

# The Revelation

## The Church Triumphant Through Jesus Christ the Lamb

Embry Hills 2015

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# REVELATION OUTLINE (2015 EMBRY HILLS)

## 1. Introduction & Overview of Revelation

- Text: 1:1-11
- Application(s): In this book, Jesus is **revealing** (NOT hiding) God's plan for his people in order to **comfort** those who will see and hear the message.

## 2. Jesus among the Churches

- Text: 1:12-2:29
- Application(s): Jesus **knows** and **cares** about his people live and **promises** that he will reward them based on their faithfulness or faithlessness.

## 3. Jesus among the Churches, Part II

- Text: 3:1-3:22
- Application(s): Jesus **knows** and **cares** about his people live and **promises** that he will reward them based on their faithfulness or faithlessness.

## 4. A Vision of Heaven

- Text: 4:1-5:14
- Application(s): We need to **see the overwhelming glory** of God's power and grace which should compel us to **deeper worship** (4:8, 11, 5:8-10, 11-12, 13, 14), **gratitude toward Jesus** (5:1-14) and more **faithful service** (5:9-10).

## 5. The 7 Seals

- Text: 6:1-8:5
- Application(s): God gives **protection** to his people (7:9-17 specifically highlights protection in midst of judgment on the world) who **pray** to him (8:1-5).

## 6. The 7 Trumpets

- Text: 8:6-10:11
- Application(s): The world is scary and we are often tempted to turn from serving the Lord. We need to remember that God has a plan for us and we must **repent** of the things of world (9:20-21) and **trust** in the purposes of God in the world for our benefit (even when we do not understand or know precisely what those purposes may be - see chapter 10).

## 7. War in Heaven and on Earth

- Text: 11:1-12:17
- Application(s): God's people will often seem defeated, yet because Christ has overcome the Great Serpent we can rest assured that **his victory will be ours**. But that victory is only for those who live by, "*the **blood of the Lamb**, and by the **word of their testimony**, for they **loved not their lives even unto death**.*"

## 8. War in Heaven and on Earth, Part II

- Text 13:1-14:20
- Application(s): We must **remain faithful** to the Lamb, **standing with him in Zion** (14:1-5) rather than being tempted and drawn away by Satan's earthly allies of **Persecution** (13:1-10) and **False Religion**--all of which will face the wrathful judgment of God.

## 9. The 7 Bowls of Wrath

- Text: 15:1-16:21
- Application(s): Rather than seeking out our own protection and justice against the evil of the world, we must be **patient to wait on God** who will judge the evil world for our salvation.

## 10. The Great Fall of the Great Harlot, Babylon

- Text: 17:1-18:24
- Application(s): Satan's ally of **Worldliness** will fall. We must **fight the temptations she offers** of things like: sensuality, drunkenness, wealth, decadence, etc. If we drink from the cup of "Babylon's" worldly pleasures, then we will share in the cup of God wrath for her.

## 11. God's Judgment and Salvation

- Text: 19:1-20:15
- Application(s): We should **praise** and **rejoice** in God's sovereign rule over Heaven and Earth, which is demonstrated by his judgments on evildoers and allows for the "*marriage supper of the Lamb*" of which we are the Bride. Along the way we need to be certain we are dressed in the "**righteous deeds of the saints**." Though Satan is given periods of 'rule' on Earth, we can **persevere** because we know ultimately he will be overcome by the Lord.

## 12. The New Heavens and the New Earth

- Text: 20:16-22:21
- Application(s): The struggle of life is real but we can rest assured that **God will fulfill the promises** to his people of **victory over evil**, **fellowship with the Father**, and a **glorious new state of existence**. Our security in Christ should motivate us to be more passionate about bringing the nations into the Kingdom through the work of **evangelism**.

## The Relevance of REVELATION

What happens;

When prosperity consumes our attention and begins to reshape realities. Ephesus was the mistress of the Roman Empire, Laodicea thought they were rich. Look at the merchants in chapter 18 and western Asia Minor was a merchant's dream location — this area was ahead of the rest of the empire.

When morality is breaking down. Debauchery shaped the area, and Revelation's letters to the churches are not just the only place one finds concern with moral breakdowns. The stage, circus demands for blood, assassinations, blasphemies and sexuality was uninhibited.

When worship turns from God to the heroic humans. Caesar was at the center of the Roman Empire and found himself prominent in each major city. Divine honors were paid to Caesar and sacrifices were paid to others notables.

When fascination with political, social, and cultural power shapes the people. Monuments, tributes, honorifics — abound in the empire. The desire for fame and connection to those in power is the name of the Roman Empire.

Is Revelation relevant today? Prosperity is the air we breathe, morality is lax up and down society, we adore our own, and we want a seat at the table next to those in power.

There are **great lessons in Revelation**. Lessons that are real, and timely. Lessons we would do well to be reminded of.

1. Jesus loves the church and there are some good things happening within the church.
2. God is faithful to reward all that press on, that trust in Him and stay faithful and loyal to God's word.
3. Revelation warns us that Jesus will not wink at sin. Jesus will utterly disapprove of evil and sin. Jesus will find people guilty that play spiritual and religious games. Spiritual neglect is as dangerous as spiritual abuse.
4. Revelation teaches believers that we must repent of God will punish churches and people that are in spiritual decline and moral corruption.
5. Revelation teaches us that God wants us to realize that He will not tolerate backsliding or stagnation (dull, sluggish, lazy, no action, stale, or flat) Moral decline and religious apostasy are real killers.
6. A great lesson that Revelation teaches us is that we need to be wise to the tactics and strategies of our enemy. God wants us to develop a plan to overcome the enemy's schemes.
7. The greatest revelation is that we have a great invitation and Jesus is coming again to take His church home with Him – together forever.

## **AN INTRODUCTION**

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The study of Revelation is often a source of anxiety, frustration and confusion. Because of the obvious difficulties presented by the book, Revelation is often bypassed. But avoidance only produces guilt, for we know that God gave us the Revelation for a reason and we should be trying to discover that reason.

It is God's prerogative to withhold information from man. But we must always remember that when He chooses to reveal something, He fully intends for man to understand what is revealed. The word "revelation" itself means a disclosure, an uncovering or unveiling. Jesus admonishes, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; comp. also 13:9). Blessing was pronounced upon those who would read, hear and keep the things of the book (1:3; 22:7). The man of understanding is told to "calculate the number of the beast" (13:18). Why, then, does Revelation seem so obscure and shrouded in mystery?

It seems that many who are interested in the Bible would like to know what the book of Revelation is about but very few want to take the time to get into it. I'm sure there are numerous reasons for that. One reason may be that there's so much disagreement about what the book means that many people feel, "*If all the experts differ how can we, the less experienced, hope to understand it?*" So they leave it alone and concentrate on the books they can "draw lessons from." Take my word for it that the book isn't as difficult as the "experts" have made it. It's richer and deeper than all of their insights combined and they concede that, but it's not as obscure as they often give the impression it is. But if you insist on thinking you can't understand it this will undermine your ability to understand it. With God's gracious help, if you want a good working knowledge of its general thrust and a sense of its riches and you're prepared to spend a little time in getting it, you can do it.

### **Some helpful suggestions for understanding the book of Revelation**

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1. Read a lot in the Old Testament because so much of Revelation's speech and thought is rooted there.
2. Tell yourself again and again that Revelation is written mainly in images and pictures that aren't supposed to be taken literally. Remind yourself, "That's what he *sees*, now what does it *mean*?"
3. Be content to get a grasp of the main drift and larger issues first before spending too long wrestling with the details. It doesn't matter that you don't know all the answers right now. When you're done you'll admit there's a vast amount that you've missed but you'll feel helped by how much you've learned.
4. Believe that God wouldn't have written it if it couldn't be understood and then prayerfully work away at the contents.

5. Credit yourself with as much common sense as the people who paint these wild pictures of what they say is going to happen in the very near future. (What they have been saying for many years is going to happen in the very near future.) We've heard from the "experts" that very soon hailstones will fall, each one weighing about 100 pounds. We hear that all the water on the earth—oceans included—will turn into blood and yet two hundred million warriors from the East will ride on horses into Palestine. All that, they warned us, was going to happen and the Coca-Cola will run out. Yes! You can't butcher Revelation worse than that so get on into it and see what you can do.

### ***Literary style***

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The literary style of Revelation is the primary reason for its difficulty. It is not biographical like the gospels, conversational like the letters of Paul; historical like Acts or polemical like Romans. The literary style is apocalyptic, like Zechariah, Ezekiel and the latter half of Daniel. This kind of literature is highly symbolic and figurative and is designed to inspire courage and fidelity in a time of crisis.

Apocalyptic literature is not a logical, progressive argument or treatise, which attempts to sway the intellect by, reasoned analysis. Instead, it is a "photo album," a picture book with imaginative imagery aimed at stirring the emotions and bringing comfort to those who are being challenged or threatened.

Accordingly, Revelation is filled with pictorial richness: dragons, serpents, beasts, angels, horses, rainbows, thrones, altars, fire, hail, earthquakes, floods, darkened suns, bloody moons, plagues, precious metals and gems, cities, deserts, seas, lambs, lions, bears, eagles, scorpions, locusts, trumpets, harps, choirs, numbers (3, 4, 7, 12, 666, 144,000, 1000 years, 42 months, 200 million horsemen, etc.), swords, bows, battles, crowns, chains, marriage, birth, death, resurrections, judgments – and a host of other things.

### ***OT Terminology***

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God communicates with men in each cultural setting as they communicate between themselves. There is no such thing as "heavenly language" which God employs to speak to men. The reason that Revelation is so different from other NT books is that it is written in OT terminology. Homer Hailey observed that there are 260-400 allusions to the OT in Revelation. Ferrell Jenkins observed, "The book of Revelation is the most thoroughly Jewish in its language and imagery of any New Testament book. This book speaks not the language of Paul, but of the Old Testament prophets ..." (*The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, p. 22).

