

WOLBI: Revelation 6-22

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Christ's Final Words to His Church

My prayer for each of you today is that: **God would stir in you a deep & abiding love for Jesus Christ, that can ONLY be satisfied by time spent with HIM in His Word.**

Why Study Revelation?

Because it is so Christ-Centered "He Shall Glorify Me" John 16:14

Old Testament: Christ in Prophecy

Gospels: Christ in History

Acts: Christ in the Church

Epistles: Christ in Experience

Apocalypse: Christ in coming Glory

Why Study Revelation? Because it is Super-Relevant

The Challenge of Prophecy:

We are being plunged into a period of time about which the Bible says more than about any other period in history ...including the time when Jesus walked the shores of Galilee and climbed the mountains of Judea.

In Revelation God Gives us the Most Complete Answers to

the Most Important Questions of Life

Origin = How did I get here?

Purpose = Why am I here?

Destiny = Where am I going?

Origin = How did I get here? Creator

Purpose = Why am I here? Redeemer

Destiny = Where am I going? Judge

The Panorama of History

The Return of Christ to Rule

1,845 references in the Old Testament

17 books give prominence to the event

318 references in the New Testament

216 chapters

23 of 27 books give prominence to the event

For every prophecy of Christ's 1st Coming there are 8 of His 2nd Coming!

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF REVELATION

1. **John the Apostle is the _____** of 5 New Testament books with 50 chapters, only surpassed by the 87 chapters of Paul's 13 Epistles; and Luke's 52 chapters of his two books.
2. **The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was _____** in the AD 90's, during the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD), who had exiled John to the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, roughly 60 mi. SW of Ephesus, off the coast of Roman Asia, or modern day Turkey.
3. **The _____ of this final book is also the title** contained in the

opening words of the first verse: The Revelation of Jesus Christ. All Scriptures point to Him (Luke 24:27, 44), and this book is the capstone of revealing the character of Christ.

4. **Revelation is a self-outlined** _____ (Acts is another), as we can see the three clear divisions of this book in Rev. 1:19: “the things that you have seen”, this is chapter 1; and “the things that are”, these are chapters 2 & 3; and “the things which shall be”, these are chapters 4-22.

5. **Revelation is a** _____ **challenging book**, because of:
 - There are many symbols both explained and unexplained.
 - There are historic disagreements among the four main avenues of interpretation: **preterists** believe Revelation’s events already happened; **historists** believe the Book just explains history from then to the end; **idealists** believe the Book is just principles not historic events; and **futurists** (that’s where we are) believe that from chapter 4 onward shows Heaven and the future on Earth.
 - There is an amazing abundance of numeric references in Revelation.
 - There are hundreds of quotations and allusions to the Old Testament in Revelation.
 - The grammar John uses reflects what may easily be seen as excitement at what he saw.

6. **Revelation is the** _____ **Book that comes with God’s promised blessing** for reading and responding to the truths God communicates in these

22 chapters.

The Divine Overview Rev. 1:19

Revelation's Outline

The Things Which You Have Seen (Rev.1)

The Things Which Are (Rev. 2-3)

The Things Which Will Take Place After This (Rev. 4-22)

The Worship Scene in Heaven (4:1-5:14)

The Great Tribulation on Earth (6:1-18:24)

The Return of the King (19:1-21)

The Millennium (20:1-10)

The Great White Throne Judgment (20:11-15)

The Eternal State (21:1-22:21)

CHARTS BY TOM DAVIS ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

The Seven "Beatitudes" in Revelation

Beatitude: "A Declaration of Blessedness"

Reference	Scripture
1:3	Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.
14:13	Then I heard a voice from heaven say, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."
16:15	"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."
19:9	Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God."
20:6	Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.
22:7	"Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book."
22:14	"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city."

Summary of the Letters to the Seven Churches

<i>Church</i>	<i>Christ</i>	<i>Commendation</i>	<i>Rebuke</i>	<i>Exhortation</i>	<i>Promise</i>
<i>Ephesus 2:1</i>	<i>Controls the 7 Stars and 7 Candlesticks.</i>	<i>Strictly Orthodox. Faithful. Hard workers.</i>	<i>Forsaken their first love.</i>	<i>Return to your first love.</i>	<i>They will eat from the tree of life.</i>
<i>Smyrna 2:8</i>	<i>The First and the Last. Resurrected!</i>	<i>Endured persecution and poverty.</i>	<i>None!</i>	<i>Do not fear martyrdom.</i>	<i>They will receive the crown of life.</i>
<i>Pergamum 2:12</i>	<i>Sharp two-edged sword.</i>	<i>Remains true to Christ.</i>	<i>False teaching: Balaam and Nicolaitans.</i>	<i>Remove False Teachers.</i>	<i>Hidden manna, White stone, New Name.</i>
<i>Thyatira 2:18</i>	<i>Fiery Eyes and Feet, Son of God.</i>	<i>Christian Graces, Faithful Service.</i>	<i>False teaching of Jezebel.</i>	<i>Remove Jezebel.</i>	<i>Rule nations. Morning Star.</i>
<i>Sardis 3:1</i>	<i>Holds the 7 Spirits of God and 7 Stars.</i>	<i>Some good deeds, reputation of "life".</i>	<i>Dead.</i>	<i>Come alive!</i>	<i>Dressed in White. Praised.</i>
<i>Philadelphia 3:7</i>	<i>Holy and True. Key of David.</i>	<i>Good Deeds. Good Testimony.</i>	<i>None!</i>	<i>Keep on Keeping on!</i>	<i>Pillars. New Name.</i>
<i>Laodicea 3:14</i>	<i>The Amen, The Faithful Witness, The Ruler.</i>	<i>None!</i>	<i>Lukewarm, Ignorantly sick.</i>	<i>Christ has healing.</i>	<i>Overcomers will eat and rule with Christ.</i>

15 Doxologies in the Book of Revelation

Doxology: "Giving Praise"

Reference	The One(s) Giving the Praise	The One(s) Receiving the Praise
1:5	John	The Lamb
4:8	4 Living Creatures	God the Father
4:11	24 Elders	God the Father
5:9	24 Elders and 4 Living Creatures	The Lamb
5:12	Many Angels	The Lamb
5:13	Every Creature	God the Father and the Lamb
7:10	Tribulation Martyrs	God the Father and the Lamb
7:12	Angels, 24 Elders and 4 Living Creatures	God the Father
11:16	24 Elders	God the Father
15:3	Tribulation Saints	God the Father and the Lamb
16:5	Angel	God the Father
16:7	"The Altar"	God the Father
19:1	A Great Multitude	God the Father
19:4	24 Elders and 4 Living Creatures	God the Father
19:6	A Great Multitude	God the Father

The Use of Numbers in Revelation

Number	Reference	Item
1/2	8:1	1/2 hour of silence
1/3	8:7-12; 9:15,18; 12:3	earth, trees, sea, sea creatures, ships, rivers, sun, moon, stars, mankind
1/4	6:8	earth destroyed
1/10	11:13	Jerusalem destroyed
1	17:12; 18:10,17,19	one hour
2	9:12; 11:3,4,10; 12:14; 13:11; 19:20	woes, witnesses, olive trees, lampstands, prophets, wings, horns, beast and false prophet
3	8:13; 9:18; 16:13,19; 21:13	angels, plagues, unclean spirits, parts of the great city, gates on each side of the New Jerusalem
3 1/2	11:11; 12:14	3 1/2 years, 3 1/2 days (2 witnesses dead)
4	4:6,8; 5:6,8,14; 6:1,6; 7:1,2,11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4; 7:1; 9:13,14,15; 20:8	living creatures, angels, corners of the earth, winds of the earth, horns of the altar
5	9:5,10; 17:10	months of locust torment, kings
6	4:8	wings on the living creatures
7	MANY !!	churches, spirits, lampstands, stars, angels, lamps, seals, horns, eyes, trumpets, thunders, heads of dragon/beast/scarlet beast, crowns, plagues, bowls, mountains, kings
10	2:10; 12:3; 13:1; 17:3,7,12,16	days of tribulation for Smyrna, horns of dragon/beast/scarlet beast, crowns on beast, kings
12	12:1; 21:12,14,21; 22:2	stars, gates, angels, tribes, foundation stones, apostles, pearls, fruit
24	4:4, 10; 5:8, 14; 11:16; 19:4	seats, elders
42	11:2; 13:5	months Jerusalem dominated, months beast rules
144	21:17	cubits measuring the height of the wall of Jerusalem
666	13:18	the number of the beast
1,000	20:2-7	years: of Satan's bondage, no Satanic deception, reign with Christ, between first and second resurrection
1,260	11:3; 12:6	days the 2 witnesses prophesy, woman protected
1,600	14:20	stadia of blood flowing through Israel
7,000	11:13	people killed in Jerusalem by the earthquake
12,000	7:5-8; 21:16	sealed from each tribe, stadia (Jerusalem cubed)
144,000	7:4	sealed servants from the 12 tribes
200,000,000	9:16	horsemen
"myriads"	5:11	angels praising God

Comparison of The Exodus & Revelation

Exodus	Event	Rev	Event
19:20	The LORD descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain . So Moses went up.	4:1	And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, " Come up here , and I will show you what must take place after this.
19:16	On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning , with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast.	4:5	From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder . Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God.
32:15	Moses went down the mountain with the two tablets. They were inscribed on both sides, front and back .	5:1	Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals .
9:24	Hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm since Egypt had become a nation.	8:7	The first angel sounded his trumpet, and there came hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was hurled down upon the earth.
7:20	He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood .	8:8	The second angel sounded his trumpet, and something like a huge mountain, all ablaze, was thrown into the sea. A third of the sea turned into blood .
15:25	When they came to Marah, they could not drink its water because it was bitter . (That is why the place is called Marah).	8:11	The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters turned bitter , and many people died from the waters that had become bitter.
10:21	Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt -- darkness that can be felt ."	8:12	The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars. A third of the day was without light .
10:12	And the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over Egypt so that locusts will swarm over the land and devour everything left by the hail."	9:3	The fifth angel sounded his trumpet and out of the smoke of the Abyss locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of the scorpions of the earth.
8:22	But on that day I will deal differently with the land of Goshen, where my people live; no swarms of flies will be there .	9:4	They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any plant or tree, but only those people who did not have the seal of God on their foreheads .
7:18	The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water .'	11:6	These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying.
15	"Moses' Song of Deliverance"	15:3	And they sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.
9:9	It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land..	16:2	The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.
8:6	So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt and the frogs came up and covered the land.	16:13	Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs , they came out of the mouth of the beast.

The Book of Revelation

TITLE

Revelation contains its own title, unlike most of the other books of God's Word: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (1:1). "Revelation" (Gr., *apokalupsis*) means "an uncovering," "an unveiling," or "a disclosure."

The NT usage of this word describes when spiritual truth is revealed (Rom. 16:25; Gal. 1:12; Eph. 1:17; 3:3), or when the sons of God are manifested (Rom. 8:19), or Christ is incarnated (Luke 2:32), as well as describing Christ's glorious appearing at His Second Coming (2 Th. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:7).

This word always refers to something or someone, once hidden, becoming visible. So this book is our final, and perhaps greatest revealing or unveiling of our Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory.

AUTHOR AND DATE

The Apostle John identifies himself as the human author of this final book of God's Word four times in Revelation (1:1,4,9; 22:8). Church tradition unanimously identified him as John the apostle, who is also the author of the Gospel by John and his three epistles. Some of the early testimonies to John's authorship are the second century writers: Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian. Some of the original readers of John's writings would still have been alive during the lifetimes of both Justin Martyr and Irenaeus—both which affirmed John's apostolic authorship.

Revelation fits into the final decade of the first century (ca. A.D. 94–96), which places it near the end of Emperor Domitian's reign (A.D. 81–96). Some have tried to date this book during Nero's reign (A.D. 54–68), but their arguments conflict with the testimony of the early church. For example, Irenaeus wrote that Revelation was written near the end of Domitian's reign. After those earliest writers, other writers through the next centuries also affirm the Domitian time frame, like: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus (who also wrote one of the earliest commentaries on Revelation), Eusebius, and Jerome.

A strong factor is the declared state of spiritual decline that Jesus exposes in some of the 7 churches (chaps. 2-3), because those churches were strong in the mid-60s, right after Paul's last ministry to them. There is not enough time between Paul's ministry and the end of Nero's reign for such a decline to have occurred. The extra decades can also explain the rise of the heretical sect known as the Nicolaitans (2:6,15), who are not mentioned in Paul's letters.

BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Revelation opens with John as an old man, and the last surviving apostle now in exile on the small, barren island of Patmos, located in the Aegean Sea southwest of Ephesus. John was banished (1:9),

for being faithful to the Gospel. There during his exile, God gave to John a series of revelations that outline the end of days for humanity on Earth.

While on Patmos, John received a series of visions that laid out the future history of the world.

When he was arrested, John was in Ephesus, ministering to the church there and in the surrounding cities. Seeking to strengthen those congregations, he could no longer minister to them in person and, following the divine command (1:11), John addressed Revelation to them (1:4). The churches had begun to feel the effects of persecution; at least one man—probably a pastor—had already been martyred (2:13), and John himself had been exiled. But the storm of persecution was about to break in full fury upon the 7 churches so dear to the apostle's heart (2:10). To those churches, Revelation provided a message of hope: God is in sovereign control of all the events of human history, and though evil often seems pervasive and wicked men all powerful, their ultimate doom is certain. Christ will come in glory to judge and rule. (MSB)

INTERPRETIVE CHALLENGES

No other NT book poses more serious and difficult interpretive challenges than Revelation. The book's vivid imagery and striking symbolism have produced 4 main interpretive approaches:

The *preterist* approach interprets Revelation as a description of first century events in the Roman Empire (see Author and Date). This view conflicts with the book's own often repeated claim to be prophecy (1:3; 22:7,10,18,19). It is impossible to see all the events in Revelation as already fulfilled. The second coming of Christ, for example, obviously did not take place in the first century.

The *historicist* approach views Revelation as a panoramic view of church history from apostolic times to the present—seeing in the symbolism such events as the barbarian invasions of Rome, the rise of the Roman Catholic Church (as well as various individual popes), the emergence of Islam, and the French Revolution. This interpretive method robs Revelation of any meaning for those to whom it was written. It also ignores the time limitations the book itself places on the unfolding events (cf. 11:2; 12:6,14; 13:5). Historicism has produced many different—and often conflicting—interpretations of the actual historical events contained in Revelation.

The *idealist* approach interprets Revelation as a timeless depiction of the cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil. In this view, the book contains neither historical allusions nor predictive prophecy. This view also ignores Revelation's prophetic character and, if carried to its logical conclusion, severs the book from any connection with actual historical events. Revelation then becomes merely a collection of stories designed to teach spiritual truth.

The *futurist* approach insists that the events of chaps. 6–22 are yet future, and that those chapters literally and symbolically depict actual people and events yet to appear on the world scene. It describes the events surrounding the second coming of Jesus Christ (chaps. 6–19), the Millennium and final judgment (chap. 20), and the eternal state (chaps. 21,22). Only this view does justice to Revelation's claim to be prophecy and interprets the book by the same grammatical-historical method as chaps. 1–3 and the rest of Scripture.

An Overview of Revelation 6-22

In Revelation 6-9, 16, and 19—find living hope for the end of days in the return of the real King, Jesus.

_____ as the long-withheld wrath of God breaks out. Sin is judged. Mankind is decimated. Civilizations vanish. Imprisoned monsters run wild. Evil goes unrestrained. And then Christ comes: His eyes ablaze, His Words unleashed, and His feet once again standing on earth. WATCH for Christ's return!

In Revelation 10-15—find living hope for the end of days in the mysteries Jesus reveals. _____ the mysteries of God's plan in conquering evil and taking back the Father's world. Countering every nefarious attack of that old serpent, Satan, Christ's truth is unleashed. Nothing surprises Christ. Nothing impedes Jesus. Nothing limits His perfect plan. Whatever life brings, God is providentially weaving His good handiwork into the fabric of our lives. PONDER God's mysteries!

In Revelation 17—find living hope for the end of days in meeting the true bride Christ calls out. _____ that we who love Jesus are also engaged to be married to Him. In this chapter we see the stark contrast between the false harlot of religion and the true bride of faith in Christ. As deceptions abound, as false teachings multiply, and as religion replaces the revelation from God through His Word, nothing is more vital than the truth. REMEMBER the truth!

In Revelation 18—find living hope for the end of days in the true riches Christ gives. _____ your true wealth by what you have invested in heaven. As Christ reveals the coming meltdown of human civilization, He shows us that our real worth is found in what remains after losing our health, wealth, prosperity, possessions, and power. We must be sure that we are invested in the "stocks" that we know will survive the collapse. MEASURE true wealth!

In Revelation 20 through 22—find living hope for the end of days in the mansions Jesus has prepared for us.

_____ until you see what God has planned for us! It is out of this world! The curse is restrained. Sinners are eternally judged. And heaven's gates are finally opened. These concluding

chapters in Revelation embody every promise God has made. For the answer to the problems of mankind, the end of suffering, and the joys of heaven, here is God's final Word. WAIT with hope!

WORSHIP IS: TO BEHOLD OUR GOD!

“And Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘**My Lord and my God!**’ ”

—John 20:28, emphasis added

Note what happens in Revelation 19:10. The angel tells John: Focus your worship on God!

William Temple (1881-1944), the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944, defined worship as follows: “To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God.”²

If there is no worship, there is no change in the life. Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. How?

Quickening of our conscience by His holiness—being renewed through the life and power of our endless lives in Christ;

Nourishing our minds by His truth;

Purifying our imaginations by His beauty;

Opening our hearts to His love;

Submitting our wills to His purpose.

All of this gathered together in adoration is the greatest of all expressions of which we are capable.

HOW TO WORSHIP GOD THROUGH THE NAMES OF JESUS

One clear way God invites our worship is by revealing himself through His divine names. Since Revelation is a revelation of Jesus and His person, its twenty-two chapters are a gold mine as the Lord

unveils His deity through more than sixty-seven names and titles. The greatest insight into adoring the Lord comes by way of His names and titles in His Word. They are real treasures to find!

Chapter 1: He is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, ruler over the kings of the earth, the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Almighty, the First and the Last, the Son of Man, the living One!

Chapter 2: He is the administrator of the church who has the sharp two-edged sword, eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like fine brass!

Chapter 3: He is the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, who is holy and true, who has the key of David, who is the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God!

Chapter 4: He is the One who sits on the throne in heaven!

Chapter 5: He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, and the Lamb who was slain—who lives forever and ever!

Chapter 6: He is the wrathful Lamb!

Chapter 7: He is the redeeming Lamb and the providing Lamb!

Chapter 8: He is the patient collector of our prayers!

Chapter 9: He holds back the monsters from the abyss!

Chapter 10: He is the Creator of heaven and earth and sea!

Chapter 11: He is Christ, the Lord God Almighty!

Chapter 12: He is the Christ, the Lamb, Jesus!

Chapter 13: He is the Lamb, whose is the Book of Life!

Chapter 14: He is the Lamb on Mount Zion, Jesus, the Lord, the Son of Man!

Chapter 15: He is again the Lamb, the Lord God Almighty, the King of saints, the Lord!

Chapter 16: He is the One who was and is and is to be, the Lord God Almighty!

Chapter 17: He is Jesus, the Lamb—Lord of lords and King of kings!

Chapter 18: He is the Lord God!

Chapter 19: He is the Lord our God, the Lord God, the Lamb, Jesus, the Faithful and True, the Word of God, Almighty God, King of kings and Lord of lords!

Chapter 20: He is Jesus, the Christ!

Chapter 21: He is the Alpha and Omega, the Lamb, the Lord God Almighty!

Chapter 22: He is the Lamb, the Lord God, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last, Jesus, the Root and Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star, the Lord Jesus—*our* Lord Jesus!

Worship Christ in His majesty—worship Him in all His glorious names! Nothing can possibly come into your life that the all-powerful, all-knowing, and ever-present Christ didn't know about long before it happened. As Creator, He made you as you are; he picked your family, limitations

and all. The Lamb has paid the price for sin. And the Lamb is the only One who has the reservation book, the Book of Life, which is the key to enter into the paradise He has prepared for His bride.

Make a choice to live in hope: Have you made your reservation? Is your name written there? Are you in touch with Him to prepare for what is ahead? Are you worshiping the manufacturer and owner of your life in grateful awe that He knows and cares for you?

What's Next for Planet Earth: A Current Assessment of The Ten Signs of His Coming Matthew 24

Please open with me to Matthew 24.

The disciples ask Jesus a question that interests all of us, I'm so glad they did. Follow along as they ask in Matthew 24:3, and as Jesus answers them in verse 8 and 33.

This week I was examining just how much God has left for us to know about the future.

I hold in my hand the ONE Book that God wrote—the Bible.

This one book, made up of 66 books has a total of 31,103 verses.

Of all the verses in the Bible **8,352** verse are prophetic or spoke to future events. All Biblical predictions about the future in these thousands verses can be grouped into **737** different predictions¹.

Of these 8,352 verses, 6,312 (or 522 different predictions) have already happened to the letter, **JUST LIKE** God's Word said they would.

God Gives the Specific Details on the End of the World

That leaves just about **2,040** verses with **215 specific predictions from God about the end of the world** that are in process of being fulfilled.²

So, the Bible contains many specific events that would signal the end of days for life on planet earth as it has been for the past several thousand years.

Each of the prophetic signs Christ and His apostles gave are specific and not vague.

Jesus explained to us in Matthew 24, verses 8 and 33-34—that these events would begin at the same time, run concurrently, and crescendo like the pains of a woman giving birth—the closer we get to His Second coming.

Matthew 24:8, 33-34 All these are the beginning of sorrows. 33 **So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near—at the doors!** 34 Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place.

The list of Biblical Signs of Christ's Return will not actually be full blown until the Tribulation time.

Each of the signs of Christ's Return He said--are trends.

These trends are speeding up—the last seconds of the countdown clock of Christ's return are clicking down.

Each day the prophetic picture Christ painted grows clearer.

Each of these signs were captured by the apostles and prophets between 2,000 and 3,500 years ago.

Now they are happening in our lifetime!

But, in all of history--**ONLY** our generation has seen **EVERY ONE** of these events starting to unfold.

All of the yet to be completed prophecies fit within these seven major events. Probably the most exciting of all are the signs of Christ's Second Coming. There are dozens of them. Jesus described many of them in incredible detail. But here is what I want you to see—Jesus said these signs would

¹ Bible Prophecies can be divided into **EIGHTEEN** chronological categories (by the timing of the events). There are only **FIVE** categories of the eighteen left to be fulfilled. They are: church prophecies, Second Coming prophecies, Millennial prophecies, Final Judgment prophecies, and New Jerusalem prophecies.

