of Jesus Christ - They have all been wrong.
2. John uses many objects to try to express what he saw. Obviously it is beyond human perception, so he must describe it by things we know.
  - a. Birds, beasts, dragons, persons, cities, elements of nature, weapons, qualities (night and darkness), precious stones, all these serve the writers purpose.

## VII. METHODS OF INTERPRETATIONS.

A. FUTURIST - Held by millennial and dispensational groups who consider the entire book is unfulfilled prophecies about the future.

1. Chapters 4-19 - Before Christ returns.
2. 20:1-10 - Millennial reign.
3. 20:11-15 - Judgment
4. Chap. 21 & 22 - The final state.
5. Most futurists are literalist.

B. CONTINUOUS HISTORICAL - This view is a forecast, in symbols, the history of the church. This system makes the prophecy a detail of the apostasy of the Roman Catholic Church, then the Reformation.

1. Revelations becomes a calendar of events written in advance.

C. PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY - This considers the events as not necessarily occurring but as symbolic of forces at work. The book then would set forth principles of how God deals with men in all ages.

1. Also called “Spiritual” or “Idealist” view.

D. PRETERIST (Completed in the past) - This view maintains the book was written for the people of John’s day. It was fulfilled then, and has no value for us today.

E. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND - This view seeks to find the meaning of the book in that day. Since it was written to the people of that day, it was fulfilled in the first two centuries (some extend it longer), but in its background is seen a message for all time.

1. This class will primarily use on this view. Why?

a. It meets the needs of the people of John’s day.

1. Futurist is inconsistent with “the time is at hand” (1:3, 22:10), “must shortly come to pass” (1:1, 22:6), “I come quickly” (22:7, 12, 20).

2. Others (Futurist and Historical) leave out the needs of the early church. They needed spiritual encouragement.

b. It meets our needs today.

1. Look at it the same way you would 1 Corinthians. It was written to correct errors of that day - but its truths are valuable for all ages.

2. Its message will always be true and encouraging to us;

- a. Triumph of the Kingdom of God and truth.

- b. Satan and his helpers are destined to complete destruction.

## **VIII. RULES FOR STUDY;**

- A. Revelations was written by John primarily to comfort, encourage, and edify Christians in his own time.
- B. It is written with symbols - do not take them literally.
- C. John uses Old Testament terminology with New Testament meaning. He uses over 400 allusion to the Old Testament.
- D. Do not press the symbolism of one of John's visions, but try to group them together.
- E. All interpretations must be consistent with the rest of the bible. Use clearer passages to help you understand more difficult ones.

## The Contribution of the Book of Revelation to the Bible:

- 1 It shows that God is at war with sin.
- 2 It gives encouragement to the depressed.
- 3 Revelation completes the story begun in Genesis;

Contrast the first three chapters and the last three chapters of the bible  
See the great themes come together;

GENESIS	REVELATION
In the beginning God created the Heavens and the earth (1:1)	I saw a new heaven and a new earth (21:1).
The darkness he called night (1:5).	There shall be no night there (21:25).
God made the two great lights (sun and moon) (1:16).	The city has no need of the sun or moon (21:23).
In the day that you eat from it you shall surely die (2:17).	And there shall no longer be any death (21:4).
Satan appears as the deceiver of mankind (3:1).	Satan disappears from the scene forever (20:10)
A garden in which defilement entered (3:6-7).	A city into which defilement will never enter (21:27).
I will greatly multiply your pain (3:16).	No longer any mourning, crying, or pain (21:4).
Cursed is the ground because of you (3:17).	There shall no longer be any curse (22:3).
They were driven from God's presence (3:24).	They shall see His face (22:4).
Access to the tree of life disinherited in Adam (3:24).	Access to the tree of life reinstated in Christ (22:14)

## LESSON TWO-THE PREFACE

### Rev. 1:1-8

**Rev 1:1** *The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants; things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John (2) who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw. (3) Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.*

*(4) John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, (5) and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, (6) and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

*(7) Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.*

*(8) "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

From the very beginning, John makes it clear that this book is not a work of his own or any other man, but it is a direct Revelation from God Himself (*"The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave unto Him"*) John is the servant who received the Revelation and was commanded to write that which he heard and saw. In addition to John, the entire God-head are included in the salutation;

- *God, the Father* (vs. 4)
- *The Holy Spirit* (vs. 4)
- *Jesus Christ* (vs. 5-7)

John also wants it understood from the very beginning that this book was written to help the recipients of the first century (vs. 4 - *to the seven churches who are in Asia*), not to give us clues as to when the end of the world is near. Oh, yes there are definite applications for us today, we learn a lot about God, we gain confidence, our hope is renewed, and our futures are always bright - no matter how bleak things look today. John encourages Christians of all ages to look at the Lamb and know that He assures us victory - GOD WILL OVERCOME. But keep in mind throughout our study that more than anything Revelation was written for the benefit of those who first received it and assures them of imminent relief;

- 1:1                           *"things which must shortly come to pass"*
- 22:6                       *"Things which must shortly come to pass"*
- 1:3                           *"for the time is at hand"*
- 22:10                      *"for the time is at hand"*
- 22:7                       *"Behold, I come quickly"*
- 22:12                      *"Behold, I come quickly"*
- 22:20                      *"Surely I come quickly"*

John immediately defeats in verse 3 all those who say "You can't understand Revelation so don't even try" How many of us have heard this, and thought it ourselves. We study from Genesis through Jude and then stop and start all over again. Why? I think it's because we are afraid. Please don't miss-understand I don't think we will ever know in this life all the meanings of all the symbols that John uses, but I do believe we can understand, with a little hard work, what God wants us to know. (Hint: God is in control, and victory is ours if we choose to accept it and all the challenges that go along with it). In fact John spells out seven beatitudes in the book (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14). Please try to memorize 1:3 (I'll be calling on "volunteers" to repeat it several times in class).