This fact, of course, places a premium upon previous study of the Old Testament as a foundation for understanding Revelation – just as algebra and geometry are prerequisites of trigonometry and calculus. This greater familiarity with the OT likely made the Revelation

more readily understandable to its original recipients. Too, their suffering and trials made the apocalyptic imagery more meaningful to them.

### ***Practical importance of this study***

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Revelation is a book upon which much popular false teaching is based. People who know little about the Bible have heard of “Armageddon,” the “rapture,” the “tribulation,” a thousand year reign of Jesus and other millennial teachings from their preacher, on television, or in popular books (i.e., Tim LaHaye’s *Left Behind* series). We cannot adequately deal with these erroneous doctrines simply by turning to other passages. Unless we can take the scripture in question and offer a more reasonable and Biblically consistent explanation, we will lose our credibility and those who are deceived by such teaching will have no incentive to abandon it.

Also, Revelation does have something to say to us today. Its themes have to do with answered prayer, God’s sovereignty, victory over enemies, patience, reward for faithfulness, warning against compromise with the world and other spirit-strengthening issues.

### ***Suggested approach***

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DON’T *DON’T DON’T* get discouraged! Revelation is difficult, and if you have not studied it before or do not have a thorough background in the OT, you will have some problems with the imagery. Try not to get too bogged down with the details of each vision; it is the overall picture or message that is important.

A modest goal for this study is to simply work toward a better understanding than when you began. It takes years of studying Revelation several times through in order to become comfortable with the book. Be patient, understand what you can, and be satisfied with whatever progress you make.

Finally, try to rid yourself of preconceptions and keep an open mind. Things are rarely what they appear on the surface. Honor the context and the figurative language of the book and resist the urge to suddenly take an image literally. **Very little in Revelation is literal.**

The approach we are going to take in this class may be unusual. You may ask yourself; ***Has the book of Revelation been fulfilled?***

This is a legitimate question but it leaves a false impression. It makes it appear as though the book of Revelation is more or less a series of predictions. It gives the impression that it is *essentially* a book that foretells startling events that will unfold in the near future. It would be a mistake to deny that there are events predicted in the book (there are!) but that’s true of the Gospels, Acts and the epistles. The book of Revelation is a prophetic call to loyalty to God who alone is worthy of service and praise. And it’s an assurance that victory belongs to the

people of God no matter who the enemy is. But there are predictive elements in the book that are wrapped up in the truths just mentioned. Have the predictive elements been fulfilled? You can be certain the answer is yes!

Bear in mind that John wrote the book almost two thousand years ago. When he wrote it he said it was "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place." (1:1) *What must soon take place.* Then in 1:3 he urged his readers to take to heart what is written, "because the time is near." *Because the time is near.* What do you think those two phrases mean? He said that two thousand years ago at the opening of the book. My suspicion is that if we had no special interests that we'd take the words at face value.

And he didn't change his mind as the book closes. In 22:6 the angel says, "The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place." *Things that must soon take place!* And just to be sure that we get the message he says this again in 22:10; "Don't seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, because the time is near." *Because the time is near.*

It looks like everyone knows what these words mean until they come to the book of Revelation. Certain teachers keep telling us that the end of the world is near or that Armageddon is to take place soon. They know what it means in their best-selling books and in their tapes. They know what it means everywhere else in the Bible, but when it comes to Revelation the phrases become all mystery.

If John walked into your presence *today*, showed you a scroll and said to you, "This is about what must soon take place!" what would you think? If he repeated, "Take this to heart, because the time is near!" what would you think? If he read the whole Revelation to you and then said, "These things are true and must soon take place!" would you think they might be hundreds or thousands of years away? And then he hands you the scroll and as he turned to leave you he says, "Don't seal that revelation up because the time is near!" would you even imagine that it related to *centuries* from now?

The truth is, the book of Revelation deals with things that related to the Roman Empire, the fourth beast of Daniel 7, when it came into conflict with the New Testament church back in the first centuries. Revelation presents Rome as the tool and instrument of Satan in conflict with Christians who are the body of Christ, the army of the white-horsed rider whose name is The Word of God (Revelation 19:11-16). It comes to focus in a particular Roman emperor (Domitian) who stands for all that the Roman Empire stood for.

If we can't understand plain phrases that are like an envelope that encloses the whole of the book (scholars call phrases that function in that way an *inclusion*) how do we imagine we'll understand symbols and images that are left without explicit explanation? Whatever the signs and images mean we are to understand this: *Two thousand years ago John said the coming*



*events were to happen soon.* So when you hear popular writers assure you that they haven't even begun yet you've just been warned.

People have said that with God time didn't matter and that with him one day is like a thousand years so "at hand" or "soon to happen" may mean anything. It's true, of course, that God isn't bothered by time, but his creatures are. If God had been talking to himself this would have been relevant. But God was talking to puny little people. He takes our humanity into account as Ezekiel 12:21-28 and Daniel 8:26 shows us.

In Daniel 8:26 God says the vision there "concerns the distant future." There is no distant future for God but he wasn't talking to himself. When he spoke to limited humans he spoke of "the distant future" so he knows what words like that mean. The ungodly mocked God's message in Ezekiel chapter 12. At first they said, "These threats are empty. They won't be fulfilled." Then they said, "Well, maybe they'll be fulfilled but the vision he sees is for many years from now, and he prophesies about the distant future." And how did God answer them? He answered them in the words we find in Revelation. "Say to them the days are near...it shall be fulfilled without delay..." They said, "Don't worry it's a long way off" and God said, "Worry, the time is near."

Finally, on this point. Compare Daniel 8:26 with Revelation 22:10 and let common sense rule. Here's what the two texts say:

*Seal up the vision for, it concerns the distant future.*

*Don't seal up the prophecy, because the time is near.*

You can see they're told to do opposite things. But notice *why* they were told to do opposite things. Daniel is told to seal up the vision because it deals with the distant future. John is told to leave it open because the time is near. God knows what a short time is. Why do people argue against this? Well, for one reason or another they've drawn conclusions about what the images in Revelation mean and they settle for that. When they're reminded of truths like the above they don't want to receive them because it makes a mess of their whole futuristic scheme. And when you go public, write a lot of books, construct a whole eschatological system based on your interpretation of these images it's hard to back away. It isn't easy to admit we've been wrong especially if a lot is riding on it.

The safest approach to Revelation is to let *John* tell us what its time frame is rather than us telling John.

### **The central message of the book of Revelation**

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The central message is that God alone is to be worshiped and served and that that truth is to be maintained when the Roman beast rises against the people of God. The central message of

the book is that the Roman Empire is the expression of the world spirit (the Dragon, Satan) that opposes God's kingdom purpose as it shows itself in Jesus Christ and his followers. The central message is that when the smoke clears it's the followers of the Lord Christ that are triumphant and that his Lordship is made concrete and local here on the earth. The Roman Empire claims dominion but it's a satanic claim. They "prove" it by brutality and cruelty. The church insists that Jesus has dominion and they prove it (as followers of Christ) by outliving, out-suffering and out-lasting Rome.

### ***Two major elements in the book***

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*There are some predictive elements* and these have been fulfilled. They are summarized and focused in the emperor Domitian who stands for all that is the brutal and bestial Roman Empire. On his tomb, so to speak, Jesus stands and proclaims the kingdom of God. And so aspects of Daniel 2 and 7 are demonstrated as "done!"

*There are timeless truths.* For example, God alone is Lord and worthy of praise and service. Note how large sections of praise for God occur in chapters 4-12 and 14-19. Sandwiched in between is chapter 13 and the worship of the Beast. Twice John is told to worship no one but God himself. Other major timeless truths are developed in the book.

But if the predictions of Revelation have been fulfilled would that mean Revelation is of no real interest or relevance to us today? Indeed not. Nahum prophesied the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC but to call it useless or irrelevant would be silly. Old Testament prophecies of the birth and suffering of Christ or Christ in his earthly ministry have been fulfilled but we know they aren't useless. ***There's profoundly more about life with God than having a calendar of future events in our pocket.***

<p><b>Application(s):</b> In this book, Jesus is <b>revealing</b> (NOT hiding) God's plan for his people in order to <b>comfort</b> those who will see and hear the message.</p>
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### **Revelation 1:1-8 – The Time Is Near**

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The agents involved in its transmission indicate the importance of Revelation. It originated with God, who gave it to Jesus, who sent His angel, who then "signified" (to express by signs, symbols) the message to an apostle – yea, even the disciple whom Jesus loved – who then sent it to the seven churches of Asia. There is an urgency to this prophecy-cy which rules out a far-distant, millennial fulfillment: "must shortly take place" (1:1); "the time is near" (1:3). These things were vital to the well being of the churches of Asia (and others), and those who would read, hear and keep the things written would be blessed.

John gives a description that reminds these Christians who is in charge. The persecutions of Rome might make it appear that Caesar holds the upper hand, but John reminds his readers

that Jesus, too, died by Roman hands but was raised to become “the ruler over all the kings of the earth” (1:5). Caesar is not the be-all and end-all, but Jesus is “the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.” Caesars would come and go, but Jesus is, was, and is to come.

The great question of Revelation is “Who rules?” Does Caesar rule as Satan’s agent? After all, Christians are being put to death. No, the time is near for Jesus to exercise His dominion over the oppressors of His people. Time for repentance has been and is currently being granted but it will shortly come to an end. Jesus will bring an end to Rome while His kingdom/church stands triumphantly.

## **Revelation 1:9-20 – The Resurrected And Glorified Jesus**

John identifies with his readers as he, himself, has suffered persecution “for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” He claims to be “in the kingdom,” although the millennialists who base their false ideas on Revelation deny it is fully in existence. John heard a voice and turned to see the speaker. He was not prepared for what he saw.

