

VICTORY!

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

(Rev. 14:4)

A Study of Revelation

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LESSON TWELVE
THE WOMAN, THE MAN CHILD, AND THE DRAGON
12:1-17

Rev 12:1 Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. **2** Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.

Rev 12:3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. **4** His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born. **5** She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. **6** Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

Rev 12:7 And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, **8** but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer. **9** So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Rev 12:10 Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. **11** "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. **12** "Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."

Rev 12:13 Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child. **14** But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. **15** So the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. **16** But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. **17** And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The main purpose of the book is to encourage Christians to be steadfast in the midst of persecutions. The first half of the book indicates dire judgments which are to befall the enemies of Christ. Now John is able to write of the real struggle "behind the scenes" going on between God vs. Satan, Truth vs. Error - or as man saw it, Rome vs. the Church. It appears to follow that from chapter 12 on, John reveals the contents of the Little Book that John was commanded to master and deliver to all the nations.

In chapters 12 - 14 seven characters or figures are involved in intense conflict and hostility. These characters are (1) the woman, (2) the man-child, (3) the dragon, (4) Michael, (5) sea beast, (6) land beast, and (7) the Lamb. Each of these figures must be identified and then the nature of this struggle will become clear. Let's do what we can to understand who the figures are in this chapter. For now let me give a brief interpretation of these characters, and we will go into more detail in class;

The WOMAN represents the faithful of God. Since Christ built the church and not the church giving birth to Christ, it seems more logical for her to represent the faithful remnant of Israel, out of whom the Christ was born and of whom He was first believed (This would lead to the church later). Her offspring then would be the Christians upon whom Satan sought revenge for the battles he loses. The MAN-CHILD obviously represents Christ, no other description seems to make any sense. The DRAGON we are told is none other than Satan himself and all his powers of wickedness.

The story begins with the appearance of a pregnant woman (fleshly Israel with its promise of a Messiah) who is being threatened by a dragon (Satan). Through history Satan has tried to cut off the "promised seed of woman" (Gen 3:15). At His birth Herod tried to kill Jesus (Matt. 2:16), at His crucifixion Satan seemed to triumph, but in reality this was his downfall (Heb. 2:14-15).

The child (Christ) is successfully delivered and immediately caught up into heaven for His protection from the dragon. Thus thwarted in its effort to destroy the child, the dragon unleashes its terror against the woman (who now seems to be Spiritual Israel - the church) and seeks to destroy her. But God has prepared a place of refuge and safety for her in the wilderness.

The scene shifts from earth to heaven and the devil is represented as attempting to follow Christ into heaven to destroy him. Michael and his fellow angels fought to prevent this and Satan was cast down (note: This text proves nothing about the origin of Satan. It simply describes a conflict between him and Christ at a time much later than his origin.).

Satan has lost two great battles. He is a double loser. He lost when he tried to destroy the Child, He lost when he went up to heaven and was cast back to earth. All that is left is for him to focus all his destructive power against the woman (church on earth) and her seed (Christians). The scene shows the security of believers against all the devil can do, so long as they "*keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus.*" Now we see the devil is a four time loser. Who would want to follow a four time loser (and don't say Buffalo Bills fans, we are not talking about the same thing here)?

QUESTIONS:

1. How strong is the devil? List the things John uses to describe him. Is the devil someone we should take lightly?
2. Who is the woman in your opinion?
3. How did the brethren overcome the accuser?
4. Is the idea of using a "woman" to represent a nation used elsewhere in the scriptures?
5. What happens in the wilderness?
6. At what other times has God used the wilderness as a place for his people?
7. Is there a difference between "comfort" and "protection"? Which does God promise to us?
8. Verse 12:11 describes the basis of true victory over Satan. Where is the scripture Jesus said "he that loves his life shall lose it..." and what does it mean?
9. Who does the dragon personify?

LESSON THIRTEEN (13:1-18)

SATAN'S ALLIES: THE BEAST OF THE SEA, AND THE BEAST OF THE EARTH

Rev 13:1 Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. **2** Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority. **3** And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast. **4** So they worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

Rev 13:5 And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he was given authority to continue for forty-two months. **6** Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, His tabernacle, and those who dwell in heaven. **7** It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. **8** All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Rev 13:9 If anyone has an ear, let him hear. **10** He who leads into captivity shall go into captivity; he who kills with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

Rev 13:11 Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. **12** And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. **13** He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. **14** And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. **15** He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. **16** He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, **17** and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Rev 13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.

Satan calls on two of his helpers to aid him in their life-or-death struggle. He has already lost the battle to destroy the man-child when He was born. Then he loses a battle in heaven and is cast down to earth. Then he loses the battle to destroy the woman because the earth helped her (Rome was often distracted by internal uprisings), then at the close of chapter 12 John says that Satan now turns his attention to the Woman's offspring (Christians). Satan is a four time loser, but he doesn't give up easily. His first ally is a terrifying beast from the sea which was an object of worship to men on the earth. This beast had 10 horns (great power), 7 heads (great wisdom), and 10 crowns (authority), and he had names of blasphemy on his heads (arrogant toward God). Compare this to Daniel 7:7-8, 17-27. This beast represents the persecuting Roman Empire personified in its emperor (DOMITIAN) who demanded to be worshipped as a god. John also describes a "death-stroke" that this beast received, but then it was healed. When Nero died the saints were relieved, and the fierce persecution ended - temporarily. When DOMITIAN came to power, the persecution began anew, but even worse than before. Many even circulated the rumor that Nero never really died, but escaped his enemies, and that DOMITIAN was really Nero who had come back to power, or that DOMITIAN was Nero who came back to life! The Lord calls His people to patience. That though the whole world worship this beast, do not be afraid, God is still in control, and He will bring down this invincible foe by the sword.

Satan's second agent is a beast from the earth. This beast is not so fierce looking as the first beast. In fact he has a look of religion about him (lamb). But do not be fooled by his looks, for when this beast opens his mouth, the voice of a dragon is heard. This beast is cunning, deceptive and caused men to worship the beast from the sea. This beast represents the priesthood of the cult of the emperor and he is later referred to as "the false prophet" (16:13, 19:20, 20:10). Obviously emperor worship is being described here.

It was the job of these priests to enforce emperor worship. Every citizen was required to pay homage to the emperor and praise him as god. If you refused, then you could not buy or sell anything!! Your family would starve. You could lose all your possessions, you could be exiled (as was John), or be killed. What would you do? If you worshipped the first beast (the

emperor) than you received a mysterious mark. Only those with this mark could engage in business. This mark corresponds to the mark or seal that God gave to His faithful children. Both marks denote allegiance.

The mark of the beast (13:17-18) is a much disputed verse. Many have tried to figure out who the beast is by calculating this number "666". As an example some have claimed, by assigning letters in various alphabets to the numbers "666" and have come up with; Nero Caesar, the Catholic Pope, Hitler, international trade system, and even the UPC codes. Read the passage again. The number is what is emphasized and not the name. As surely as the number "7" represented perfection and holiness in Eastern symbolism, "6" fell short of that sacred number and was therefore evil. Using a series of sixes - "666" - represents the raising of evil to the highest degree. The man worthy of such a number is the first beast - the Roman Emperor himself!!!

The point is this; Every man must choose: Either have the seal of God, or the seal of the beast. You must choose one or the other. You can't say you don't want to get involved. By not choosing one, you side with the beast and against God. If you haven't decided whose seal or mark you want to have, read on.