John begins his book by giving us a description of the three co-authors. This is essential to the first readers. This powerful description gives them hope in a desperate time of need.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. What does the word “Apocalypse” mean?
2. Does the word “prophecy” always mean foretelling the future?
3. To whom is the book addressed? How does it apply to us today?
4. When are the things revealed in the book to be fulfilled? What does it really mean?
5. Based on your answer to number four, what method of interpretation will you use in this study, and why?
6. In the first beatitude (1:3) what three things are required of us if we are to be “blessed”?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
7. Were there more than just seven churches in existence in Asia at the time of this writing? If so why were only these seven mentioned?
8. What do the following numbers mean when used symbolically; (a) Seven \_\_\_\_\_ (b) Two  
(c) Twelve \_\_\_\_\_ (d) Six \_\_\_\_\_ (e) Three and one-half
9. What might the “seven Spirits” indicate?
10. In verse five, Jesus is called by three designations. Name them and tell what each means?
11. Explain the meaning of Alpha and Omega?
12. What “coming” of Jesus in verse seven is referred to? And why do you think this? (Read Matt. 24:30,34 for some help, but remember that Matthew is speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem);

## LESSON THREE - THE MAJESTIC CHRIST

### Rev. 1:9-20

**Rev 1:9** *I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. (10) I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, (11) saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."*

**Rev 1:12** *Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, (13) and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. (14) His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; (15) His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; (16) He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. (17) And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. (18) "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. (19) "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this. (20) "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.*

This is John's first vision - He sees the Majestic Christ among the seven churches. John wants it known that he is their brother and companion (vs 9-11). It was not written by one who could not sympathize with suffering saints, but rather by one who was himself in exile on the isle of Patmos "for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ". John was their companion in tribulation. This is a message of hope written by one who occupied the same ground as the ones to whom it is written.

Beginning in verse 12, John describes what he sees:

- Like unto the Son of Man (Human form)
- Clothed with garment down to the feet (priestly attire)
- Golden girdle (signifies high or royal rank)
- Head and hair white as snow (divine purity)
- Eyes as a flame of fire (bright, sharp, penetrating, giving divine knowledge)
- Feet like unto fine brass (strong, able to tread down all opposition)
- Voice as sound of many waters (overwhelming, commanded attention)
- Seven stars in His hand (has all authority over the churches)
- Sharp two edged sword out of His mouth (word of truth)
- Countenance as an unclouded sun (heavenly glory and majesty)

This is no ordinary vision! And these are no ordinary authors!!! Notice how this description of Jesus contradicts most of the worlds opinion of Jesus. This vision is not of One who is all tenderness and mercy, but of One who is also ready to punish, to judge, and to destroy. No wonder John "fell at His feet as dead". But we know that Jesus is full of love and compassion for He re-assures John who He is and later He will show that He has more than enough compassion for all who are penitent and humble. He commands John to write what he saw, what he sees, and what he will see (vs. 19).

The message of Revelation is one which is needed in every generation. While it must be understood first in light of its meaning for those to whom it was delivered, yet it inspires hope and comfort to the faithful of all generations as well as fear and dread to the wicked. At the time this was written, the relevant question was "Is it worthwhile being a Christian" (6:10; 17) When faced with tremendous persecution such as social disgrace, financial ruin, exile from all that you love, and often death, first century Christians had to ask "Who is Jesus, and if He is the Christ, why does He allow the wicked to prosper? What will be the end of the Christian?"

Today those same questions are asked and are still relevant. Though we are not persecuted, we are drawn into a race with the world just to keep up. But the message of Revelation is still the same "Do not measure your life by what the eye can see, or the hand can hold!" Being a Christian is a worthwhile endeavor regardless of what might occur in the flesh (Matt 10:28), for Jesus Christ is truly "Lord of Lords and King of Kings." (Rev 17:14).

**QUESTIONS :**

1. Describe Patmos and locate it on a map?
2. Jesus having the keys of death and Hades means what to us?
3. What are the angels of the seven churches?
4. What did John do when he saw the Son of Man and why?
5. What was John told to write?
6. What does “Son of Man” mean? And where else is it used?
7. How is Jesus described and what do these terms mean? (You’ll need a separate sheet of paper)
8. What does “tribulation” mean?
9. What does the word “kingdom” refer to (heaven)?
10. What is a lampstand used for?
11. Explain the word “mystery”?



## LESSON FOUR - CHRIST AMONG THE CHURCHES

Rev. 2:1 - 3:22

### **To the Church in Ephesus**

**(2:1)** "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, 'These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: **(2)** "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; **(3)** "and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name's sake and have not become weary. **(4)** "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. **(5)** "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place; unless you repent. **(6)** "But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. **(7)** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

### **To the Church in Smyrna**

**(2:8)** "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write, 'These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: **(9)** "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. **(10)** "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. **(11)** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."