There is a notable absence of any personal appeal by Jesus to his most beloved earthly friend. Jesus is “all business.” John sees a symbolic representation of Jesus standing among His people (seven lampstands = seven churches). The imagery combines to present a picture of heavenly glory, power, and victory. This was not the One whom John felt comfortable reclining with at a meal; instead, he “fell at His feet as dead” (v 17).

Jesus eases John’s anxiety and, for the third time already, declares Himself to be the First and the Last (1:8, 11, 17). Death did not hold dominion over Him, and the suggestion is that it will not hold dominion over His people. He is the “firstborn” from the dead. Those “who pierced Him,” though they thought themselves victorious over Him, will yet see Him in His glory. Christians who are suffering persecution should not despair; death does not mean defeat. Consider Christ in His glory. Not only is He alive, but He is coming to vindicate His people.

1. The word “revelation” means \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Of what literary style is Revelation? Which OT books share this style?

3. What is your personal goal in studying Revelation?

4. Trace the path the Revelation has taken in coming to the churches of Asia.

5. To what three things did John bear witness?

6. What two blessings have come to Christians from Christ's love?

7. John was in the \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day when He saw the vision.

8. Compare the vision of Jesus with Dan 10:4-12. How did Daniel and John react?

9. To what did Jesus have keys? What do keys symbolize?

10. What was John to write in a book and send to the seven churches in Asia?

Introduction to mini-epistles.

APPLICATION: Jesus knows and cares about his people live and promises that he will reward them based on their faithfulness or faithlessness.

There is no compelling reason to take figuratively the command of Jesus to John to write to the seven churches of Asia (1:11). The Revelation concerned “things which must shortly take place” (1:1). Therefore, these mini-epistles do not represent seven church ages; they are simply letters to congregations regarding their spiritual condition.

Why these seven churches only were addressed is not explained, but their relative strengths and weaknesses typify churches in every age. The exhortation, “He who has an ear ...” commends the messages to all faithful people.

William Hendriksen (*More Than Conquerors*, pp. 59-60) suggests the following general pattern to the epistles:

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|------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Salutation/address        | 5. Warning/threat |
| 2. Christ’s self-designation | 6. Exhortation    |
| 3. Commendation              | 7. Promise        |
| 4. Condemnation              |                   |

The mini-epistles and the symbolism to follow may be summarized thusly: Do not be deceived by appearance. The things, which have occurred and are about to transpire are according to God’s plan and under His control. Victory over your enemies is assured and you have been given the power to overcome (“overcome” is used 28 times in the NT, 24 times by John and 17 of those in Revelation). No matter what happens, you must re-main faithful to God; otherwise you will forfeit your soul.

1. T/F These seven messages represent church ages which will come to pass before the return of the Lord.
2. Each epistle contains a promise to him who \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Who is encouraged to heed what is written to these churches?

#### Revelation 2:1-3 – Ephesus: Laborers For Jesus’ Sake

Forty years earlier, Paul had warned the Ephesian elders about false teachers who would arise among them (Ac 20:28-31), and he later issued similar warnings to Timothy as his young assistant worked in Ephesus. Evidently, the warnings were heeded and the congregation had a history of opposing doctrinal error.

4. Was Ephesus an active or dead church?
5. Who had the Ephesians found to be liars?
6. In forty years of service to the Lord, the Ephesians had not become \_\_\_\_\_.

### Revelation 2:4-7 – Ephesus: Left Their First Love

It is not enough to mechanically go through the motions of faith. If the proper motivation is missing – love, both for God and man - then our service is without profit to us (comp. 1 Cor 13:1-3).

7. Is it possible to have zeal without love? Discuss.
8. What three things did Jesus require of the Ephesians?
9. T/F The Ephesians hated the Nicolaitans, as did Christ.

### Revelation 2:8-11 – Smyrna: Faithful Though Persecuted

Jesus uses the phrase “*I know ...*” in every epistle. This divine knowledge will be a comfort to the honest heart. The Lord knew of Smyrna’s works which had been rendered amid poverty and persecution. Jesus does not promise to alleviate the suffering; instead, He says that prison, testing and tribulation lies ahead. The number “10” is “a significant number in all historical ages ... suggestive of a rounded total, large or small” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p. 2162). This indicates a definite period known to and controlled by God but the duration of which is not revealed to Smyrna.

10. In spite of their poverty, Jesus says the Smyrnans were \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Who would cause them to be thrown into prison?
12. If they were faithful unto \_\_\_\_\_, they would receive a crown of \_\_\_\_\_.

Review: Match the self-designation of Jesus to the churches at Ephesus and Smyrna with the corresponding verse in chapter 1.

Seven stars in His right hand	1:11
Walks in midst of lampstands	1:18
First/Last	1:16
Dead/Came to life	1:13

13. What do you think Jesus meant when He threatened to remove Ephesus’ lampstand?
14. Who particularly had been giving the church in Smyrna trouble?

### Revelation 2:12-13 – Pergamos: Where Satan’s Throne Is

Pergamos was the political capital of Asia and thus a seat of pagan worship, including emperor worship. It would appear that the Romans rather than the Jews were the main threat to the Pergamos church.

1. What is the possible significance of “Satan’s throne”?
2. How does Jesus describe Antipas?
3. How did the church react to the death of one of its members?

### Revelation 2:14-17 – Doctrinal Impurity In Pergamos

Though the church at Pergamos courageously endured persecution, Jesus criticized them for condoning false doctrine. It is called “the doctrine of Balaam” because of the idolatry and fornication which accompanied it (see Num 23-25; 31:8, 16; 2 Pe 2:15 and Jude 11 for background on Balaam). Such would have been tempting in order to lessen persecution. Some also advocated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans which the Ephesians had resisted.

4. When Balaam couldn’t curse Israel, what did he induce them to do?
5. What would Jesus do if repentance was not forthcoming?
6. Whose sword should be feared most: Rome’s or Christ’s?

### Revelation 2:18-19 – Thyatira: A Growing Church

Thyatira was a “blue-collar” town, noted for its manufacturing, trade and worker’s guilds (labor unions). It is conjectured some that Christians were being influenced to compromise to ensure job security.

7. What prominent member of the Philippian church was from Thyatira?
8. List five qualities for which Thyatira is commended.
9. What indicates that the church is growing?

### Revelation 2:20-23 – The False Prophetess Jezebel In Thyatira

It is likely that, like the name “Balaam,” “Jezebel” describes the character of the one who is corrupting the church. You may remember Jezebel’s dominance of Ahab along with her idolatry, treachery and murder (review 1 Kings 16:29-22:40; 2 Kings 9:22, 30-37). Thyatira’s Jezebel was unopposed as she led part of the church down the path of idolatry and fornication. The Lord has been patient with Jezebel, allowing both her and her followers’ time to repent. His patience is now wearing thin.

10. What did Jezebel call herself?
11. What had Jezebel been allowed to do?
12. What would all the churches know by the punishment of Jezebel and her followers?

### Revelation 2:24-29 – Thyatira: Power Over The Nations

If the observation on the influence of the trade guilds is correct, then the imagery of shattered pottery in 2:27 becomes more meaningful. Christians who would not give in to coercion would rule over nations with Christ.

13. What two phrases in 2:25-26 stress the need for endurance?
14. What would Jesus put upon those in Thyatira who had not been corrupted?
15. What had Jesus received from the Father?

Application: Jesus knows and cares about his people live and promises that he will reward them based on their faithfulness or faithlessness.

#### Revelation 3:1-3 – Sardis: A Dead Church Thought To Be Alive

Jesus has no congregational praise for Sardis. This letter highlights the superficial and inadequate assessments of man. Brethren were fooled into thinking that Sardis was a living and active church, but nothing is hidden from the Lord. The admonition to “*be watchful*” would be significant to a citizen of Sardis. The city was perched high on a rock and was nearly inaccessible. This location bred overconfidence which proved fatal on two major occasions: the invasions of Cyrus in 549 BC of Antiochus in 218 BC. Likewise, the church in Sardis was not aware of its spiritual demise and Jesus threatens to come upon them Himself if they do not repent.

1. How can a dead church maintain a reputation of life and activity among brethren?
2. What exhortations are given by Jesus to the Sardis church?
3. How would Jesus come upon them if they would not watch?

#### Revelation 3:4-6 – The Faithful Few In Sardis

Though collectively the Lord considered them dead, there were certain individuals in Sardis who were still faithful. The Lord’s judgment of men is individual, not congregational. However, as with Lot in Sodom, there was not enough righteous influence in Sardis to spare the church in its present condition.

4. How does Jesus describe the faithful in Sardis?
5. What will Jesus do and not do regarding the names of those who overcome?
6. What outward persecution or congregational false doctrine is mentioned? Do you think this is significant?

#### Revelation 3:7-10 – The Open Door In Philadelphia

Jesus had the true key of David, not the Jews who apparently were causing the Philadelphians trouble. As with Smyrna, no condemnation is spoken against Philadelphia. Jesus gives an ominous warning of an approaching trial “*which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth,*” but He promises to shield them from these trials because of their faith.

7. What does the key of David enable Jesus to do?
8. What similarities exist between Philadelphia and Smyrna?
9. What was about to come upon the whole world? Why?

#### Revelation 3:11-13 – Philadelphia: Hold Fast To Your Crown



10. When would Jesus come and bring this trial upon the earth?
11. What might happen to the Philadelphians' crown if they did not hold tightly to it?
12. The persecution Jews were of the \_\_\_\_\_ of Satan, but Christ's faithful people would be a \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
13. What would be written on the one who comes?

#### Review

14. Memorize the order in which the churches of Asia are addressed.  
(Hint: Remember the acronym ESP/TSP - "a teaspoon of ESP").
15. In what direction was the Revelation sent among the churches?
  - a. Clockwise
  - b. Counterclockwise
  - c. Alphabetical
  - d. North to south

#### Revelation 3:14-18 – The Lukewarm Laodiceans

The message to Laodicea draws heavily upon its outstanding civic features: hot springs surrounded the city; it was famous for an eye salve called Phrygian powder; its rare black sheep produced a soft, glossy wool that was in great demand; and it was an opulent city, home to many banks, millionaires, and all the trappings that come with great wealth. Laodicea was self-sufficiently rich, and the Christians there began to see themselves in the same light. This led to an apathetic lukewarmness which the Lord loathed.