² J. Barton Payne, Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), pp. 631-675.

not suddenly appear. He said that they would rather become a trend that amplified and strengthened until it became overwhelming like “birth pangs”.

Let me give you just a handful of the precise, clear, specific predictions that Christ's Words in this Book give us. You may be startled. Every one of the signs Christ gave are present in your world today. You are the first generation in all of history to experience these trends, these signs—all at once!

What are some of them? We will actually in the days ahead look at these in detail, but here they are in summary.

THE SIGN OF GLOBAL TRAVEL (DANIEL 12:4A)

Daniel was overwhelmed when he caught a glimpse of the number and speed at which people were moving about the planet.

Daniel 12:4 “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

The Bible says that there would be many involved in travel, and today the transportation industry is one of the largest segments of the global economy.

Prior to the industrial revolution, few individuals traveled beyond their community. Until recently, horse, foot, and boat were the only modes of transportation. Yet, in our day hundreds of millions travel to and fro great distances every year.

THE SIGN OF A GLOBAL EXPLOSION OF KNOWLEDGE (DANIEL 12:4A)

Knowledge would increase. We have gone from kilobyte, the megabyte, to gigabyte, to terabytes, to petabytes, to exabytes, to zettabytes, and soon to yottabytes...

The last time that records were finalized was four years ago (in 2013) and on Earth we humans produced 4 zettabytes of information, that is a one with 21 zeros or 304 million years (not hours) of 4K HD video, or the equivalent of every human on earth getting the information in 348 newspapers every days.

This month saw the introduction of a new generation of computer chip. Each generation has basically doubled the processing speed and power. The newest chip called the AMD Ryzen is using 14 nanometer architecture. Just in common talk that means the chip the size of a quarter can pack 1

billion lines of information storage from side to side by 1 billion lines of storage from top to bottom, that equals 1 quadrillion lines of information architecture and one-billionth of an inch-wide spaces.

Daniel 12:4 “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase

Specifically, this is referring to an understanding of Bible prophecy, but also an increase in scientific knowledge is implied.

THE SIGN OF GLOBAL WEATHER GONE WILD (LUKE 21:25-26)

Jesus foresaw the time when weather would be so bad that not just a few, but the whole world would be troubled, fearful, and killed by the fear of chaotic weather that would become prevalent.

Luke 21:25-26 “And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; 26 men’s

hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Jesus foresaw those seas and the waves roaring in the last days, and compared these trends to birth pangs.

Matthew 24:8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.

The Greek word *odin*, often translated as *sorrows* in Matthew 24:8, literally means *birth pangs*. Paul explains to us that all of creation is under the curse of sin.

Romans 8:21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

While creation awaits the coming of the Liberator Himself, Christ the Lord—just as when delivery draws near, birth pangs always increase in both intensity and frequency--so the universe itself will travail as the time of delivery draws near.

Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Of course chaotic weather has always existed, but there are indications that we are witnessing an increase in strange weather.

THE SIGN OF GLOBAL TELECOMMUNICATION AND TELEVISION (REV. 11:9-10; 17:8)

God's Word explicitly declares that mankind will be able to see and hear globally. When the world's fastest known means of travel was the speed of a horse—God says the whole world will see an event and all at the same time, celebrate that event! Truly global communication was foreseen.

This past summer I was standing in the Med on the foundation of Herod's Palace. I pulled out my phone, poked a button and began narrating what I was seeing. Instantly via FB Live the bubbles of dozens of people began to cross my screen. They were watching and listening instantly across the world what I was seeing. That is common.

Revelation 11:9-10 Then those from the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. 10 And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.

Revelation 17:8 The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

The Bible predicts that the entire world will "see" certain events unfold. The invention of the television and the deployment of global satellite networks during the 20th century allow news to travel

the world at the speed of light for the first time ever. Remember that in the Apostle John's day, news traveled at the speed of horseback.

THE SIGN OF GLOBAL EVANGELISM (MT. 24:14)

Never before our generation was it possible to even know how many people are on this planet. Never was it possible to see the entire planet, let alone reach it all. Today we can send an email anywhere, bounce a radio or television wave anywhere, travel anywhere and most of all—get the Gospel anywhere on this planet. My little website alone has visitors from over 100 different nations on earth. The Christian gospel would be preached as a warning to all nations. Remember what Jesus said?

Matthew 24:14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Mark 13:10 And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations.

Today, portions or the entire Bible have been translated into over 2,300 languages and dialects covering over 90% of the world's population.

THE SIGN OF GLOBAL PESTILENCES (MT. 24:7)

Despite an increase in scientific knowledge, deadly diseases (which the Bible calls "pestilences") would be prevalent. Just this week here in Michigan at GR's Butterfield Hospital, a man with strep throat barely survived after multiple amputations because the strep traveled into his abdominal cavity. That was not even one of the dreaded, looming, circling ominously close "super-pathogens" waiting on the edges of civilization.

Matthew 24:7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places.

Emerging CRE superbugs have medical scientists worried. The rise of VERSA & MERSA pathogens and now CRE's (carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae or CRE), etc., underscore this fact.

Ironically, just a few decades ago, some scientists were forecasting that advances in medicine might soon eradicate deadly diseases.

THE SIGN OF DIGITAL MONEY, GLOBAL TRACKING & POSITIONING (REV. 13:16-17)

There would be technology capable of tracking the world's population and commerce.

Revelation 13:16-17 He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, 17 and that no one may buy

or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

With ApplePay, ePay, PayPal, Venmo, and on it goes we can have instant electronic access to payments, and each one is tagged exactly when and where it took place.

THE SIGN OF WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION (MT. 24:21-22)

We all have started saying a word these days—and have no idea how sobering it should be. God says that at the end of the world--Mankind would be capable of destroying all life.

Matthew 24:21-22 For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Consider that when Jesus made this prediction the armaments of His day were swords and spears. But today, with nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, it is possible to wipe out all flesh on planet earth.

THE SIGN OF GLOBAL RELIGION & THE RETURN OF THE WANDERING JEWS TO THE PROMISED LAND.

God promised over 26 centuries ago that at the end of the world--Jews would begin to regather in Israel.

Jeremiah 31:7-10 For thus says the Lord: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, And shout among the chief of the nations; Proclaim, give praise, and say, 'O Lord, save Your people, The remnant of Israel!' 8 Behold, I will bring them from the north country, And gather them from the ends of the earth, Among them the blind and the lame, The woman with child And the one who labors with child, together; A great throng shall return there. 9 They shall come with weeping, And with supplications I will lead them. I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, In a straight way in which they shall not stumble; For I am a Father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn. 10 "Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, And declare it in the isles afar off, and say, 'He who scattered Israel will gather him, And keep him as a shepherd does his flock.'

Ezekiel 37:21-22 "Then say to them, "Thus says the Lord God: "Surely I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, wherever they have gone, and will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land; 22 and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king over them all;

they shall no longer be two nations, nor shall they ever be divided into two kingdoms again.

Ezekiel 38:8 After many days you will be visited. In the latter years you will come into the land of those brought back from the sword and gathered from many people on the mountains of Israel, which had long been desolate; they were brought out of the nations, and now all of them dwell safely. Since 1948 the world has witnessed the call of God deep within the hearts of 5.4 million Jews who have done everything they could to get to the Promised Land. And more arrive each day!

THE SIGN OF A GLOBAL DESIRE FOR PEACE, PROSPERITY & MATERIALISM.

Jesus said that it would be just like the days of Noah.

“What’s Next?” is a reminder that there are clear and well described events that lay ahead for us who know Jesus, and for planet earth. There are seven major events.

I call these seven steps from Now to Eternity!

RAPTURE	I THESS. 4	BE READY – Christ is Coming
JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST	2 CORIN. 5	BE HOLY – Christ will test our lives.
TRIBULATION	REV. 6-19	BE THANKFUL – Christ will keep us from the hour.
SECOND COMING	REV. 19	BE PATIENT – Christ will right all wrongs.
MILLENNIUM	REV. 20	BE FOCUSED – Christ will perfect the earth
GREAT WHITE THRONE	REV. 20	BE FAITHFUL – Point people to Christ.
HEAVEN	REV. 21-22	BE INVESTING – Lay up treasure in Heaven.

APPENDIX:

RAPTURE: BE READY--1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. 15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive

and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words. shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

CHRIST'S JUDGMENT BEMA: BE HOLY--2 CORINTHIANS 5:1-10

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. 9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

TRIBULATION: BE THANKFUL—REVELATION 6:1-17

Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see." 2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer. 3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." 4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword. 5 When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine." 7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." 8 So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth. 9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were,

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

CHRIST'S SECOND COMING: BE PATIENT--REVELATION 19:1-21

After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! 2 For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." 3 Again they said, "Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!" 4 And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" 5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!" 6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunders, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! 7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God." 10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." 11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. 12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. 13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. 15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. 17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, 18 that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave,

both small and great.” 19 And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. 20 Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

MILLENNIUM: BE FOCUSED—REVELATION 20:1-10

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; 3 and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. 5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. 7 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. 10 The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

GREAT WHITE THRONE: BE FAITHFUL—REV 20:11-15

11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. 13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. 14 Then Death and Hades were cast into

the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

HEAVEN: BE INVESTING—REV21:1-7; 22:1-5

Revelation 21:1-22:21 Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." 5 Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." 6 And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. 7 He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

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

APPLICATION

What are you intensely asking (begging) God to be doing through your life that will last forever?

Christ said here is something anyone in my family can do! Here is what you do that I love, and I make your investments in these areas last forever. Jesus said:

I collect all of your prayers - PRAY! Revelation 5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. (KJV)

I multiply sacrificial gifts - GIVE! Mark 12:42 And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. (KJV) **do rest**

I count souls you lead to me - WIN! Daniel 12:3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise. 1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I

have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. (KJV) **1st thes 2.19**

I remember humble service - SERVE! Mark 14:3 And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. (KJV) **do rest**

I love missionaries that do outreach - GO! Matthew 19:29 And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. (KJV)

To obey Jesus we must “watch and pray”. That is how we can resist the temptations that lure us. Then we will be ready when our Lord returns.

Christ's Throne of Judgment is a part of His overall plan. Remember GOD’S PANORAMA OF AGES? These are the steps from here tonight to Eternity that God's Word has mapped out for all who study His Word.

RAPTURE	I THESS. 4	BE READY – Christ is Coming
JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST	2 CORIN. 5	BE HOLY – Christ will test our lives.
TRIBULATION	REV. 6-19	BE THANKFUL – Christ will keep us from the hour.
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GREAT WHITE THRONE	REV. 20	BE FAITHFUL – Point people to Christ.
HEAVEN	REV. 21-22	BE INVESTING – Lay up treasure in Heaven.

What does the Judgment Seat of Christ always boil down to? TIME.

Time is the only thing we can't recover, earn more of, get from someone else, or do over again.

It is an irreversible river flowing by ceaselessly at sixty seconds per minute, sixty minutes per hour.

Are you giving significant, regular, sacrificial time to God?

Understand Christ's Wrath (Revelation 6)

THE INEXPLICABLE _____

[He] ... is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to **the revelation of the mystery** kept secret since the world began.

—Romans 16:25, emphasis added

Revelation 6 opens with the period that is known in the Bible as the Great Tribulation. To some, hearing talk about the impending arrival of Tribulation, such as this world has never known, may seem like just another science fiction story, or simply the delusion of alarmist Christians. Thus, scoffers often mockingly ask: “*Where is the promise of His coming? For ... all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation*” (2 Peter 3:4).

Why God delays in reclaiming the kingdom for himself is an inexplicable mystery—the mystery of the presence of evil. For thousands of years, God has allowed Satan to wrap his vicious, slimy, filthy, cruel tentacles around human life and around this earth.

There is no village or town without its seething, and there is no human heart without its insidious darkness. There is no life without its tears and its sorrows. There is no home that ultimately does not get broken by death; there is no family that does not see the circle of the home dissolved by the depths of the grave. The pages of history, from the time of the first murder until this present hour, are written in blood, tears, and death.

Does God know all this? Is He indifferent to it? Is He not able to overcome it? The mystery of how and why God allows sin and suffering to run its deadly course through human history has been one of the most persistent questions that skeptical unbelievers have asked Christians. The infidel, the atheist, the agnostic, and the unbeliever laugh and mock us, and God allows them to laugh and mock.

God seemingly just looks on as our missionaries are slain, our churches are burned to the ground, and countless millions upon millions of people on this earth are oppressed and living in despair. He apparently does not intervene—nor does He say anything, and neither does He move. Sin just develops. It goes on and on. Oh, the mystery of the delay of the Lord God!

But somewhere beyond the starry sky there stands a herald angel with a trumpet in his hand, and by the decree of the Lord God Almighty, there is a day, there is an hour, there is a moment, there is an elected time when the angel shall sound the trumpet and the kingdoms of this world shall become

the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ!¹ When that trumpet sounds and God intervenes, the entire world will take note of it, and the mystery of God's delay shall be no more. But until then, you and I can find hope in knowing that some day God *will* right all wrongs! For He is the eternal King of Kings and Lord of Lords!

My Prayer for You in Revelation 6: Oh Father, the question You inspired John to write in his rocky exile on Patmos 2,000 years ago is a great one for each of us to ponder: Who is able to stand before Your wrath—the wrath of Jesus, the Creator, the Judge—if You are not our Redeemer? I pray that this will be a sobering thought for any who are not spiritually prepared to stand before Your wrath, oh Christ, the Lamb. In the privacy of their wills, may they realize that You wrote a love letter in blood on a cross of wood; there You gave Your life for our sins, and shed Your own blood to cleanse us. May they, without delay, realize their need of a Savior. As for Your children, may we all realize what You want us to do during the closing hours as this world heads toward a ghastly ending. May we dispense Your antidote with our lips, speaking Your wonderful Words of life! May we not hesitate to do so because people are headed toward the horrors of the pit. I pray that You would touch each Christian's heart, oh Lord, to be Your good and faithful servant. May Your Word be magnified in every life! I pray this all in Your lovely name, Lord Jesus. Amen.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE END OF DAYS IN REVELATION

Chapter 6 starts the judgments, and from that moment to the climactic return of the King in Revelation 19, the river of God's wrath just keeps flooding the earth. Note the rapid devastation. We begin in chapter 6 with the Lord beginning to unroll the seven seals, as each one breaks open it reveals another event that's going to happen on the earth. By the sixth seal in Rev. 6:12-17, we have an earthquake.

When God makes the earth shake, it is a big one. The sun becomes as black as sackcloth of hair and the moon becomes like blood. The stars of heaven fell to the earth. Imagine a day when the sun goes black, the moon goes blood-red, and the stars all fall out of heaven, as the sky departs like a scroll. As those scenes flash by above,

below, every mountain and every island get shaken out of their places. This is like a:

GLOBAL HORROR MOVIE

Can you imagine that? These will be scary time in verses 15 to 17. The shaken inhabitants of Earth scream for the rocks and the mountains to fall, to hide them from the face of him that sits on the throne; and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of His wrath has come and who shall be able to stand?

That was only the first of the 14 chapters of tribulation horrors. Next, jump to the last seal in Revelation 8:1. This seal unleashes the seven trumpet judgments, another way to signify terrifying, wide-spread judgment.

Rev. 8:7 gives us just a little taste of what is going on as the judgments roll across the land, seas, and skies: “The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up”.

Like in one of the countless computer-generated science-fiction movies: a huge, huge ball of fire fall from the sky and hit the seas, destroying a third of the oceans.

Only it wasn't a computer-generated theater disaster, it actually happens. Most people will probably just stand there in unbelief. They had seen New York and LA destroyed so many times on screen, but never heard the ear-shattering concussive blast of impact, or felt the skin- searing heat of the devastation.

Soon a tsunaminous-tidal wave that would be absolutely beyond imagination, follows the flaming ball of fire that plunged into the

sea, joining the other fires that come down to the earth that burn up a third of everything on the globe. But we know that:

REVELATION 6-8 IS ONLY THE MOVIE TRAILER

Each of these disasters is only a preview, we understand, of the devastating fire of God, when He will consume everything left at the end of the thousand years, before He sets up the new heaven and the new earth.

While all the implications of that horrible scene is being digested by our minds, note the 5th trumpet in Rev. 9:1.

John sees an angelic creature falling like a burning meteor to earth with a key. What a key he holds. This is probably Lucifer, the Devil who is allowed to let out all the imprisoned terrorist-like demons, locked up by God over thousands of years.

All the bound up, out-of-control demons that have been imprisoned down there for centuries gush out of the prison pit in verse 2, like: "Smoke out of the pit, like the smoke of a furnace and the sun and the air darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit."

WHEN THE REAL HORROR IS UNLEASHED

It says in Rev. 9:3 that these demons sweep across the face of the Earth like a dark, thick plague of locusts. If the terrifying quake of chapter 6 seemed bad, this is so much more terrifying. Like the

sound of locust cloud screeching overhead is this cloud of evil, that envelopes the Earth.

There is nowhere to go, there is no escape, because there is no secure room to hide from creatures that transcend any physical barrier.

This is one of the main reasons why the Tribulation is going to be such a terrible time.

Think of all the bound demons of the Pit being turned loose in addition to the ones that are already running all over the earth. Then, as if these hordes were not bad enough, out of the smoke rising from the Pit in v. 11 emerges the most fearsome monster of all, their king Abaddon the Destroyer. This is the angel of the bottomless pit whose name in the Greek tongue, Apollyon. Both languages capture this creature's name, it means destroyer. But all these demons are allowed to do is inflict pain, not death. Death is coming, but not quite yet.

THE GREATEST MASSACRE ARRIVES

A world, terrorized for 150 days (9:10), now has something to fear. The searing pain is about to be replaced by horrific death.

In Revelation 9:17, at the sounding of the sixth angel, trumpet, another army rises. Destroying, horse-like creatures and those who sat on them, it says, are riders with breastplates the color of fire and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions. With fire, smoke, and brimstone: a third of mankind is killed. Brimstone is like volcanic lava, which proceeded out of their mouths.

Either this is some kind of graphic figurative description of a great fiery force, or maybe God just opens the earth and turns loose the Earth's volcanic capacity. In deadly destruction, a third of the world's inhabitants are plunged into Hades.

But, that's just a preview, a little taste of what's coming at the end of the thousand-year Kingdom. Skip over the next 7 chapters of the

Beast, False Prophet, and the seven bowls of scorching fire, blackness of darkness, and Armageddon, and turn with me to Rev. 20:7-9.

Rev. 6-19 is all just a starting point for the final devastation of fire that consumes the whole universe. That's how it's going to end.

THE FIRE THAT MELTS THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE

The Lord has given many Old Testament warnings, and many New Testament descriptive previews of what is coming at the end of the seven-year period of Tribulation, just prior to Jesus' return to set up His thousand-year Kingdom.

But the end really hits with that furious fire, that is going to come upon that great rebellious army that are going to fight Jesus Christ at the end of His earthly Kingdom.

Rev. 20:7-9 Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. 9 They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

It is at that moment in Rev. 20:7-9 that the final holocaust hits, when all of the universe is consumed and the elements melt with intense heat, right down to the elements.

To understand the end, turn with me to 2 Peter 3:10.

John has already told us in 1 John 2:17 that the world would someday pass away, but only Peter describes the exact way it happens.

It is with the fire of God: the consuming, purifying fire that brings a new heaven and earth.

Note what Peter says in 2 Peter 3:10.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will

melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

What does Peter mean that the “elements” melt?

Peter is guided by the Spirit to use the Greek word *stoichea*, which means the microscopic components that make up the building blocks of matter. God tells us that He is refining with fire the

Universe, right down to the very essence of matter, it's all going to be consumed.

EVERYTHING UNCONNECTED TO GOD, BURNS

As God's Word says in 1 John 2:17: "the world passes away." The universe, the earth and the world's systems: social, economic, cultural, and religious, are all consumed.

Now look at 2 Peter 3:11. There is a question Peter asks us on behalf of Almighty God.

These words may be the most important words to really wrap your mind around if you believe God, if you know Jesus, and if you want to please Him with your life.

Please stand with me, we are going to read these words from the screen together.

1 Peter 3:11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?

PROPHETIC SCRIPTURES

- 8,362 PREDICTIVE VERSES
- 1,817 PREDICTIONS
- 737 SEPARATE MATTERS

J. BARTON PAYNE, ENCYCLOPEDIA OF BIBLICAL PROPHECY

ALTERNATIVE "TRIBULATION" VIEWS

THE HORRORS OF CHRIST'S _____

"... He will ... say to those on the left hand, '**Depart from Me, you cursed**, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels' "

—Matthew 25:41, emphasis added

Let us now look at that future moment when the trumpet sounds and the Lord opens the Tribulation to begin reclaiming His rights to the earth. One by one Christ will unroll the seals of Revelation 6. As each seal is broken, He will take further possession and control of His inheritance. Listed below are excerpts from the opening of each seal:

First Seal (vv. 1-2)—The Conqueror: ... A crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer (v. 2b).

Second Seal (vv. 3-4)—Conflict on Earth: ... It was granted ... to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword (v. 4b).

Third Seal (vv. 5-6)—Scarcity on Earth: ... He who sat on [the black horse] had a pair of scales in his hand. ... “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine” (vv. 5b, 6b).

Fourth Seal (vv. 7-8)—Widespread Death on Earth: ... The name of him who sat on [the pale horse] was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth (v. 8).

Fifth Seal (vv. 9-11)—The Cry of the Martyrs: “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” ... And it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed (v. 10b, 11b).

Sixth Seal (vv. 12-17)—Cosmic Disturbances: “... There was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, ... Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place (vv. 12-14).

Finally, in Revelation 11:15, when Jesus Christ unrolls the **seventh seal** and the seventh trumpet blows, it will be complete—He will have taken back the rule of His planet: *The seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”*

During this terrible time of tribulation, one out of four people will die (6:8)—some through the ravages of war, others by starvation, and many others by the “*beasts of the earth.*” Death may come instantly, without prolonged dread, or it may come slowly and painfully. In 2006, the world’s population was 6,491,353,180; that means that at least 1,622,838,295, or more than five times the current population of the United States, will die. Can you imagine that? Because the population of the world doubles every thirty-nine and one-half years, the number of people who will die grows larger every day.