### **To the Church in Pergamum**

**(2:12)** "And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write, 'These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: **(13)** "I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. **(14)** "But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. **(15)** "Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. **(16)** "Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. **(17)** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

### **To the Church in Thyatira**

**(2:18)** "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: **(19)** "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. **(20)** "Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. **(21)** "And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. **(22)** "Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. **(23)** "I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. **(24)** "Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. **(25)** "But hold fast what you have till I come. **(26)** "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations; **(27)** 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'; as I also have received from My Father; **(28)** "and I will give him the morning star. **(29)** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

### **To the Church in Sardis**

**(3:1)** "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: "I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. **(2)** "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. **(3)** "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. **(4)** "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. **(5)** "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. **(6)** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

### **To the Church in Philadelphia**

**(3:7)** "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write, 'These things says He who is holy, He who is true, "He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens": **(8)** "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name. **(9)** "Indeed I will make those of the synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not, but lie; indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you. **(10)** "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. **(11)** "Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown. **(12)** "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. **(13)** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

### **To the Church in Laodicea**

**(3:14)** "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: **(15)** "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. **(16)** "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. **(17)** "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'; and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; **(18)** "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. **(19)** "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. **(20)** "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. **(21)** "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. **(22)** "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Jesus addresses these seven churches by name in the Revelation. Remember we are following the principle that all of the book must be interpreted in a way that applied to those Christians who first received it. From history, we know that these seven congregations existed at the time of this writing. However we also know that other churches also existed in Asia Minor at the same time (Troas - Acts 20:6-7; Colosse, Hierapolis - Col 4:13). These seven were representative churches. What Jesus had to say about them could apply to all the congregations (even congregations of today). The number "7" is the sacred perfect number, the message of this book is actually for the church as a whole.

You will notice an obvious pattern for each letter; (1) Salutation, (2) Christ's self-designation, (3) Commendation, (4) Condemnations, (5) Warning or Counsel and , (6) A Promise if they would follow the counsel.

### **Notice the similarities between each letter**

1. ***"Unto the Angel of the Church..."*** - The word angel can also be translated "messenger". Because of this many feel this refers to the one who would carry the message to the church (elders, or evangelist). Others feel it refers to the "prevailing spirit", attitude or conduct of the church. What ever the meaning, we see the Lord is concerned about the church individually and encourages them to faithfulness.

2. ***"I Know Your Works"*** We find out at the beginning of the book that God is omniscient - we may fool men but not God (Gal 6:7-8). At judgment each of us will have to give account of our lives (2 Cor 5:10). This strikes fear into the hearts of the wicked and the "Sunday Only Christian", but it is a comfort to the faithful to know that the Lord is aware of our efforts and will give us rest (14:13). Christ is pictured here in the middle of the churches which means He is near to us and willing and able to help in time of need (Heb. 4:14--16).

3. ***"To him that overcometh"*** - *"Overcome"* is found 17 times in Revelation and is from the same root word as victory. This was written to encourage Christians in a great time of need and extreme persecution. The odds they faced often looked overpowering. But the message Jesus wants us to know is if we keep our vision clear, looking to the promises the Lord has set before us, and continue steadfastly unto the end, then there are great and glorious promises that will be ours. An interesting note to Calvinists is that these warnings would have no meaning if it were not possible to fall from grace. We are promised these assurances and protection so long as we walk by faith. We can see from these warnings that it is indeed possible for one to change his alliances from Christ to the dragon.

4. ***"He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit says..."*** - The Lord wants it known that He has left it up to man's free will. He does not force his message or His will on men - it is our choice. It also interesting to note that while these letters are indeed written to the church as a whole, the Lord still considers the individual, and judgment will be one by one (see the church at Sardis).

## **THE CHURCHES:**

**EPHESUS (2:1-7)** *Left Her First Love:* This church had a fine past record of loving devotion and service to Christ. But now it had abandoned that love and was in immediate need of repentance. Extinction of the church in Ephesus was threatened if such repentance did not occur. There are several lessons to be learned from Ephesus;

- A church with the correct doctrine is to be commended - Guard against false teaching.
- A church without fervor is fruitless - Form alone is of no value.
- Admonition - "Remember", "Repent", and "Return"

**SMYRNA (2:8-11)** *The Poor-Rich church.* Smyrna, a church composed of people poor in this world's goods but rich in the faith, was being subjected to an especially fierce attack from Satan's agents in that city. This church stands with Philadelphia as having no condemnation mentioned. To those who are faithful a reward is promised. Lessons from Smyrna are rich;

- Tribulation ought not to discourage us.
- We may be in poverty by the world's standards, yet be rich according to God's standards.
- We have no need to be afraid - God is on our side!!

**PERMAMUM (2:12-17) - Faithful in the midst of evil.** Satan's throne was likely a shrine for emperor worship. The saints were exhorted to continue resisting the pressures to deny Christ and confess the emperor, even if it meant death. Certain false teachings were beginning to make their way into this congregation and that was to be corrected immediately. Again the overcomers are promised a reward. Lessons;

- We can live the Christian life even where Satan's throne is. But we must still flee temptation.
- Some may be unfaithful even in a good congregation (can't ride yourself into heaven).
- Repentance is imperative or condemnation awaits.
- If we "overcome" we will also receive a reward.

**THYATIRA (2:18-29) - Compromised with Evil.** Although we initially get the idea that this church is outstanding because it is commended for its progress, it was condemned for tolerating a woman (Jezebel) who was teaching a false doctrine which had gross immorality and idolatry as its outcome. A curse is pronounced on all those who had accepted this false worship and those who were still free of its contamination were urged to hold fast to their purity and service for Christ.