QUESTIONS Chapter 13:

1. Ask yourself what you would do; You have a wife and two wonderful children. A Five year old and a two year old. Your babies are starving, they haven't had enough nourishment in days. Yet no one in town will sell food to you. No one will hire you. The only way you can get food to feed your family is to say "Domitian is my lord and god." To do this means denouncing everything you believe in. To not say it means your family will die a terrible death of starvation. What would you do?

2. What do you know about "Situation Ethics". Do you believe this teaching to be valid?

3. Where does the beast out of the sea get his power?

4. I thought Jesus said that Pilate only had power because the Father gave it to him (Jo 19:19). This passage implies that Satan gave Rome, and that includes Pilate, its power. Help me understand this apparent contradiction.

5. Who did the first beast make war with?

6. It appears that the church loses here. But what does God promise in verses 9 - 10?

7. In Daniel 7, we read of four beasts and a description. Tell what each beast represented, and give the description. Also give a detailed description of the four beasts in Daniel. (You might also read Dan. 10)

LESSON FOURTEEN
VISIONS OF TRIUMPH FOR THE SAINTS
REV. 14:1-20

Rev 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads. **2** And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. **3** They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. **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. **5** And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Rev 14:6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth; to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people; **7** saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." **8** And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." **9** Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, **10** "he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. **11** "And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." **12** Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. **13** Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

Rev 14:14 Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. **15** And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." **16** So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. **17** Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. **18** And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." **19** So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. **20** And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

In contrast to those who wore the mark of the beast, this chapter shows those bearing the mark of the Lamb. The 144,000 had been sealed on the earth in chapter 7. Now we see that entire throng - none have been lost during the great conflict - safe in heaven with the Lamb. Here is assurance and comfort!! The saints are assured that their ultimate salvation is guaranteed so long as they "follow the Lamb where-ever He goes" (14:4). This does not mean that Christians don't suffer - look at these poor persecuted saints, being killed for following the Lamb. Look at us today - the wicked seem to prosper, and the righteous suffer. But we are sealed, we are victorious, if we follow the Lamb where-ever He goes!!! When the suffering and oppressed saints saw this picture of victory they could rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

We are introduced to six angels in this chapter all of which make different announcements concerning God's judgments. The first angel (vs. 6-7) has the everlasting gospel, the glad tidings of everlasting victory. This angel announces the judgment of God against His enemies. This will bring glory to God throughout the earth. The second angel (vs. 8) specifies one aspect of the judgment of God upon His enemies - the fall of Babylon (i.e., Rome). Babylon ransacked Jerusalem and carried the people of Judah into captivity (2 Kings 24). Just as Babylon was the Jews' worst enemy, the Roman Empire was the worst enemy of the early Christians. The third angel announces the fate of those who worship the beast (vs. 9-11). With the fall of Rome, it is inevitable that all those who worship its emperor will suffer. They will taste the "unmixed" (not watered down or diluted) wrath of God. What a contrast to those who remain faithful to Christ - even at the cost of their lives - are pronounced "blessed" (vs. 12-13). Their troubles are now gone, and they can rest.

The forth, fifth, sixth angels urge divine judgment by crying to Christ to “Throw in thy sickle and reap.”(14-20). This scene depicts not the final judgment of the world but the judgment that will occur when the announcements of the first three angels are fulfilled. The evil and righteous will be distinguished and rewarded accordingly. Here is the tragic fate of the wicked. Rome and all its allies would be trampled in the great winepress of the wrath of God. The judgment would be complete. The terror of this judgment is seen in verse 20. Blood was up to the horse bridles and the flow extended 200 miles. Obviously this is pageantry and symbolic imagery to show the terribleness of this divine judgment on Rome.

QUESTIONS: CHAPTER 14

1. What does it mean to “worship the beast”?

2. How do people “worship the beast” today?

3. What is the punishment of those that worship the beast?

4. Materialists say that Hell is not eternal but will only be momentary until the consciousness is annihilated. Using 14:11, and other passages, give an answer to this doctrine.

5. What does “her grapes are fully ripe” mean? (Gen 15:16, DT. 9:4-5)

6. What Beatitude is mentioned in this chapter and what does it mean?

7. What is the judgment in verse 7?

8. What were the messages of the six angels?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.

9. What does it mean to “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (14:4)? Give other passages to support your answer.

LESSON FIFTEEN
THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH
15:1 - 16:21

Rev 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. **2)** And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. **3** They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!" **4** Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

Rev 15:5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. **6** And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. **7** Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. **8** The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

Rev 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." **2** So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. **3** Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died. **4** Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. **5** And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. **6** For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." **7** And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." **8** Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. **9** And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

Rev 16:10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. **11** They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds. **12** Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

Rev 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. **14** For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. **15** "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." **16** And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

Rev 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" **18** And there were noises and thunderings and lightning's; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. **19** Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. **20** Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. **21** And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

In the preceding chapter Christ has appeared in glory; gathered His wheat into the garner; judgment is come, and the wicked have been trodden in the "great winepress of the wrath of God". We might naturally expect the scene of the new heaven and earth, but instead there appears a new series of judgments. We have a review, a recapitulation, an enlargement upon the scene already sketched. However, before he describes the golden bowls of wrath, he beholds the great company of the redeemed which serves as comfort and encouragement to the church. In verses 1-4 seven angels are seen holding the last plagues. The martyrs of the Roman persecution praise God for His righteousness which is about to be revealed in the pouring out of His holy wrath.

They are seen standing on the “sea of glass” which is first pictured in Rev. 4:6 symbolizing the transcendence of God. When the final consummation is pictured in 21:1 “there was no more sea”, for God’s people can then approach Him and have intimate fellowship with God. For now though, because they were put to death for the gospel’s sake, they are able to approach the presence of God. The sea was no longer between them (the martyrs) and God, they were standing on it!!! They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. They sing a song of victory (Ex. 15:1) and of God’s justice. With the doom of the wicked sealed, the bowls containing God’s wrath were delivered to the seven angels.

In chapter 16 we see the seven bowls of wrath poured out. The first four affect nature. The trumpet judgments were calls to repentance, and were partial. The bowls are visitations of punishments and are complete. God has been patient long enough, you had time to repent but would not. God is not only Loving and Merciful, but He is Just, and a Just God demands obedience and will punish the wicked. Justice demands this.

FIRST BOWL - EARTH: foul and loathsome sores came upon men who had the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image. The SECOND BOWL - SEA: This caused the waters of the sea to become blood and thus brought about the destruction of living things within it. The THIRD BOWL - FRESH WATERS: Fresh waters as well as salt stank of death as they turned to blood. As surely as Rome had once caused the blood of Christians to flow throughout the Empire, all they could find to drink themselves was blood after the third bowl had been emptied. The FOURTH BOWL - SUN SCORCHED MEN: This fourth bowl was emptied on the sun which then scorched men with great heat. Even with this great calamity, these hardened men continued to blaspheme God and would not repent!!! Unbelievable isn’t it!

QUESTIONS (CHAPTERS 15 - 16)

1. Those on the sea of glass were victors over what?
2. What was the temple filled with? What significance is this? (Ex. 19:18, 1 Kings 8:10-11, Isa. 6:4)
3. If God is a “Loving” God, why would He punish anyone?
4. What does “Justice” mean? What does “Ungodly” mean and who are they that are “ungodly”? (Jude 15)
5. Make a chart that list all seven bowls, what they affected, and what it could mean.
6. John saw “harpers of God” (15:2). Since this is a New Testament reference concerning music that God approved of, does this passage give us authority for instrumental music in our worship today?
7. Where did the three unclean spirits come from? What could they represent? And why did they look like frogs?
8. What do we know about “Armageddon”? (Look up “Megiddo”). What is its importance in the O.T.
9. Why did men blaspheme God when the seventh bowl was poured out?
10. Who will be blessed? And why?
11. Look up these words and list all the references to them in the bible; “Rapture”, 1,000 year reign of Christ, “seven year tribulation”.