1. Was this a wealthy or poor church?
2. How had the Laodiceans misjudged themselves?
3. How does Jesus feel about those with weak convictions and indifferent commitment?
4. What did the Laodiceans need to "buy" from Jesus?

#### Revelation 3:19-22 – Knocking At Laodicea's Door

5. Who receives rebuke and chastening when necessary?
6. With whom will Jesus dine?
7. Though Caesar sat on Rome's throne, where would Christians who overcome sit?

#### Review Of Letters To Seven Churches

8. Which two churches did Jesus not criticize?
9. Which churches were troubled by hostile Jews?

10. Which church was to:

Hold fast ... till I come? \_\_\_\_\_

Hold fast ... and repent? \_\_\_\_\_

Hold fast ... that no one may take your crown? \_\_\_\_\_

#### Review Of Letters To Seven Churches

11. Which church was encouraged by Jezebel to know the depths of Satan?

12. Which church was praised by its intolerance of false apostles?

13. Which church was praised for having a little strength?

14. Which church should have been more concerned about Jesus' sword rather than the Roman sword?

#### Review

15. Discuss: Why is it important that Jesus tells each church "I know your works ..."?

16. Discuss: Is it harder to live faithfully in some places than in others? How so?

17. Discuss: What do you think Jesus would say in a letter addressed, "To the angel of the church in (your town) write ..."?

APPLICATION: We need to see the overwhelming glory of God's power and grace which should compel us to deeper worship (4:8, 11, 5:8-10, 11-12, 13, 14), gratitude toward Jesus (5:1-14) and more faithful service (5:9-10).

#### Revelation 4:1-5 – The Glorious And Fearsome Throne Of God

Remember that Revelation presents ideas and principles in picturesque form. Descriptions are not intended to convey what something looks like but rather an essential truth about the subject (i.e., the description of Jesus in 1:12ff). Thus the imagery in ch 4 is not an attempt to describe what heaven looks like but is a symbolic picture of God's sovereign rule. In order for the Asian Christians to properly evaluate and understand their circumstances, they must begin with the proposition that God is the supreme Ruler and all things are under His control. In forthcoming chapters, heaven (where God's throne is) will dictate the flow of events in the clash between God's kingdom and the Roman Empire (cf. 8:1ff; 11:15ff; 14:1ff; 15:1ff; 19:11ff; etc.). In the Revelation we are allowed to see in symbolic form the inner workings of God's power and purpose.

1. What does the trumpet-voice invite John to do?
2. What is the centerpiece of the vision?
3. What general impression of God's throne do you get from the picturesque language?

#### Revelation 4:6-11 – The Eternal And Powerful Lord God Almighty

The word "throne" is found 17 times in chs 4-5. Whatever the meaning of each specific detail, the central message is the absolute rule of God over creation. The vision of the throne is filled with noise (thunder, voices, praise) and activity (the eternal worship of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders).

4. What creatures are closest to the throne?
5. What aspects of God's nature do the living creatures extol?
6. Why do the elders say God is worthy of praise?

#### Revelation 5:1-7 – The Scroll And The Slain Lamb

John sees a sealed scroll in the hand of God but is distressed when no one suitable to open it is found. He is comforted by one of the elders who declares that a Lion from Judah and a Root of David has prevailed to open the scroll. But when John looks for this Lion, what he sees is a Lamb – a slain Lamb that yet lives.

7. Why did John weep?
8. How does the elder refer to the one who will open the scroll?

9. Describe the appearance of the “Lion of Judah.”

#### Revelation 5:8-14 – Worthy Is The Lamb Who Was Slain

While more detail about the scroll will be found in ch 6, note for now that it originates with God; it is in His hand. It is not God’s scheme for redemption, for in the vision redemption has already been provided (5:6, 9-10). The scroll represents the plan and purposes of God, “*the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole earth*” (3:10). These purposes will be executed by the Lamb; He is worthy because He died and yet continues to live. The message these Christians needed to hear was that their Lord was alive and more powerful than Caesar. As they were dying for His name, they needed assurance that it was not because He was powerless to help. The vision indicates that all is unfolding according to a specific plan which is designed to glorify the Father and the Son and their kingdom in the end.

10. What do the golden bowls of incense represent?

11. According to the new song, what had qualified the Lamb to open the scroll?

12. Who offers identical praise to the Lamb and the One on the throne?

#### Overview

13. Contrast the description of Jesus in ch 1 with 5:6. What can we learn from these images about the nature of the battle being waged?

14. List all living beings mentioned in chs 4-5.

15. How many “sevens” have there been thus far in Revelation?

16. Rev 2:26-27 and 5:10 speak of God’s redeemed people reigning or having power over nations. How would you describe the nature of such power? Do we as Christians have it today?

APPLICATION: God gives protection to his people (7:9-17 specifically highlights protection in midst of judgment on the world) who pray to him (8:1-5).

#### Revelation 6:1-8 – The First Four Seals: Horses And Riders

Four principal characters are involved in these seals: the Lamb, who has power over the seals; the living creatures, who call forth the horses and riders; the horses and riders, who bring death and hardship upon the earth; and John, who sees and hears in order to communicate the vision.

Horses were the ultimate war machine in ancient times (Job 39:19-25; Zech 1:8-11; 6:1-8). The first horse symbolizes either Christ, Himself, or the principle of divine will going forth and accomplishing God's purposes. It may refer to redemption and the victory over the dominion of sin and Satan. If so, the other horses represent the hostile reaction to God's will and the persecution that inevitably comes upon God's people.

1. What do you think the white horse and its rider signify?
2. What things would follow the conquering of the white horse?
3. Who called the horses forth? What does this indicate?

#### Revelation 6:9-17 – Seals Five And Six: Martyrs And Lamb's Wrath

The appearance of martyrs "who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held" seems to verify that the first four horses involved religious persecution. The martyrs cry to God for justice and vindication, but they are told that God's purposes are not yet fulfilled and more must die even as they did. The day is coming, however, when the wrath of the Lamb will be outpoured upon His enemies. The imagery in 6:12-17 is from the OT and was used of God's wrath upon the nations (cf. Is 13:13; 34:3-4; Ezek 32:7-8; Joel 2:30-31). We must be careful not to automatically assign such language to the second coming of Jesus.

4. Were the martyrs justified in asking God to avenge them?
5. How long must the martyrs rest and wait?
6. From what were the enemies of God trying to hide?
7. Is the final judgment in view in this passage?

#### Revelation 7:1-8 – The Sealing Of God's Servants

Chapter 7 interrupts the opening of the seals to answer the question of the ungodly: "Who is able to stand" before the wrath of the Lamb?" (6:17). God assures these Christians (and us) that His people are marked for identification and will not be overlooked ("The Lord knows those who are His" – 2 Tim 2:19). "Sealing" plays a prominent role in Revelation; see Ezek 9 for OT background.

8. What question does this chapter answer?
9. What is the reason for delay in restraining the winds?
10. Why are God's servants described as Israelites? Why are there 144,000 of them?  
Are these terms literal?

#### Revelation 7:9-17 – Those Who Survive The Great Tribulation

Again, it is easy to assign this passage to the final judgment but such is not consistent with the context. After indicating that God would put His mark of identification on His servants, the vision now describes the character of those who are so identified and the benefits that accrue to them. Those who would survive the wrath of the Lamb would do so only by acknowledging that salvation was in Him (7:10). They “washed their robes ... in the blood of the Lamb” (7:14); i.e., Christians would not be subject to the wrath of the Lamb (comp. 3:10).

While 7:15-17 may look like an “in heaven” scene (and it may be), let me caution you to remember that Revelation relates abstract ideas and concepts in figurative picture form. These images well describe Christians who respect the authority of the Lord and benefit from the spiritual blessings that are in Him. *“He who sits on the throne shall dwell among them”* parallels 2 Cor 6:16; 2 Cor 3:16-17 and Eph 2:19-22. The Lamb is conversely pictured as the shepherd of His people who provides “living water” (comp. Jn 4:10-15; 7:38), shade from the heat and comfort from sorrow (Jn 16:33 – *“be of good cheer ...”*; Phil 4:4 – *“rejoice in the Lord always ...”*; etc.).

11. Who is now standing before the Lamb arrayed in white?
12. What makes you think these are Christians?
13. To what would the Lamb lead His people? Does this apply to earthly life? How?

#### Overview

14. Compare the fortunes with the redeemed multitude in 7:15-17 with the fate of kings and great men of the earth in 6:15-16. Compare also the sealed 144,000 with the multitude from all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. Are these two groups the same?

#### Revelation 8:1-6 – The Seventh Seal: Sounds Of Silence

The specific reason for the half-hour of silence is not stated but it does serve two purposes: it heightens the drama and suspense of what is to happen next, and it highlights the sound of prayer that comes before God from His saints. Seven angels who stand before God are ready to blow their trumpets, and they receive their cue from the altar upon which the prayers were offered. Silence gives way to the ominous sounds of undefined noises, thunder and an earthquake.

1. What did the angel offer on the golden altar before the throne?
2. What does this image convey about prayer?
3. Who is to blow the seven trumpets?

APPLICATION: The world is scary and we are often tempted to turn from serving the Lord. We need to remember that God has a plan for us and we must repent of the things of world (9:20-21) and trust in the purposes of God in the world for our benefit (even when we do not understand or know precisely what those purposes may be - see chapter 10).