- This church had many strengths (Love, Service, Faith, Patience, Progress).
- But a church that fails to reprove its evil is weak

**SARDIS (3:1-6) Living-Dead church.** The church at Sardis had not pressed forward since its establishment and was described as being dead. It had compromised with the world to the extent that it was the "church of Christ" in name only. A few who were not spotted with this sin are commended, but the rest are commanded to repent.

- A church's reputation may not reflect its true character.
- Two kinds of peace - Rest after conflict and giving it our all, and the other is lethargy.
- Judgment will be by individuals not congregational.
- They are admonished (we would do well to keep these in mind) - Be watchful, Strengthen that which remains, Remember, Hold fast, Repent.

**PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13) - An Open Door.** This church received a warm commendation for its past faithfulness, it was assured of an open door (most likely an opportunity to do good), and was promised special protection.

- The Lord can set an "Open Door" before us.
- We are responsible to use the opportunities given to us.
- Be strong - let no man take your crown.

**LAODICEA (3:14-22) The Lukewarm church.** This church had not given up to another Lord or become contaminated with immorality, but neither was it steadfastly loyal to Christ, nor aggressive with His gospel. It was a comfortable church. Comfortable in maintaining the status quo. Even though it is severely condemned, it is given a chance to repent (2 Peter 3:9).

- The Lord does not want us "coasting"
- We should open our eyes and see ourselves as the Lord sees us.
- Remedy: Be Zealous and Repent.

**QUESTIONS Chapters 2 and 3:**

1. What churches received no condemnation? Which received no commendation?
  
3. What three things did the Lord find right in Ephesus?
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4. What was wrong with the church in Ephesus? Explain what it means. Would this congregation get the same letter?
  
5. What does “will remove your candlestick out of its place” mean?
  
6. What five ways did Smyrna suffer?
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7. How do Christians suffer today? How does tribulation bring joy to the Christian and not sorrow?
  
8. Why was Pergamos identified as where Satan’s throne is?
  
9. What do we know about the following;
  - Balaam
  
  - Nicolaitanes
  
  - Jezebel
  
10. What was the problem in Sardis? Does this exist today?
  
11. What doors does the Lord open for us today?
  
12. How could a congregation (Individual Christians) let themselves get to the state of being Lukewarm?

## LESSON FIVE: THE THRONE SCENE (Chaps 4 - 5)

*4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this." (2) Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. (3) And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an emerald. (4) Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. (5) And from the throne proceeded lightnings, thunders, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. (6) Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.*

*(7) The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. (8) The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying:*

***"Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God Almighty,  
Who was and is and is to come!"***

*(9) Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, (10) the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying:*

***(11) "You are worthy, O Lord,  
To receive glory and honor and power;  
For You created all things,  
And by Your will they exist and were created."***

*(5:1) And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. (2) Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" (3) And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.*

*(4) So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. (5) But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."*

*(6) And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. (7) Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.*

*(8) Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. (9) And they sang a new song, saying:*

***"You are worthy to take the scroll,  
And to open its seals;  
For You were slain,  
And have redeemed us to God by Your blood  
Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,  
(10) And have made us kings and priests to our God;  
And we shall reign on the earth."***

*(11) Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, (12) saying with a loud voice:*

***"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain  
To receive power and riches and wisdom,  
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!"***

*(13) And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:*

***"Blessing and honor and glory and power  
Be to Him who sits on the throne,  
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"***

*(14) Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshipped Him who lives forever and ever.*

Here begins the apocalyptic section of the book - in earnest. From now on John will present scenes as in a play. These scenes will be rushed on and off the stage in a fast a furious manner. These two chapters are loaded with comfort for a people who were seeing, and would see tremendous persecution. These chapters show God to be on the throne and (in Christ) to be in love with them. Chapters 4 and 5 are the door into the central thrust of the book. The book teaches victory of the Church over her enemy (Satan in Rome). In the course of these events that John will present, Christians will have many occasions to be afraid, but these two chapters tell them, no matter how it looks, all is well. Scary material is to be presented so these two chapters are essential in giving reassurance.

Chapter 4 says, "Believe in God", and chapter 5 says, "Believe also in me." Chapter 4 speaks of the Creator and 5 of the Redeemer. Chapter 4 speaks of power, and 5 of love and mercy. Chapter 4 will say the throne which rules the universe is not in Italy and chapter 5 will say the CO-ruler of the universe is an all-sacrificing Lover of the saints.

The two chapters together will say that worship, glory, and honor should be given to the Father and the (once dead) Lamb and not to any arrogant and evil earthly ruler. They will say: "No matter what you hear, you can be assured everything is under My control and to your ultimate benefit.

### **Chapter 4 The Reigning God:**

John was called to see "the things which must come to pass" from Heavens point of view. It is important to always know that no matter how bad things look to us on earth, God sees the big picture. The scene before John in Heaven is dominated by the throne and Him who sat on it. There could be no doubt that the throne represented a more glorious and powerful presence than any upon the earth. This is the Throne that should be worshipped and not that of Domitian's. John and his persecuted brethren needed re-assurance that their God was in control. Around the throne of God are twenty-four thrones and twenty-four elders who sit on these thrones. These 24 elders are likely the heavenly representatives of the people of God throughout history. Perhaps the 12 tribes of Israel and the 12 Apostles. Twelve is symbolical of God's people; 12 + 12 magnifies it. The four living creatures remind us that all the powers of the entire creation are at the disposal of God. Then John sees a tremendous out-break of praise and worship to Him who sits on the throne. All of nature and the redeemed of the ages are seen acknowledging the sovereignty of God! The glory and honor and power are ascribed to Him.