In addition, one-third of all vegetation will be burned up. All grass, every tree, and everything else that is green will be destroyed (8:7). The sun and the moon will be darkened as nature goes into revolt (8:12). The gates of hell will open and hordes of locusts shaped “*like horses prepared for battle*” will come

upon the earth. Those locusts will be permitted to sting men like scorpions, and the pain will last for five months. The Bible says that men will beg God to let them die, but they will not die (9:6).

During the dreaded Battle of Armageddon (14:20), the blood of those killed in battle will flow for 200 miles, and reach up to the bridle of a horse (about four feet) in the valley of Jezreel. And there will be worldwide famine unlike anything the world has ever seen (18:8).

What has just been described in the last three paragraphs represents only some of the highlights that describe the living hell you will avoid if you are part of the Rapture!

But before mankind is destroyed by nations or his own hand, the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Do you have the hope of being caught up in the clouds to meet our blessed Lord in the air? Has Christ's forgiveness been applied to your life? If not, it can be today. God still stands with open arms saying: "*Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other*" (Isaiah 45:22).

Altogether, as many as half the people on earth will be killed during the Great Tribulation. Because the events to come will be so horrible, God has promised that His born-again ones will be taken home to be with Him before His wrath falls upon this planet. Do you now see why God refers to the Rapture as a "*blessed hope*"? If He were to come today, would you be part of that glorious home going?

THE CHILLING _____ OF GOD'S WARNING

Of how much worse punishment ... will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?"

—Hebrews 10:29, emphasis added

Note how Jesus describes the powerful effect of the coming pestilences: "... *Unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened*" (Matthew 24:22; see also Mark 13:20).

Listen to Jesus again as He foretold that one of the signs of His Second Coming would be the onslaught of global pestilences: "... *There will be ... famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven*" (Luke 21:11).

There have always been diseases, plagues, and pestilences, but none have been capable of spreading worldwide until the advent of global travel. Until the invention of the steam engine in the nineteenth century, most plague carriers would die before they traveled very far. But beginning with air travel in the twentieth century, it became possible to harbor a plague or pestilence, board a flight, and reach a distant destination before ever exhibiting symptoms. By the time the disease was

discovered, everyone who had come in contact with that person would have already been exposed to the plague, and perhaps have become carriers themselves.

Consider the magnitude of possibilities, like this report in the February 2005 edition of *New Yorker Magazine*:

The vicious avian flu that has killed dozens of people in Vietnam, Thailand, and elsewhere in the region has caused the deaths of hundreds of millions of animals in nearly a dozen Asian countries in the past two years and could kill millions of people if it becomes capable of spreading efficiently among humans. No such virus has ever spread so quickly over such a wide geographical area, and, unlike most viruses, this one has already affected a more diverse group than any other type of flu, and it has killed many animals previously thought to be resistant.

One farmer whose chickens were killed by the virus says, "It's so hard to watch. One day, they're all alive and healthy—the vets were here the week before to check them—and the next day they're dying by the thousand. It happened so quickly. They started shivering, thousands of them at once. And then they started to fall. Every one of them. They just fell over, dead."

Scott Dowell, the director of the Centers for Disease Control's Thailand office, told Specter, "The world just has no idea what it's going to see if this thing comes. When, really. It's when. I don't think we can afford the luxury of the word 'if' anymore. ... The clock is ticking. We just don't know what time it is."

Robert Webster, a virologist at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, in Memphis, who has been studying avian influenza for decades, was even more stark: "**This is the worst flu virus** I have ever seen or worked with or read about. We have to prepare as if we were going to war—and the public needs to understand that clearly. This virus is playing its role as a natural bioterrorist. ... If it does happen, and I fully expect that it will, **there will be no place for any of us to hide**. Not in the United States or in Europe or in a bunker somewhere. The virus is a very promiscuous and effective killer." (emphasis added.)²

Not all politicians have ignored the threat. When Tommy Thompson, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, announced his resignation, he cited an avian-influenza epidemic as one of the greatest dangers the United States faces. The World Health Organization's conservative estimate of the number of deaths that an epidemic would cause is seven million worldwide. Because people transmit flu before they even have symptoms themselves, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to halt the spread of the avian flu virus. And now, even a year later, scientists around the world are continuing to warn us about the dangers of avian flu.

Amazingly, instead of talking about what **MAY** happen, current news reports are now talking about what **IS** happening. Consider those reports, and others you've heard, in light of the full-blown Tribulation scene in Revelation 6.

Understanding Christ's wrath is exciting because its appearance means that our redemption is drawing near, and He will be reclaiming the earth that is rightfully His. Yet it is also chilling because

of what it means to earth's inhabitants—including our unsaved family members, friends, and neighbors. God's people must therefore mobilize and urgently warn as many as possible!

INESCAPABLE _____

It is **appointed for men to die once**, but after this the judgment.

—Hebrews 9:27, emphasis added

There will be nowhere to hide from worldwide pestilences like the avian flu. In a matter of a few weeks, death for millions upon millions would be inescapable. As described in God's inspired Word, that scenario certainly fits with when the Lord is reeling in this rebellious planet at the end of human history: "*I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth*" (Revelation 6:8).

The rider on the pale horse begins his deadly ride at some point during the Tribulation, and before his ride is over, a quarter of the population of mankind will be dead from either war, famine, or "*the beasts of the earth*." The word "beasts" in verse 8 is *therion* in Greek, and means a "venomous beast." The H5N1 avian flu is a viral infection that scientists fear has crossed over from the beasts of the earth to human-to-human transmission. A virus is, in and of itself, a living thing, a "venomous beast" by definition.

The existence of a deadly virus, combined with the other signs of the soon return of the Lord, suggests a loose time frame for the end of human history. For 2,000 years, that time frame was "someday" or "eventually." For our generation, however, the ability to kill a quarter of mankind with war, famine, and infectious disease is imminently real. As Dr. Michael Specter observed: "If not this year or the next, the following year, depending on the 'if-then' factor ...

IF Iran doesn't use its nuclear weapons,

IF the Pakistanis and Indians don't nuke each other,

IF North Korea doesn't use its atomic bombs,

IF a vaccine is discovered for H5N1,

IF terrorists don't get their hands on bio-weapons,

IF no global war arises out of our newly articulated policy of spreading democracy into the Third World, and

IF the ongoing Middle East conflicts don't spark a global thermonuclear war first, THEN, maybe it might take a little longer."³

While we wait, we have been gifted, called, and empowered to be His witnesses.

The Motivation: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Our

marching orders as believers came in Galilee as Jesus invited His disciples to their commissioning (Matthew 28:16-20). We are all to be involved in making disciples. We are to LOVE the lost by going to the lost.

The Power: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44). We are to PRAY for the lost.

The Method: Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily (Colossians 1:28-29). We are to WARN the lost.

The Urgency: *Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ...* (2 Corinthians 5:11). We are to PERSUADE the lost.

Are you loving, warning, persuading, and praying for the lost? Make whatever time you have left on earth count for Christ—for eternity!

A TOUR OF THE _____

“There **was** a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day. But there **was** a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate”

— Luke 16:19-20, emphasis added

Today we will be taking a tour of the grave—the destination of the vast majority of people whom you live with, work with, and see around you in daily life: “You and I, everybody you meet, from the mailman to the guy next to you at work, has an eternal destiny. That destiny is either a joyful existence in the presence of God, or a Christ-less eternity in the place prepared for the devil and his angels. It is a real place.”⁴ What I am about to share may change the whole way you look at death, dying, the grave, and the afterlife. The expert witness, the only One who has ever gone to the grave and returned to report on it, is Jesus. No one has greater reliability or more to say on the afterlife than He. As Revelation 1 says, Jesus Christ alone has the keys to death and to the grave.

In Luke 12:16-20, Jesus told a parable of the rich man who mastered the “eat, drink, and be merry” lifestyle. He was so filled with greedy plans for the future that God said to him, “*Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?*” (Luke 12:20).

Now consider what Jesus reports concerning Lazarus and the rich man. It is seen in the very important word “was” in Luke 16:19-20: “*There **was** a certain rich man ...*” (emphasis added). Unlike Luke 12:16-20, Jesus did not use the word “parable” because He was speaking of a literal event of which He, as God, had knowledge. Jesus continued by saying: “*So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame’*” (Luke 16:22-24).

Jesus explains another truth in that passage. Before their pardon was secured at the cross of Calvary, the righteous dead (like Abraham, Moses, and so forth) did NOT go directly to heaven as do blood-bought Christians of the church age. Instead, they went to paradise. The grave (Sheol, Hades)

was at that time divided into two parts: “*Abraham’s bosom*” was a place of comfort; the other was a place of torment. But both were located physically in the grave, or hell, as it is called in many places.

Note that the rich man could actually see Lazarus, which indicates a literal existence and therefore a literal torment and a literal flame. Abraham explained the division of hell to the rich man, including the fact that Lazarus could not come to him. Now look at the account again as the rich man cried out: ... *‘I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment’* (Luke 16:27-28).

The rich man remembered his life on earth, as he will for eternity. Thus he remembered his loved ones, and was conscious of their destiny. So he pleaded with Abraham to do something, but Abraham simply told him: “*‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ But he said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead’*” (Luke 16:29-31).

Here is something extremely revealing about their conversation: Abraham is Abraham, and Lazarus, the beggar, is Lazarus; but the rich man had no name. He had his memories; he had awareness of his surroundings; he knew the hopelessness of the situation. The only thing he wanted more than a drink of water was to save his five brothers. But *he has no name*. Why is that so important? Because he does not need one; nobody will ever speak it again. There will be no reprieve, no visitors, no hope, and no need for a name. To all intents and purposes, he is dead, and will be eternally aware of that fact. Eternal, conscious, perpetual, lonely torment—dead forever, yet alive—always remembering the opportunities God had given him to escape such torment!

That is what awaits the mail deliverer, the guy or gal next to you, or friends and relatives of whom you say, “I’ll talk to him (or her) when the time is right.” Or, when he or she says to you: “I’ll think about it. Maybe tomorrow ...” But at any moment God could unexpectedly say, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you!”

CHRIST IS THE ANSWER

“You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; But you are not willing to **come to Me that you may have life.**”

—John 5:39-40, emphasis added

I can’t say this often enough: these are the last days! The Rapture is coming, and the Tribulation is almost upon us. So look up, for the King is coming! But He isn’t here yet ... and there are plenty of people alive today who won’t be here then, either.

In the ten seconds of time it takes me to say this sentence, eighteen human beings awoke in eternity because they died on earth. Every hour, 6,464 more people die. That amounts to 155,131 per day, or 56 million a year. What should those alarming statistics mean to us? Three things:

Life is _____. As the Lord has reminded us in His Word, our lives are but a vapor. We can be healthy, strong, and full of life today; yet, a tiny virus can make us sick tomorrow. The next day

we can shiver and the following day we can fall over dead—just like the countless birds dying in Asia today. Life is too fragile to be wasted!

Death is _____. Although a few of us will be privileged to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at Christ's coming all lost people and most believers have an appointment with death. Death is unstoppable and inescapable. With the weather growing more violent, people becoming more openly wicked, warfare becoming more globally lethal, and pestilences stalking the planet like never before, life is truly fragile and death is inevitable.

Christ is our _____ answer—our only hope. Flu shots cannot help our souls. The United Nations is not able to stop the growth of evil. Our only hope is found in God's Word. The only escape pathway is laid out by Him.

God has given us the conclusion to human history—the Bible. Trust Him completely. Since people are the only investment that lasts eternally, invest heavily in disciple-making.

God has given us a job to do while He is away—soul winning. Therefore, obey Him now. If you have not started to share the gospel, the good news about Jesus Christ, start today.

God has given us a way to stay in touch with Him—time spent in the Word. If you haven't started regular devotions yet, begin now to make reading His Word and praying a priority.

God has given us a means to start an investment account in heaven—sacrificial giving. So then, give sacrificially to support His church. Don't waste the money He's entrusted you with, because God has told us that the earth is doomed. Be a good steward by using His money wisely for Him.

Make a choice to live in hope: As we rapidly approach the end of days, you can find living and abiding hope by choosing to please God and make disciples for Christ. How can you start? Ask

the Lord to help you apply what you have learned this week by making the words of this song a daily reality in your life:

Rescue the Perishing

Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one, Lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.
Down in the human heart, Crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart, Wakened by kindness,
Chords that are broken will vibrate once more.
Rescue the perishing, Duty demands it;
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;
Back to the narrow way Patiently win them,
Tell the poor wand'rer a Savior has died.
Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save.

—Fanny J. Crosby, 1820-1915

Six Truths From God to Each of Us

Truth-1: “Now I saw” means that the Events of Revelation are presented like one long chronological Event.

Truth-2: “When the Lamb opened,” reminds us that Jesus is the Central Character of Revelation.

Truth-3: “One of the seals” reveals that God bases all of the Tribulation Judgments on the reality of His Title Deed as Creator & Owner of the Universe, Held at His Right Hand.

Truth-4: “And I heard” is a reminder that John the Apostle personally witnessed these events.

Truth-5: “One of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder” emphasizes that God’s Judgment always issues forth from His Holiness.

Truth-6: “Come and see” states to us that God wants us to Know His plans, so He asked John to share them with us.

Remember Christ's _____ (Revelation 7)

THE LOVE OF JESUS

“For **God so loved the world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

—John 3:16, emphasis added

Who could ever forget the dramatic scene of Revelation 6? Somewhere beyond the starry sky a herald angel stood with a trumpet in his hand, and at an elected time, by the decree of the Lord God Almighty, the trumpet sounded and the kingdoms of this world became the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ! Thus the Tribulation opened, and Christ began taking back the earth, which is rightfully His. One by one Christ will unroll the seals. As each seal is broken, He will gain further possession and control of His inheritance.

Revelation 7 then opens with the love of Jesus sending 144,000 missionaries into this time of Great Tribulation upon the world. This is the most important chapter to help us truly understand the love of Jesus Christ. In no other place in the Bible is it so dramatically etched out as it is in the contrast between the wrath in chapter 6 and the mercy in chapter 7.

Christ's merciful love in Revelation 7 is demonstrated by His sending over four times as many missionaries into the world as are currently serving Him. At the beginning of the twenty-first century,

there are only 35,000 missionaries of every persuasion, but during the Tribulation He will provide 144,000 evangelists!

Look at how Jesus shows His love throughout this overview of Revelation 7:

Verses 1-3: Jesus stands with the servants of the Lamb, and prepares them for the bad times ahead. His Spirit signs, seals, and secures them.

Verses 4-8: Jesus knows where His servants are at all times. He directs His servants, and seals 12,000 members of each of the tribes of Israel.

Verses 9-10: Jesus wants His servants with Him.

Verses 11-12, 15: Jesus seeks His servants' worship.

Verses 13-14: Jesus promises His servants a fruitful ministry.

Verse 16: Jesus comforts His servants after all their troubles on earth.

Verse 17: Jesus refreshes His servants by His presence.

What a beautiful chapter! Like Jesus, do you share His loving passion for lost souls? Do you have a burden for the lost? If you haven't up to this point, would you like to get started? You can begin by making a list of unsaved family members, friends, and neighbors, and then start praying for them. Get a supply of gospel tracts at your local church or Christian bookstore, and ask the Lord to give you divine appointments to share those tracts. Then keep praying, and look expectantly for the Lord's direction. Once you begin giving away tracts and loving lost souls, Christ will grant fruit, and you will share in His joy over each person who turns from darkness to the Light.

My Prayer for You in Revelation 7: Oh Lord, we thank You for the magnificence of Your love! It is so comforting to see Your love as the Lamb who shepherds, sustains, and meets every need and fulfills every desire of Your faithful servants. Thank You that before You unleash the horrors of the Tribulation on earth, that You put evangelists into every corner of this planet to give the good news of the gospel. Thank You for loving the world so much that You gave Your life to pay our sin debt. Even when You are hated, and those who will have nothing to do with You seek to erase Your servants from the face of this earth, You still mercifully send Your messengers. Oh, how we pray that we will see the beauty of what messengers of the Master in the Tribulation look like so that we can emulate them! If that is what You honor and love, that is what we want to be. We want to rejoice in the security and the knowledge of how You care for those whom You send out to minister. Open our eyes to behold more wonderful things about You, Lord Jesus, for it is in Your precious name that we pray. Amen.

HOW JESUS _____ HIS LOVE

After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the

sea, saying, “**Do not harm** the earth, the sea, or the trees **till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.**”

—Revelation 7:1-3, emphasis added

We now meet the evangelists our loving God sends to rescue helpless sinners at earth’s darkest hour. In the company of the Lamb are those who rest in the absolutely secure safety of the love of Jesus for His servants. Jesus shows His love as He stands with these slaves of the Lamb. How does He do that? Look at the elements of Christ’s love in Revelation 7:1-3. Notice that Jesus calls for the angels to hold back the four winds lest the judgment should blow across the earth. Before the judgment sweeps down upon the earth, and these servants who are residing there, Jesus prepares them for bad times. Have you ever thought about that? Have you ever experienced some great and fruitful times of fellowship with the Lord just before bad times hit?

So many times my wife, Bonnie, and I have talked about the challenging and difficult periods we have gone through in our lives, ministry, and family. During such talks, we remembered with gratefulness how the Lord has often given special seasons when our fellowship with Him through the Word and prayer was elongated because He was lovingly preparing us for the hardships ahead.

These Jewish evangelists are also being lovingly prepared for what is ahead by being “*sealed*” with the mark on their foreheads of Christ’s name and the name of His Father. But the term “sealed” is different from anything we know about. In the ancient world, a mark upon a person could stand for at least five different things. **A mark could stand for:**

Ownership: Often a slave was branded with his owner’s mark, just as sheep and cattle are branded. In this instance, the 144,000 missionaries belong to the Lamb of God.

Loyalty: A soldier would sometimes brand his hand with the name of the general whom he loved, and would willingly follow him into any battle. In the presence of the Lamb stand the veterans who have proved their loyalty.

Security: Historically, a wax seal pressed with the imprint of an owner would secure that object as owned and belonging to another. Similarly, God’s seal upon these witnesses, as well as upon us (2 Corinthians 1:21-22), shows God’s ownership—and the great security that brings!

Dependence: The great Arab chieftains had some humble clients who were absolutely dependent on them. Often, to outwardly identify that dependence, a sheik would brand his clients with the same mark used to brand his camels. In the company of the Lamb are those who are utterly dependent on His love and the grace of God.

Safety: “It was common for those who were the devotees of a god to be stamped with his sign. Sometimes that worked very cruelly. Plutarch tells us that after the disastrous defeat of

the Athenians under Nicias in Sicily, the Sicilians took the captives and branded them on the forehead with a galloping horse, the emblem of Sicily.”¹

So these marked ones in chapter 7 are owned, loyal, secure, dependent, and trusting. They are resting safely in the Lord because they have responded to the love of Jesus. Have you made time to experience Christ’s love as you worship Him today?

THE _____ OF ISRAEL

And I heard the number of those who were sealed. **One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes** of the children of Israel **were sealed.**”

—Revelation 7:4, emphasis added

In chapter 7, the Lamb’s servants are protected; no harm can come to those who are sealed. Who are these people? They are tribes of Israel, the Jews, not the church or anyone else. Many commentators have tried to show that they are not Jews—especially Reformed scholars who believe that God is through with the Jews forever, and is dealing with the church only. They believe that these special missionaries are either denominations or great triumphant Christians of the past. But what do Judah, Rueben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin have in common? They are all sons of Jacob.

The servants in this passage are born-again Jewish people. Jesus either confronts each of them personally, just like He did the apostle Paul, or perhaps there is a great outpouring of God in Israel at this time. We do not know for sure how they’ve come to Christ, but we do know from the Scriptures that these 144,000 are all converted.

In Ephesians 1, we see that when believers come to Christ they are: chosen, sealed, spiritually filled, spiritually led, protected, rewarded, servants, and owned. And, as Romans 8:16 says, the Spirit assures us that we are saved: *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*

This is exactly what God does for the 144,000 Jews who become Christians. The Holy Spirit of God seals them, so they likewise get to experience the great Shepherd’s betrothal gift to His bride, which is the Holy Spirit—“the earnest” or “*guarantee of our inheritance*”: *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee [earnest] of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory* (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The thought behind the word “guarantee” (NKJV) or “earnest” (KJV) is exactly the thought behind the idea of an engagement ring or down payment on something. Just as a bride-to-be delights in showing off her engagement ring, so we are to delight in “showing off” the Holy Spirit before the world to signify that our affections have been engaged to another: “*to Him who is raised from the dead*”

(Romans 7:4). No longer are we to show any allegiance to the decaying and soon-passing world system. That is why it is spiritual adultery to love the world and all that is in it.

If you are truly engaged to Jesus Christ, this will be evident through special spiritual changes in your life. If you can see no such changes, you would do well to question: *Am I really betrothed to Christ? Is He my beloved?*

THE HOLY SPIRIT _____ HIS SERVANTS

... He who establishes us with you in Christ ... has **sealed us** and **given us the Spirit** in our hearts **as a guarantee**.

—2 Corinthians 1:21-22, emphasis added

God not only seals and secures His servants, but Jesus also shows His love by always knowing the whereabouts of His servants that He has signed His name upon (Revelation 7:4-8). There is something comforting about this in verse 4: ... *One hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel were sealed*

If you really want to confound a Jew, ask him, “What tribe are you in?” He won’t be able to tell you. In A.D. 70, when the Roman General Titus came and burned the temple, genealogical records that were stored there, and zealously guarded, were destroyed. But God knows which tribe each of His people is in, and Jesus always knows where His servants are.

In Revelation 7:5-8, the tribes are not listed in their right birth order. Not all the tribes are there. Dan is missing, Manasseh is the son of Joseph, and Ephraim is not in this listing. The order according to birth would be: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, and so on. However, the list as it appears in chapter 7 is God’s order. Judah is shown first because that is the royal tribe. The tribe of Dan is not there because they apostatized, and no apostate can be an evangelist. God has His purposes and He sets things in order as He sees fit. (By the way, this is not the same order listed in Revelation 21 and 22.)

Jesus will identify all the members of these tribes, confront them face-to-face, and draw them to himself. Some people have a problem with His chasing after the 144,000 like this because of feeling that in their own lives they had to search for Christ a long time before getting saved. Such persons simply have a wrong view of salvation. No one personally seeks the Lord: “*There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God*” (Romans 3:10-11). God is the One who always does the chasing to draw us to himself. We were born dead in our trespasses and sins—we were not born looking for Jesus.

We can clearly see in the 144,000 that there are three elements to what the Holy Spirit does in each believer at salvation: (1) the Spirit signs us; (2) the Spirit seals us; and (3) the Spirit secures us. (We will cover all three elements over the next few days.)