#### Revelation 8:7-13 – The First Four Trumpets

It is impossible to identify certain historical events which coincide with the trumpets. (On the OT use of trumpets, refer to Num 10:1-10.) Remember, John is seeing principles in symbolic form rather than specific incidents which are to occur. The overall picture is that God is beginning to move against the enemies of His people and will increase pressure against them in an effort to encourage their repentance.

4. What elements of nature are affected by each of the trumpets?
5. Upon whom is a triple woe pronounced because of the remaining trumpets?

#### Revelation 9:1-12 – The Fifth Trumpet: Locusts From The Abyss

Locusts bring to mind certain OT judgments by God against His enemies (Ex 10:1-20; Joel 1-2). But these are no ordinary locusts. They come from the abyss, afflict and torment only those not sealed by God (non-Christians), and they will produce such misery that their victims will wish for death but not find it. Given these facts, and considering the darkness which envelops the earth together with the name of the king over the locusts (Death or Destroyer), it is possible that the reference is to sin and its effects. Gross immorality and excessive indulgence in sin are signs of God's judgment against a people (cf. Rom 1 – "*God gave them up ...*"). Christians must recognize this truth in order to avoid discouragement over sin and participation in it.

6. Who might be identified as the angel of the bottomless pit?
7. Who is affected by the locusts? Who, then, is not affected?
8. Did these locusts kill the unsealed?
9. How long would the locusts have this power?

#### Revelation 9:13-21 – Trumpet Six: Angels From The Euphrates

This passage seems to affirm that the fifth trumpet involved sin, for now sin is to be greatly punished (9:20-21). The Euphrates River symbolizes the approach of God's judgment, for in the OT both the Assyrians and Babylonians came from the north, beyond the Euphrates, to afflict Israel. In the vision, four angels are released from the River and become an army of horsemen two hundred million strong. The fire, smoke and brimstone consumes one-third of mankind, but the remaining two-thirds refuse to repent.

Special note: Things associated with the "earth" in Revelation often refer to non-Christians: "*inhabitants of the earth*" (8:13); "*kings of the earth*" (6:15); "*those who dwell on the earth*" (11:10; 12:12; 13:11-14); "*redeemed from the earth*" (14:3); "*harvest of the earth*" (14:15). Christians, on the other hand, are often described as being in heaven, on Mt. Zion, before the throne, etc. Relation, not location, is in view.

10. From where does the command to release the angels come? What had come from this before (8:3-4)?

11. Why did the horsemen destroy one-third of mankind? Did the others repent?

#### Revelation 10 – The Bittersweet Book

Both the appearance and words of the mighty angel indicate that a significant time is near: "there should be delay no longer ... the mystery of God would be finished" (10:6-7). Homer Hailey's observation on the unity of the Bible places Revelation in a proper context: "The Old Testament prophets never dealt with the specific events beyond the coming redemption, the permanent establishment of the spiritual kingdom, the termination of the Jewish theocracy, the persecution of the saints, and the destruction of the fourth world empire" (*Commentary On Revelation*, p. 246). John's pronouncements against Rome represent the final fulfillment of OT prophecy. The book in the hand of the angel was sweet because it revealed God's sovereign control over the upcoming events, but it was also bitter because of the suffering and calamity which would befall men.

12. What was John not allowed to write? What would you conclude from this?

13. What was about to be finished? When?



APPLICATION: God's people will often seem defeated, yet because Christ has overcome the Great Serpent we can rest assured that his victory will be ours. But that victory is only for those who live by, "the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."

#### Revelation 11:1-14 – The Indestructible Kingdom Of God

The identity and purpose of the kingdom is described by various figures: a temple, a holy city, two witnesses, two olive trees and lampstands. The trampling of the holy city by the Gentiles and the death of the two witnesses indicate that suffering and persecution await God's people. But the death of the two witnesses (in the OT, a sufficient number to establish a matter as truthful) will not occur until "*they finish their testimony*" (11:7). In order to accomplish this, they would have the power of heaven at their disposal (11:5-6).

The unregenerate are also called a city; it has the characteristics of Sodom, Egypt, and, by implication, Jerusalem. This city rejoices when the king/beast from the abyss rises up and kills the witnesses (see 9:11), but the joy is premature as the witnesses are resurrected and ascend to heaven. This is not the final judgment but a vivid, apocalyptic picture of triumph and vindication (comp. the same imagery in 1:7 – "*every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him*"). Here is the sweet and bitter: God's kingdom would be victorious but not without hardship.

1. The two witnesses would prophesy clothed in \_\_\_\_\_. What does this suggest?
2. What assurance is given by the symbol of olive trees and the lampstands? (Refer to Zechariah 4, especially verse 9 for the OT symbolism).
3. What would happen to the witnesses after they finished their testimony?
4. Who are "those who dwell on the earth" and why do they rejoice?

#### Revelation 11:15-19 – Trumpet Seven: Christ Reigns Supreme

This scene does not depict the final judgment. It is the third woe directed toward the "*inhabitants of the earth*" (8:13; 9:12; 11:14), and the third woe was "*coming quickly.*" Also, the angel declared that the mystery of God would be finished at the blast of the seventh trumpet (10:6-7). Again, remember the nature of apocalyptic imagery. Concepts and ideas are set forth in picture form rather than specific events. What is being described in this vision is not the beginning of Jesus' reign, for He was inaugurated on Pentecost (see Rev 1:5, 9; 2:26-27; 3:21). Rather, the passage affirms the supremacy of Christ's rule as manifested by the church's victory over Roman aggression.

5. How does 11:14 indicate that this section does not refer to the final judgment?
6. What did Daniel say would eventually happen to the fourth world empire of Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Dan 2:44)?
7. What is seen in the midst of the temple in heaven?

#### Revelation 12:1-6 – The Woman, Her Child, And The Dragon

The general message of ch 12 is the same as ch 11 only from a different point of view. God's victory over Satan is again portrayed, but this time the focus is upon the antagonism in the spiritual realm which gives

rise to the events upon the earth. A woman is pictured giving birth to a Son who is destined to rule all nations with a rod of iron (1:5; 2:27). This destiny is not pleasing to the great dragon who stands poised to devour the Child upon delivery. His plan, however, is thwarted and the Child is caught up safely to God and His throne.

8. What did the dragon intend to do to the Child?

9. Was he successful? Explain.

10. Who is the Child? Who do you think the mother figure represents?

#### Revelation 12:7-12 – A Heavenly War

This passage has no bearing upon the origin of Satan. The dragon has been unsuccessful in destroying the Child, so he attempts an assault on heaven itself where the Child is now enthroned. Defeated in this battle by an angelic army, he and his angels are cast out of heaven to the earth. This is a behind-the-scenes look at the reason for the earthly conflict between the church and Rome. Satan could not prevent redemption from being offered to men; he couldn't avert the birth of Jesus, couldn't destroy Him on earth, and certainly cannot overthrow the rule of Christ in heaven. His only recourse is to wage war against the people of God and try to destroy them. But victory is assured as they "did not love their lives to the death."

11. Who is the great dragon?

12. Who defeats him in heavenly battle?

13. How would accused brethren overcome him?

#### Revelation 12:13-17 – The Dragon Pursues The Woman

Accurately defining the woman is not easy, but it seems reasonable to identify her as the corporate body of God's people. The dragon is intent on persecuting the church, but God provides it protection and sustenance in a safe haven. Further enraged and frustrated by his inability to destroy the church, the dragon "went to make war with her offspring." Who are they? Possibly they are Christians considered individually rather than collectively. They "*keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*" (12:17). While Satan cannot destroy the kingdom and rule of Christ, he will content himself with trying to deceive and subvert as many individual Christians as possible. This is the influence Christians today feel through temptation and enticement to sin. Satan is seething with hatred toward those who have escaped his dominion through the blood of the Lamb, and he constantly seeks to reclaim them by causing them to repudiate the redemption, which he cannot nullify.

Special note: We have seen references to equivalent time spans such as "*time, times and half a time*" (12:14), 1260 days (12:6; 11:3) and 42 months (11:3). Numbers in Revelation rarely have literal numeric value. They usually indicate a concept or principle. For example, we have seen the number "7" occur many times. Seven usually suggests perfection or completeness. Seven seals meant the scroll was completely inaccessible; seven horns portray God's perfect power; seven trumpets herald complete judgment against God's enemies. If seven represents completeness, then three-and-a-half falls far short and thus suggests incompleteness, imperfection. These persecutions against God's people will be ineffective in accomplishing their purpose; viz., to overthrow God's rule and destroy His kingdom. Satan would cause much grief and suffering but would be unsuccessful in the end.

14. From whom does water spew forth? Who does 12:9 say this is?

15. T/F Satan may succeed in killing (physically or spiritually) individual Christians but he will never destroy the corporate church.

APPLICATION: We must remain faithful to the Lamb, standing with him in Zion (14:1-5) rather than being tempted and drawn away by Satan's earthly allies of Persecution (13:1-10) and False Religion--all of which will face the wrathful judgment of God.

Revelation 13:1-10 – The Beast From The Sea: This chapter tells how the dragon would make war with the offspring of the woman (Christians, 12:17). John sees a beast rising out of the sea which resembles the dragon (comp. 13:1 with 12:3) and receives authority from him (13:2, 4). Hence, the beast is the manifestation of Satan upon the earth. Given the characteristics of power, authority, a throne, the world's submission (13:3, 4, 7), and the purpose of making war against the saints (13:6-7), it is both reasonable and Biblically consistent to identify the beast as the Empire of Rome. Further comparison between this beast and that of Dan 7:17-27 indicates this beast to be the fourth world empire to come; i.e., Rome (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome).

Note again the designation of God's people as "those who dwell in heaven" (v 6) as contrasted with "*all who dwell on the earth*" (the unregenerate, those whose names are not written in the Book of Life and who worship the beast – v 8). Permission is granted by God (13:5, 7) for the beast to wage war against His people for a limited period of time (42 months, see 11:2-3; special note on Week 9).