LESSON SIXTEEN
BABYLON, THE HARLOT, AND THE BEAST
REV. 17:1-18

Rev 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, **2** "with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

Rev 17:3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. **4** The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. **5** And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Rev 17:6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

Rev 17:7 But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. **8** "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Rev 17:9 "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. **10** "There are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. And when he comes, he must continue a short time. **11** "And the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going to perdition.

Rev 17:12 "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. **13** "These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. **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."

Rev 17:15 Then he said to me, "The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues. **16** "And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire. **17** "For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. **18** "And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

Chapter 17 is probably one of the more difficult sections of the book to interpret. However don't get frustrated. Keep in mind our fundamental rule of interpreting the entire book; "What would this mean to first century Christians?" With this in mind it will make our study easier. That is not to say that we will understand every symbol or thought that John tries to convey, but we can understand the overall message.

So momentous was the event brought about by the pouring of the fifth, sixth, and seventh bowls (i.e., the fall of Babylon) that three chapters are used to give the details of Rome's overthrow. It is very much as if a camera has swept the great panorama of the general struggle between Rome and the church so as to allow one to see what is happening, and now begins to zoom in its lens on the single event of the overthrow of the capital city.

Rome, the capital city of the empire (and for that matter the known world at the time) is here pictured as the mistress of the world. She is a harlot in that she has not only been wicked and immoral herself but has also enticed many other peoples and nations to follow her lead. She "sits upon many waters..." meaning she has extensive influence and she rides a scarlet-colored beast which will shortly be identified as the Roman Empire (which includes the emperors). She is rich, proud, and haughty.

The beast represents the power of evil which has been incarnated in successive emperors of the Roman-Empire. These have lavished attention, wealth, and power upon the harlot. It is this part of the chapter that causes much debate. Is John talking about specific kings, or kingdoms. If so where do you begin, and where do you end. Many take the number literally and begin with Julius Caesar which makes the writing of Revelation in the reign of Nero. Others say that Julius Caesar was never an emperor or

king, but was a dictator and so they begin with Augustus Caesar, which would make the writing in the reign of Vespasian. In either case you are forced to omit some rulers and include others. How do you know which ones to skip (I guess it depends on what you are trying to prove). Others relate back to Daniel where “Kings” represented kingdoms that at one time opposed God’s people (i.e., Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Macedonia, and Rome). I don’t know about you but I get confused reading all this. Perhaps the best solution is the one suggested by Homer Hailey, and that is to adhere to the symbolic character of the book. Repeatedly John has used the number “seven” as the symbol for completeness or perfection, and “ten” for the fullness of power. The seven churches represented all the churches at that time (the church in its fullness). The same could be said of the seven spirits, the seven lamps, etc... Using this logic then the seven kings would represent all kings or kingdoms, past, present, and future that would oppose the kingdom of God.

The once favored city of Rome is headed for hard times (vs. 15-18). The ten horns (the kings of earth) and the beast (evil personified in the emperors of Rome) would turn upon Rome and destroy it! Rome’s former allies and friends would destroy her! From history, we know this is exactly what happened.

QUESTIONS, CHAPTER 17:

1. Rev. 17:4 describes the Lamb as the “King of Kings”. Is this an event to take place in the future or is He already our King? (Support your answer with passages).
2. Who is the Woman?
3. Why is she called “the mother of Harlots”?
4. Interpret vs. 10-11. (you may need a separate sheet of paper for this one)
5. Compare the beast of the sea in chapter 13 with the beast discussed here. What similarities do you see?
6. What description does John give of those who are with the Lord (vs. 14)? What do each of these mean?
7. What are the “waters” where the harlot sits? What does it mean?
8. In what way was Rome the incarnation of ancient Babylon (Jer. 51:7, 13; Dan. 11:36)
9. What three places does the woman sit? What do they mean?
10. What is in the “golden cup”? (1 John 2:15-16)

LESSON SEVENTEEN
THE FALL OF BABYLON
18:1-24

Rev 18:1 *After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. 2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! 3 "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."*

Rev 18:4 *And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues. 5 "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. 6 "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her. 7 "In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow. 8 "Therefore her plagues will come in one day; death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her."*

Rev 18:9 *"The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, 10 "standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'*

Rev 18:11 *"And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore: 12 "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; 13 "and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men. 14 "The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all. 15 "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16 "and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! 17 'For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.' Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, stood at a distance 18 "and cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What is like this great city?'*

Rev 18:19 *"They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.'*

Rev 18:20 *"Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!"*

Rev 18:21 *Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. 22 "The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore. No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore, and the sound of a millstone shall not be heard in you anymore. 23 "The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. 24 "And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth."*

Even though Rome does not actually fall for another 350 years, and they continue to persecute the church for an additional 200 years, so sure was its fall that the language of chapter 18 is put in the past tense. In fact all through the chapter you can see that Rome's fate is fixed and sealed. We are told that Babylon (Rome) is fallen and now only demons, foul spirits, and unclean birds live there. Notice again the likeness here and the fall of ancient Babylon (Isa. 13:19-22; Jer. 50:39). The reason for Rome's fall is stated in verse three - spiritual fornication. The nations, kings, and merchants had permitted themselves to become infatuated with Rome's treasures and pleasures.

Another angel sounds that God's people need to come out of Babylon; not to partake of her sins in order to escape her plagues (vs. 4-5). This is sound advice for all ages. Her sins have been severe, they have not repented, and God is aware of them. Now she is to be punished in proportion to her sins - in fact a double dose for all her wickedness (vs. 6-8).

Three groups mourn over Rome's fall. They are kings, the merchants, and the shipmasters. Rome was built on two things: territorial conquest and trade expansion. Based on this knowledge these groups mourn because they are dependent on Rome and will fall with her. The kings have once enjoyed the empire's extravagance and now they are destitute. The merchants have no place to sell their goods. All of these have become rich by Rome, but now it is desolate. In contrast to this the Christians can rejoice (vs. 30) as they behold God's power and the vindication of their cause.

John graphically demonstrates Rome's fall using the symbol of a great millstone and casting it into the sea. This kind of symbolism is found in reference to ancient Babylon's destruction (Jer. 51: 63-64). In Rome's destruction we are told of the three ways of life among the Romans that would cease; **(1) Amusements life** would cease (vs. 22) - harpers, musicians, etc... **(2) Business Life** would cease (vs. 22), and **(3) Home life** would also cease (vs. 23) - No more would a light be on for the bridegroom. Nothing is found in Rome except the blood of the saints which was the reason for her destruction. Barclay said *"This is the fate of the city that built a civilization without God."* How true it is! Not only for any government, but for any one to build their life, or to make plans without God at the center of those plans. Heed the warnings of Revelation, and do not let history repeat itself within your family, or within your life.

QUESTIONS CHAPTER 18:

1. Notice the description of Rome's fall. Does this sound familiar? (Isa. 13:19-22, Jer. 50:39)
2. Why do these groups mourn over Rome's fall?
3. Why are God's people told to "come out"? What other references are we given in the bible telling us to be separate, and not to partake of evil ways no matter how popular they may seem?
4. Rome caused other people to sin and they were destroyed like a millstone cast into the sea. What other references are we given that use basically the same terminology (Hint: I'm looking for a passage in Luke)?
5. What did Rome say about herself (vs. 7)? How does Satan use this same overconfidence on us today? (He also used it on Eve).
6. The plagues came upon her in "one day" (v. 8), and "one hour" (v. 10, 17, 19). What does this describe? Is it an actual length of time?
7. Since it is a fact that Rome is still standing today, how is it that this chapter talks about her total destruction? Is this describing some future event?
8. What three areas of life are to be destroyed in Rome?
9. What is the basic reason for Rome's fall? (vs. 3)
10. Those who take an "early date" for the Revelation say "*Babylon*" represents Jerusalem in these passages. After reading some of the above O.T. passages, and John's description of this NT "*Babylon*", what do you think? Is it Rome, or Jerusalem?