### **Chapter 5 The Redeeming Lamb**

John saw a book containing the destiny of mankind which was sealed with seven seals. John wept that the book could not be opened and its contents revealed until he learned that one (Christ) who is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah was worthy to take, open, and reveal the book. When John turned to see the Lion he saw a Lamb instead. This Lamb looked as though it had been slain. Christ in His suffering, demonstrated characteristics of both a Lion and a Lamb (1 Pet 1:19; John 1: 29; Isa. 53:1-7). The Lambs "seven horns" represented His power and authority (1 Sam 2:10; Psa 75:10; Matt. 28:18). His seven eyes show the fullness of the Holy Spirit ( John 3:34). When the Lord came and took the book so as to indicate His willingness to reveal its contents, all creation broke out in joyful praise. The saint's would now learn the outcome of their present fiery trial! Here the unveiling actually begins.

**QUESTIONS Chapters 4 & 5:**

1. After reading chapters 4 & 5, what significance would you say the Throne Scene has to the oppressed Christians?
2. What does a throne represent?
3. Why was John invited up to heaven to see what must take place?
4. What was contained in the book the Lamb took from God?
5. What were the four living creatures (beasts) like? And why would John use these symbols? What would they represent?
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6. According to the “New Song” (vs. 12), what seven things describe the work of Christ and why He is worthy of praise?
7. Why did John cry?
8. What did the blood of Christ make us?
9. In verse 10, many translations read “kingdom” instead of “kings”. What other passages show that the church was purchased by the blood of Christ, and can it be shown that the “church” and the “kingdom” are one in the same? (hint: where are we told we shall reign?)
10. How is it that John was told to look at the “Lion” of the tribe of Judah, but when he looked he saw a “Lamb”?
11. Why is this vision so important to the early church and to us today?
12. What would the “sea of glass” represent (2 Chron. 4:2-6)?

## LESSON SIX - SIX OF THE SEVEN SEALS

6:1 - 17)

**6:1** Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see."**(2)** And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

**(3)** When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." **(4)** Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.

**(5)** When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. **(6)** And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

**(7)** When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." **(8)** So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.

**(9)** When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. **(10)** And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" **(11)** Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

**(12)** I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. **(13)** And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. **(14)** Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. **(15)** And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, **(16)** and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! **(17)** "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

It's a good thing John gave us chapters 1, 4, & 5, otherwise after reading chapter 6 we would be scared, and thoroughly depressed. The preceding chapters, for the most part have been introductory. The letters to the seven churches showed the character, temptations, and rewards of the church. The throne scene reassured the Christians of the sovereign power of God both in the creation and redemption through Christ. With the opening of the sealed book we now see the pictures of the sufferings of the church, the divine judgments upon its enemies, and the ultimate triumph of Christ.

After each of the first four seals are opened, a rider on a horse appears. These represent, in turn, conquest (either Christ or outside enemies), war, famine, and death. These are the forces of might which have been unleashed against the church. When the fifth seal is opened, the souls of the martyrs (who have suffered during the opening of the first four seals) cry to learn how long this will be permitted. They are told to wait but a little longer. When the sixth seal is broken, great calamities representing the judgment of the Lord against the enemies of His people comes into view. The wrath of the Lamb is coming!!!



**QUESTIONS:**

1. What does the White Horse represent to you?
2. What does the Red Horse represent to you?
3. What would “taking peace from the earth” mean?
4. What does the Black Horse represent to you?
5. What is meant by “*A measure of wheat for a penny*” and “*Hurt not the oil and wine*”?
6. Is this talking about a famine?
7. What does the Pale Horse represent to you?
8. What is under the alter after the Fifth Seal is opened?
9. Why do they cry out “How long?”
10. Are they asking for revenge, and is this wrong?
11. What happens after the sixth seal is opened?
12. Who tries to hide themselves and why?
13. Why is the question asked, “Who is able to stand”?

**LESSON SEVEN**  
**AN INTERLUDE - PROVISIONS FOR THE REDEEMED**

**7:1-17**

**144,000 Sealed**

*(7:1) After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. (2) Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, (3) saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." (4) And I heard the number of those who were sealed. One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed: (5) of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand were sealed; (6) of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand were sealed; (7) of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand were sealed; (8) of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand were sealed; of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were sealed.*

**The Great Multitude in White Robes**

*(9) After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, (10) and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" (11) All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, (12) saying:*

*"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen."*

*(13) Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?"*

*(14) And I said to him, "Sir, you know." So he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (15) "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. (16) "They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; (17) "for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

After reading chapter six, one is prepared for the great wrath of God and divine retribution poured out on the enemies of God. Contrasted with this however, Christ provides an Interlude (which you will see several times through-out the book designed to give God's people encouragement when everything looks so hopeless) to show the compassion of God for His own as He "seals" the saints. In fact God intentionally holds back His wrath until all His faithful have a mark or seal placed on their foreheads (Jer. 49:36, Ezek. 9:1-11).

A seal had several purposes; {1} Protection against tampering (Matt. 27:66), {2} Marks of ownership (Song 8:6), {3} Certifies (Esther 3:12). All of these apply to the Christian - We are under God's protection, we have been bought by the blood of Christ, and the Spirit certifies we are the sons of God (Eph 1:13, Rom 8:16).