1. What is the relationship between the dragon and the beast?
2. Who was worshipping the dragon and the beast (v 3, 4, 8)?
3. What is the answer to the questions in v 4?
4. What name was on the heads of the beast and what came out of his mouth?

Revelation 13:11-18 – The Beast From The Earth: This beast is an accomplice of the beast from the sea; they are distinct forces though one in purpose. The religious overtones in the description of the earth beast (worship, signs, make an image) suggest that false religion, specifically emperor worship, is indicated. This earth beast will later be referred to as "the false prophet" (16:13; 19:20; 20:10).

The earth beast derives its power from the sea beast (v 12). Without the power and approval of the civil state, pagan priests and the emperor worship they promoted would have been without foundation. In return, the earth beast fosters worship of the sea beast. Rome was a very diverse empire; cohesion was encouraged by a common though forced adoration of the emperor (comp. Nebuchadnezzar's forced worship of the image in Dan 3).

The mark of the beast was not a literal mark, just as the seal of God in ch 7 was not literal. It simply meant to share the nature of the beast and acknowledge him as ruler instead of God. In describing the name or number of the beast, John says "*it is the number of (a) man: His number is 666*" (13:18). This passage, like no other in Revelation, has given rise to wildly speculative theories. However, no specific individual is being referred to. Remember, the beast is an empire. The number assigned represents the imperfection of humanity. If the number was 777, then its power and success would be complete. But "sevens" come from heaven; "sixes" come from man and fall short of perfection (we might say "a few bricks short of a load"). The beast, a cooperative effort between Satan and man to destroy God's kingdom, is doomed to failure.

5. List the religious terminology associated with the land beast.
6. Whose worship does the earth beast encourage?

7. What would happen to those who refused to so worship?

8. What number indicates that Rome will ultimately fail?

Revelation 14:1-5 – Victorious Followers Of The Lamb: I cannot improve on Homer Hailey's summarization of this section:

*"John is not describing a final scene in heaven, but the Zion of the Messiah to which the saints of this dispensation have come ... the scene symbolizes security, permanence, and a victorious spirit of rejoicing enjoyed by the church on earth at any time" (Commentary On Revelation, p. 302).*

The contrast between the warring parties is striking: the dragon is on a rampage and his beasts are killing all who oppose them; the Lamb is standing on Mt. Zion with His re-deemed ones accompanied by music and singing. Looks can be deceiving. David didn't look like he could beat Goliath, Jesus didn't look victorious as He hung on the cross, and Christians didn't look victorious while Rome was slaughtering them in the arena.

9. What did the 144,000 have on their foreheads?

10. In what condition do they stand before the throne?

Revelation 14:6-13 – Babylon Is Fallen: The first angel represents the commission of Jesus to preach the gospel to "those who dwell on the earth" and its fulfillment. This reflects the activity of the two witnesses in ch 11. A fundamental part of that message was "*fear God and give glory to Him*" (v 7), but Satan had encouraged the world to fear Rome and give glory to the emperor. "*That great city,*" formerly identified as Sodom, Egypt and Jerusalem (11:8), is now called Babylon and is declared "*fallen*" by a second angel. A third angel follows with a message of doom for all those who would worship the beast. Again, the scene does not represent final judgment but the defeat of those forces that stood opposed to God's people.

11. What warning does the first angel give?

12. Why does the second angel say Babylon is fallen?

13. Contrast Rev 14:10 with 2 Thes 1:9. What indicates that the Revelation passage is not speaking of the final judgment?

14. What victorious message is John instructed to write?

Revelation 14:14-20 – The Harvest Of The Earth: Finally, "*the harvest of the earth is ripe.*" This is the time for which the righteous had been waiting and praying. The souls of the martyrs had cried for the avenging of their blood (6:10) and they were told to wait patiently. Now, "*the hour of His judgment has come*" (14:7); "*here is the patience of the saints*" (14:12; 13:10). The harvest of grapes is thrown into "*the great winepress of the wrath of God*" (14:19), and so great and thorough is the slaughter of the enemies of God that the winepress yields a huge river of blood. In this scene Christ and His angels are seen working hand in hand in the harvest as they did when Satan was defeated in heaven (12:7-9).

15. What two agricultural images describe the judgment upon God's enemies?

16. Who reaps the harvest of the earth?

17. Who gathered the clusters of grapes?

Application: Rather than seeking out our own protection and justice against the evil of the world, we must be patient to wait on God who will judge the evil world for our salvation.

#### Revelation 15:1-8 – The Seven Last Plagues

This chapter contrasts the faithful servants of God who stand triumphantly before His throne with the enemies of God upon whom His wrath is about to be outpoured. There is an added note of finality: *“the seven last plagues ... in them the wrath of God is complete”* (15:1). Compare other similar references: 10:7; 14:8. God is soon to vindicate Himself and His martyrs, and He will demonstrate that the glory and worship offered to Rome was misplaced (15:4).

1. What do the bowls indicate about God’s wrath?
2. Who is standing on the sea of glass?
3. List the features from the Old Testament in ch 15.

#### Revelation 16:1-9 – The First Four Bowls

Again, it is neither necessary nor possible (and, therefore, not intended) to specify certain historical events represented by the bowls. The overall picture is clear: God’s patience has run its course; it is time to vindicate His people (16:5-7). The images are deliberately gross and disgusting. Those loyal to the beast break out in oozing sores, the earth and sea are awash in blood which kills all marine life, and the blazing sun bakes it all into a miserable mess. As with Pharaoh, these people had become so spiritually degenerate that blasphemy is forthcoming rather than repentance (16:9).

4. Who is affected by the first bowl?
5. What reason is given by the third angel for these judgments?

6. T/F Unlike Pharaoh, the plagues cause these people to repent.

#### Revelation 16:10-21 – The Last Three Bowls

The misery of the plagues continues as does the blasphemous obstinacy of God’s enemies. The sixth bowl assembles the kings of the earth *“to the battle of that great day of God Almighty”* (16:14). The Euphrates

is dried up “so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared” (16:12). Compare this image with that of 9:14 where four angels were released from the Euphrates to slaughter one-third of mankind (a partial judgment).

The OT imagery continues with the reference to Mount Megiddo (Armageddon, 16:16). The mention of this famous battlefield northwest of Jerusalem would immediately convey the concept of victory for the army representing the will of God (though not always Israel or Judah). Many vain attempts have been made to identify the place and participants of the coming “*battle of Armageddon*,” a phrase not used in Revelation. But the reference is not to any specific war – past, present or future. Remember yet again that Revelation portrays concepts and principles in vivid imagery. The concept is that God is allowing His enemies to amass their strength so that His power and glory will be further enhanced when He is victorious over them. The seventh bowl pictures that victory.

7. The kingdom of the beast became full of \_\_\_\_\_.

8. In which verse is found the phrase “Battle of Armageddon”? What phrase is used?

9. What is spoken with the outpouring of the seventh bowl?

Application: Satan's ally of Worldliness will fall. We must fight the temptations she offers of things like: sensuality, drunkenness, wealth, decadence, etc. If we drink from the cup of "Babylon's" worldly pleasures, then we will share in the cup of God wrath for her.

Revelation 17:1-6 – The Harlot Atop The Beast: The harlot seems to represent the imperial city of Rome. She “*sits on many waters*” (v 1) which refers to the whole of human civilization (17:15). Rome “*is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth*” (17:18). The power of ancient empires was focused upon a dominant city; i.e., Babylon, Nineveh, Jerusalem, Damascus. From such cities went forth the military, political and economic might that ruled their respective worlds. Rome depended upon the loyalty of her subjugated kings and cultures, enforced by the mighty legions, to maintain its supremacy. Rome, then, was a “harlot” as she enticed the kings of the earth, the independent rulers of various lesser nations (the Harrods, for instance), to “*commit fornication*” with her (17:2).

Another prominent feature of the harlot is drunkenness. She is “*drunk with the blood of the saints and ... martyrs of Jesus*” (17:6), and she holds “*a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication*” (v 4) by which she makes drunk the inhabitants of the earth; i.e., the unregenerate (v 2). The ancient city of Rome, so grand in many ways (power, luxury, architecture, engineering), was morally rotten, spiritually dead and corrupt to the core. Her filth contaminated those who allied with her, but this was of no matter, as everyone wanted to share in Rome’s richness and success. One’s name summarizes attributes and characteristics, and so the harlot’s name (17:5) described her true essence to those who looked at her with spiritual eyes. Those whose senses were dulled by drunken-ness, however, would see enticing beauty and be lured to their death.

10. What is John being shown according to 17:1?

11. What are the “many waters” upon which the harlot sits?

12. With what is the harlot drunk?

Revelation 17:7-18 – The Mystery Of The Woman And The Beast: This, along with ch 20, is probably the most difficult section of Revelation. We must resist becoming overly burdened with the details and remain focused on the larger picture. We have previously identified the beast as the fourth world empire of which Daniel spoke. Whereas the harlot refers to Rome, the nerve-center of the world, the beast refers to the whole empire, the body and presence of Rome throughout civilization. Rev 17:8 speaks of the origin, purpose and destiny of this creature. Kingdoms which wage war against the people of God are 1) of Satan, they arise from the bottomless pit, and 2) destined for destruction. God’s kingdom, on the other hand, originates in heaven and stands forever.

The harlot sits on seven heads, which are identified as seven mountains and apparently seven kings (17:9-10a). In the OT, the term “mountain” sometimes refers to a kingdom as the city best fortified on high ground ruled (comp. Is 2:2-3). Two general things are indicated in vs 10-11 about the imperial rule of Rome: 1) it has almost run its course, and 2) God has allowed an ample amount of time and power for Rome to destroy His spiritual kingdom – if it could. Rome was the perfect fullness (the seven kings become eight – more than enough) of civil power. No nation on earth could successfully resist Roman rule. Surely if any force could destroy God’s kingdom, Rome could. When the beast and harlot are destroyed, no one will be able to argue that Rome could have destroyed Christianity if only it had been a stronger kingdom. It was the best Satan and man had to offer, and it was destined to failure.