First Element of Salvation—The Spirit Signs Us: ... *He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God* ... (2 Corinthians 1:21). “*Anointed*” is the signature of God showing that we have security, and authentically belong to God. Many people in Christendom worry a lot about whether or not they are really saved. Usually this is due to

having an incorrect view as to how they became a Christian. They forget *Who* does the action and *Who* is the initiator of salvation. The Bible says that it is always God.

Remember: we don't find *Christ*, He finds *us*. We are lost, and He is the seeker: "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). He first finds us, we respond to Him, and then He establishes us. That means He grabs hold of us and anoints us with His Spirit; He signs us so that we are authentically His.

His gift of salvation is **gracious**: But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name ... (John 1:12).

His supply is **inexhaustible**: For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure (John 3:34).

His anointing is **personal**: But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things (1 John 2:20).

It is so wonderful that we don't need a mystical anointing from some teacher. The Holy Spirit signs us so that we are authentically God's. Hallelujah!

THE HOLY SPIRIT _____ HIS SERVANTS

After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude** which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, **saying, "Salvation belongs to our God** who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

—Revelation 7:9-10, emphasis added

In the verses above Jesus shows His love by wanting His servants with Him. Christ has a global desire to cry out His message. The 144,000 missionaries will go to the entire world and find the greatest response in history to the gospel—a numberless multitude will come to Christ. Because of His merciful love, Jesus wants lost people on earth to be with Him. Think about this: when you and I witness and share the gospel, we are extending Christ's invitation to people whom He wants to live with Him forever. What a privilege!

Why are the white-robed people there in verse 9? The Beast, the Antichrist, killed them. In fact, the Antichrist and his legions followed them around. Can you imagine being a missionary and having someone with an AK-47 standing behind you, ready to kill the people you lead to salvation? It would be hard to evangelize. Maybe that is why there are not more in the Muslim world coming to Christ because few missionaries are willing to go to them and be killed. But these 144,000 evangelists will boldly go forth to evangelize in spite of Antichrist's agents spying on them, and in spite of seeing those who come to Christ being martyred. They will be so zealous, and God's love in Christ will be so

powerful, that as all hell is breaking loose on the planet, countless people will be led to Christ. For they will realize that their true citizenship is in heaven, as Scripture tells us in Hebrews 11:13-16.

Second Element of Salvation—The Spirit Seals His Servants: ... *Who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee* (2 Corinthians 1:22a). The ancient world recognized the sealing of goods. People wore signet rings with distinctive markings on them. They would press their signet into soft wax or clay across the opening of a document, tomb, sealed box, and so on; it would bear an exact imprint of that signet ring, which signified that a representation of the owner was going with it.

The Holy Spirit's sealing of us is the believer's security of divine ownership. In other words, we have the image of our owner transferred to us. We bear the image of Christ—our precious possession. As we yield to Him, we will look more and more like Him every day because the Holy Spirit will impress the image of Christ on us.

We can't escape this truth: as we age we will act more like whoever our "god" is. For that reason, it grieves me as a pastor when I see professing Christians who do not look more like Christ every day. Instead, they idolize a current rock star, movie star, or sports figure. Although they may deny it, that person is their "god." Who you admire is who you want to look like. If you admire the Lord Jesus Christ and belong to Him, as you view Him through the picture window of the Bible, you will want to look more like Him every day.

When the Spirit seals us, it assures us of three things:

We are verified—the image of the owner's signet is transferred to us.

We are signified—by the presence of the owner. If the owner could not be at a transaction in ancient times, his ring signified that he had been there in spirit at least.

We are certified—the contents are authentic. We really have God's life and have His image within us!

Who or what do you serve? Is your "god" made in the image of man—or do you serve the authentic Lord God Almighty of the universe? The answer to that question determines your eternal dwelling place.

THE HOLY SPIRIT _____ HIS SERVANTS

All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: "Amen! **Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever**

and ever. Amen.” ... Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.

—Revelation 7:11-12, 15, emphasis added

Jesus shows His love by seeking His servants’ worship. What a great joy it will be for Him to hear this massive outpouring of a sevenfold doxology! How will Christ be worshiped in verses 11 and 12? They will speak to Him. You can speak praises to God, too, and show other people how to prepare for worship. Look again at what He loves to hear: “*Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*” If you truly love Christ, tell Him: “Oh God, everything that is important I offer to You—my attention, possessions, and pleasure!”

The Old Testament worshipers used to bring their sacrifices in hands that were lifted up. When we enter the Lord’s house, we should lift up our overflowing hearts of love in worship as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God. Jesus longs for us to worship Him through His Word, songs, fasting, and prayer. All this focuses our lives on Him, as He desires.

If you want to enhance your worship experience, I encourage you to arrive early at services; sit down, stop your activity and thoughts, and become still before the Lord. Then open your Bible and get tuned in to the Lord (like you tune in your favorite radio station), for Psalm 46:10 says: *Be still, and know that I am God.* We must purposefully open our hearts and let His Word draw us to Him so we can begin to worship Him as He deserves.

Jesus also shows His love by promising His servants a fruitful ministry (Revelation 7:13-14). This is a promise that has been fulfilled. Jesus discussed the Tribulation in the Gospels. In Matthew 10 He spoke to the Jews in particular, and secondarily to us: “... *You will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes*” (vv. 22-23).

In Matthew 10:22-23, Christ is also talking about the 144,000 Tribulation evangelists. They are not only evangelizing the world, but Israel also. He predicted to them that they were going to have a fruitful ministry.

Look at Revelation 7:14 again: “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” Jesus promised that His Word would not return void. He promised His servants that if they would give out the Word there would be fruit in response to Christ. Revelation 7:13-14 represents the greatest outflow of missionary evangelism in the history of the world.

As His servants, we ought to cling to His promise that we will be fruitful. All we have to do is go tell people, but sometimes we are unwilling. Perhaps this is due to busyness, fear, thinking they wouldn’t be interested, and so forth. If we let him, Satan will happily flood our minds and hearts with excuses to avoid witnessing. It can happen to anyone. For example, someone I led to the Lord always sits in a certain place in our Sunday morning service. When I look in his direction, I am often reminded of how unwilling I was at first to share the gospel with him because I was so busy. Had I not done so, however, I would have missed the great blessing of seeing that person come to Christ. You and I should never forget that God promises us a fruitful ministry if we will just tell people about Jesus.

Third Element of Salvation—The Spirit Secures His Servants: ... *The Spirit in our hearts [is] as a guarantee* (2 Corinthians 1:22b). I remember so distinctly when I went to the office where my fiancée worked. In my pocket was a little box containing the engagement

ring I had finally earned enough money to buy. I had already asked Bonnie to marry me, but she did not know I had a ring with me. We will never forget that diner where we ate lunch that day. After I gave Bonnie the ring, with every bite of food she ate, she displayed it for all to see.

Because I lived 500 miles away from her, I wanted to put a mark of ownership on Bonnie so that no one else could snatch her up. Spiritually, God gives us His pledge by giving us His Holy Spirit who is our “engagement ring” that displays the security of His protection. And He promises to bring us to the wedding day—taking us home to be married to Christ and live with Him forever. That is the threefold cord of our secure salvation: (1) we are signed with the very name of God; (2) we are sealed with the very seal of God; and (3) we are secured by the very presence of God.

Are you being faithful to the One who is to be your beloved Bridegroom?

CHRIST _____ HIS SERVANTS

“They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for **the Lamb** who is in the midst of the throne **will shepherd them** and lead them to living fountains of waters. **And God will wipe away every tear** from their eyes.”

— Revelation 7:16-17, emphasis added

Jesus shows His love by comforting His servants after all their troubles. In the Great Tribulation, they will be hungry and thirsty, and the sun will scorch them. But in the midst of their suffering, the Spirit of God will draw them, and the Tribulation evangelists will then point them to the Messiah. After Jesus Christ saves them, they will be killed by the Antichrist. What will Jesus do then? He will comfort them. There is nothing like the comforting love of someone who truly cares for us!

Jesus also shows His love by refreshing His servants with His presence. The Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them by leading them to living fountains of waters. God will wipe

away every tear from their eyes. Can you see all the elements of His loving provision? He is with them, shepherding them, and refreshing them!

The Comforting Voice of Jesus: It is just like our Lord to speak to us when we need Him the most. His tender *"Fear not!"* can calm the storms in our hearts regardless of the circumstances around us. (Emphasis added in the verses below.)

Abraham heard His comforting voice: ... The word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, **"Do not be afraid,** Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward" (Genesis 15:1).

Isaac heard His comforting voice: ... The LORD appeared to him ... and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; **do not fear,** for I am with you. I will bless you and multiply your descendants for My servant Abraham's sake" (Genesis 26:24).

Jacob heard His comforting voice: So He said, "I am God, the God of your father; **do not fear** to go down to Egypt, for I will make of you a great nation there" (Genesis 46:3).

King Jehoshaphat heard His comforting voice: ... **"Do not be afraid** nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's. ... Stand still and see the salvation of the LORD ...! **'Do not fear** or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you' " (2 Chronicles 20:15, 17b).

Daniel heard His comforting voice: ... **"Do not fear,** Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words

were heard; and I have come because of your words." ... And he said, "O man greatly beloved, **fear not!** Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!" (Daniel 10:12, 19).

Mary heard His comforting voice: ... The angel said to her, "**Do not be afraid,** Mary, for you have found favor with God" (Luke 1:30).

Peter heard His comforting voice: ... Jesus said to Simon, "**Do not be afraid.** From now on you will catch men" (Luke 5:10b).

Paul heard His comforting voice: Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "**Do not be afraid,** but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city" (Acts 18:9-10).

Because the Lord prepares His people for troubles, we can see the love of Jesus in all these verses. And you, too, can likewise experience the comfort of God's Son. The next time you feel alone and defeated, meditate on how the Lord ministered to these saints.

Make a choice to live in hope: What are God's servants like? They find hope for living in the fact that the loving Christ:

- Wants us to worship Him.
- Wants to refresh us with His presence.
- Wants us to be still before Him.
- Wants us to trust that He knows where we are all the time.
- Wants to prepare us for bad times.
- Wants to comfort us in all our troubles.
- Wants to give us a fruitful ministry.
- Wants us to be with Him for all eternity!

These are all marks of Christ's love. We are His servants, and though we are not Jewish evangelists going through the Tribulation, every one of these elements is what God wants to give us today. He

wants us to rejoice that we are signed and sealed and that He is going to safely deliver us home through death, or the glorious Rapture.

Oh, how I pray that you also long to worship this lovely Christ! One way to do that is by meditating upon the words of this beautiful old song:

Jesus, Thy Boundless Love to Me

Jesus, Thy boundless love to me
No thought can reach, no tongue declare;
O bind my thankful heart to Thee,
And reign without a rival there:
Thine wholly, Thine alone, I am;
Be Thou alone my constant flame.
O grant that nothing in my soul
May dwell but Thy pure love alone;
O may Thy love possess me whole,
My joy, my treasure, and my crown:
All coldness from my heart remove;
May ev'ry act, word, thought, be love.
O Love, how gracious is Thy way!
All fear before Thy presence flies;
Care, anguish, sorrow melt away,
Where e'er Thy healing beams arise:
O Jesus, nothing may I see,
Nothing desire, or seek, but Thee.
—Paul Gerhardt, 1607-1676;
tr. John Wesley, 1703-1791

See Christ's _____ (Revelation 8)

A GREAT MYSTERY OF HEAVEN

When He opened the seventh seal, **there was silence in heaven** for about half an hour.
And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets.
—Revelation 8:1-2, emphasis added

Revelation 8 explains one of the great mysteries of heaven—how God responds to the prayers of His saints. As we gaze into the inner court of the Lord God Almighty, seven archangels are standing in God's presence. Before His throne there is an amazing silence as the voices of myriads of angels, the heavenly creatures, and the saints heard in chapters 4 and 5 are all strangely silent.

It is as if the coming judgments are so dreadfully frightening, so unsettling, that those surrounding God's throne are struck dumb, and all heaven becomes speechless. There, in a holy hush, the Great High Priest, who ever lives to intercede for us, approaches the throne of God and pours out the prayers of His saints.

In this chapter, we will learn how the patience of Jesus and those powerful prayers of His saints work together to fulfill God's purposes and how the vengeance God has promised to His people is poured out upon sinful earth in heaven's perfect time. We will also learn why we need hope and how we can have it.

Revelation 8 is divided into the following topics:

Verses 1-2: God Waits—Time to Repent

Verses 3-5: God Listens—Time to Pray

Verses 6-13: God Responds—Time to Flee

God Waits—Time to _____: Unlike us, God is patient. Before the judgment actually starts in Revelation 8:7, He waits a long time. Because we are a people of action, waiting is something that is hard for most of us. But God says that the greatest action that we can perform is being still before Him and praying. The half hour of total silence before the throne of God reminds us that this chapter is about the power of prayer and silence. As we offer our prayers before His throne, we will see God respond to those prayers, the angel pour out the censer, and the seven angels with the seven trumpets prepare themselves to sound as God begins the Tribulation.

What are some of the lessons ahead in this chapter's study? The coming judgments are dreadfully frightening, terribly unsettling, and the earth dwellers will have a horrifying end. The coming judgments should make us humbly reach out to our God of love and mercy while there is still time.

Remember: only you can choose your destination. If you have not already humbled yourself before our merciful almighty God, I urge you to do so today!

My Prayer for You in Revelation 8: Oh Father, how we praise You for being such a patient God! We thank You that there is still time for those who do not yet know You to repent, and to bow and yield themselves to Your great salvation and Lordship over their lives. For You are not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to a knowledge of the truth. Oh Father, as we see into the mysteries of Your inner workings—the relationship between the sacrifice of Christ, the incense of the saints' prayers, and Your vengeance about to be poured out on this planet—may it stir us to greater worship, prayer, and service. Oh, that we might long to worship You in Spirit and in truth! May we never forget that prayer is vital and revered by You, our infinite heavenly Father. May we therefore make it a point to pray without ceasing. May our service be prompted by the fact that all around us are dear souls who are going to exist eternally, either in heaven or hell. So, as we see the horrors coming, help us to be more zealous by laying aside the trifles of life and going out to witness to our family members, friends, and neighbors who do not yet belong to You. To that end, we renew our consecration to You and, as we look into Your Word this week, we anticipate Your promised blessing. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

SOLAR INSTABILITIES _____

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and **the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**”

—Matthew 24:29, emphasis added

Before continuing on with the next segment of Revelation 8, let us again consider this question: Are we actually close enough to think that we are the final generation?

Jesus said that the generation that sees His plan unfold for the end of days will witness His Second Coming. That promise has kept the church throughout the centuries in the Word, on their knees, and ready to go home to heaven at any moment: *“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, **when you see all these things**, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, **this generation will by no means***

pass away till all these things take place. *Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away*” (Matthew 24:32-35, emphasis added).

Based on that passage, are we witnessing the unfolding of His plan for the end of days? Do the following happenings have a bearing upon the answer to that question?

The global travel Daniel said had to happen is here, as well as the explosion of knowledge.

The apostle John said that there had to be global commerce that was based on buying and selling with a personal number, and that is also here.

Jesus said that Israel had to be back in their land, and they are there.

In Matthew 24, Jesus foretold that a series of specific signs would occur to signal the onslaught of birth pangs. Have those pains that signal the end of days started? I am not absolutely sure, but this much is clear: not since the birth of Israel in 1948—and not since the birth of the United Nations (also in 1948), United Europe, the World Council of Churches, and the computer—have we seen so many signs happening contemporaneously.

Just since Christmas 2004, a vast majority of the earth’s population witnessed the second largest quake ever recorded; the government has warned that we have been observing the largest solar storm measurable; and now, more than ever, we have become aware that the largest threat to global safety may be hurtling through space toward our world right now.

Does all that mean anything? To sort it out, in Matthew 24:29-32 we find that there are three parts to Christ’s warning: (1) the sun will be darkened; (2) the stars will fall; and (3) the powers of the heavens will be shaken. We will look at the first two parts today, and then cover the third one tomorrow.

Part 1 of Christ’s Warning—“the sun will be darkened”: In the Tribulation, the earth will become scorched, and yet the sun will get darker. This could be massive sunspots that lessen visible light and maximize solar radiation. During the past few years, astronomers have witnessed the greatest solar activities ever recorded. The largest and most powerful solar eruptions have dazzled their instruments and made scientists wonder what is in store for the earth in days ahead. For example, on March 6, 2003 the largest sunspot ever seen developed. In October that year, there was “one of the most dramatic periods of solar activity we have seen in modern time.”¹ Then, on May 15, 2005, we had one of the highest magnitude solar storms (G-5 in solar terms is like an F-5 tornado) sighted by the NOAA Space Environment Center in Boulder, Colorado.

God says that a day is coming when the sun will scorch the inhabitants of the earth: Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory (Revelation 16:8-9).

Though this prophecy is clearly a divine judgment on unrepentant mankind, it is interesting that an event of great enough proportions to alter the earth’s atmosphere could also take place due to nuclear war. Were that to occur, there would be “*signs in the sun*” (Luke 21:25) as the sky became partially darkened from the clouds of dust and debris in the upper atmosphere (which could facilitate God’s judgment). However, this could also refer to an increase in sunspots and solar flares.

Part 2 of Christ’s Warning—“the stars will fall”: When Christ returns, there will be global fears of an asteroid or comet strike, and an ensuing devastation. It is interesting that, until more recently, “the ultimate disaster” movie style wasn’t common. In previous

generations, they were not as aware of the objects hurtling through space faster than bullets and headed our way.

After a lifetime of studying Revelation, and reading as many books and commentaries as possible, I am still not sure whether the following prophecy is the record of a first-century man's description of an atomic bomb, a super powerful demonic creature's attack, or a comet, an asteroid, or a meteorite slamming into the earth. Since this couldn't be an actual solar furnace (like our sun), the Greek word used could stand for any shining object from the sky. But the apostle John definitely saw something hit the earth during the Tribulation: ... *A great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water... a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter* (Revelation 8:10-11).

Whatever this is, it poisons one-third of the earth's fresh water supply, which is the reason it sounds more like the effect of nuclear radiation fallout. But there are some recent discoveries that indicate other possibilities. Hal Lindsey reports that in February 2004 a bill (HR4544) was introduced which mandated "the allocation of \$40 million to survey every near-Earth object 100 meters across or larger."²

May 2004, three months later, a University of Hawaii astronomer, David Tholen, and a team from Arizona University discovered a new near-earth object (space rock) and took photos until storm clouds blocked the skies. Around Thanksgiving 2004, some Australian astronomers spotted the object, found it to be an asteroid, and named it 2004 MN4. A month of calculations later led the astronomers to announce to the world on Christmas Eve that this asteroid was on a direct hit trajectory with the earth.³ On December 28, 2004, "... astronomers announced they had refined their calculations and said that 2004 MN4 probably wouldn't impact the Earth" They speculated that although MN4

will probably miss the earth in 2029 (the time they calculate it will hit or miss the planet), there are no guarantees. In other words, "... a collision with 2004 MN4 remains a definite 'maybe.'"⁴

Of course, the original prediction announced that Christmas Eve was overshadowed by holiday events and was soon buried by the event that occurred two days later—the Sumatran-Andaman earthquake.

In spite of the terrifying events to come, God does not want His children to fear—like those who have no hope: *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind* (2 Timothy 1:7). Trust Him, for He is your safe refuge!

THE HEAVENS _____ SHAKE!

"... men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for **the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**"

—Luke 21:26, emphasis added

Not only will the sun be darkened, and the stars fall, but there will also be great earthquakes in various places!

Part 3 of Christ's Warning—"the powers of the heavens will be shaken": Both natural and supernatural phenomena in the earth and sky appear to be increasing. And when Christ returns there will be cosmic quakes: *"There will be great earthquakes in various places, and famines and pestilences; and there will be fearful sights and great signs from heaven"* (Luke 21:11).

On December 26, 2004, two days after that amazing prediction about Asteroid 2004 MN4, our planet was struck by the Sumatran-Andaman earthquake. That quake was so massive that scientists are still analyzing what happened. But this we do know: the earthquake lasted about ten minutes; it is the longest quake ever known, and was the most powerful ever recorded. The quake, centered in the Indian Ocean, created the largest gash in the earth's seabed ever observed. It was the second deadliest quake known to history. The quake was also the second largest to hit our planet (that we are aware of) and is only surpassed by the 1960 Chilean quake.

So we have lived through the second biggest, second deadliest, longest, and most powerful quake ever felt and measured by man. We have been warned that a space rock is headed closer than any has ever been and that it will be the first asteroid visible with the naked eye from earth. And, on May 15, 2005, we had the highest-level solar storm sighted by the NOAA.

Jesus was asked, "What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" So He ran down the now-familiar list of earthquakes, famines, wars, and pestilences. He said that all of these would come upon the earth like *"birth pangs"* that would increase in frequency and intensity as the time grew near.

Jesus responded, "There will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the

heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:25-27). In the meantime, He told those who would witness the signs of His return, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28).

One thing is certain: for the first time man now has the ability to track smaller asteroids that could wreak enormous destruction on this planet. This is creating an increased anxiety over previously unknown threats from the heavens. This is what Jesus predicted would happen in the last days, and that is precisely why we all need a hope that anchors!

The prophetic signs of Christ’s soon coming just keep multiplying. Are you ready to meet Him?²⁵

How can you get ready? Live in the hope of Christ’s return. Trust Him with your future. Wait upon Him to guide your daily life. Avoid whatever grieves Him. Resist fearing anything but God!

—A SWEET-SMELLING SACRIFICE

Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with **the prayers of all the saints** upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake.

—Revelation 8:3-5, emphasis added

Perhaps the altar spoken of in Revelation 8:3-5 has made you wonder what kind of altar is in heaven. Are there animal sacrifices going on up there? No. Is Jesus offering himself over and over again in heaven? No. So then, what altar is left? If you look at the setting of this passage, you will see that it is right in front of the throne.

The altar noted seven times in heaven (Revelation 6:9; 8:3 twice; 8:5; 9:13; 14:18 and 16:7) is not an altar of burnt offering. Jesus was offered once; therefore, no animal sacrifices in heaven are needed. The only other altar is the altar of incense. This altar is found in the third and fourth books of Moses (Leviticus 16:12; Numbers 16:46). Do you remember the setting? There was a big tent with an outer courtyard housing a brazen altar and a laver. The inner tent was two-chambered. There was a holy place with a table of showbread and the golden candlesticks that lit it. Then, right in front of the doorway into the Holy of Holies, there was an altar of incense. That incense was always to be rising up before the curtain on the other side of the Holy of Holies, the tiny room of God’s presence over the ark of the covenant.