LESSON EIGHTEEN
SAINTS REJOICING AND THE VICTORY OF CHRIST
19:1-21

Rev 19:1 After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! **2** "For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." **3** Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" **4** And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" **5** Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" **6** And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

Rev 19:7 "Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." **8** And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. **9** Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." **10** And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Rev 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. **12** His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. **13** He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. **14** And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. **15** Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. **16** And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Rev 19:17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, **18** "that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great." **19** And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army **20** Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. **21** And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Revelation 19 and 20 has been one of most abused passages in all the bible. Many have twisted it to teach something that it does not teach. They have made it say something that it does not say. Many questions are raised, and because of the sparse details, answers are difficult. Questions like; When is the battle of Armageddon?, What is the 1,000 year reign?, Why must Satan be let loose after being sealed in the abyss? Whatever answers we give for these questions we must be certain they are consistent with the entire bible, and especially with the theme and purpose of the Revelation (i.e., What is the relevant meaning for the first century Christian?).

In verses 1 - 10 although wicked men on the earth would wail over Rome's destruction, a hymn of praise to God for overthrowing it would be heard in heaven! The reason for this jubilation was due to the fact that the great harlot had been judged and the blood of the martyrs has been avenged. The word "Alleluia" (hallelujah) itself is found only in the 19th chapter. It literally means to "praise God!". Here the heavenly chorus is praising God for the triumph of righteousness and truth. We are told here that the "marriage of the Lamb is come." In bible times the espousal is often described as a marriage (Matt. 1:18,20). The church is now espoused to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). This marriage relationship is one of an intimate and blessed union of Christ and His church. It is important to remember that this passage does not imply that the marriage was not in existence before (Rom. 7:4). The fact that John says "His wife has made herself ready..." indicates that we are His "wife" now. If we are "ready" then we can have victory with the Lamb!

Now our attention is turned to Christ as the Victorious Warrior (19:11-16). He comes forth identified as “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” He is called “Faithful and True” (trustworthy and reliable). He is followed by heavenly armies and comes to conquer. This is a picture of victory on part of the saints.

We are now prepared to see a mighty battle, an awesome struggle between the forces of good and evil, the mother of all wars, we expect to see a long lengthy fight (you get the picture). But its over before it begins! We have been given much detail of the strength of these two armies (remember Satan was able to strike stars out of the heavens with a swipe of his tail). But we are not given a long list of details, we are told of the entire battle in one short sentence. So certain was the victory of Christ over His enemies that an angel calls for birds of prey to gather and prepare to eat the flesh of his enemies! The battle is soon over. The beast (the emperor) and false prophet (the priests of the state religion) were cast into a “lake burning with fire and brimstone.” Though the dragon and his allies looked invincible to the world, the saints are given an overwhelming victory. This lake of fire is not literal any more than the beast is literal but it represents the end of the persecuting force.

This is not the end of the world being described here. If we have properly identified the beast and the false prophet then this battle of Armageddon was fought years ago. The persecuting force against the church was brought down, and there has never again been a power enforcing emperor worship on the scale that Rome did.

QUESTIONS CHAPTER 19:

1. What did the clothing of His “wife” represent?
2. Several times the writer has referred to the “righteous acts” or works of the saints, and it is implied that God keeps track of these acts. Does this mean we “earn” God’s favor?
3. Is the church married to Christ now? Please prove it.
4. How is Jesus described in chapter 19 and what is the significance of these references?
5. What does the burning alive of the beast and false prophet represent?
6. What does it mean, and how are we to be “ready” for the bridegroom when He comes?
7. What other passages refer to Jesus as the “Word”? (vs. 13)
8. What is the sword that comes out of the mouth of Jesus?
9. When was this battle fought? (approximately)

LESSON 19
THE REIGN WITH CHRIST AND THE BINDING OF SATAN
REV. 20:1-15

Rev 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. **2** He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; **3** and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Rev 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. **5** But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. **6** Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

Rev 20:7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison **8** and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. **9** They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. **10** The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Rev 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. **12** And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. **13** The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. **14** Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. **15** And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

I have to admit to you, this is the hardest section (chapters 20-22) of the book for me to interpret. All through this study I kept asking myself "What would this mean to John's first readers?" We have seen the persecution the church has endured, and we've seen the encouragement they've been given to "overcome" these tribulations at the hands of an evil Roman empire. We've seen their victory as Rome has been defeated, and their exaltation and praise towards God for protecting them. When we get to this section however, the language certainly fits our "image" of what the judgment at the end of time should look like. It fits how we view heaven, and eternity (both for the wicked and righteous). And to say that this would not be encouraging to the first century Christians because of what they were going through right then is the same as saying that it is not be encouraging to us today. We should be encouraged by looking toward heaven, and with expectant hope desire for the judgment day to dawn soon. But on the other hand, John clearly says these things are going to happen "soon", they are "at hand". I have trouble going through chapters 1 - 19 which clearly relate to the time at which this book was written (94-96 AD), and then in the middle of chapter 20 making a quantum leap to the end of time. We just got through discussing the defeat of Rome, the emperor, the state religion, and how Satan is bound for 1,000 years, to then discussing the end of time!?! With all this in mind we will stay on our course of trying to find the meaning to the Christians in John's day. Please understand that I am not dogmatic about this interpretation. It just seems to make more sense to approach it in this manner.

Make no mistake - this is a very difficult passage. Many disagree as to what John is saying in this chapter. Many un-biblical ideas have come out of this passage. Even among members of the church there is disagreement. While it is sound advice that we should not be dogmatic regarding our own personal interpretation of each symbol, I can confidently affirm that I know what John's overall message is; Satan loses, Christ Wins!!! That's it! So don't get frustrated. I'll give you my impression of what is being said here in a moment. But keep in mind that while we may not know exactly what the "binding", and the "loosing", and the "Gog and Magog" are all about, we do know that it all had to do with the persecuted Christians in Asia Minor. The purpose was to strengthen them and not to arouse our curiosity of future events.

From chapter 12 three enemies of the church have been closely allied in their struggle against it. They are the beast (Rome / Emperor), the false prophet (Roman priests whose job it was to enforce emperor worship), and the dragon (Satan). Two of them, the beast and the false prophet, have been overcome by Christ in chapter 19. This leaves only one - the dragon! At first these enemies of Christ seem to have been successful in their efforts. The picture was bleak and dark at times for God's people. But a new day dawned with brightness of hope and gladness. Rome's persecuting and oppressive powers would be annihilated and a new era of peace and tranquillity would be ushered in.