The ten horns represent *“ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast”* (17:12). In return for their limited authority, *“they will give their power and authority to the beast”* (17:13). This portrays the mutually beneficial relationship between Rome and the client kings who were allowed to rule in their respective countries under Rome’s authority (viz., the Harrods). In order to protect themselves and their relationship with Rome, these kings throughout the Empire would *“make war with the Lamb”* (17:14; comp. also 16:14); i.e., they would join the beast in the persecution of God’s people and the promotion of immorality and idolatry.

But Christians should not fret over this conspiracy against righteousness, for in the end *“the Lamb will overcome them”* (17:14). In fact, these vassal kings who were the strength of the empire would become its weakness (remember the iron/clay feet of Daniel’s image – Dan 2:42-43). The horns would come to *“hate the harlot, make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh and burn her with fire”* (17:16). This will be God’s will *“for God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose”* (17:17). Pride, lust and greed can only be suppressed for a while. As soon as Rome showed a weakness, the vassal kings would turn upon and cannibalize her.

These images are admittedly difficult. Scholars become hopelessly bogged down in each minute detail of the vision and end up in complete contradiction with one another. I believe we can understand the general thrust of the visions without total agreement on each detail and without consulting secular history for specific fulfillment.

Synopsis of ch 17: The world empire of John’s day, the city of Rome together with the network of client or vassal kings, was waging war against the people of God through active persecution, idolatry, immorality and materialism. God had allowed sufficient time and power to overturn His rule and His kingdom but it could not be done. Some of His people had been killed, but this destroyed neither them nor His cause. He would cause the Empire to self-destruct; its cultural diversity and selfish greed would be the ultimate weakness that would unravel the apparently indestructible human kingdom.

13. The beast ascended from \_\_\_\_\_ and was going to \_\_\_\_\_.

14. To whom do the ten kings give their power?

15. With whom will these kings make war?

16. What will the kings eventually do to the harlot?

17. How is the harlot described in 17:18? To what do you think this refers?

Revelation 18 – Babylon Falls: The fall of Babylon was declared back in 14:8 (comp. also 16:19). Why the drawn-out end? God wants no doubt as to who is responsible for the destruction and why. Since Rome is the duplicate of ancient Babylon in character, the angel applies the sentence passed upon Babylon to Rome (comp. Is 21:9; 13:19-22; 14:22-23). Merchants and kings became rich and powerful through their alliances with Rome which explains their grief as they behold Rome going up in smoke (18:9-11, 15-19). God calls His people to separate themselves from the iniquities of Rome lest they *“receive of her plagues”* (18:4-5). In contrast to the sorrow of the world over Rome’s demise, the apostles and prophets rejoice over the avenging of their blood (18:20).

1. What are God’s people warned to do?

2. Why were kings and merchants so distraught over Babylon’s fall?

3. What were the apostles and prophets to do?



Application: We should praise and rejoice in God's sovereign rule over Heaven and Earth, which is demonstrated by his judgments on evildoers and allows for the "*marriage supper of the Lamb*" of which we are the Bride. Along the way we need to be certain we are dressed in the "*righteous deeds of the saints*." Though Satan is given periods of 'rule' on Earth, we can persevere because we know ultimately he will be overcome by the Lord.

Revelation 19:1-10 – The Marriage Of The Lamb Has Come: The rejoicing in heaven answers to the cry of the martyrs from beneath the altar in 6:9-10. Finally, in His own time and according to His own purposes, God "*has judged the great harlot ... and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her*" (19:2).

The image of the marriage of the Lamb and His bride illustrates the affirmation, not the commencement, of Christ's relationship with His people. We must be very careful to keep this passage and those that follow in their proper setting. The context does not have the end of time in view. Rom 7:4 and Eph 5:22-33 indicate that the current fellowship between Christ and His disciples constitutes spiritual marriage. The Lamb's vindication of His saints and their cause is here figuratively described as taking them as His bride, just as the victory in 11:15ff was described as the affirmation, not the establishment, of His kingdom. It will be very tempting, especially in chs 20-21, to leap away from the context of Rome vs. the church and into final judgment scenes. Caution must be exercised against abandoning the figurative nature of the imagery.

4. How many "alleluias" are there and who says them?
5. Whose reign is upheld by the fall of Babylon?
6. What human celebration expresses the victory of God's people?

Revelation 19:11-21 – Victory Over The Beast And False Prophet: This section amplifies 16:14 and 17:14, which spoke of the kings of the earth being gathered against Christ at Mount Megiddo. First, Christ and His heavenly army are victoriously portrayed (though the battle itself is not actually described): righteous judgment and war (v 11; comp. 16:5-7); many crowns (v 12); the sharp sword and rod of iron by which the nations would be defeated (v 15a); treading the winepress of the wrath of God (v 15b; comp. 14:19-20).

Whereas the fall of Babylon had been followed by the marriage supper of the Lamb (19:9), the birds are now invited to feast upon the carcasses of the enemies of God (19:17-18, 21). This is OT imagery indicating complete overthrow (Jer 7:32-33). As we consider the fate of the beast (sea beast) and the false prophet (land beast – comp. 16:13; 13:11-17), we must take care not to stray from the context. The "*lake of fire*" immediately brings to mind the image of hell after final judgment, but final judgment is not here in view. We have identified the beast and false prophet as the Roman empire, the earthly manifestation of Satan's hatred and opposition toward the people of God. I would suggest that the casting of these two into the "*lake of fire burning with brimstone*" simply indicates a final end.

We already saw such a fate assigned to those who would worship the beast: "*he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever*" (14:10-11). Then Rome, the imperial capital city and harlot, was left in a smoking heap: "*and her smoke rises up forever and ever*" (18:8-9, 18-19; 19:2-3). Now the forces of the Empire considered individually – kings, captains, mighty men, horses, all men slave and free, small and

great (19:18) – were being picked over by the birds. Finally, the corporate Empire, in the form of the beast and false prophet, which encompasses Rome, the vassal kings, the military might, religious deception, economic blackmail and every other force hostile to Christians, is brought to final ruin. This is symbolized by being cast into a lake of fire, reminiscent of the annihilation of Sodom and its neighboring cities.

God is assuring the seven churches of Asia that the forces causing them so much grief will not ultimately triumph over the church. Remember, these are things that will shortly come to pass (1:1); the mystery of God would be finished (10:7); the seven last plagues have come, and in them the wrath of God is complete (15:1). *“It is done!”* declared the loud voice from the throne as the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air (16:17). The final, end-of-time judgment is not in view!

7. The rider of the white horse is named or called what four things? Who is the rider?

8. Where did the gathering of the armies in 19:9 occur?

9. What was the fate of the beast and false prophet? The kings? The harlot?

Revelation 20:1-6 – Binding Of Satan And Reign Of The Martyrs: Having read of the defeat of the harlot, beast, false prophet and all those loyal to them, we now see the victory of Christ and His saints over the one ultimately responsible for the persecution – *“the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan”* (20:2).

Special note: This is the most challenging chapter in Revelation to maintain the figurative application of symbolism. Certain images tempt us to stretch these symbols through the entire Christian dispensation and beyond to the final judgment: a thousand year period, resurrections (note the plural), a judgment scene and the lake of fire. But we have seen that Revelation portrays concepts and principles in symbolic form rather than specific historical events. Time references have consistently conveyed quality rather than chronology (one-half hour, one hour, three-and-a-half days, forty two months, forever and ever, etc.). A resurrection and ascension have already occurred which represented the success and victory of a cause – the preaching of the gospel (11:11-12). For consistency’s sake, we must honor both the time frame and figurative language of the book and not take the same liberties for which we criticize (and rightfully so) the premillennial theorists.

The image of 20:1-3 is of total incapacitation of Satan, not merely a severe curtailing of his power that leaves him free to roam the earth like a dog on a wire between two trees. He was laid hold of by an angel, bound with a great chain, cast into the abyss, shut up and sealed within it “so that he should deceive the nations no more” (v 3). Does that sound like partial or total incapacitation? (Was the tomb of Jesus sealed to give partial access or no access?)

But to what does this total binding refer? It refers to the means whereby Satan has been operative throughout the book of Revelation – Rome, the fourth world empire. This pas-sage does not address how Satan tempts or influences man in our day. Remember the context! Satan was persecuting these Christians through the Empire, and the binding for a thousand years indicates that he will never again be able to do so. Why? Because Rome has come to its final end in the lake of fire. But what of the releasing for a little while after the thousand years? The fact that Rome will be destroyed does not mean that Satan will be inactive in the world and abandon his attack against God’s kingdom. But the *“little while”* indicates the weakness and ineffectiveness of such attempts. It is the assurance that as God has defeated the best Satan had to offer, the Roman Empire, so shall He defeat Satan in every future threat against the church.

Rev 20:4-6 contrasts the utter defeat of Satan/Rome (bound for a thousand years) with the complete victory of Christ/saints (live, reign for a thousand years). Note especially who reigns: *“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”* (v 4). This is the same group as 6:9; 11:7; 12:11, 17; 13:7; 17:6; 18:20, 24; 19:2. Blessing had been pronounced upon those *“who die in the Lord from now on”* (14:13). They are pictured on thrones, having judgment committed to them, living and reigning. These are the same ones who had been despised, judged and killed by Rome. The tables have been turned.

The reference to the “first resurrection” (v 5) should immediately alert us to the fact that final judgment is not in view. Jesus and His apostles taught only one final resurrection of all men at the end of time (Jn 5:28; Ac 23:6; I Cor 15:20-28). Like the resurrection in 11:11-12, this resurrection has reference to victory of a cause. Note that only the *“blessed and holy”* participate in this first resurrection, and they *“shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years”* (v 6). This is the victory of the martyrs and the persecuted over Satan’s attempt to annihilate them. They are alive, ruling, reigning, judging, blessed, holy and priests of God. But what of their enemies? They are dead (v 5).