In front of that tiny room of God’s presence, where God’s shekinah (the glory cloud) hovered over the ark of the covenant, was a hollow, rectangular box, covered with gold, standing three feet high and a foot and one-half square. Along the top of this incense altar was a small rail fence to keep burning coals from tumbling off as the priests came and walked past it. As the High Priest annually came with the bowl of the blood of the atoning sacrifice to be sprinkled on top of the mercy seat, he had to walk by this cloud of incense.

What’s amazing is that it is almost as if that priest brought his blood sacrifice surrounded by fragrant incense. Because the incense was offered before the first and last sacrifice, it is like the people’s offerings were sent to God tied with fragrant ribbons of perfumed incense smoke. What a beautiful

picture of how God wants us to offer our prayers to Him! We are to come before Him in the name of Jesus Christ. We are to come because of the sacrifice of Christ and His finished work, but this time of fellowship is to be surrounded by the perfume of our prayers and our devotion to Him.

God Listens—Time to Pray: As we just read in Revelation 8:3-5, although Christ is above time, He shows himself to be God, waiting as He allows the prayers of His saints to arise. Before He acts in vengeance upon the earth, He receives the incense of our prayers as sacrifices rising from the altars of our hearts, a fragrant aroma of perfume from a devoted spirit of worship. This is what the eighth chapter of Revelation is all about: God is waiting for the smoke of the incense of our lives to rise before Him before He will act. How does God, who is sovereign, eternal, and omnipotent, limit himself to wait? That is part of the mystery of God.

Prayer is an awesome privilege. Do you look on prayer that way? What a captivating thought to see God wait for these prayers to rise before Him in Revelation 8. Even now He seeks the same worship, adoration, devotion, and praise from each of us. Is the altar of your soul burning with fragrant incense to God? Are the coals of your soul glowing with fire for Him? Do your prayers fill His presence with your devotion? Those are some remarkable thoughts that should draw you to bow in your soul before your Creator and speak to Him wonderful words of worship.

Jesus Christ asks us to come before Him with our prayers so that He can act on our behalf. How is the smoke of the fire of your heart doing? Are your prayers incense to Him? Right now, you may have nothing more important to give to God than your prayers. If so, rejoice! Jesus is waiting to capture those prayers as they rise and pour them out before His Father, our Lord God Almighty!

WAITING _____

“... Those who **wait on the LORD** shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

—Isaiah 40:31, emphasis added

Where is your primary citizenship? Is it on earth or in heaven? If your life is tied only to this world, you are an earth dweller. The expression “*those who dwell on the earth*” is found seven times in Revelation (6:10; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6; 17:8). It is another term for a worldly person—one who is at home here and wants to live for this doomed planet, and does not want to leave it. Such persons will worship Antichrist and take the mark of the Beast, and will have a horrifying end. They will refuse to repent, harden their hearts, and continue to sin. The apostle Paul describes a worldly person like this: *For many ... are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things* (Philippians 3:18-19). This is someone who lives only for the moment.

God’s children, however, are no longer earth dwellers once they come to know Jesus Christ. That is why God hates worldliness in us. Look at how Paul describes the Christian: *For our citizenship is in*

heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body ... (Philippians 3:20-21).

Do you see the contrast? Earth dwellers will have a horrifying end, but God's children will not. On which side do you want to be?

God Responds—Time to Flee: The coming judgments are extremely frightening! In Revelation 8:6-12, the first through fourth angels sound their trumpets and unleash God's judgments: *hail and fire ... mingled with blood ... were thrown to the earth* (v. 7); the seas are struck with *something like a great mountain burning with fire* (v.8); *a great star fell from heaven ... and many men died from the [poisoned] water* (vv. 10-11); and *the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened* (v. 12).

Now look at Revelation 8:13: ... I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" God reveals what is to come because He wants us to be jolted by the vivid and inescapable sights of future calamities. He always wants us to soberly look at reality. Thus, He has given us the truth that we need to act upon.

If you are not a born-again Christian yet, it is time to flee the wrath to come, and have a true relationship with a holy God. It is not too late. This very moment you, too, can find living hope for the end of days. You can then profit from one of the most fascinating studies I have ever engaged in—the study of biblical hope.

The Study of Biblical Hope: The Hebrew language of the Old Testament is a rich storehouse of words that define hope. It is filled with examples of what the cause and remedy are for periods of hopelessness. There are four Hebrew words that give us valuable insights into the many ways God can help us live in hope. In English, the four are categorized as: (1) waiting hope; (2) trusting hope; (3) clinging hope; and (4) sheltering hope. Today through Saturday we will examine all four and see how words written thousands of years ago can leap into our lives in the twenty-first century.

Waiting Hope: In Lamentations 3, we find the first of the four Hebrew words for hope—*qavah*⁶: ... Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" The Lord is good to those **who wait for Him**, to the soul who seeks Him (Lamentations 3:21-25, emphasis added).

The Hebrew word *qavah* describes "waiting hope"—**hope that renews exhausted strength**. The original idea of this verb "wait" was to twist or to stretch something. It was associated with the twisting and stretching of weak strands into a strong rope. From this, the word metaphorically developed into the idea of "enduring under tension." That concept sprung from the fact that even a weak thread twisted together with a rope became strong. The belief grew that as we hope in the Lord's promises, we are woven into His strength and strengthened to withstand the stresses of life.

The most well-known verse in the Bible using this special word *qavah* is Isaiah 40:31: "... *Those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength ...*" (emphasis added). The major shade of meaning in this verse is "waiting in the expectant *hope* and being strengthened thereby." One margin note renders it "who *hope* in the Lord," which is more accurate. A sure hope in the future enables a person to have superhuman strength: *He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who [hope in] the LORD shall renew*

their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:29-31).

This is exactly the same word and hope that the patriarch Jacob testified about at the end of his 147-year-long life of troubles, stress, and disasters: ***“I have waited for your salvation, O LORD!”*** (Genesis 49:18, emphasis added).

King David, in writing the Psalms, uses this word for hope more frequently than any other biblical writer. It actually was one of the keys to success in David’s life. He recognized that his human strength was never enough to meet the stresses of life.⁷ (Emphasis added in the following verses.)

In Psalm 25:3, we see that waiting hope delivers us from being ashamed of hard times: ***Indeed, let no one who waits on You be ashamed; let those be ashamed who deal treacherously without cause.*** Waiting hope also makes each day’s troubles into a lesson from God just for us: ***“Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day*** (Psalm 25:5).

Psalm 27:14 reveals that waiting hope can give us the strength we need so that we do not lose heart: ***Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!*** (Psalm 27:14). And waiting hope promises us that we have victory through the Lord: ***For evildoers shall be cut off; but those who wait on the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. Wait on the LORD, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you shall see it*** (Psalm 37:9, 34).

In summary, waiting hope focuses our lives upon the Lord (Psalm 39:7), assures us that He is hearing us (Psalm 40:1), and draws us back into God’s Word (Psalm 130:5). Are you experiencing waiting hope today? Is your life focused on the Lord and His Word? Wait on the Lord—and He will give you the living hope you need to triumph in the end of days!

TRUSTING HOPE

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and **He shall direct your paths.**

—Proverbs 3:5-6, emphasis added

The coming judgments are terribly unsettling: we are powerless before an angry God. There is nothing that can stop His plan, His judgment, and earth’s ultimate dissolution as a planet. For that reason, more than ever we need to find hope that anchors us during these turbulent times.

Trusting Hope: The second of the Hebrew words for hope is *yachal*.⁸ The Hebrew word *yachal* describes “trusting hope”—**hope that produces great endurance.** The root idea of this word is to wait for something. It came to mean “an expectant waiting under extreme pressure.” The scholar R. B. Girdlestone says, “Yachal occurs several times in the Book of Job and signifies a long patient waiting.”⁹ A study of the usage of this word in Job gives the most accurate connotations. He was a man going through extreme tribulation. In rapid succession he lost his great wealth, his children, and his health. Job suffered incredible and constant physical and mental pain. Yet in the most well-known verse using this special word for hope,

he said this: “*Though He slay me, **yet will I trust Him***” (Job 13:15a, emphasis added). From this, we learn that trusting hope guards us from despair.

In Job 13:15 “the word *yachal* means to keep on hoping with endurance under extreme pressure. Job’s hope in the Lord enabled him to endure and be stabilized even under adverse conditions.”¹⁰ (Emphasis added in the following verses.)

As Hebrews 16:19 says, trusting hope anchors our souls in heaven. Job believed in trusting hope when he said, *If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service **I will wait**, till my change comes* (Job 14:14). Trusting hope strengthens us: *Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, **all you who hope in the LORD*** (Psalm 31:24).

In Psalm 33 we find that trusting hope invites God’s blessings: Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, **on those who hope** in His mercy, let Your mercy, O LORD, **be upon us, just as we hope** in You (Psalm 33:18, 22). Trusting hope also opens our lives to magnify the Lord: **But I will hope** continually, and will praise You yet more and more (Psalm 71:14). And trusting hope points us back to God’s Word: ... Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for I have **hoped in** Your ordinances. Remember the word to Your servant, **Upon which You have caused me to hope** (Psalm 119:43, 49; see also 119:74).

In summary, trusting hope keeps believing even when there is no visible thing in life that points to a possibility of hope, like Noah did in the ark (“*So he waited*”—Genesis 8:12). Trusting hope gives us a reason to go on, a reason to smile, a reason to bless others with the strength that God alone can give (Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5). And trusting hope assures us that God hears us (Psalm 38:15). What an anchor!

CLINGING AND _____ HOPE

He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, **trusting in the Lord**.

—Psalm 112:7, emphasis added

The coming judgments should make us humbly reach out to our God of love and mercy while there is time. If you listen carefully, the compassionate voice of Jesus is heard all through Revelation, which is a book of woe. He calls John to not be afraid, and He calls the wayward church members to repent and return to Him. It is Jesus who knocks patiently for us, awaiting our fellowship. It is Jesus who sends His witnesses in chapter 7. It is Jesus who sends warnings of doom, the two witnesses of chapter 11, the angel preaching the everlasting gospel in chapter 16, and so on. Jesus is crying out: “While there is time, hear My voice. Do not harden your hearts!” Jesus does not want anyone to perish.

Only you can choose your destination. As the Bible opens, Jesus is seeking His lost ones in the Garden of Eden saying, “*Where are you?*” (Genesis 3:9); the Bible ends with Jesus calling, *Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely* (Revelation 22:17c). Over and over He has extended His invitation. All you need to do is come to Him. You choose your eternal destiny.

One of the most fearful things in the universe is the free will to say yes or no to God. Why? Because you will be eternally held accountable for how you willfully choose to respond to God, who waits

silently before He pours out His judgment on this planet. Right now, there is still time to cling to the Lord, but don't delay. Jesus could come back today.

Clinging Hope: The third of the Hebrew words for hope is *batach*.¹¹ The Hebrew word *batach* describes “clinging hope”—**hope that inspires deeper trust**. The most well-known verse using this special word is Proverbs 3:5: **Trust** [literally cling to] *the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding ...* (emphasis added).

Here *batach* is used in the sense of hope that comes from casting one's total future upon God like a little child and trusting Him for everything. This word is most often translated to trust or to have confidence in someone, usually God. But in some contexts it is definitely used to mean hope, as in the great prophetic twenty-second psalm. The Messiah's thoughts while suffering on the cross are predicted here: *But thou [God] art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me HOPE [batach] when I was upon my mother's breasts* (Psalm 22:9 KJV).¹² (Emphasis added in the following verses.)

Clinging hope assures that God is at work: **Trust in** the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, **trust** also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:3-5). In Psalm 40:3 we see that clinging hope can put a song in our hearts that flows out of our lives even in hard times: He has put a new song in my mouth—praise to our God; many will see it and fear, **and will trust** [cling to] the LORD (Psalm 40:3).

Clinging hope counteracts and removes our fears: Whenever I am afraid, **I will trust** [cling to] You. In God (I will praise His word), In God I **have put my trust**; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me? (Psalm 56:3-4). And clinging hope calms us in whatever trying situation we face: “He will not be afraid of evil tidings; His heart is steadfast, **trusting** [clinging to] the LORD (Psalm 112:7).

Sheltering Hope: The fourth and final of the Hebrew words for hope is *chasah*.¹³ The Hebrew word *chasah* describes “sheltering hope”—**hope that offers a secure refuge**. The most well-known verse in the Bible using this special word is Ruth 2:12: *“The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come **for refuge**”* (emphasis added).

This is a beautiful word for hope. Its root meaning is “to seek shelter, refuge, or protection in something or someone.”¹⁴ It is used frequently to portray little animals taking refuge in the cleft of a rock, as in Psalm 104:18: *The high hills are for the wild goats; the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers.*

Figuratively, it came to be used of man's taking refuge in God from the spiritual, emotional, and physical dangers of life. On a few occasions, this concept is translated HOPE. In Proverbs 14:32, this is used in a unique way: The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death (KJV). When the one who has been declared righteous by believing in Jesus as his Savior faces death, he will have a hope that is a refuge from the uncertainty and fear presented by his own death.¹⁵ (Emphasis added in the following verses.)

Sheltering hope is a defense and refuge in troublesome times: “The God of my strength, **in whom I will trust**; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My Savior, You save me from violence. ... As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the LORD is proven; He is a shield **to all who trust in Him**” (2 Samuel 22:3, 31). In Psalm 7:1, we find that sheltering

hope is also a refuge in times of persecution: O LORD my God, **in You I put my trust**; save me from all those who persecute me; and deliver me

Sheltering hope gives confidence and peace to persevere in tough times: *In the LORD I put my trust*; how can you say to my soul, “Flee as a bird to your mountain?” (Psalm 11:1). Psalm 31:1-2 tells us that sheltering hope gives boldness in our prayers: *In You, O LORD, I put my trust*; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in Your righteousness. Bow down your ear to me, deliver me speedily; be my rock of refuge, a fortress of defense to save me (Psalm 31:1-2).

Sheltering hope provides security and confidence in calamitous times: Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me! For my soul **trusts** in You; and in the shadow of Your wings **I will make my refuge**, until these calamities have passed by (Psalm 57:1). And sheltering hope is a safe haven from our enemies: In You, O LORD, **I put my trust**; let me never be put to shame. Deliver me in Your righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline Your ear to me, and save me (Psalm 71:1-2).

Make a choice to live in hope: In Revelation 8 we have seen that earth dwellers will experience a horrifying end of dreadfully frightening and unsettling judgments. The coming judgments should make us humbly reach out to our merciful and loving God while there is still time. We can find waiting hope, trusting hope, clinging hope, and sheltering hope in our patient Christ who is a shelter midst the storms of life. He is a solid Rock where we can find safety when we are assailed from without and within! The words of this old song, “The Solid Rock,” beautifully express the hope

that is ours in Christ. If your heart has been especially touched by the loving patience of Jesus this week, I encourage you to sing these words worshipfully to your precious Redeemer!

The Solid Rock

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
When darkness seems to hide His face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In ev'ry high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.
His oath, His covenant, His blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand,
All other ground is sinking sand.

—Edward Mote, 1797-1874

Watch Christ's _____ (Revelation 9)

ENDURING HOPE IN JESUS

“And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But **he who endures** to the end will be saved.”

—Matthew 10:22, emphasis added

When Jesus commissioned His disciples to go forth in their work for Him, in verse 22b above, He was basically telling them: “He who perseveres under stress and trials by abiding and remaining in Me will be saved.” In the last days, Jesus says that this will characterize those who are really His children. Thus, no matter what happens before or during the Great Tribulation—His true children *will* endure.

Jesus also said that the generation who sees His plan unfold for the end of days will witness His Second Coming. How can we best get ready for that momentous event? We need to have *waiting hope* for Christ’s return. We need to have *trusting hope* for whatever is to come in our future. We need to have *clinging hope* in Jesus as our all-wise guide for daily life, and avoid whatever grieves Him. And through *sheltering hope*, we must resist fear, for Christ is our safe and secure eternal refuge. In summary, what we need to believe today is what Jesus taught: this world is not our home.

Our real home is the one our master architect, Jesus, went to prepare for us (John 14:2-3), and He says that “moving day” is fast approaching. But until then, we can try to wondrously imagine our brand-new home—a mingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar, the earthly and the more-than-earthly. For heaven is a place, but not exactly like earthly places. It contains recognizable features, but the strangeness and transcendence keep alive our awareness that earthly images do not exist in the ordinary manner in heaven.

I love the way this author expresses his thoughts on heaven: “Oh, the wonders of our promised Haven, the glories of that eternal Home! But nothing will compare with the knowledge that Heaven is just the outflow of Him. In each aspect ... concerning that heavenly City, we see a character trait of Him, our Savior. Let us seek Him, and in the words of the song-writer so true: ‘Tis heaven below, my Redeemer to know, For He is so precious to me.’ ”¹

How exciting it is to contemplate these comforting elements of heaven as presented in this excerpt from a commencement address by Harold Lindsell: “The last thing will not be bombs, but blessings; not war, but peace; not uncertainty, but confidence; not sickness, but health; not weakness, but strength; not longing, but satisfaction; not sorrow, but joy; not weariness, but vigor. There’s a great time coming, so let us lift up our heads and our hearts, for the day of our redemption draweth nigh.”²

What should talk about heaven mean to us in the twenty-first century? Simply this: if the simultaneous increase in catastrophic storms, massive earthquakes, deadly pestilences, wars of terror, and looming threats from objects in outer space are indeed some of the “*birth pangs*” Christ spoke about, then meditating on heaven’s glories can be very reassuring. Such thoughts in turn will promote waiting, trusting, clinging, sheltering hope—the hope that anchors—*enduring hope!*

My Prayer for You in Revelation 9: I thank You, dear Father, that You are the God of hope. But I pray for those who do not understand what I am talking about because they have never responded to Your offer, “Come unto Me all You that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” That was a gracious offer with Your outstretched arms of salvation. I hope in You because I know You, because I know that I have responded to You and that You live within me. I belong to You, but if there are those who does not share that hope, may they flee to You, oh Christ. If they don’t know how, may they simply say, “Jesus, I come to You.” I pray that no one would hear of Your great salvation and refuse to come. As for we who know You, may You be working in us so that we wait in hope, that we trust in hope, and that You

will see us through the even gloomier days ahead for this planet. May we hold forth the Word of God and shine as a light until the day of Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

JESUS AND THE ANGELS OF _____

... And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit. And **he opened the bottomless pit**, and smoke arose out of the pit like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke of the pit.

—Revelation 9:1-2, emphasis added

In chapter 9, the apostle John introduces us to the dreadful realm of the fallen spirits and their abode: the abyss. At this point, the fifth angel sounds the fifth trumpet, which is a preview of hell—endless darkness. This bottomless pit is the holding tank of punishment for the fallen angels, demons, the beast, the false prophet, and Satan (Revelation 9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 20:1-3). These spirit-beings of the highest magnitude of evil are left over from Satan’s rebellion.

Jude tells us that some of these evil spirit-beings tried to corrupt the human race so that the promised Seed of the woman, Jesus Christ, could never come. Others seem to be key leaders of Satan’s forces, while still others have been so vile that they have been held back until Revelation 9. Like Satan, these demonic spirit-beings are filled with a hatred for God and mankind.

The success of Satan’s mission “*to steal, and to kill, and to destroy*” is evident throughout the history of planet Earth. From the time Cain slew his brother, Abel (Genesis 4:8), strife and bloodshed among men has never ceased to exist. But not until Assyria was there a society that conquered in a global way. After the Assyrian conquests, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek armies sowed blood, broken bodies, and death across the face of the earth. In cold, calculated, and cruel efficiency, the Romans then fought and won the world we know.

By the thirteenth century, inhabitants of Asia were mesmerized by the Khans, and the Mongol Empire was carved across the continents, leaving an estimated ten million dead in its path. Five hundred years later, Napoleon ravaged Europe for twenty years, resulting in a death toll of five million as his armies blindly followed him. The most vivid despot, however, is the strange little man who hypnotized some of the most sophisticated and civilized cultures on the planet into becoming barbaric butchers of humanity. Hitler caused upwards of fifty million deaths, six million of them being the gassed and murdered people of promise—the Jews.

Those are dark pages in history—and Satan and his forces have relished every single page so far. But far worse is yet to come. If Revelation 9:1-2 and 11, Revelation 11:7, and Revelation 20:1 and 3 are taken literally, then God has designed an impregnable fortress that holds the most fearsome creatures existing anywhere in the universe. This abyss, or bottomless pit, is only an intermediate step before the final abode of the prince of darkness and all his followers. In Revelation 20, the final place of terror is the lake of fire—the gehenna or hell Jesus spoke of so often in His warnings scattered throughout the Gospels. The fallen Lucifer, Satan himself, will be given permission to open the dungeon of demons and loose the legions of terrors. That is a dreadfully frightening prospect for the earth dwellers!

The apostle Peter warns us to keep alert: But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away ...; both the earth and the works that are in it will

be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness ...? (2 Peter 3:10-11).

The coming judgment should motivate you to conduct yourself in the light of eternity, and deploy yourself for God. In these end days, you have the greatest opportunity of all time! Before it is too late, talk to others about Christ and read the Scriptures to them. Be available for divine appointments to lead men, women, and children to the Lord. In other words, I exhort you to be a Christlike example who will draw others to Jesus!

Here are some practical choices you can make for how to live godly every day until the end. Note these five points in 2 Peter 3:10-18:

Keep alert. Staying alert should encourage you to live a godly life (vv. 10-11).

Build a fireproof life. Don't fear the day of God, but eagerly look forward to it. Forsake materialism and other worldly interests, and invest in that which lasts forever (vv. 12-13).

Look up. Live purely by expecting the Lord's return at any moment (v. 14).

Study the Book. God's Word will help you guard your heart and encourage mature living (v. 17).

Obey Jesus. If you love Him, you will obey Him. That is essential if you wish to grow spiritually (v. 18).

Suggestion: write the five points above in your Bible, and then refer back to them regularly until you habitually live by each of these truths. If you do, God will greatly bless you for it!

The Doctrine of the Creation of Angels:

Each of the angels we read about in God's Word has power that exceeds anything we can humanly understand as possible by the laws of the physical world that we know.

God is Absolutely, All-Powerfully, Greater Than

Everything: that is Anywhere

Angels are Supernatural & Super Powerful Creatures:

As far as we know the angelic creatures are **indestructible**, they **can't** be killed or destroyed. They travel the **universe** effortlessly, with **no** spaceships. They seemingly **never** rest, or sleep, or **even need** to eat.