With a chain and a key to the bottomless pit, an angel came down from heaven and bound the dragon (Satan) for 1,000 years. Satan was cast into the pit and held there so that he could no longer deceive the nations. All of this is symbolic - the chain, the key, the pit, and the 1,000 years! John is trying to describe what has happened to the devil to give his persecuted readers some encouragement. Satan was to be effectively stopped in his operation through the persecuting power and emperor worship, he was

to be completely restrained. The “1,000 years” is symbolic of completeness and meant complete defeat to Satan, and complete victory to Christ and His faithful martyrs. That needs to be understood. The “1,000 years” does not stand for a period of time at all. It speaks of a state of affairs, a condition of things. When it applies to Satan, it means that he is perfectly and altogether bound (this is in reference to the working through Rome against the Church). When it applies to Christians it speaks of their perfect and total victory and triumph. It represents the complete defeat of Satan. Many hold that Satan’s binding occurred when Christ rose from the grave after His crucifixion, but this does not fit the chronological context. His binding was to come after the overthrow of Rome (when the beast and the false prophet were cast into the Lake of Fire). It is more logical not to view this binding as a specific point in history, but to say that it is an on going action to prevent him from having the type of widespread civil power to inflict evil upon God’s people. When Rome fell Satan lost a powerful ally. He was then bound, not able, or restrained from “*deceiving the nations*” from believing DOMITIAN was a god. The worries of the church were over. DOMITIAN was not in control - GOD IS IN CONTROL.

Now what about this loosing of Satan after the 1,000 years have expired? The same thought is picked up again in verse 7 when the writer talks about “*Gog and Magog*”. Remember, the 1,000 years stands for the triumph of Christ, and neither Satan nor his followers will have any part in that victory. The “*little while*” does not stand for a period of time after the 1,000 years that Satan will break forth in one final attempt to defeat Christ and His church. Why not? Because the 1,000 years is not literal (if we make that literal then the chain, the key, the pit, the beast, only those beheaded will reign with Christ, must also be literal if we are to be consistent), nor does it stand for a period of time at all! If it did then at one point in time the Saints would quit reigning. The “*little while*” stays with the “time” figure, and tells us that the devil is not through tempting God’s people when Rome was defeated. The loosing for a “*little while*” obviously then stands in contrast to the 1,000 years. The “*little while*” is period of loosing, the devil, while we should beware of him and never under-estimate him, is still under God’s control. God permits him to tempt us, to deceive us, and cause us to sin. But the “*little time*” means he can’t do it very long. He is weak compared to the all powerful, 1,000 year reigning Christ!!!! The bottom line to all this is that God wants us to know that as surely as He has protected his people in the past, He will protect us in the future. Just as surely as He defeated Rome for His children, He will do it again to anyone, at anytime if they oppose Him.

In verses 4 - 6 we have the souls of those who died for their service to Christ reigning with Him for 1,000 years (a perfect, complete period of time). This is where the premillennial theory gets its “stuff”. But to make their theory work they have to make this passage say something it doesn’t say (i.e., second coming, Christ on earth, Jerusalem, bodily resurrection, the throne of David, etc...). John saw souls, not bodies. He said they “*lived and reigned*” **not** “*we shall live and reign*”. Only those beheaded would have the privilege of reigning with Christ (too bad for those who were fed to the lions). Further more, they lived while they reigned. If the reigning ceases after the supposed literal 1,000 years, so does the living. Some millennium! Do you see the trouble with trying to make this literal. It just doesn’t work.

John calls their reigning with Christ the “*first resurrection*”. This can’t mean a physical, or bodily resurrection because that would contradict other NT passages. There is to be only one resurrection. So what can this mean? The O.T. will help us here. The same type of thing is described by Ezekiel in Ezek. 37:1-14. Israel was in the grave of captivity in Babylon (where have we heard that name before). Their return to Palestine from exile is described as a resurrection. This “*first resurrection*” then is a resurrection of a cause. These martyrs had been raised from humiliation to glory. Revelation was written at a time when Christianity seemed about to be crushed. But instead of the church being abolished it was resurrected, and her persecutors shall instead be brought to an end. They may have been hurt by the “*first death*” (which is implied in the passage), but they will not be hurt by the “*second death*”. The second death is reserved for those who stood with Caesar and opposed God and His people (vs. 15).

In verses 7-10 Satan is loosed for a “*little while*” and he gathers his forces of God and Magog to battle against the church. Gog and Magog stand for any people who rally with the Devil and oppose God (Ezek. 38 & 39). Fire came down from heaven and destroyed them. In verse 10 the Devil is cast into the lake of fire where the beast and false prophet are. Wallace says in his commentary that “The defeat of the emperor-worship was described in verse 10 with metaphors of torment and endless punishment.” These were *systems* cast into the lake of fire, denoting their complete destruction. This does not mean that Hell is not a real place (Matt. 25:41). Many think that this is eternal hell in verse 10 and they could be right. To me the context seems to demand that we take it symbolically.

The remaining of the chapter gives additional encouragement to John’s readers (and to us today). Divine judgment is being executed. Righteousness is acquitted and wickedness is convicted and condemned. The books are opened. They contained the record of the evil deeds of those who opposed the church and they were judge accordingly. They had the mark of the beast on them. The book of life symbolized the approved; those who were sealed of God, and “*followed the Lamb wherever He went*.” The wicked are all cast into the same punishment as that of the Devil. The period of martyrdom had ended!!!

I believe that this judgment scene is not the general judgment that we will all experience at the end of time when Christ comes again (Matt. 25:31-46, Acts 17:30-31). The principles obviously characterize the judgment day when Jesus returns. It will be the same kind of fearful and glorious day. The day that we all hope for, and wait for with anticipation, but the sinner dreads.

Here is a great article by brother Mark Roberts giving us an excellent overview of Premillennialism;

Overview of Premillennialism

By Mark Roberts

Through the centuries Revelation has become a haven for false teaching of every kind. Nearly anything imaginable has been derived from this wonderful book, including authority for instruments of music (harps in heaven, 5:8) and the number of the saved (144,000, of course). Yet no system of false doctrine has ever been more deeply indebted to the book of Revelation than premillennialism.

Have you seen those bumper stickers that say "In case of RAPTURE this car will be unmanned?" That is premillennialism. Ever hear talk that the Mid-East will explode in a war called Armageddon? That is premillennialism too. Seen Tim LaHaye's incredibly popular books in the "Left Behind" series? Premillennialism strikes again. What is premillennialism all about? What should you know about it? How can we show it to be false and contradictory to the Bible? Let's get some answers to these important questions.

Premillennialism is a way of interpreting the Bible, especially biblical prophecy, that became popular in the 1830's. Names you might hear or recognize that are associated with premillennialism include Darby, Ryrie, Walvoord and Scofield (of Scofield Reference Bible fame). All of these men believed that Jesus had attempted to establish a literal kingdom reigning here upon this earth, that He was rejected and crucified, and so must return and establish that literal kingdom at some point in the future. The term "premillennialism" roughly means "before the thousand years" because premillennialists believe we are living before the (coming) thousand year reign of Jesus Christ here on earth. Naturally, Revelation, with its dark signs and symbols, became a haven for such speculation. Persecution, false teaching, days of troubles and a thousand year reign are all to be found in this difficult book. Announcing that they had found the key to unlocking biblical prophecy premillennialists peddled their doctrines and ideas everywhere. In the last century interest in premillennialism came and went, but in the early 1970's premillennialism enjoyed quite a revival. Hal Lindsey's book, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, made a difficult system of Bible interpretation accessible to the common man and premillennialism took off again.