10. Does the angel totally or partially bind Satan?

11. Who is pictured as reigning with Christ for a thousand years?

12. Who are the “rest of the dead”?

Revelation 20:7-15 – All Enemies Cast Into The Lake Of Fire: It seems to me that any attempt to place this section at the end of time and within the framework of final judgment is both out of context and hopelessly doomed to confusion. I fully concede that the following observations may not be correct, but they are an attempt to keep the imagery within the self-stated scope of the book.

Rev 20:7-10 pictures Satan again mustering an army to threaten the people of God (v 9). The use of “God and Magog” comes from Ezekiel 37-39 where we find a resurrection of God’s people (Ez 37) and the rise of a vague, threatening army (Ez 38:9-12, 15-17). The crushing defeat of this army is described in Ez 38:18-23; 39:4-7. John’s Gog/Magog has the same purpose as Ezekiel’s: attack on the *“beloved city,”* and it meets the same fate (Rev 20:9). The images, in my view, are a “footnote” to Revelation and expand on 20:3. Satan will continue, as long as the world stands, to fight and war against the kingdom of God. He cannot do otherwise, for such is his nature. But he is always doomed to failure, for the same Christ who shattered Rome with a rod of iron continues to rule over all kingdoms of men with the same rod (19:15; 12:5; 2:27). Rev 20:10 pictures Satan not in the final judgment but as an eternal loser; all his attempts to oppose the kingdom of God will end in failure.

I consider the judgment scene in 20:12-15 to represent the ultimate failure of the enemies of God. It is *“the dead”* who are before God, but God’s people in Revelation have always been pictured as alive, triumphant, dressed in white (20:4; 19:8; 15:2; 14:1-5; 11:11-12; 7:9, 14-17). These dead ones come from the sea, Death and Hades; they were dead because they had been slain by the wrath of God (comp. 20:5). They are now judged by their works while the saints are already arrayed in the fine linen of their righteous acts (19:8). This judgment is a summary condemnation on all the forces which had tormented and persecuted the people of God – the second death. The lake of fire again represents a final end, the complete defeat of those in opposition to God and who would not submit to the authority of the Lamb. This same type of judgment scene is found in Dan 7:9-14 and describes the defeat of the fourth beast of Daniel’s vision.

While it may be difficult or even impossible to satisfy ourselves on every aspect of these images, it seems more consistent with the message of the book to see ch 20 as a contrast between the fortunes of the church and the fate of Rome rather than a final judgment scene.

13. After the defeat of Rome, will Satan stop trying to wage war against God's kingdom?

14. Who are judged according to their works?

15. What is the ultimate fate of all those who oppose God's kingdom?

Application: The struggle of life is real but we can rest assured that God will fulfill the promises to his people of victory over evil, fellowship with the Father, and a glorious new state of existence. Our security in Christ should motivate us to be more passionate about bringing the nations into the Kingdom through the work of evangelism.

### Revelation 21:1-8 – God’s Victorious Church

My view of this passage differs with many, for I consider it to be descriptive of the victorious people of God rather than heaven. John has consistently contrasted the enemies of God and their fate with the church and its blessed success. With all the enemy forces now defeated and cast into the lake of fire (ch 20), John closes out the imagery of Revelation with the church of God as a radiant bride and glorious city. The passing away of the first heaven and earth (v 1) and the former things being removed (v 4) refer in context to the change in world order now that the dominant force, the Roman Empire, is gone. The hostile climate of persecution has changed; no longer would weeping, sorrow, death and pain be caused by the dragon and his allies (v 4).

John sees “*the holy city, New Jerusalem*” coming down out of heaven from God (v 2). Remember, things which originate from Satan come out of the abyss or the earth/sea, but things that originate with God and according to His will come down from heaven. So it has been consistently throughout Revelation. God’s redeemed people have already been de-scribed as a city (11:2; 20:9). As the city appears, a voice declared it to be the dwelling place of God among men (comp. Is 4:4-6; 2 Cor 6:16; 1 Cor 3:16-17; Eph 2:19-22). All the things said here are descriptive of relationship between God and His people. Fellowship is in view, not location (viz., heaven). “*It is done*” (v 6) connects with 16:17 where the seven last plagues would complete the wrath of God (15:1). If this is final judgment and heaven is being described, then we have a problem in resolving the finality of the language. Again, the blessed success of God’s family is contrasted with the wicked who have come to failure “in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (v 8).

1. What does John see coming out of heaven?
2. In the context, what are the former things which have passed away?
3. To what did the phrase “it is done” refer in 16:17?

### Revelation 21:9-21 – The Bride And The Holy City

Note who shows John the bride; it is one of the seven angels who were pouring out the last plagues (comp. 15:1; 16:7). This brings unity to these last seven chapters and further indicates that heaven is not under consideration. John is to be shown the Lamb’s wife, but he beholds a great city descending “*out of heaven from God*” (21:9-10). Is the Lamb married to a place (heaven) or a people (His church)? The Lamb’s wife in 19:7-8 was “*arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*” These were people, the ones who had remained faithful to Him and had their blood shed because of it (19:2; 18:20, 24). Compare also Isaiah 60:14 where God’s redeemed people are called “*The City of the Lord.*”

Further, the twelve gates have the names of the twelve tribes written upon them. How was the church identified back in 7:4? *"One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel."* Also the great wall of the city had twelve foundations upon which were written the names of the twelve apostles (v 14). Ephesians 2:20 teaches that the church was built upon the apostles and prophets with Jesus being the chief cornerstone. Finally, the measurement of the city reflects the measurements that were made of God's people back in 11:1-2 (from Ezek 40:1ff, especially 42:20). For these reasons, and others to follow, I believe this passage is not a description of heaven but the church in its triumph over Roman persecution.

4. Whose names were on the twelve gates of the city?
5. Whose names were on the twelve foundations of the walls?
6. Does the Bible teach that men are in any sense the foundation of heaven? Does it teach that men are in any sense the foundation of the church? How? Where is it taught?

#### Revelation 21:22 - 22:5 – The Glory And Purity Of The Church

The imagery here is from Isaiah 60, so it would be helpful to read that passage and compare it with John's description of the city. Isaiah is looking ahead to John's day, and John is looking back to Isaiah's prophecies to describe the church in the midst of an unsaved world. In Is 60, spiritual Zion is to be sought by the Gentiles. There will be light in Zion (60:1-3, 19-20); the glory of God would illuminate His people (60:2, 7, 9, 19); the gates would be open continuously (60:11); the wealth of the Gentiles would be brought (60:5 – flocks herds, silver, gold, etc.); Zion would be called the City of the Lord (60:14). If this is heaven, how would the church shine its light upon the unsaved after judgment?

Also, v 27 indicates that nothing defiled or unclean would enter the city though the gates would be continuously open (Is 60:17-18). This spiritual city is entered by cleansing; to be written in the Lamb's book of life was to be redeemed to God by the Lamb's blood (Rev 5:9). The image is of purity and holiness, which the inhabitants of the city must possess, but it is also one of constant access to those who would come to the light. No one could enjoy the blessings of Roman citizenship anymore because Rome was gone. But the city of God, His church, His kingdom, was still standing and all who desired could become a citizen – in holiness, not in harlotry, as was the case with the nations of the earth and Rome.

The imagery continues as the throne of God and the Lamb and the tree of life are found in the city (22:2-3). The description of the tree is somewhat incongruous; it is in the middle of the street and yet on either side of the river. The idea is of access (street) and longevity (abundant water supply). Consequently, fruit is born throughout the year. Note especially what is said of the leaves; they were *"for the healing of the nations ... and there shall be no more curse."* If this is descriptive of heaven, in what sense would the nations have continual access to the tree of life for healing? It seems more consistent with the context to understand these images as referring to the rule of God in the lives of His people and the access to spiritual life that is found in a relationship with Him.

7. Why would the gates of the city not be closed at night?
8. How often would the tree of life bear fruit? What do you think this means?
9. What is the light-source for the city?
10. Christians are children of \_\_\_\_\_ and of \_\_\_\_\_ (I Thes 5:5).

## Revelation 22:6-11 – “I Am Coming Quickly!”

The revelation closes with the same sense of urgency with which it began: these are things “*which must shortly take place*” (22:6; 1:1); “*the time is at hand/near*” (22:10; 1:3); “*I am coming quickly*” (22:7, 12, 20; 3:11). John is told not to seal these words of prophecy because of the relative nearness of their fulfillment. Compare this with the command to Daniel to seal his prophecy “*for it refers to many days in the future*” (Dan 8:26; 12:4, 9). Whether or not we can satisfy ourselves through the historical accounts of Rome’s ultimate fall, we must look at the events prophesied in Revelation from the perspective of “soon to happen” rather than “off in the distant future.”

11. “Blessed is he who \_\_\_\_\_.”

12. What does the sealing of a book of prophecy indicate? Was John to seal Revelation?

13. Why does the angel not accept John’s worship?

## Revelation 22:12-20 – Invitation To Enter The City

Jesus now speaks and affirms that He is coming quickly, “and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (22:12 - comp. 20:12). Again, this is not final judgment but a judgment against those forces who have opposed and persecuted the saints and for the vindication of the church. This is consistent with our explanation of 20:11-15.

A final invitation is extended to enter the city and partake of the water and tree of life. The solemn warnings against the corruption of the prophecy sounds as if Jesus clearly anticipates future mishandling of the symbols and figures (22:18-19). This should cause all of us to approach our study of Revelation with humility, reverence and prayer unto a proper handling of the message God intends to be conveyed.

14. Who can enter into the city?

15. Does 22:17 fit the Calvinistic idea that only a specified and limited number of people can be saved?

16. Why do you think such a strong warning is given against tampering with the book of Revelation?