Our God is Greater than the Sum of All He Created Universe + Earth + Spiritual World

Angels & Demons

Note Just the Power of the Destroyer

(Exodus 12:23; 2 Samuel 24:15-17; 1Corinthians 10:10; Revelation 9:11). The angel's name is actually Destroyer (in Hebrew: Abaddon; and in Greek: Apollyon)

The Big Picture:

Listen to Almighty God

A _____ OF HELL—RELENTLESS TERROR

Then **out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth**. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

—Revelation 9:3, emphasis added

As the shaft leading downward is unlocked, the infernal smoke of the pit will billow out of the darkness and unleash the pent-up fury of hell. When that pit is opened, locusts will emerge like the smoke of a furnace. With the most destructive imagery known to man, the apostle John described the creatures as locusts.

Because locusts were such relentless destroyers, no plague was more fearsome in the ancient world. Truly, the day of the Lord, portrayed in this short prophetic oracle's revelation through God's Spirit,

is a day that is to be heeded. God clearly demonstrates the need for repentance and the physical disaster that must follow moral disintegration.

As a vehicle of judgment, three times God uses locusts as a plague of horrific proportions:

Moses unleashed an eighth plague on Egypt—locusts that horribly devoured every green thing left after the hail (Exodus 10:4, 12-14, 19).

God sent a plague of locusts on Israel that horribly destroyed all that was green and thus caused economic devastation as well (Joel 1-2).

The fifth trumpet will sound the release from the abyss of horrible demonic hordes of locusts (Revelation 9:3, 7).

Today, few readers of the book of Joel are likely to experience a locust plague. With current eradication methods, a locust swarm in modern Israel is indeed a rare phenomenon. In ancient times, however, the land of Israel was frequently subject to invasions by the desert locust, *Schistocerca gregaria*. Exodus 10:1-20 describes the locust as perhaps nature's most awesome example of the collective destructive power of a species. Adult locusts weigh a maximum of two grams, and yet their combined destructive force can leave thousands of people in famine for years. The locust plagues were very much feared in ancient Egypt. So much so that the peasants were in the habit of praying to the locust god, for Satan likes to keep superstitious peoples enslaved to his demonic horde's evil powers.

John J. Davis reports that "A swarm can contain over a billion creatures that, all together, can weigh more than three million pounds. One locust, with his colleagues, form gregarious marching bands up to ten miles wide and ten miles long. The marching bands move forward at a slow cadence, perhaps no more than 250 feet per hour, and may travel no farther than fifteen miles from their staging area. But within their path the hoppers may consume virtually every tender blade of grass or legume. The extraordinary appearance of this marching band with its mass of tiny pullulating bodies can be unnerving, to say the least. In the words of Joel, 'Before them earth trembles, Heaven shakes ...' (Joel 2:10). The marching bands are oblivious to obstacles: 'They rush up the wall, they dash about in the city; They climb into the houses, They enter like thieves by way of the windows' " (Joel 2:9).³

As we contemplate the horrors ahead, we need to make sure to build our lives upon the Rock, and not upon the sands of life that will sweep us away in the storms. We should live expectantly to hasten the coming of the Lord. How can we hasten the day of God? Jesus will return when the last person to become a part of His church is saved. In light of that, every time I kneel to pray with someone who wants to be born again, I expectantly think: *Maybe this is the last one whom God will save before Jesus calls His church home!*

Do you want to hasten heaven? Lead people to Christ! Build a fireproof life: don't live for what is here on earth, because all this is going to pass away. That is how to best get ready for the end!

THE FEARSOME _____ OF THE LOCUST

And they were not given authority to kill them [humans], but to torment them for five months. **Their torment was like the torment of a scorpion** when it strikes a man. In

those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them.

—Revelation 9:5-6, emphasis added

The time limit God gives these horrible creatures is the same as the normal life cycle of a physical locust. (It is interesting that this plague lasts the same duration as the flood waters of Genesis 8:1.) After five months, these creatures will be swept back, presumably to where they came from, and God will again close the pit.

Locust plagues were so dreaded in ancient times that even the Hebrew vocabulary used to describe locusts as fearsome. There are six different Hebrew words for locust, and each is sobering:

Gazam—**shearer**: This portrays the machine that makes a destructive path of sheared-off living plants left in the wake of these monsters.

Arbel—**swarmer**: This is a reference to the innumerable hordes that darken the sky as a black cloud.

Hasil—**finisher**: This refers to the devastating aftermath of all green plants finished off by the army that passes.

Solam—**annihilator**: This is another glimpse of how those who saw these hordes described their work.

Hargol—**galloper**: This notes the incredible speed with which they pour out unstoppable destruction across the face of the earth.

Tzelatzel—**creaker**: This reminds us that locusts are ominously heard creaking toward you long before they are seen.

The people who lived in the ancient world dreaded these locusts. They would thus declare that the shearing, swarming, finishing, annihilating, galloping, and creaking army was coming toward them! And that is what God sends in Revelation 9, but He does so by way of the demonic army.

In Revelation 9:7-10, the shape of these creatures is like horses prepared for battle. John was grasping for words to describe monsters that can fly like locusts, gallop around like horses, carry a venomous sting like scorpions, look somewhat human with hair, and bite with sharpness like a lion. These horrible and ghastly creatures will do great damage to humanity!

Revelation 9:11 tells us: They had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. In Hebrew, Abaddon means “Destruction”; in Greek, Apollyon means “Destroyer.” Thus, leading the most horrible assault ever launched on mankind will be the Destroyer himself—the one who defected from the holy presence of God to decay into the murderous liar and hater of truth—the chief officer of Satan, or perhaps even the old Dragon himself. Most likely this is one of the arch-fallen angels. As Jesus has said, Satan wants to steal God’s blessings.

The absolute contrast between Jesus and the devil is seen in John 10:10: “*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.*” When Satan is allowed to do what he wants to do on this planet, he steals the joy of humanity: he destroys life as we know it, and he kills human beings. But Jesus said, “... *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*”

Jesus says the contrast couldn’t be greater: Satan offers to steal everything you have that is worthwhile, destroy anything that is of value, and to kill you. He robs people of true joy and offers

them only emptiness. He destroys their virtue and purity. If they follow that path long enough, it leads to death and eternal separation from God in hell. But Jesus said, “If you come to Me, I will give you an abundantly overflowing life that just won’t stop.” That is what Jesus offers.

Which offer sounds best to *you*? How foolish it is for anyone to purposefully make any other choice than to receive the eternal hope that is found in Jesus Christ alone. Are you ready to meet Him?

HOW TO BUILD A _____ LIFE

But [those] ... who were not killed by these plagues, **did not repent of the works of their hands**, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their **murders** or their **sorceries** or their **sexual immorality** or their **thefts**.

—Revelation 9:20-21, emphasis added

Armies that dwarf all that ever marched are poised, even now, awaiting a moment known only to God. As the sixth angel sounds, the ultimate weapon will be unleashed: angels of doom by the hundreds of millions. These cosmic warriors will be unstoppable and deadly! They will need no weapons, no food, no vehicles, and no rest; and in their wake will fall more than all wars have ever killed. Yet, horribly, the earth dwellers will miss the message and change nothing. They will still turn their backs on God to worship themselves and the demons that have cruelly enslaved them in hatred and lust.

The two-thirds of humanity that Jesus mercifully spares will respond no better than those in hell who gnash their teeth—as Jesus said seven times when He described the horrible place the hard-hearted would go (Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28). Their gnashing implies the hatred of an unrepentant heart poured out at God’s judgment. They would not bow their knee when they were alive and breathing; they will not bow their knee other than the forced bowing at the judgment seat; and they will not bow in hell—for even then there will still be gnashing of teeth against God.

What will control the culture at the end of days? Revelation 9:20-21 reveals five striking evils that will grip the souls of humanity in those dark days:

Godlessness: Mankind will still willfully push the Creator out of their minds. Instead, these terrified earth dwellers will worship demons and the works of their hands: idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood which can neither see, nor hear, nor walk. Wherever idols are worshiped, even in churches today, those are demons. Whenever an idol gives deliverance from whatever is prayed for, it is a demon providing that deliverance. God does not operate through idols. Whether it is Far East or American Indian idols, or idols of religious American churchgoers, those are demons that are being worshiped.

Callousness: Even when people are dying by the thousands and millions and hundreds of millions, people will still be murdering one another.

Mindlessness: The word “*sorceries*” in verse 21 is actually *pharmakeia*, which means “druggings, sorceries.” Drugs have always been around. There have always been those who have consistently relied on the effects of drugs on their minds. And in this horrible hour, with

the message of God calling the world to repentance, people will still be mindlessly following their drug-induced stupors and sorceries.

Licentiousness: Sexual immorality will abound. During this time of judgment, without the preaching of God's Word that produces righteous influences, evil perversions will run rampant throughout society.

Lawlessness: While everything is burning, and the demon creatures are killing people, the homes and businesses of those who are killed are looted. Theft abounds!

All the above evils are prompted by a lust for pleasure, a lust for power, a lust for possessions, and a lust to maintain personal pride at the expense of God and others.

If you want to build a fireproof life, humble yourself because "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. ... Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up (James 4:6b-8a, 10).

WHEN _____ BECOMES OVERWHELMING

Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "**Therefore I hope in Him!**" The LORD is good to **those who wait** for Him, to the soul who seeks Him.

—Lamentations 3:22-25, emphasis added

The very anticipation of catastrophic world events on top of everyday personal trials can be so overwhelming that at times it may *feel* like life is just too painful to even go on. Have you ever felt that way? Jeremiah did. In the Old Testament, without all the benefits and blessings we have in this church age, he lived through a life in shambles, friends all dead, and the stench of destruction all around everything he held dear—yet he lived in hope. How can that be?

True children of God endure under affliction. The Greek word for endure, *hupomeno*, is a very interesting word. In fact, I want to give you the privilege of sharing in one of the most spectacular things that I like to do through the Bible: see the *analogia scriptura*—the analogy of the Scripture as one Scripture explains another Scripture, and it all fits together like a beautiful woven tapestry.

Consider this association: The word *meno*, which is used all through John 15, means "to abide." In the Greek language, putting a preposition that amplifies, like *hupo*, in front of a verb like *meno*, gives this meaning: "to abide under something." It means "to abide when you're being squashed, when you're being pressed, to super-abide when things are not the way that you wanted them, or expected, or hoped them to be."

Endure (*hupomeno*) is used only eighteen times in the New Testament, and it is used to describe a genuine believer's response to dreadful and fearsome times, such as when the world is falling apart,

as Matthew 24 describes. Some may wonder what “enduring under affliction” means. Let’s follow this beautifully illustrated trail through the New Testament to find out:

(Emphasis added to the following verses.)

Mark 13:13: *“You will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But **he who endures** to the end shall be saved.”* This verse is a parallel to Matthew 24: it is from the same sermon, the same context, and the same event when Jesus is speaking the Olivet Discourse. The thirteenth verse of both chapters is identical. The verse reflects the response of a true believer, one who endures or abides in Christ under trials.

Romans 12:12: [Be] *rejoicing in hope, **patient in** tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer* ... The bold portion is *hupomeno*, which means “abiding under difficulty.” The evidence of a true believer is that he or she patiently and superbly abides in Christ when going through tribulation.

I am often asked: Are Christians going to go through the Great Tribulation? We will not be attacked and stung by all the horrific demon hoards from the pit that opens in Revelation 9. However, we will all experience *thlipsis*, which is the word for Tribulation that pictures something being squashed. If you’ve ever gotten your hand painfully shut in a door, you could say that it was *thlipsised*, or squashed by incredible pressure. That is what Tribulation is, and when we are undergoing incredible pressures we are to rejoice in hope, and abide faithfully (*hupomeno*), regardless of the situation (Romans 12:12).

Our American mentality thinks that because we are going to be in the Rapture, we’re going to miss all suffering. We will miss the Great Tribulation, but we are not going to miss the tribulation shaping up in our world that is hostile to the gospel. The Muslim faith is committed to opposing everything we believe, and Satan is seeking to erase us from this planet. So we all need to *hupomeno*—to abide faithfully in difficulties with enduring hope as we continue steadfastly in prayer.

First Corinthians 13:7: [Love] *bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, **endures all things***. This is about the love that Christ implants in our hearts at salvation. When we have Christ and His love shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, we will bear all things, believe all things, and have enduring hope in all things

Second Timothy 2:10, 12: Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. ... **If we endure**, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. This is saying: “I will endure or abide faithfully in whatever I am called to go through. I will faithfully hope and trust in the Lord.” Christians who are characterized by perseverance will also reign with Christ.

Hebrews 12:2-3, 6-7: [Be] looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him **endured** the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider **Him who endured** such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. ... “For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If **you endure** chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? This passage is a beautiful picture of Christ’s ministry for us. He

remained super-faithful under all He was going through, and endured the pain and shame of the cross to the end.

To prevent becoming weary and discouraged in our own trials, we need to consider all that Jesus went through for us. He was both 100 percent God and 100 percent human. In His humanity, God's grace was sufficient for Him, just as it is for us. One of the things we must endure is God's chastening of sin in our lives, which is an evidence of salvation. God hates sin, so He says: "I will punish it. I will not allow you to continue in unrepentant sin. If you endure the chastening by abiding in Me until I've finished what I want to accomplish in you, that is a sign you're My child." If you don't endure God's correction, are never chastened, and habitually choose to run toward sin rather than flee from it, that is a sign you may not belong to Christ.

James 1:12: Blessed is the **man who endures** temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." James, the brother of Jesus, was the pastor of the first church at Jerusalem. He wrote to his people who were fresh out of Pentecost. If we are faithful under tribulation, under trials, under whatever we have to go through in life to please God, we will receive the crown of life.

So regardless of what you face this week, this month, or this year, grab hold of God's overflowing hope. Let Him weave your weaknesses, like fragile fibers, in with the countless strands of His promises in the Scriptures to stretch and twist you into waiting hope. And then, when troubles increase, let Him bring you a fresh portion of His hope and goodness as you wait, and enduringly find hope in Christ!

THE HOPE THAT _____

And we know that **all things work together for good** to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

—Romans 8:28, emphasis added

Do we really believe this assurance? In our testimonies and prayers, and even in some of the songs we sing, we seem to enjoy talking about our little troubles and difficulties, multiplying and magnifying them. This almost sounds like we're *spiritual* hypochondriacs. At such times, perhaps we have simply lost sight of the waiting, trusting, clinging, and sheltering hope that is ours in Christ—the hope that endures and anchors our souls during trials.

In the seventeenth century, a model example of one who possessed the enduring hope that anchors is seen in the life of Martin Rinkart—a pastor at Eilenberg, Saxony, during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Because Eilenberg was a walled city, it became a severely overcrowded refuge for political and military fugitives. As a result, the entire city suffered from famine and disease. In 1637, a great pestilence swept through the area that resulted in the death of around eight thousand persons, including Rinkart's wife. At that time he was forty-one, widowed, and the only minister left in

Eilenberg because the others had either died or fled. Rinkart alone conducted the burial services for 4,480 people, sometimes as many as forty or fifty a day!

From that horror came one of the great hymns we possess as Christ's church:

Now Thank We All Our God

Now thank we all our God With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done, In whom His world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms, Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today.
O may this bounteous God Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in His grace And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills In this world and the next.
All praise and thanks to God The Father now be given,
The Son, and Him who reigns With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God, Whom earth and heaven adore;
For thus it was, is now, And shall be ever more. Amen.

—Martin Rinkart

We may well ask why all his dramatic experience and difficulty is not reflected in Rinkart's hymn. Had the good pastor seen so much stark tragedy that he had become insensitive to human needs and problems? Of course not. He simply had come to believe that God's providence is always good, no matter how much we are tempted to doubt it.

Make a choice to live in hope: As a Christian, a favorite and often-quoted Bible verse is Romans 8:28. At the beginning of today's devotional, that reference appears in the New King James Version.

In the unclear world of tomorrow, it is entirely possible that "fitting into His plan" means that we as Christians may experience great difficulty, persecution, and even war and death. We should therefore prepare ourselves and our families for this possibility, so that if such trials come, we might face them with the hope that anchors—in spiritual victory that gives testimony, like Pastor Rinkart's, that ours is a faith that works.

Rinkart's experience and his hymn wonderfully confirm these words of the apostle Paul: "What can separate us from the love of Christ? Can affliction or hardship, Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, peril, or the sword? ... I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths—nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39, New English Bible).

If you will memorize and meditate upon that passage, God will ground you in this, His living hope that anchors: nothing can separate us from the love of Christ!

Behold the _____ of Jesus (Revelation 10)

THE MYSTERY OF JESUS

I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire.

—Revelation 10:1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ gives God's record of history from the founding of Christ's church until the end of the earth and the ushering in of heaven. The more you read Revelation the simpler it is.

Chapters 1-3 deal with the church age—God revealing himself to the seven churches through the Lord Jesus Christ in all His Resurrection glory.

In chapters 4-5, God shifts the scene away from earth and takes us heavenward by means of Christ's promised coming to take His bride home. This is a beautiful portrait of the Rapture of the church—the instantaneous removal of all His saints from this planet. The saints will then stand before the glassy sea and the beautiful emerald-surrounded throne as Jesus takes the multi-sealed book, the title deed of the universe, and starts claiming back all that the god of this world, Satan, has usurped.

Chapters 6-19 reveal the horrors of God's wrath upon sin and sinners. Chapters 6-9 show the six seals and the first six trumpets, and then there is an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet (Revelation 10:1-11:14). This is so important for understanding God's plan. Chapter 10 is part of a silence where God steps back and shows little parenthetical pictures. It is critical for understanding *the* mystery of God (not *a* mystery).

The chapter we'll be studying this week, Revelation 10, discloses the preparations for the second half of the Tribulation that begins by means of the seventh trumpet. Having taken back His earth, the conqueror and rightful owner, the King of Kings, will plant His feet on land and sea and take possession. This is Jesus the Redeemer who, in chapter 5, took the title deed to the universe from the majesty on high. He is the One who loosed each seal, and now He prepares for the final assault upon hard-hearted earth dwellers who refuse to bow to Him. With a roar like a lion, He will express His power, and with the sound of thunder He will declare the coming judgment. What is amazing is that in verse 7 it says, ... *the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.*

There are two parts to Revelation 10:

The Mystery—The Vision of the Son of God (vv. 1-5): These verses focus on Christ and His power. In verse 1, Jesus reflects God's image; in verse 2, Jesus claims His inheritance;

in verse 3, Jesus roars His victory; in verse 4, Jesus shows His grace; and, in verse 5, Jesus reveals the image of God.

The Vision of the Word of God (vv. 6-11): This second part focuses on the Word of God and His plan, and what we are supposed to do with it. In verse 6, Jesus shares the plan of God; in verse 7, Jesus explains the mystery of God; and, in verses 8-11, Jesus shows the way of God—to eat His Word.

As Revelation 10 opens, we stare at the mystery of Jesus. It is on the backdrop of an earth that lies in ecological desolation; the land and sea are ravaged. The benumbed survivors have hastily buried billions of corpses in mass graves. The horrible roar of demon locusts is silent for who knows how much longer. That horrific mounted cavalry from hell—the angels of doom by the hundreds of millions—seem to have ceased their murderous campaign. The sun is getting brighter after the strange darkening that caused such weather disasters; the smoke of the grass and forest fires has started to settle; and some specks of light green anticipate that grass should soon be poking up once again from the scorched earth. The bitter waters of the earth are getting clear again, and no stellar debris has fallen to earth lately. It is halftime—the midpoint of the Tribulation.

So then, what about the mystery? What has been the effect of all this unleashed wrath of God on the cosmos? You cannot explain it any other way but God. It has been systematic, unstoppable, and predicted. Everything that has happened has been written down for 2,000 years in exact detail. God has spoken, and the earth has been faced with God’s wrath.

At this point, has the cosmic rebellion ceased? Has Satan bowed his knee and confessed that Jesus is Lord? Has the decimated populace of earth seen ... *the true Light which gives light to every man coming into this world* (John 1:9)? No. That in itself is a mystery to us who know and love the Lord!

My Prayer for You This Week: Father in heaven, as the end of days fast approaches, we are continually amazed that You would bestow upon us the honor of being able to go home to dwell with You forever. Why You would let Your Son redeem us and then go and prepare a place for us is beyond our wildest imagination! As we look into Your Word this week, we pray that Your Spirit would lead us to comprehend the mystery of our Lord Jesus—our wonderful Jesus! May we see Your glory and may Your glory, as the apostle Paul says, transform us more and more into the image of Him whom our souls love, our Lord Jesus. Open our eyes that we may behold wonderful things from the wonders of Jesus. In His precious name we come to You, oh Father. Amen.

THE MYSTERY

“It has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given.”

—Matthew 13:11, emphasis added

In the New Testament, a mystery is not something eerie or inscrutable, but rather “a truth that was hidden by God in times past and is now revealed to those who are in His family.” This mystery

is a sacred secret that is unknown to unbelievers, but understood and treasured by the people of God. When you read the New Testament you will see the word “mystery” often.

The Mystery of the Kingdom (Matthew 13:11): The mystery first appears in Matthew 13 where Jesus presented the truth that the majority rejected the good news. This had not been revealed in the Old Testament. God came down in human flesh, walked on the earth, did all kinds of miracles, but most people still did not believe Him. THIS IS A MYSTERY.

The Mystery of Israel's Unbelief (Romans 11:25): Why would those who were the line through which the Messiah would come—the chosen people whom God so wonderfully protected and provided for—reject Him? Have you ever thought of how much food it took to feed them in the wilderness? There were three million people. If they ate normally, it would take a train with 1,300 boxcars, nine and one-half miles long, to carry enough food supplies for each day. But God provided faithfully, every day, by spreading out manna around their tents! Yet, with all that and so much more, they still did not believe!

The Mystery of the Rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51–52): This is a mystery that God did not reveal until 1 Corinthians 15. That is why so many people who don't understand the Bible don't believe in the Rapture. (It isn't in the Old Testament or the Gospels.)

The Mystery of the Unity of Believers (Ephesians 3:3–6): That all who believe in Christ would be knitted together in Him is a mystery. The mystery of the church as Christ's bride is found nowhere in the Bible until Ephesians 5:24–32. Israel was the wife of Jehovah God (Isaiah 50:1-3; Jeremiah 3:1), but the church is the bride of Jesus Christ.

The Mystery of the Indwelling Christ (Colossians 1:26-27): The mystery which has been hidden ... now has been revealed to His saints ...: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.” The Old Testament saints did not have this privilege.