Let's get a brief summary of pre-millennialism's teachings (notice the chart). Premillennialism teaches that we are now in the church age. The church is nothing more than a stop-gap measure the Lord established when Jesus was crucified, rather than accepted as king. Someday the Lord will return and get it right! The church age will be marked with increasing sin, wickedness and rejection of righteousness. World events, as interpreted through a hodge-podge of Daniel, Ezekiel, Matthew 24 and Revelation, will move toward a one-world government and one, charismatic leader who will mesmerize the world. Just as things appear to be getting worse and worse for Christians God will suddenly and mysteriously snatch or rapture all true Christians off the planet. The rapture marks the end of the church age. With all believers gone the world will descend into terrible tribulation and destruction. This period of time, lasting by most counts, seven years will be marked with appalling violence and wickedness. Premillennialists believe the bowl and trumpet judgments of Revelation describe these times. This time is divided into periods of three and one half years, with some premillennialists even believing that the rapture won't come until the middle of the tribulation. At the end of the seven years the world will be just about ready to tear itself apart in a huge war (Armageddon) that will destroy all mankind in a nuclear conflagration. At the last moment Jesus will return from heaven, stop the war, and establish His literal kingdom, reigning and ruling from Jerusalem for one thousand years. At the end of that time there will be the resurrection of the unsaved, judgment and eternity will begin. Clearly, such a brief synopsis of

a huge system of interpretation has to leave out some details but that is the gist of premillennialism. Now, what is wrong with it?

First, premillennialism teaches that the kingdom is yet future, but the Bible plainly states the kingdom is now presently in existence. Paul tells us that Jesus "has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love" (Col. 1:13). In Mark 9:1 Jesus promises some of the apostles then living that they would see the kingdom of God come with power. In the very first Gospel sermon Peter urges the audience to understand that Jesus is both Lord (King) and Christ (Messiah) (Acts 2:36). The kingdom has been established and Jesus is now ruling over it! Further, the very idea of God failing is simply astounding. If Jesus had wanted to establish an earthly kingdom He would have! God does not fail! Jesus had opportunity to be such a king (see John 6:15) but plainly announced "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Let none misunderstand: the fundamental tenet of premillennialism is that the kingdom is still to come. The Bible affirms that Jesus established His kingdom, and rules it right now.

Secondly, premillennialism teaches that all Christians will be raptured. This necessarily leads then to the idea of two resurrections. There will be a resurrection of dead Christians at the rapture, and then the resurrection of unbelievers at the end of the millennial reign. Again, we find premillennialism contradicting scripture. Jesus says "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth; those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:28-29). Jesus knows nothing of two resurrections, separated by over a thousand years of time. The very term "rapture" is nowhere found in scripture. Appealing to Paul's talk of the coming of the Lord in Thessalonians won't help. It is clear in that context that Paul is discussing the end of everything, not some coming before everything gets going! There is no rapture taught in scripture.

Thirdly, premillennialism teaches that God still owes Israel something. Much is made, for example, of the promise to Abraham that his descendants would inhabit Canaan. Yet the Bible plainly states that the land promises were fulfilled: "So the Lord gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it . . . Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass" (Joshua 21:43, 45). If it be argued that Israel then lost that land it must be remembered that God's promises to them concerning that land were always conditional (see Deut. 28-32). If Israel was not faithful to Jehovah He was not obligated to preserve them on that land. Further, the entire dispensation of physical Israel and her laws were only to prepare the world for Jesus' coming and His spiritual kingdom (see Gal. 3:24ff). In short, God owes the present day Jew, faithless to Him and rejecting His Son as Messiah, absolutely nothing!

Fourthly, premillennialism brutalizes God's word. Read any premillennial material or examine any of their colorful charts and you will find that passages from all over the Bible are cut and pasted together to weave their false doctrine. Regardless of original context, whether this interpretation would make any sense to the original readers, or what the stated time frames of the verses are the premillennialist meshes them all together to derive his peculiar doctrine. Travesties with biblical numbers are common, as literal times (such as Israel's wandering in the wilderness in for forty years) are plugged into non-literal figurative passages to obtain dates and times for Christ's return. Revelation's original message of comfort and hope to persecuted first century Christians is obliterated, all so that today's interpretation of scripture can match the headlines on CNN. Rightly did Peter warn us that some would "twist to their own destruction" God's precious word (2 Peter 3:16).

In the early 1990's premillennialists found their doctrine on the front page of every newspaper. Saddam Hussein looked like a promising antichrist and the Gulf War would surely plunge the world into chaos. The Soviet Union would attack from the north, just as Lindsey and Company had been saying for years. It didn't happen. Hussein was reduced to the status of a third-rate tyrant, world war three didn't break out, and the Soviet Union dissolved into a weak and powerless group of

unhappy little nations. So premillennialism has fallen onto hard times. They lack tribulation, a terrible world leader to be afraid of, and a superpower nation to play the bad guy in their drama of human devising. Yet all along those who knew the scriptures understood that premillennialism was false and could never be true. If world events spin back around into the premillennialists corner let us be steadfast in teaching the truth: the kingdom is here now and everyone needs to be a part of it.

QUESTIONS CHAPTER 20:

1. Is the 1,000 years a literal period of time? How do you know?
2. What is meant by “the Lake of Fire”?
3. What other examples of “1,000” can you give where it is used figuratively?
4. In vs 10 the word “forever” is used when talking about the punishment of the Devil, Beast, and the false prophet. Is this literal? (Jude-7, Isa. 34:8ff)
5. With respect to question #4, read Isa. 34:1-37. How can Edom be condemned to burn forever and ever and yet be possessed forever by wild animals and have thistles grow in it? How can both of these be true?
6. If this is symbolic language then, how is Satan destroyed?
7. Has Satan’s power ever been limited before? Give passages.
8. Explain “Gog and Magog”.
9. What is the “First Resurrection”?
10. Has Satan already been loosed? Or is this event yet in the future?
11. List the other passages that refer to judgment. Is Rev. 20 talking about the judgment at the second coming of Christ?
12. What is the “2nd Death”?
13. Who are “the rest of the dead”? (vs 5)
14. How is the premillennial theory absurd?
15. How long is Christ’s reign? (This is a trick question!! Hint: vs. 4 says “with”. Who’s reign is being discussed?)

LESSON TWENTY
THE FELLOWSHIP, PROTECTION, AND PROVISIONS WITH GOD
REV. 21:1 - 22:5

Rev 21:1 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. **2** Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3** And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. **4** "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." **5** Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." **6** And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. **7** "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. **8** "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Rev 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife." **10** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, **11** having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. **12** Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: **13** three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west.

Rev 21:14 Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. **15** And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. **16** The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. **17** Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. **18** The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. **19** The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all kinds of precious stones: the first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, **20** the fifth sardonyx, the sixth sardius, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. **21** The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.

Rev 21:22 But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. **23** The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. **24** And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. **25** Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). **26** And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. **27** But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Rev 22:1 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. **2** In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. **3** And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. **4** They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. **5** There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.

We are now reaching the end of the Revelation. John has a grand ending, full of glory, joy, and encouragement to the suffering Christians. The enemies of the church and of Christ (Rome, the emperor, the priests) have been judged, found guilty, and overthrown. They have been defeated. God has fulfilled His promises to the seven churches of Asia - He has delivered them from their oppressors, He has watched over and cared for them. What joy these words would bring to the hearts of God's people.

He says at the very beginning that He is creating for them a "New Heaven and a New Earth". This language is not new as we can see in several O.T. passages. In Isa. 65:17 - 66:22 we have the same phrases used when Israel returned from Babylonian captivity and were restored to Palestine. What it meant then, is what it means now; God has created a new order of things, the church's worries were over. John pictures the church's emergence from trials and tribulations as "a new heaven and a new earth". There was no more hostile society to deal with. This new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ, the Holy City, and the Tabernacle of God, all of these phrases refer to the church.

Many, including myself, have always viewed this chapter as describing heaven, but the language of the passage does not allow this it seems to me. You have the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. If this new Jerusalem were

heaven you would have heaven coming down from heaven. Several places in this chapter tell us he is still addressing the needs of his first readers. The new Jerusalem is pictured as a beautiful bride, a woman, who in chapter 12 represented God's people and fled into the wilderness (chap 12) for protection.