Those that received the Seal of God are those true servants of God. The number "12" (which is understood historically to represent God's covenant people) is multiplied by itself, and then by a multiple of the number "10". This is a complete number, it is a symbolical number not literal. The total sealed is 144,000. It represents the entire faithful body of Christ on earth. John then says that he saw a great multitude in heaven praising God. These are they that no longer need the Lords protection on earth, but are shown in a triumphant state before the throne. They have come out of the great tribulation and this is a scene of great encouragement to the early Christians, and to us. For they answer the question we asked earlier; "Was it worthwhile serving the Lord Jesus Christ?" While the wicked seek to hide from the wrath of God, these are before the throne praising God. They shall never hunger or thirst again, and God shall wipe away every tear.

## **QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 7:**

1. What problems would you have if you tried to make the 144,000 literal? (hint: who is listed in verses 5-8, and who is left out?)
  
2. Jehovah's witness teach that literally only 144,000 will have a heavenly inheritance, and the rest (whom they call the great multitude) will live in the flesh of this earth. What problems are there with this interpretation? Where are the "great multitude" according to John?
  
3. Why were the four winds held back?
  
4. Are the two groups pictured here the same people (the 144,000 and the "great multitude")? Explain.
  
5. Why is this interlude used? Why doesn't God open the seventh seal right away? (hint: What question was asked at the end of chapter 6).
  
6. What did the Lamb do for them?
  
7. What does the "sealing" mean? The righteous will not be hurt? Or the righteous will not be judged? (Ezek. 21:3-4) Explain.
  
8. How is it that the "Lamb" is also the "Shepherd" in verse 17?
  
9. How can our robes be made white in the blood?

**LESSON EIGHT**  
**THE SEVENTH SEAL AND FOUR OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS**  
**8:1-13**

**THE SEVENTH SEAL (8:1-6)**

*Rev 8:1 When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightning's, and an earthquake*

**THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS BEGINS:**

*6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. 7 The **first angel sounded**: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up. 8 Then the **second angel sounded**: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. 9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed. 10 Then the **third angel sounded**: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.*

*11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter. 12 Then the **fourth angel sounded**: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.*

*13 And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"*

With the saints secured against the divine wrath about to be unleashed upon the foes of Christ, the seventh seal is broken. The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets (just as the seventh trumpet will contain the Seven Bowls of Wrath). After a brief but dramatic pause, seven angels appeared with seven trumpets. These trumpets would herald doom to the foes of the Lamb!

The cry of "How long...?" (6:10) is finally answered. An angel with a golden censer containing the prayers of the saints threw it down to earth. This caused violent disturbances in the earth, a clear indication of what is to be expected when the trumpets are blown.

The first four trumpets are blown in quick succession and affect man's natural environment. They affect a third of the Earth, Sea, Fresh Waters, and the Heavens or sky. These trumpets serve as a warning of coming judgments and call men everywhere to repent. After this we see an eagle with a frightening message to the enemies of Christ; the remaining three trumpets will be worse than the first. These last three trumpets are called the "Three Woes".

Notice how these four trumpets serve as only partial judgments, they only affect a part of nature. Total and complete judgment and destruction come later. These four trumpets picture natural calamity as an agent for destruction. Now the remaining trumpets (the Three Woes) show mankind's role in the downfall of the wicked.

These trumpets remind us of the plagues that God brought on Egypt and that is how we should view them. The oppressor is being punished - brought to his knees. As it was in the days of Moses, so it is in the days of the Revelation period. The ungodly is badly hurt, but as it turns out, not hurt sufficiently to turn him from his evil ways.

Historians agree that three major factors contributed to Rome's downfall (1) Natural calamity, (2) Internal corruption or rottenness, and (3) Outside invasion.

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. What is mentioned first at the opening of the 7th Seal? And what affect would this have on the audience?
2. Who were these “saints upon the golden alter”?
3. What happened when the First Trumpet sounded? What would it mean to the first readers?
4. What happened when the Second Trumpet sounded? What would this mean to the first readers?
5. What would a “Mountain” represent? (Read Jer. 51:25 for help)
6. What happened when the Third Trumpet sounded? What would this mean to the first readers?
7. What is Wormwood? (Jer. 9:15)
8. Who might you think the “star” represents? (Read Isa. 14:12, and Mark 13:25 for help). (vs. 10)
9. What happened when the Forth Trumpet sounded? What would this mean to the first readers? (Amos 8:9, Joel 3:15, Jer. 15:9)
10. Be prepared to answer the question (with passages) “Does God answer prayers?”
11. Why use the symbol of Trumpets?
12. Bring a chart that compares the Plagues and Egypt in the Old Testament and the Seven Trumpets.

**LESSON NINE (9:1-21)**  
**THE FIFTH AND SIXTH TRUMPET AND TWO OF THE THREE WOES**

**Rev 9:1** Then the **fifth angel sounded**: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. **2** And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit. **3** Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. **4** They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. **5** And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months. Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. **6** In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

**7** The shape of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were crowns of something like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men. **8** They had hair like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. **9** And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots with many horses running into battle. **10** They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails. Their power was to hurt men five months. **11** And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. **12** **One woe is past.** Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things.

**Rev 9:13** Then the **sixth angel sounded**: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, **14** saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." **15** So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. **16** Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. **17** And thus I saw the horses in the vision: those who sat on them had breastplates of fiery red, hyacinth blue, and sulfur yellow; and the heads of the horses were like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. **18** By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed; by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths.

**Rev 9:19** For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm. **20** But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. **21** And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceress or their sexual immorality or their thefts.