The Mystery of God in the Flesh (Colossians 2:2-3): The incarnation of the Son of God was a truth not fully revealed in the Old Testament. Isaiah 9:6 declared that God would come, but it did not explain that He would be a person walking around on the earth.

The Mystery of Iniquity (2 Thessalonians 2:7): This refers to sin and how it grows and permeates. Revelation 17 speaks of the mystery of Babylon—the terrible, vile economic and religious system of the end times; and the mystery age will be completed when Christ returns in glory (Revelation 10:7).

The Biggest Mystery of All Human History: Why has God permitted evil? The answer comes in Revelation 10 as the Lord makes a vow that this mystery will be finished—there will be no more delay!

Have you ever read *Robinson Crusoe*? In that classic, Robinson Crusoe teaches English to his servant named Friday, and then tells him about God. Here is basically what Robinson said: “There is a great and mighty God. He is possessor of the entire universe. He is powerful over all.” Then he told him

that there is a devil, so Friday asked, “If God is so great, why is there a devil?” Robinson did not answer because he said it could not be answered—it is a mystery.

Why *didn't* God do away with the devil in the Garden of Eden or in the wilderness of temptation?

When God flooded the earth and killed everyone but Noah's family, did all the generations that followed believe and follow the Lord? No. Just a few generations after the Flood, they built the Tower of Babel in a group rebellion.

After Moses destroyed the Egyptians in the most public and visible spectacle of divine proportions, did Egypt have a national revival? Did they turn in faith and repentance to the Lord? No.

As Jesus did wonderful miracles and signs that no one could even question, did everyone turn in faith and repentance to Him as the Lord? Did the nation of Israel trust, obey, and follow Him as Messiah? No.

The apostles went out across the world with supernatural power, healing the sick, raising the dead, and speaking with the unquestionable authority of God. Did all the nations they visited turn in faith and repentance to the Lord? No.

Is it any wonder that the descendants of those who survived the Flood—the families of the empire of Egypt, the children of Jesus' day, and the generations born to those who saw and heard the apostles—are any less hard-hearted? They see wonders, hear marvelous things, and experience the indisputable hand of God but turn from it. Oh, the mystery of the human will—so blinded by willful sin!

As you read Revelation 10, it may surprise you to know that in the entire span of time from Creation until now, God has never reigned on earth. Yes, He is the sovereign King over the entire universe, over both heaven and earth, but He has never stood on the planet and been visibly in charge with everyone obeying Him. He has overruled and intervened on earth, and governs all human events, but for now He does so in a way that appears remote and incomplete. Thus, He has never used His absolute power to bring about an end to demonic evil, human rebellion, and global injustice and suffering. So chapter 10 opens with Christ coming down to earth, putting one foot on the sea and one foot on the land, and roaring like a lion!

Jesus Christ does not presently receive the worship and honor that is His due as the sovereign King. He has authority that He chooses not to exercise for now, but when He finally establishes His

reign, all sin and all suffering will cease. That is our eternal hope for which we pray whenever we repeat the words: “*Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” (Matthew 6:10).

The Mystery: Why does God continue to wait? Why does He warn, offer, and watch for a few more sinners to repent?

The Answer: The mystery of Jesus is His amazing love for even those who never seem to stop rejecting Him. So He waits, but now, in Revelation 10, it is time for the seventh trumpet to sound.

ON JESUS

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, **This is My beloved Son**, in whom I am well pleased. **Hear Him!**”

—Matthew 17:5, emphasis added

After the opening of the six seals of Revelation 6, the seventh seal initiates the six trumpets of Revelation 8-9. In Revelation 10, John now sees what lies ahead with the seventh trumpet. This trumpet, which sounds in 11:15, holds the longest of the messages of doom.

Do you remember what has happened to set off this chain of terror? The Lamb who was worthy opened the scroll (5:7). What made Him worthy to be the heir of the universe (Hebrews 1:2)? He was the Lamb slain for sin! In Revelation 10, Jesus is now wrestling the dominion of all things back from the thief, the liar, and the murderer—Satan. He is in the process of judging all that the usurper to the throne has caused in the cosmic rebellion.

At this midpoint in the vision, John records the drama of redemption, and we are reintroduced to the hero—our Lord Jesus. By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John paints a beautiful picture of Jesus as the almighty Redeemer and absolute victor. Thus Revelation 10 may well be a snapshot capturing the work of Christ and the grandeur of God’s plan of redemption.

Jesus reflects God’s image: I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, **clothed with a cloud**. And a **rainbow was on his head**, his **face was like the sun**, and his **feet like pillars of fire** (Revelation 10:1, emphasis added). Jesus was often seen in the Old Testament as a pre-incarnate angel of the Lord. When He appeared it was as a special and mighty angelic messenger from God. In these instances, He would accept and receive worship, which no angel would ever accept, unless it was the usurper himself, Satan. The four descriptions of this mighty angel in verse 1 correspond at each point with previous descriptions of Jesus in Revelation.

This mighty angel comes “**clothed with a cloud**”—the cloud of God’s glory. Revelation 1:7 says, *Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him*. Jesus was clothed in a cloud like this the last time the apostle John saw Him ascend into heaven in Acts 1:9. And

John heard the angels who spoke with the apostles say that Jesus would return “*in like manner*” (Acts 1:11).

In the Old Testament, God manifested His presence by a visible glowing cloud signifying His glory. Israel was led by a pillar of fire and a cloud (Exodus 13:21). They saw the cloud when God’s glory appeared (Exodus 16:10), when the tabernacle was commissioned by God (Exodus 40:38), and over the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:2). In the New Testament, Paul tells us that it was Christ in that cloud who led, watered, and fed them (1 Corinthians 10:1-4). Just as the shekinah (the glory cloud) hovered over the Holy of Holies when God’s presence was there, so what Matthew describes as a “*star*” was probably also another of these Old Testament glory clouds that stood over the manger when God was incarnated. Thus the cloud is always associated with Deity.

Revelation 10:1 says that ***a rainbow was on his head***. The rainbow is a crown. We encountered the rainbow in Revelation 4 as it encircled the throne, reminding us of God’s grace from the time of Noah and the Flood (Genesis 9:13). Ezekiel also saw this rainbow around the throne of God (Ezekiel 1:28). Because of the article used in Revelation 10:1, “*the rainbow*,” this seems to be God’s special crown for His beloved Son, Jesus. It is very interesting that the Hebrew word “bow” is used for both a rainbow and a weapon that shoots arrows. So this rainbow could speak of God’s grace as well as His judgment, which perfectly meet in the person of Jesus (Psalm 85:10). As we have seen so far, the greatest multitude saved in history is coming out of the time of earth’s greatest judgment (Revelation 7:14). Jesus loves and seeks sinners at all times and in every place.

John tells us that ***his face was like the sun*** (Revelation 10:1). In Revelation 1, he also saw the face of Jesus with a countenance “*shining like the sun*” (v.16), so this description matches again. Just like at His Transfiguration (Matthew 17:2) and on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3), Jesus shines as bright as the sun. This fits what Malachi said when he predicted the coming “Sun of Righteousness” (4:2).

Here is the fourth description of this mighty angel: ***his feet [are] like pillars of fire***. In Revelation 1:15, the feet of Jesus were like brass glowing from a furnace, which sounds exactly like this mighty angel’s description. This being may well be our Lord Jesus Christ appearing to John as a kingly angel. He often appeared in the Old Testament as “the Angel of the LORD” (Exodus 3:2; Judges 2:4; 6:11–12, 21–22; 2 Samuel 24:16). This was a temporary manifestation for a special purpose, not a permanent incarnation. Whenever Jesus appeared that way, the people would be scared to death and fall on their faces to worship Him. And only Jesus accepts worship!

How is your worship of Jesus these days? Are you remembering to worship first—and then serve Him?

JESUS _____ HIS INHERITANCE

He had a little book open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land, and **cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars**. When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.

—Revelation 10:2-3, emphasis added

Revelation 1 tells us that the voice of Jesus is powerful. John describes it as “*a loud voice, as of a trumpet*” (1:10) and “*His voice as the sound of many waters*” (1:15). In Revelation 5:5b, we learn that “*the Lion of the tribe of Judah ... has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.*” And now in Revelation

10:3 we hear the voice of the conquering Lamb roaring as the Lion of Judah in His victory: "... *When he cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices.*" Thus we hear the conquering, almighty voice of Jesus declaring His right to possess His possession!

Jesus shows His mighty grace: Now when the seven thunders uttered their voices, I was about to write; but I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them" (Revelation 10:4). This is one of the most beautiful verses in Revelation, but most people don't understand it. (I had to read this verse about fifty times before I understood what it was saying.)

When the Lion roared in 10:3, "*the seven thunders uttered their voices.*" That reminds me of a phrase in Psalm 29:3: *the God of glory thunders.* Psalm 29 is speaking of the Flood; the last time God conquered the earth was with water. But when the Lion of the tribe of Judah comes, He will roar like a lion and seven thunders will sound. Since seven means "complete" and thunder means "judgment," His roar is the sound of complete judgment.

This sound, however, does not refer to unintelligible noise—the thunders are voices. John was about to write down what they said, but God told him, "*Seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered, and do not write them.*" If God did not want this written down, why did He have John say that he heard something? This is Jesus showing His grace.

Revelation 10:4 is certainly a strange verse without looking at it in light of the whole Bible. John hears and records this event because God wants us to see His loving patience. God, who is not willing that any should perish, halts the annihilation of the human race because there must still be a few more who will be saved. To the end of earth's history, God is still sprinkling His grace. When the seven thunders explode in the decree of final destruction, God seals it up for a bit longer.

God showed grace and mercy in Noah's generation by withholding judgment for all those extra days (Genesis 7:4). As He listened to Abraham's plea to spare Sodom, even if but for a few righteous ones, He was again merciful because God sent the angels to drag Lot out of Sodom and to try to convert his married children. And the earth will be spared once again while God deploys one evangelistic team after another in Revelation 7-14: the 144,000 of chapter 7, the two witnesses of chapter 11, and the angel who goes out in chapter 14.

There may be a similar word in Daniel 12. After the revelation of the coming terrible Tribulation, Daniel is told to seal up the words for three and one-half years as an angel swears by the Almighty (vv. 1-2, 4, 6-7). This may be the same scene John is now seeing. If so, it is a blessed reminder of God's grace in the midst of judgment. Even as the wrath of God intensifies, He continues to offer salvation in spite of the implacable hardness of human hearts that only seems to increase.

Jesus reveals the image of God: The angel ... raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer ... (Revelation 10:5-6).

When the Ancient of Days, God the Father, wants to make himself known, He always does so through His Son. That is why so many Bible teachers through the ages have seen this angel as Jesus. As John 1:18 says: *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.* In Revelation 10:5-6, this swearing and holding up of the hand reminds us of what

the writer of Hebrews says in 1:1-3: *God, ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, ... heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, [upholds] all things by the word of His power ...*

When God made the covenant with mankind, He said that He could not swear by anybody greater than himself. So God the Son stands there swearing by himself: *... and swore by Him who lives forever and ever ...* (Revelation 10:6a). The One who created heaven and earth is Jesus Christ.

Jesus lays claim to His rightful possession. As portrayed by this mighty angel, Jesus descends and plants His feet on the land and sea. Whether it is Jesus or just an angel representing Him, this is a picture of laying claim to His possession—an exclusive right of Jesus as the One who purchased it by His blood *... to reconcile all things to Himself, ... having made peace through the blood of His cross* (Colossians 1:20).

Jesus is the only One who can reconcile heaven to earth, that which He conquered at the cross. In a special sense, this may show Jesus sharing the right of our redemption, for we are joint heirs with Jesus: *... and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together* (Romans 8:17).

We also see this truth in Hebrews 9:15: *... He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. And in 2 Timothy 2:12, the apostle Paul said, If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*

In Revelation we have already seen some wonderful pictures of Jesus as the Son of Man (1:13); the Creator of the universe (4:2, 11); the slain Lamb (5:6); and the Great High Priest (8:3).

In the Old Testament we find Daniel meeting with a heavenly representative. Let's compare these passages to see if we can identify Daniel's visitor.

Daniel 10:5-6, 18	Revelation 1:13-17
Clothed in linen	Clothed with a garment down to the feet
Girded with fine gold	A golden girdle
Body like beryl	Head and hair white as snow
Face as lightning	Face as the sun
Eyes as lamps of fire	Eyes as a flame of fire
Arms and feet like polished brass	Feet like fine brass
Voice like a multitude	Voice as many waters
At the sight, Daniel retained no strength	John fell at His feet as if dead

There can be no doubt about it—Daniel saw the Lord Jesus in His pre-incarnate glory, and John saw Him as the risen and glorified Son. But both of them are the image of the invisible God. And here

in Revelation 10:1-6, we have a vision of what may well be Jesus in all His glory coming to take back His earth and, as He lays claim, He gives a loud cry of victory! Oh, won't that be a glorious day!

JESUS _____ THE MYSTERY

But in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, **the mystery of God would be finished**, as He declared to His servants the prophets.

—Revelation 10:7, emphasis added

In Revelation 10:7, we again see the term “*mystery of God*,” which is summarized in all the revelation of the Word of God. This mystery is God's waiting and watching while the ravages of sin have run seemingly unhindered throughout all history. As the rebellion of humanity and the blindness of His people continue, God patiently waits for any to return to Christ. However, there is a moment when God is going to say, “Enough! I am now turning My attention on My people—My Israel—and I am going to pour out My wrath on the earth, but I am going to save Israel.”

As the representative of both the nation of Israel and all of God's servants, the mystery of God's plan is given to John. Like Daniel who awaited his part, and all the faithful through the ages, it is sweet to know Jesus and yet bitter to see those destroyed who have by the horrors of their sins fitted themselves for destruction. The amazing fact is that among the most hardened hearts (especially in Israel), there will be some who become softened. As Ezekiel and Paul predicted, God will take the stony hearts of the remnant of Israel and turn them to their Messiah (Ezekiel 36:26; Romans 11).

It is tragic that so many of God's servants who have taught His Word have failed to see all that is promised for Israel. It has become popular to spiritualize promises God made to the Jews and attribute them to His church. But the plan of God focuses on Israel. The apex of that plan is the return of Jesus *to the earth* the second time to save His people as they at last look to Him.

When Jesus comes for His children of faith, He stays in the clouds and we will join Him there. However, we are to return with Him at the climactic moment of history recorded in Revelation 19. The apostle Paul says, *I do not desire, ... that you should be ignorant of this mystery, ... that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins”* (Romans 11:25-27).

What is God's plan? The apex of His plan is to come back for His people, Israel, and that is what “the little book” in Revelation 10:8-11 is talking about. He is saying that when the fullness of God's plan with the Gentiles is done, He will turn His attention to the hardness of the hearts of His people. This is why chapter 10 is a pivotal chapter. God is not going to delay any longer; He is going to destroy the rebellious of earth and rescue His people Israel.

As we saw in Revelation 8, the momentous time has come for the petition “*Your kingdom come*” to at last occur. So now, with this seventh trumpet, the delay of God is ended and the time for the end

is seen in its final three and one-half years. (In Revelation 11:17, we will then see the declaration of the reign of God commencing.)

Are you getting ready for Christ's appearing? What if He were to come today?

FOCUS ON THE _____

Then the voice ... spoke to me again ..., "Go, take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the earth." So I went to the angel and said to him, "**Give me the little book.**" And he said to me, "Take and eat it; and it will make your stomach bitter, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth." Then I ... ate it, and it was as sweet as honey in my mouth. But when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter. And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings."

—Revelation 10:8-11, emphasis added

Revelation 10:8-11 is really the most practical part of the chapter. Jesus shows the way to God—and the way to God is eating His Word. History records an eccentric Ethiopian monarch, Menelik II, who ruled from 1889-1913. This monarch brought Ethiopia out of the dark ages by introducing communication (telephone and telegraph), transportation (railroads), and public education. But he held to a superstition inherited from the ignorance of the past. He believed in a form of self-medication that called for the literal eating of pages from the Bible. Over the years of his reign, it seemed to work quite well. If he felt ill, he ate a page or two. However, at the end of his life, his health was failing in spite of eating one page after another. King Menelik finally ordered the entire book of 1 Kings to be torn out, and he began to eat it page by page. His historians recorded that he died as he was chewing somewhere around the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon.

Old Testament prophets like Jeremiah (15:16) and Ezekiel (2:9–3:4) knew what it was to "*eat the Word*" before they could share it with others. As Jesus the perfect Word "*became flesh*" (John 1:14), so we who are His living epistles need to incarnate the written Word in our lives before we can give it to those who need it. Any Christian who merely echoes God's Word, and does not incarnate it by making it a living part of his or her very being, will suffer a great loss of rewards both now and in eternity.

The directions that the angel gave to John in Revelation 10:8–11 should stir us to fulfill our responsibility of assimilating God's Word. He wants us to make it a part of our inner person. It was not enough for John to look at the book or even know its contents and purpose. He had to assimilate it into his inner being. Scripture often compares God's Word to food: (1) bread (Matthew 4:4); (2) milk (1 Peter 2:2); (3) meat (1 Corinthians 3:1–2); (4) wheat (Psalm 81:10); and (5) honey (Psalm 119:103).

Why does God compare His Word to food? God does not force-feed His Word to us. He has provided it, but we are responsible to take in its nourishment. In Revelation 10, John shows that we can never change the effects the Word will have in our lives: sorrow and joy, bitterness and sweetness. God's Word contains sweet promises and assurances, but it also contains bitter warnings and prophecies of judgment. The Christian bears witness of both life and death (2 Corinthians 2:14–17).

The Word of God is a two-edged sword. His sword cuts open hearts to the message of salvation, but the gospel also cuts off all who reject Jesus and declares they are facing damnation. Look at what

God says in John 3:18: “*He who believes in [Jesus Christ] is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.*”

Unlike the silliness of the Ethiopian monarch, when the apostle John is told to eat the scroll, the imagery is meant for all of God’s saints. The Word of God offers such sweetness: ultimate victory on the winning team, God’s grace and love, Jesus as our friend and brother, and getting to enjoy the presence of God forever in heaven. But as His Word gets into us, there is also much bitterness. We find out that before we can fully enjoy that bright and glorious future which God has promised, He must reshape our lives from the inside out. The bitter part is not only God’s wrath, but also His demand for self-denial: personal change is expected, and we are to take up our cross daily. Suffering and persecution are thus part of our ultimate destiny on earth.

If we eat and assimilate the Word of God, we will be sweetened and then soured until we finally become useful. Like John, through a transformed life we will then be ready to share the message with the world around us. Are you eating? Is the Word of God sweet? Have you felt the bitterness of self-denial? Good! Keep eating—and go in that power to tell the world of Jesus and His great love!

THE _____ OF THE SCRIPTURES

“It is written, ‘**Man shall not live by bread alone**, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’ ”

—Matthew 4:4, emphasis added

As we have just seen in Revelation 10:8-11, Jesus shows the way to God, and the way to God is eating His Word. I pray that you can joyfully identify with Jeremiah in this verse: *Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart ...* (Jeremiah 15:16). His passion for God and His Word was consistently, and relentlessly, demonstrated throughout his life as God’s prophet.

Wouldn’t you like to capture that same passion in your own life? It all starts by disciplining yourself to spend time listening to God speak to you! To help you start cultivating such a time with the Lord, let’s look at three areas of spiritual discipline: (1) reading God’s Word; (2) memorizing God’s Word; and (3) meditating upon God’s Word.

God’s Word: The Scriptures are the very voice of God, so we must discipline ourselves to *listen* to Him. If we never inconvenience ourselves enough to be disciplined in our Bible reading, there are truths God has for us that will be missed. Our lives then can’t help but be empty.

Dr. Harry Ironside (1876-1951), a well-known Bible commentator and great pastor of Moody Memorial Church of Chicago, was a man with little formal education but great power. He read the Bible fourteen times by age fourteen! His mark is still on Chicago—and, indeed, the entire world.

Another outstanding example of a man who practiced the discipline of the Scriptures is Lt. General William K. Harrison (1895-1987). Except for the Congressional Medal of Honor, he

received every other decoration for valor. ... General Harrison—a soldier’s soldier who led a busy, ultra-kinetic life—was also an amazing man of the Word. When he was a twenty-year-old cadet, he began reading the Old Testament once a year, and the New Testament four times. He continued doing so until the end of his life—having read the Old Testament seventy times and the New Testament 280 times by age ninety!¹

Dr. Ironside and General Harrison both lived out the experience of the psalmist, which tells us the attitude we must have if we are going to have this discipline of Scripture: *Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You ... make me wiser than my enemies; ... I have more understanding than all my teachers [and] ... the ancients, because I keep Your precepts*” (Psalm 119:97-100).

Do you see the heartbeat of the man of God? It is God’s Word! It only takes fifteen minutes, or three and one-third chapters per day, to read the entire Bible in a year. You can begin to get alone with God when you consider that eating His Word is even more important than your daily meals. You can never have a Christian mind without reading the Scriptures regularly, because you cannot be deeply influenced by that which you do not know.

God’s Word: Second on the list of how to cultivate a time of getting alone with God is the discipline of *memorizing* the Scriptures. Mrs. Marge Barnhouse said of her famous preacher husband, Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895-1960): “Someone once asked him how long it had taken him to prepare a certain sermon. His answer was ‘Thirty years and thirty minutes!’ He had immersed himself in the Bible from the time he was fifteen years old, when he memorized the Book of Philippians a verse a day until he knew the entire book by heart, then went on to other passages. He felt it was not enough to learn by rote—it had to be by heart; because you loved and believed it.”²

Pioneering missionary to Africa, C. T. Studd (1860-1931), is another of God’s great disciplined servants. His life was like his grass hut: there were no doors to shut; he lived with, and for, his beloved pygmy tribes. How did he prepare to teach as many as 5,000 at a time? How did he get ready to disciple the scores of church leaders who came to sit at the foot of his cot every morning so that he would awake to what he calls in his journal “a sea of black faces and white teeth” waiting for him to open the Book of God to them? He hid God’s Word in his heart beforehand so that he would be ready, at a moment’s notice, to minister to all whom the Lord brought to him.

Are you wasting precious time that would have been better spent listening to God? Will you have any regrets when you look back on your life? Why not begin by memorizing at least one verse a week? That is fifty-two verses in one year!