A new way of life, following the period of affliction and persecution, with new surroundings and conditions, is described in verse 4. There will be no more tears, or death, or sorrow, or crying, or pain. Why? Because the "former things are passed away." Though this could rightly describe heaven, the context seems to describe a new era of the church in this life. Again we find the same language used in many other passages (Isa. 35:10; 51:11; 65:19). In the Revelation John is saying that the tears of tribulation shall be over. The former things (afflictions) are passed away and the church will enjoy a time of peace.

Further proof of this being the church under discussion is contained in verses 6 - 8 where the gospel invitation is stated. This shows the church is still in the business of evangelism. If this were not the church, and the end of time has come, judgment is upon us, why then is the invitation given. Where were these new converts to come from? Other NT passages tell us that once the Lord comes again then there are no more chances. The earth and everything else will be burned up. Those that take advantage of this invitation will "inherit" all the privileges and rights of citizenship in the kingdom, the church. To induce the non-Christians even more a pronouncement of doom is made for all those who reject the gospel. The "second death" that is described is the destruction of the persecutors. Those that stood with Caesar and the forces of evil. Just as the martyrs enjoyed the first resurrection, the persecutors will experience the second death (destruction).

Beginning in 21:9 through 22:5 we have a description of the New Jerusalem. Again the imagery is of a city which is the church, the bride of the Lamb. The symbol of marriage is used several times in the bible, and always used to make a point concerning God's people. 2 Cor. 11 Paul used it to show how the church should behave (pure). Jesus used the marriage symbol many times to convey the idea of expectancy on the part of His people (always be watchful for the coming of the bridegroom). Here He uses the symbol of marriage to show the relationship and joy between God and His people. The woman in chapter 12 (which represented God's people) fled into the wilderness to be protected by God. Here we see her returning. God had indeed protected and preserved her.

Next we have a grand description of this city. We have great high walls (security), twelve gates that never close (entrance into the kingdom was possible), twelve foundations with the names of the apostles (read Eph. 2:20 and tell me if we are not talking about the church here), etc... The description continues and is one that conveys grandeur. How could we not be impressed with this grand kingdom of which we are members.

This chapter shows the triumphant church. It still shines among the nations and brings light to those who walk in darkness. In chapter 20 we saw the conclusion of all that was Rome that threatened God's people. But we are then given assurances of the future. No enemy, however great or strong, or large, could ever make a dent of the wall around Jerusalem (the church). This is what chapter 21 is trying to tell us.

QUESTIONS CHAPTER 21:

1. Look at the description of the new Jerusalem in verses 10 - 22:5. Write down what you think these things mean.
2. The 12 gates are always open. Does this mean there is more than one way to get into the kingdom?
3. What other passages in the bible sound like vs. 3. Who is being discussed in those passages?
4. What other passages discuss weddings, bride, bridegroom, or marriage? Is it always used in reference to God's people?
5. Do you agree or disagree that chapter 21 is discussing the church?
6. What does the number 12 represent? Since it is used in reference to the city, what do we know about the city?
7. List those who will not enter the kingdom and tell me what they mean.
8. What does having the name of God on their foreheads mean?

LESSON 21
FINAL ASSURANCES AND WARNINGS
REV. 22:6-21

Rev 22:6 Then he said to me, "These words are faithful and true." And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place. 7 "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Rev 22:8 Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9 Then he said to me, "See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." 10 And he said to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand. 11 "He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. 12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last". 14 Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. 15 But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Rev 22:16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.

Rev 22:18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Rev 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Well, we are almost there. The play just sort of stops abruptly. But the point has been made. John impresses upon the minds of the recipients of the book the importance of this message. The point for this last section seems to be one of certainty and of imminence. The message that we have read is "faithful and true." (it is reliable and factual), it is from God! Many have rejected this wonderful, encouraging book, saying it has no place in the bible (Luther, Zwingli, Erasmus) have said it was "non-apostolic". But John himself said he saw and heard these visions. So we have three witnesses so far as to the credibility of this work; an angel, John and now Jesus Himself (v. 16). Let no man say the book is from a "crazy man", or doesn't belong in the bible, for the author is God Himself!!!

We've talked several times regarding that the meaning of all these symbols must be found in light of what the first century Christians were going through. Here again for the seventh time (1:1, 3; 22:6, 7,10, 12, 20) we are told the events in Revelation are about ready to happen. In verse 10 we read "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand." This is significant because Daniel was told to do just the opposite in Dan. 8:26; 10:14; "shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days." We know based on history that Daniel's vision was fulfilled in less than 400 years after it was received and God says; "seal it up for its fulfillment is a long way away." Why is that? It is because the things revealed to John were about to happen!! God told Daniel 400 years is too long. God told John things are about to happen. So why would God say "for the time is at hand" in Revelation and the visions revealed to John were over 2,000 years in the future? He didn't. The things revealed to John have already occurred. That doesn't mean that we can't benefit from them, just like we can benefit from 1 Corinthians. When Jesus comes, He will bring "rewards" (v. 12) for those that are found righteous, but condemnation for those that worshipped the beast, but victory to the redeemed.

What does the Angel mean when he says "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still..." There are two explanations; (1) Barclay says "Let each man do what pleases Him, God will not force his choice. Man has free will, Jesus will not force His message on us, all we can do is make the appeal. (2) The events described are so near that no change in the worshippers of the beast could be expected. Either way we know the unjust will receive judgment, and the just will receive rewards.

In the last chapter we said the new Jerusalem had 12 gates that are always open, symbolizing easy access into the Kingdom of God. Here we see that it is by obeying the commands of God that one has access to the tree of life (v. 14). Those outside the city are called "dogs" which was a despicable term used to characterize the wicked and evil (Dt. 23:18, Phil 3:2). These would be the heathen followers of the beast. The point is this; all those who do not obey God's commandments are outside the city (outside the church) where there is no salvation, only condemnation!!!

The gospel invitation is again extended to all when the Spirit and the bride say “Come”. While it is open for all, as we have just read it is not without conditions. If a man is thirsty, he must “Come” and he will be given water that will quench his thirst forever (John 4:14).

A stern warning is then given to any one who alters the contents of the Revelation (vs. 18-19). Although these words specifically apply to Revelation alone, the principle is found many times throughout the bible (DT. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Gal 1:9; 2 John 9). Woe to any man that would change one thing that God has spoken.

John then concludes the greatest pageantry ever envisioned. The greatness, grandeur, and glory of Christ have been vividly impressed upon our minds when we come to the close of this prophetic book. We can say with the heavenly host, **“Worthy is the Lamb (5:12).”**

QUESTIONS CHAPTER 22

1. Tell me what the word “dogs” means?
2. When are these events supposed to happen? Be ready to defend your answer.
3. Why did John fall down to worship an angel twice?
4. What three witnesses attest to the authenticity of the book?
5. What book are we not to add to or take away from?
6. What are the last two Beatitudes? What do they mean?
7. What does verse 11 mean?
8. What is the “Tree of Life”? What is the “water”?
9. The writer longs for Jesus to “come”. Why? Do You?
10. A main point of the book is found in verse 9. Who are we supposed to worship? (I know that sound simplistic, but who or what do we really worship?).

WILL GOD PUNISH THE WICKED ETERNALLY?