These Woes, announced at the end of chapter eight by the flying eagle, are terrible indeed. If mankind thought the natural calamities were bad, wait for these evil forces to be unleashed.

The Fifth Trumpet is sounded and a star falls from heaven and this star is given the keys to the bottomless pit (the lower depth of depravity, the cavity from where comes all evil, the abode of the devil and his angels). From this pit comes forth fierce demonic locusts which tormented men for a period of five months (a limited period). Also out of the pit comes thick smoke. Smoke so thick that it darkens the heavens. Smoke so thick that you couldn't see straight. This could represent deception and delusion, sin and sorrow, moral degradation. We are constantly warned about the deception of Satan (John 8:44). These horrible locust were not to harm those that had the seal of God on their forehead. So while DOMITIAN thought he was doing harm to the cause of Christ, actually Satan was causing his empire to crumble from within. This internal decadence contributed greatly to the downfall of the Roman Empire. This is the providence of God and work. He is in control, if we could only see from heavens point of view.

With the sounding of the Sixth Trumpet we see four angels whose goal is to bring wicked men to repentance. The terrible army led by these angels killed a third of the wicked people on the earth, yet the remainder would not repent. As the fifth trumpet symbolized the internal decay of Rome, the sixth likely symbolized the external invasion which began eating away at the empire. The most dreaded enemy Rome had, that they could never totally defeat, were the Parthians from the Euphrates. They were skilled in archery, and could strike (sting like a scorpion) at great distances and kill many in battle.

Here we have the three instruments symbolized in Revelation which God used as tools for rescuing His people. Natural calamity (flood, earthquake, volcanic eruption), internal rotteness (a long line of corrupt rulers), and external invasion (from new and old enemies of Rome). All these combined to overthrow the invincible Roman Empire.

## **QUESTIONS:**

1. How does Satan deceive us today?
  
2. How do we respond when we see the wicked prosper? (Heb. 11:25)
  
3. With an army of 200,000,000 marching in regular formation, this army would measure one mile wide, and 85 miles long. What would you say to those who want to interpret this literally?
  
4. Tell me what you think of the description of the locust (don't make this hard on yourself, just write down what you think of when you read this description. If one of your children came home from a field trip to the art museum and described the following painting, what picture would you get in your mind?)
  - Horses prepared for battle -
  - On their heads were crowns of gold -
  - Faces like the faces of men -
  - Hair like a woman's hair -
  - Teeth like lions' -
  - Breastplates of iron -
  - Sound of their wings was like many chariots -
  - Tails like scorpions -
  
5. Why would some men not repent regardless of all that God may do to lead them to repentance?
  
6. Who was the king of the locusts? and what does his name mean?
  
7. Is there anything in this chapter that you would feel comfortable interpreting as literal? What?
  
8. Who is the "star" mentioned at the sounding of the Fifth Trumpet?
  
9. What are the three plagues mentioned in verse 18?

LESSON 10  
***AN INTERLUDE - ANNOUNCEMENT OF RETRIBUTION, AND THE LITTLE BOOK***  
**10:1-11**

**Rev 10:1** *I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire. **Rev 10:2** He had a **little book** open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, **Rev 10:3** and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he cried out, **seven thunders** uttered their voices. **Rev 10:4** Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them."*

**Rev 10:5** *The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven **Rev 10:6** and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, **Rev 10:7** but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

**Rev 10:8** *Then the voice which I heard from heaven spoke to me again and said, "Go, take **the little book** which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth."*

**Rev 10:9** *So I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach **bitter**, but it will be as **sweet** as honey in your mouth."*

**Rev 10:10** *Then I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. **Rev 10:11** And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."*

After the sixth trumpet, another interlude takes place. The purpose again seems to re-assure His readers that God is in control and that He will protect them from all the judgments that are taking place. We are introduced to another angel called "A Mighty Angel". The way he is clothed tells us that he has divine authority. The way he stands on the land and sea also tells us that his message is for the whole world. His voice also tells us of the power behind the message of this angel. John says this angel has a voice of a loud lion and that seven (perfect or complete) thunders come out of his mouth. In the Old Testament, thunder was often used to forewarn of divine judgments. Wallace wrote that "It was a symbol of divine power in the executions of vengeance of evil doers (2 Sam 2:10, 22:14; Isa. 29:6)."

As he was told to do, John starts to write what he has just seen. But he is told by a voice in heaven not to reveal what he has just heard from the seven thunders. The warnings of the six trumpets was sufficient to bring men to repentance. No more time would be given, God's patience has just run out. At the sounding of the seventh trumpet the "mystery of God" would be finished. At the sounding of the last trumpet the final chapters of the Revelation would be made known to John and to all of God's people. God is going to tell us how he will bring down Rome.

The second picture of the interlude is that of a little book that John is told to take and to eat it. In other words, he is told to master the books contents, make it part of his life. He is told it would be sweet to the mouth, but bitter to the belly. This same idea is found in Ezekiel 2:8 - 3:3, 14 where Ezekiel is also told to eat a scroll with the same effects. The idea is that the promises and rewards of God's word are sweet as honey (Psa. 19:10; Jer. 15:16). The joy of receiving this message of hope from God is wonderful and is indeed sweet. But when you also realize the woes and hardships that must be faced, it turns the sweetness into bitterness. The saints would have endure trials and tribulations in obtaining the crown. There would be suffering and sorrow, even death, to gain the sweet reward of eternal life. In addition to this, the Christian takes no joy in seeing the final destiny of the wicked played out. Our purpose on earth is to serve God, and to teach His message where-ever we go, and to take as many to heaven with us when we die. There is no sweetness in studying with someone who rejects the gospel message. Even the thought of a friend, family member, or neighbor going to hell ought to bring a nauseating bitterness to our stomach. When John read the little book, he saw the final destiny of the redeemed (sweetness), but then he also saw the rough, rocky road that must be traveled to heaven, and he saw hell in all its vile, evil, painful reality (bitterness).



## **QUESTIONS:**

1. When the text says that God will no longer allow time to repent, and then you read 2 Peter 3:9, do you see a contradiction here in the nature of God? How do you resolve this?
2. What is the “mystery” that is talked about? and when will it be revealed? (vs. 7)
3. Why was John not allowed to write what the seven thunders said? (vs. 4)
4. What was the purpose of the first six trumpets?
5. Did they achieve their desired results?
6. What would the sounding of the seventh trumpet indicate?
7. After eating the book, what were John’s responsibilities?
8. How can you prove that it is an utter waste of time and energy to search the apocalyptic scriptures to try and determine when the end of time will occur?

LESSON ELEVEN (11:1-19)

**THE TEMPLE, TWO WITNESSES, AND THE SEVENTH TRUMPET (3RD WOE)**

**Rev 11:1** Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. **2** "But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.

**Rev 11:3** "And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." **4** These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. **5** And if anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner. **6** These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues, as often as they desire. **7** When they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. **8** And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. **9** Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. **10** And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. **11** Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. **12** And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. **13** In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. **14** The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly.

**15** Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" **16** And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshipped God, **17** saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. **18** The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

**19** Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightning's, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

Now we see other re-assurances given to John to relay to the church. In connection with the Little Book John is told to measure the temple. This is not the literal Temple in Jerusalem for it had been destroyed some 20+ years at the time of this writing, but God is referring to the spiritual temple of God - the Church. This measuring seems to be closely related to the "sealing" of the 144,000 (7:3-8). The purpose is the same - to assure the church again that God was looking out for its welfare and would surely protect and preserve it. God will offer protection to all those under His measurement (Zech. 2:1-5). Perhaps the "reed" is the scriptures, the "temple" His church, the altar is the place of prayer, and them that worship inside are saints. The outside court is left un-measured, or un-protected. This could be a few things; (1) It could represent the marginal Christians who will not deceive God although they make a pretense of coming to His temple, (2) It was called the Court of the Gentiles which would represent the heathen or non-Christian world, or (3) That the church would still be going through some pretty rough times. Some in the church would indeed be hurt, perhaps killed by the enemy, but after all this is war! Just as God protected His children in the wilderness, it was still no bed of roses. Which ever the case, those in the outer court would be hurt, they are not under the protection of God.

Before the sounding of the seventh trumpet "two witnesses" are given the chance to prophesy for 3 1/2 years. They are given God's message, and they proclaim it with great power and strength. They are opposed by the beast and they are killed (it looks as though the cause of Christ has met its match. But wait, there's more). Do not think of these two witnesses as two individuals of history. Since they are identified as "candlesticks" this would indicate they represent the church (1:20). But what of the number "two"? Eastern symbolism often uses this number to represent strength - two men are stronger than one. Therefore the two witnesses (two candlesticks) signify the church as a strong and powerful agency for publishing the gospel. This mission arouses intense oppositions from evil men. And at times it would appear that evil (the beast, which is Rome and the emperor) had conquered Christianity. But this false sense of security is short lived. After a short time the two witnesses are raised from the dead and power is restored to the church and a period of great progress is seen.

Finally the seventh trumpet is sounded and unlike the silence that was produced after the seventh seal was opened, the seventh trumpet causes an eruption of joy, and praise in heaven. Victory is ours!!!! The Lord will take vengeance on our foes!!!! But we are not given the details here, we are not told of the vengeance visited on the un-righteous. John must give us a behind the scenes look at what is really going on. This is not a struggle between individual Christians and the Roman Emperor (even though from our perspective that is how it looks). This is a struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan. John will now back-up and tell us what is really going on. He will start with the origin of the church. The scene ends with lightning's and thundering, and hail, and noises, and an earthquake. What an ending to ACT II! Kind of makes you want to stick around to see how it ends doesn't it? (Don't worry I won't spoil the ending for you).

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. Where else in the New Testament is the church described as the "temple".
  
2. How did the witnesses' resurrection serve as encouragement to the persecuted saints?
  
3. Why do the saints rejoice following the seventh trumpet?
  
4. If we are talking about God causing the downfall of Rome, why does John refer to "Sodom", and "Egypt", and "Where our Lord was crucified"? Please explain by giving your impression of what these symbols mean. (Hints: What is Sodom known for to God's people? What is Egypt known for to God's people? What was rejected in the city where Christ was crucified?)
  
5. What have we said the 1260 days, 42 months, 3 1/2 years, and the "time, times and half a time" refer to? Since numbers have meaning in this literature, what do these numbers mean?
  
6. Given the story of the two witnesses in verses 4 - 13, answer the following questions;
  - What period of the church's history is represented in verses 4-6?
  
  - What period is represented in verses 7-10?
  
  - What period is represented in verses 11-13?
  
7. Does the reaction of "the rest" in verse 13 after the 7,000 were slain mean the whole world became Christian? What was Nebuchadnezzar's response to Daniel's God? What was Pharaoh's response after the 10th plague? Please explain the meaning for Rev. 11:13.