By Larry Brown

Two young boys were talking. One said, “Do you believe in the devil?” The second boy replied, “Naw, the devil is just like Santa Clause, he’s your dad!” Unfortunately, many people have this same attitude. They think there is no such thing as the

devil, hell, or eternal torment. That these are simply figments of man's imagination, created many years ago to frighten the people. If it is not an out-right denial of the existence of hell, then it usually goes something like this, "I don't know about your God, but my God is the God of love, and a loving God would not punish anyone." From this idea also comes the doctrine of "Once Saved Always Saved". How comforting it must be to go through life in denial, thinking that since you confessed your belief in Jesus Christ, God will no longer hold you accountable for your actions. No matter what you do, you cannot fall from grace; you are saved. This may give comfort to those who believe this doctrine, but it is a false comfort. This article will attempt to answer the question "**Will God Punish the Wicked Eternally?**"

Actually this is not one question, but three; (1) Will God Punish? (2) Who will God Punish? and (3) What is the Nature of this Punishment? We will examine each of these questions individually, and hopefully we will reach a logical conclusion.

WILL GOD PUNISH? As we stated in our introduction, many have rationalized their behavior when it comes to punishment. "Surely God will not send anyone to Hell" is the reply to anyone who teaches the unpopular doctrine of a righteous God demanding justice. While this may indeed be an unpopular subject, even an awful, fearful subject, it is one that must be discussed. Even a casual reading of the Bible reveals the fact that God will punish. Psalms 9:17 answers our question plainly; "*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*" The entire book of Revelation was written to encourage the first century Christians (Rev. 1:1-3) that God would indeed avenge their blood. Jesus assures His followers that their persecutors will be punished (Rev. 6:9-10). Paul knew that one day every soul would stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of the things we have done in this life (Rom 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Having this knowledge Paul exclaimed, "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men!*" (2 Cor 5: 11). "*It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*" (Heb. 10:31). Paul knew the wrath of God. He knew the punishment that awaited those who reject Jesus Christ. He was willing to give much of himself, even suffer for the preaching of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:7-15), so that no one would have to endure the "*terror of the Lord*".

In answering this question "**Will God punish?**", it is helpful to remember God's characteristics. He is holy, righteous and just. Is He expected to allow iniquity in His presence? Is it reasonable that His enemies be allowed to dwell in His sight, to live in His palace, to share in His blessings? Should not the vile spirits, those who hate God and holiness live in a world separated from God and His goodness?

Who would deny that our prisons are necessary? Should not those who break our laws be required to spend time away from us reaping the rewards of their deeds? If not, what good would our laws be? Where is the honor and justice in our government? Who would want to live in a society where the evil are not punished, where the wicked and cruel are allowed to mingle among us? The same principles apply to the existence and necessity of Hell, and punishment. Is it not still loving and righteous that the wicked be restrained, and not be allowed to wage war against God's people in eternity? The honor of God, the justice of His divine government, the well being of the righteous, and the restraint of the vile, all demand that there be punishment for the wicked.

Now that we have established that God will punish, we must now ask **WHO WILL GOD PUNISH?** In the title of this article we ask "Will God Punish the Wicked...?" But who are the wicked? There are wide and varied opinions on this as well. We must go to the word of God to determine WHO will face this punishment.

Paul gives us several lists of those that God deems as wicked. In Romans 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 6:9,10; and Gal. 5:19-21 we see an extensive list of those who will not enter the kingdom of heaven, who are deserving of death; these are the wicked. The wicked range from *Murderers to Liars, from Homosexuals to Drunkards, from the Sexually Immoral to being Disobedient to Parents*. When we see a list like this we say "Sure the murders, homosexuals, sexually immoral, thieves, and the violent are certainly wicked, and they don't deserve to enter heaven." But that is far as we are willing to go. Who among us can say we have always obeyed our parents? Who has never held a grudge against someone and been unwilling to forgive? Who has always demonstrated "agape" (un-conditional) love to your fellow Christians? We have all been guilty of being wicked at one point or another. The Christian must never lose sight of the fact that he can still sin and lose his eternal soul. We also can not afford to become complacent and conform to the world's definition of who the wicked are. We are prone to limit our definition of what wickedness is. We make distinctions between big sins and little sins (i.e., "Little White Lies"). God makes no such distinctions! All sin is wicked and will be punished. With today's standards of compromise and tolerance of other's beliefs, 95% of the people described as wicked in Paul's list would not be considered wicked today. Our children and our young people need to be taught what wickedness is - IT IS LAWLESSNESS. (*anthesmos - lawlessness, apart or contrary to statute, a general state of rebellion against God.* 2 Peter 2:7; 3:17). When we do not follow God's laws by doing what He commands in the way He commands us, we are wicked. But does the Lord stop here?

No!! What about those who just go through the routine in God's service? They come on Sunday, sing a few songs, pray, take the Lord's supper, listen to a sermon, and go home thinking they worshipped. *"Because you did not serve the Lord with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything,...He has destroyed you!"* (Deut. 28:47-48). The Lord has never tolerated an indifferent heart in His service. The Lord wants us to *"love Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind"* (Matt. 22:37). Anything less is wicked and unacceptable to God.

We have established these two facts; that God will indeed punish, and that the wicked - those who have not obeyed Him are the object of His wrath. We now want to answer the question, **WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THIS PUNISHMENT?** Many have said "Hell is here on earth.", or they believe it is only temporary, and then we are given a second chance. However, the Bible's definition of this punishment is quite different from these popular views. It is represented in scripture as being extreme - absolute - unmitigated; as horrible as the burning of the flesh with fire. It is described as producing weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 8:12). It is represented as a state of utter torment, *"I am in agony in this flame"* (Luke 16:24). This torment, or punishment, will take on many forms. Let us examine just a few.

The Loss of All Enjoyment - There will be no peace, no joy, no happiness for the lost. *"There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked."* (Isa. 57:21). The horror and woe will not cease for an instant, not for one cheering moment. All the sources of enjoyment and happiness will have fled forever.

The Unattainable Desires - Think of the parable of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31). Is it possible that just as the rich man was able to see Lazarus comforted in Abraham's bosom, the wicked will also be able to see the joyous scenes in heaven - hear the songs, behold the triumph, see the oceans of pleasure (Rev. 4 & 5)? Oh, how they will long to enjoy them! But the desire for even a drop of water will be refused. The greedy will seek his gold, the immoral his pleasure, and the drunkard his cup. But now they will have only their burning feverish desires, with no means of realization.

The Remorse of Conscience - Sin will now be seen for what it really is - Blackness! Imagine how the lost will curse themselves! Look at Esau, crying with many prayers for his birthright; but he had sold it - it was gone forever (Gen 25 & 27). Now, the wicked will have eternity to think how they sold their souls, heaven, and eternal salvation, for the pleasure of a season. Every recollection will produce remorse and excite horror. They will go through eternity asking "What if?"

The Eternal Companions of the Wicked -Hell will hold the vile of the universe. The wicked will eternally live in bondage to sin. Think of being shut up with these souls forever and ever.

The Loss of All Hope - Hell has been described as the place where no hope exists. *"But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope."* (1 Thess 4:13). If your punishment were 1,000 years, you could make it through by counting the years. If it were 1,000,000 years you could even endure that just by knowing that one day it would end. But in hell no such hope exists. This punishment is eternal, forever and ever. Many dispute that hell is eternal, but the Bible is explicit. Phrases used to describe this punishment are "Everlasting", "where the worm dieth not", "their torment ascends forever and ever." No proof is found in scripture that this torment will ever end, that the cries for mercy will ever be heard. No, the word of God gives no hope to the lost.

This is what awaits the wicked. Be aware of the tricks of the devil. Study your Bibles! Know and do the will of God, so that you may be counted as righteous on that great and terrible day. Avoid God's punishment of the wicked.

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