Meditating upon God’s Word: Meditation is the spiritual discipline of practicing Christ’s words in Matthew 4:4: *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.”* At salvation, we became a soul that thirsts for God and longs to “drink in” His Word; a soul that longs for the “Water of Life” (the continual flow of eternal life) and “drinks in” freely from God in His Word; a soul that thirsts midst the arid, sun-baked, lifeless deserts of

life and finds a beautiful, ever-present oasis through communing with God in His Word. This is the secret of God's great warriors, and a spiritual discipline that we each need to practice. One outstanding warrior for God is George Mueller (1805-1898), a spiritual giant. His life may be distilled down to these words he wrote in a diary: "It has pleased the Lord to teach me [that] ... the most important thing I had to do was to give myself to the reading of the Word of God, and to the meditation on it, that thus my heart might be comforted, encouraged, warned, reprov'd and instructed; and that thus, by means of the Word of God, while meditating on it, my heart might be brought into experimental communion with the Lord. "³

Meditating upon the Word brings us immediately into the intimate presence of God, but too few are willing to pay the price. However, each of these great men of the Scriptures—Ironside, Harrison, Barnhouse, Studd, and Mueller—responded with joy to Jesus when they understood, through His Word, that He was saying, "If you will listen to Me, and let Me arrange your life for you, and accompany you through life, I want you to live in My power. I want you to have the boldness that comes from knowing that your life has been authorized by Me. I designed it; I am leading it; I am guiding it; and I am praying for and empowering you to live My life here on earth." Wow! What an entirely different and powerful way to look at life! That is exactly what He offers if you will but joyfully pursue the discipline of the Scriptures!

Make a choice to live in hope: To truly discover the enduring hope that anchors, you must discipline yourself to daily spend time alone with God in His Word, for *Blessed is the man [whose] delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. ... And whatever he does shall prosper* (see Psalm 1:1–3). This is the great necessity of your spiritual life.

E. Stanley Jones once described time spent in the Scriptures as a "time exposure to God." He used the analogy of his life being like a photographic plate which, when exposed to God, progressively bore the image of God in keeping with the length of exposure. You are called by God to intentionally,

volitionally, and willfully choose to do those things that will exercise, discipline, and direct your life for godliness (2 Peter 1:5-11).

If you will read, study, meditate on, and internalize the Word of God, you will look like Jesus Christ. And that is exactly what God wants!

As you read the words to “Holy Bible, Book Divine,” I pray that you will rejoice in your heart and praise God for giving you such a treasure!

Holy Bible, Book Divine

Holy Bible, Book divine, Precious treasure, thou art mine:
Mine to tell me whence I came; Mine to teach me what I am.
Mine to chide me When I rove, Mine to show a Savior’s love;
Mine thou art to guide and guard; Mine to punish or reward.
Mine to comfort in distress, Suff’ring in this wilderness;
Mine to show, by living faith, We can triumph over death.
Mine to tell of joys to come, And the rebel sinner’s doom:
O thou holy Book divine, Precious treasure, thou art mine.

—John Burton, Sr., 1773-1822

Remember God's _____ of the Ages (Revelation 11)

THE _____ OF JESUS

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, ... for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months."

—Revelation 11:1-2

The verses above help us to understand the eleventh chapter of Revelation. Revelation 11:1-2 takes us to a temple in Jerusalem. Immediately we know that this is an earthly scene, and not in heaven, because there are Jews carrying on Old Testament sacrifices—just as Jesus, Daniel, Paul, and now John predicted would happen.

At this midpoint in the Tribulation, the Lord will send a survey crew to the city of Jerusalem to widen the road and clear the roadblocks the Jews laid because of their unbelief. Jesus will then lay claim to His chosen people.

This chapter confirms what Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount of Olives—that the temple will be rebuilt and in operation during the Tribulation period. In 2 Thessalonians, Paul wrote about the same thing, and now the apostle John sees it in operation.

The two witnesses (the evangelists) that are introduced are possibly the agents that lead the 144,000 Jews to Jesus in the first three and one-half years. As we learn what is going on, let us not miss the lessons of the four powerful truths in the eleventh chapter of Revelation: (1) God keeps His Word (vv. 1-2); (2) God protects His own (vv. 3-7); (3) God gives endless life (vv. 8-14); and (4) God expects worship (vv. 15-19).

Is the temple the church? Some people believe that verses 1-2 refer to the church, which is one in Christ. But if that were true, why are Jews and Gentiles being segregated? (Ephesians 3 says that the Jews and Gentiles are to be one.) How is it that the worldwide church is localized to Jerusalem? And why are we back to a temple and an altar? Since the middle wall has been broken down, God says that we no longer need temples and altars with Christ. No, as chapter 11 opens in Jerusalem, this is a yet-future event. Something will happen that would have started a World War had it occurred this week. (By the way, although the church has already been raptured by this point, multitudes will become believers throughout the Tribulation period.)

The book of Daniel, one of the most historically and archaeologically authenticated books of the Old Testament, also says that this is a future event. It is critical to realize that the book of Daniel existed in documented form almost five centuries *before* Christ was born.

While Daniel (originally deported as a teenager into Babylonian captivity) was in the middle of studying the book of Jeremiah, he understood that the seventy years of Jewish exile were almost up,

so he began praying that God would forgive the sins of His people. The angel Gabriel, one of the seven angels that stand before God ready to be sent on His missions, interrupted Daniel's prayer saying, "... *At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision ...*" (Daniel 9:23).

The angel Gabriel gave Daniel a four-verse prophecy that is unquestionably the most remarkable prophecy in the entire Bible—Daniel 9:24-27. This prophecy includes the following segments: (1) the scope of the entire prophecy (9:24); (2) the sixty-nine weeks (9:25); (3) the interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week (9:26); and (4) the seventieth week (9:27).

To help you better understand Revelation 11, I will cover each of the segments of Daniel's prophecy during this week's devotionals. I hope that you are looking forward to studying this remarkable prophecy!

My Prayer for You in Revelation 11: Oh Father, You who put Your seal of ownership on the temple by measuring it; You who raised up Your special witnesses and sent them throughout the earth with amazing powers; You, the great God who is always in control and never in a hurry, we bow before You. By Your grace and through Your Spirit empower us to understand this most critical chapter in Your Word—that the fullness of all that You have promised You will bring to pass. And that You will bring to pass Your powerful Word in our personal lives as well. May Your will be done in us as it is in heaven, and soon to be done on earth. I pray that death would be a sobering lesson for all of us to live our lives in such a way that we are ready to go home to You at any moment. May we not be fearful and worried, but rather confident and triumphant when that hour comes. Father, speak to us through Your

Word. We thank You for the privilege of looking into it again. In the name of Jesus we pray.
Amen.

The Two Witnesses Revelation 11

- Temple measured
 - Outer Court to Gentiles: 42 months
- Two Witnesses empowered: 1260 days
 - Call down fire from heaven
 - Shut heaven, no rain
 - Turn water into blood
 - Smite earth with plagues
- Beast from the Abouso kills them
 - Earth-dwellers celebrate
 - Resurrected after 3 ½ days

DANIEL'S PROPHECY IS AN END-OF-DAYS ROAD _____

"Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy."

— Daniel 9:24, emphasis added

God's prophetic Word in Daniel 9 is directed at the future of Israel—not the church. In God's Word, more than 75 percent of all prophecies (fulfilled and not yet fulfilled) are about the future of Israel. His Word always has and always will focus on Israel. In his epistle to the Romans, Paul reminded the church of this when he clearly warned them to not forget that they are grafted into the tree, which is Israel (Romans 11:11-36).

Segment One—The Scope of the Entire Prophecy: God worked with the Jews 2,200 years before the church and is going to work with them 1,000 years after the church. In our little period of time, 2,000 years, we are important, but we are not all there is. Israel is critically important. The church is blended together with them now; we are grafted in, but God is going to come and deal with them again. We should therefore diligently lead people to Christ, because as soon as the last one to be saved is saved, we will be raptured out of this planet.

Now let us look at the scope of the whole period. At the beginning of today's devotional, we read Daniel 9:24 in which God said some specific things about the Jews. The idiom of "*a week of years*" was common in Israel as a "*sabbath for the land*." You can read about this in Leviticus 25-26 and Deuteronomy 15. These passages talk about a sabbath for the land—about *heptads*, or periods of seven years; the land was to lie fallow every seventh year. It was their failure to obey these and other laws that led to God's sending them into captivity under the Babylonians (2 Chronicles 36). They were to work for six years and take the seventh year off. After forty-eight years, the forty-ninth was the sabbath

year—and the fiftieth year was the Jubilee year. It was a wonderful system. God said that they needed that rest and renewal “*to anoint the Most Holy. And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years* (2 Chronicles 36:20-21).

Note that Daniel 9:24 is not directed to the church but focuses upon “*your people [Israel] and your holy city [Jerusalem]*.” The scope of this prophecy includes a broad list of things that clearly are yet to be completed.

Segment Two—The First Sixty-Nine Weeks: A very specific prediction occurs: “...

From the going forth of the command to restore and to build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street [open square] shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off [the Crucifixion], but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy [by the Romans, A.D. 70] the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate [the Antichrist, 2 Thessalonians 3].”

—Daniel 9:25-27

This passage encapsulates all of biblical prophecy. It also includes a mathematical prophecy. The Jewish (and Babylonian) calendars used a 360-day year (Genesis 7:24); sixty-nine weeks of 360-day years totals 173,880 days. In effect, the angel Gabriel told Daniel that the interval between the command to rebuild Jerusalem until the presentation of the Messiah as King would be 173,880 days. The “Messiah the Prince” in the *King James* translation is actually the “Meshiach Nagid”—“The Messiah the King.” (Nagid is first used of King Saul.)

This is a prophetic bull’s eye: the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem was given by Artaxerxes Longimanus on March 14, 445 B.C.¹ (The emphasis on “*the street*” and “*the wall*” in Daniel 9:25 was to avoid confusion with other earlier mandates confined to rebuilding the temple.)

When did the Messiah present himself as King? During the ministry of Jesus Christ there were several occasions in which the people attempted to promote Him as their king, but He carefully avoided it because His time had not yet come (John 6:15).

Then one day Christ meticulously arranged His timely triumphant entry. When He rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey, He deliberately fulfilled Zechariah’s prophecy (483 years earlier) that the Messiah would present himself as King in just that way: “*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation. Lowly and riding on a donkey*” (Zechariah 9:9).

The crowds were thought to be mad when they cried out: “*Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*” (Luke 19:38). Some of the Pharisees in the multitude wanted Jesus to rebuke the people because they felt that the overzealous crowd was blaspheming by proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, the King (Luke 19:39). However, Jesus did not rebuke the crowd, He endorsed their praise: “*I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out*” (Luke 19:40). This is the only occasion that Jesus presented himself as King. It occurred on April 6, A.D. 32.

The divine precision of prophecy is indisputable. When we examine the period between March 14, 445 B.C. and April 6, A.D. 32, and correct for leap years, we discover that it is 173,880

days exactly—to the very day! How could Daniel have known this in advance? How could anyone have contrived to have this detailed prediction documented over three centuries in advance? But there is even more!

Segment Three—The Interval Between the Sixty-Ninth and Seventieth Week:

There appears to be a gap between the sixty-ninth week (v. 25) and the seventieth week (v. 27). Look again at Daniel 9:26: *“And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.”*

The sixty-two weeks follow the initial seven, so verse 26 deals with events after the sixty-ninth week, but before the seventieth. These events include the Messiah being killed and the city and sanctuary being destroyed.

As Jesus approached the city on the donkey, He predicted the destruction of Jerusalem: “... Your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround ... and level you ... to the ground; and they will not leave ... one stone upon another because you did not know the time of your visitation” (Luke 19:43-44).

The Messiah was, of course, executed at the Crucifixion—*“but not for Himself.”* Christ presented himself, but they did not accept Him, so the Romans killed Him; He was cut off. Thirty-eight years later, in A.D. 70, the Roman legions under Titus Vespasian leveled the city of Jerusalem, precisely as Daniel and Jesus had predicted. Both the city and sanctuary were destroyed. In fact, as one carefully examines Jesus’ specific words—*“because you did not know the time of your visitation”*—it appears that He held the people accountable to know this astonishing prophecy in Daniel 9.

Even as we remember that moment when Christ saw the future desolation of Israel, we also remember that He *wept*. Christ’s compassion, even in the face of well-deserved punishment, should move our hearts. He is so aware of our weaknesses; He knows we are dust. He ever lives to intercede for us. And today Jesus wants to be invited to walk through this day, hand in hand with us—guiding us, protecting us, and receiving from us our adoration and love!

The Second Coming

THE _____ OF DAYS DESCRIBED

“Then he [the Antichrist] shall confirm **a covenant** with many **for one week**”

—Daniel 9:27, emphasis added

In yesterday’s devotional we saw that Daniel 9:24 says that seven weeks are determined; we have found sixty-nine of them. Daniel 9:27 now references the remaining “one week,” or seven-year period yet to be fulfilled, which is the most documented period in the entire Bible. Revelation 6-19 is

essentially a detailing of that climactic seventieth week. That is why we say the Tribulation is seven years—there is one week of years still left to be fulfilled.

Segment Four—The Seventieth Week: The interval between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week continues at the present time, but it is increasingly apparent that it may soon be over. The more one is familiar with the numerous climactic themes of end-times prophecy, the more it seems that Daniel’s seventieth week is on our horizon. Have you done your homework? Are you and your family prepared?²

Christ said, “... When you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place ..., then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains” (Matthew 24:15-16). And Paul tells us: ... That Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

This temple they spoke of *is* coming; that is why Jerusalem is such a hot piece of real estate to God and to Satan. Scholars of prophecy do not agree on all the details of future events, but the next two paragraphs are a fair representation of what many prophetic scholars believe concerning the order of events.

First, the church will be raptured (1 Corinthians 15:51–58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18), which can occur at any time. Once the true church is gone, the leader of the ten European nations will make a seven-year agreement with Israel (Daniel 9:26–27). After three and one-half years, he will break that agreement (Daniel 9:27). The Antichrist will subsequently begin to control the world and force all people to worship and obey him. At this time God will send Great Tribulation upon the earth (Matthew 24:21). The Antichrist will then set up his image in the temple at Jerusalem (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4; Revelation 13).

Next in the order of events is that the nations will gather at Armageddon to fight both the Antichrist and Israel. (Antichrist will aid Israel at first, but later turn against them.) However, as they all see the sign of Christ’s coming, everyone will unite together to fight against Him (Zechariah 12; Revelation 13:13–14; 19:11ff). But Jesus will gloriously return to the earth, defeat His enemies, be received by the Jews, and establish His kingdom (Revelation 19:11ff; Zechariah 12:7–13:1). He will then reign on earth for 1,000 years, which is the period known as the Millennium (Revelation 20:1–5).

What happens to allow this temple to be put in place and not destroy the earth? Ezekiel 37-39 may have the clue. When Ezekiel wrote, he was a captive in exile. Israel was defeated, occupied, and no longer a nation. From the sixth century B.C. until 1948, there has never been a nation called Israel. So this passage *must* be future by every way of consideration. This event may even happen *before* the Tribulation because at the midpoint of the Tribulation the temple is fully functional, and the Antichrist desecrates it. Things will fall apart so greatly in the Tribulation that I don’t think there will

be much building going on during that time, so the temple will probably be built before the Tribulation starts—or very soon after it begins.

Chapters 37-39 of Ezekiel are so important to God that He repeats himself eight times. Let's start with Ezekiel 37, which is all about the regathering of Israel, and Israel as the "valley of dry bones." In verses 1-6, Israel is going to be regathered, and the dry bones are going to come home. In 37:9 He says, "... *Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.*" The Jews came back to Israel from every corner of the earth!

In 37:12 we read: "Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." ' ' ' ' What graves are being referred to? It could be that it is all of those graves including Dachau, Treblinka, Auschwitz, and other concentration camps all around Eastern Europe. I have been to many of these places, and it made me grieve and weep to see what the Jews went through!

In 37:13 He opens the graves: "Then you shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves."

The European Jews (which were the vast majority of all the Jewish population) were so close to extinction that God intervened. The Germans were actually smarter and better soldiers. They had better technology and had the upper hand, but they made some key mistakes. They went to Russia instead of the oil fields in Romania. Hitler could have won. But God says, "You can be the smartest and have the biggest army, but you are not going to win because I am going to let everybody know that I am the Lord!"

Now look at 37:14: " 'I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,' says the LORD."

Against the entire United Nations, the whole assembled world, and everyone's better judgment—Israel was allowed to have a land on May 1, 1948—and that was a miracle. We should be really amazed that Israel even exists today. But all this is so we will know that the Lord is God!

As we reflect on how God has kept His Word for Israel, it should thrill us to know that the very same awesome power of an omnipotent God is at work each day in us. Christ's invitation to abide in and live through us (John 15) is the key to living fruitfully. I encourage you to pause right now and renew Paul's prayer and make it your own: "... Nevertheless as I live—it becomes less of me and more of Christ who lives in and through me ..." [author's own translation] (Galatians 2:20).

AND THE END OF DAYS

... Thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, **I am against you, O Gog**, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal. I will turn you around, ... and lead you out, with all your army, horses, and horsemen, all splendidly clothed, a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them

handling swords. Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya are with them ...; Gomer and all its troops; the house of Togarmah from the far north and all its troops—many people are with you.”

—Ezekiel 38:3-6, emphasis added

In the above passage, Israel is in the land and something is about to happen. Have you ever wondered whether the names in verses 3-6 are connected with Russia? To find a possible answer, one must first identify the areas against which Ezekiel prophesied, and then determine the countries that occupy those land areas today. Ezekiel's prophecy does not point to Russia merely because the words sound similar. Neither should one identify "*Meshech*" with Moscow or "*Tubal*" with Tobolsk. Ezekiel had historical rather than modern-day places in mind, so these areas must be located according to Ezekiel's time. This represents the entire Arab confederacy and some great power in the far north. Russia, with the largest landmass on the planet, is the only power that fits. As far back as the Scythians, they have historically been an enemy of Israel.

However, while one must avoid dogmatic assertions, these reasons suggest including Russia within Ezekiel's prophecy. Some of the geographic places named by Ezekiel may have been located in what is now Russia. The armies are said to come "*from the far north*" (Ezekiel 38:6, 15; 39:2). This probably includes the land bridge between the Black and Caspian Seas, now part of Russia. Ezekiel spoke of a coalition of several nations, many of which are today aligned with or under the influence of Russia. These include Iran (Persia), Sudan and northern Ethiopia (Cush), Libya (Put), and Turkey (Meshech, Tubal, Gomer, and Beth Togarmah). All these nations, possibly led by Russia, will unite to attack Israel (see Ezekiel 38:2-3, 5-6).

Ezekiel was describing a battle that will involve Israel's remotest neighbors. "They will sense their opportunity to attack when Israel feels secure under the false protection of her covenant with the Antichrist sometime at the beginning of the seven-year period. The nations involved in the attack will likely include Russia, Turkey, Iran, Sudan, Ethiopia, and Libya. Ezekiel first pictured the invasion by Gog and his allies (38:1-16), and then described their judgment (38:17-39:29)."³

Every time there is a big battle in the Bible, God fights for Israel. Gideon is a classic example of this: with torches, pitchers, horns, and 300 men—180,000 soldiers were routed because God caused the soldiers to turn their swords on each other! And He will display His sovereign intervention again in Ezekiel 38:19-23 by using natural, and possibly even supernatural, means to protect Israel. In His "*jealousy*" and "*the fire of [His] wrath*" He will send "*a great earthquake in the land of Israel,*" and "*call for a sword against Gog*" so that every "*man's sword will be against his brother.*" Furthermore, He will judge them "*with pestilence and bloodshed ... and will rain down ... great hailstones, fire, and brimstone*" (which is a supernatural event). His ultimate purpose is to "*magnify*" himself so that they shall know that He is the Lord!

In verses 19-23, a coalition of armies is moving toward Israel from the north (all of Israel's invaders usually came from the north—the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Persians). When they get to Israel there is going to be such a severe and devastating earthquake that it will be felt all over the planet.

The word "*pestilence*" in verse 22 is interesting. Do you remember the "*beasties*" we saw in Revelation 6? The beasts of the earth are more than lions, tigers, and bears; there are also little beasts of the earth. In laboratories all over the world, terrorists and governments are making anthrax, botulism, typhoid, and all kinds of other lethal organisms.

Although soldiers today don't carry swords, God says that their swords turn on themselves. A normal army today carries enough munitions to destroy the entire army. God turns these weapons against their owners supernaturally. (See also Ezekiel 39:1-9.) It is interesting that God himself will

give Israel the victory even though they could use their scores of nuclear weapons. (Israel's stockpile of nuclear weapons is probably what has kept the Arabs at bay.)

When writing in 600 B.C. about this warfare, Ezekiel referred to weapons such as shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, and javelins and spears. Would he have been able to describe modern warfare? No, Ezekiel did not have the necessary vocabulary. But this doesn't mean the armies are going to revert back to chariots and weapons made of wood: *"They will not take wood from the field nor cut down any from the forests, because they will make fires with the weapons; and they will plunder those who plundered them, and pillage those who pillaged them," says the Lord GOD (Ezekiel 39:10).*

The useable length of life for atomic material is seven years. It is possible that their atomic power plants will have enough plutonium out of those weapons to power the whole nation of Israel for seven years. (Steel or titanium can't be burned.)

How is this possible? They will be following the proper protocol for biological or atomic warfare. If there is an outbreak of atomic warfare the area would have to be isolated. Ezekiel 39:12-16 tells us that *"For seven months the house of Israel will be ... burying, and they will gain renown for it on the day that I am glorified," says the Lord GOD. ... "At the end of seven months they will ... pass through the land; and when anyone sees a man's bone, he shall set up a marker by it, till the buriers have buried it in the Valley of Hamon Gog. The name of the city will also be Hamonah Thus they shall cleanse the land."*

The valley of Hamon Gog is southeast of the Dead Sea, down wind from Israel, on the Arab side. Crews will be going throughout the land to decontaminate the battle area. Even though it would be much easier to dig a big pit where the battle took place and simply push the bodies and weapons into it, they won't want to contaminate the headwaters of the Jordan River. Therefore, all the bodies and weapons will be removed to Hamon Gog.

Now look at 39:17: *"And as for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every sort of bird and to every beast of the field ...'"* God will send 60 percent of carnivorous scavenger birds to fly their migration routes over Israel every year, and there will be a big feast.

Ezekiel 39:22—*"So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day forward"*—is what I think will embolden them to say: "God did this!" Though there is no conversion to Christ, they will be impressed to build the temple once the militant Muslims and possibly the Russians are destroyed: *"... Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who sent them into captivity among the nations, but also brought them back to their land, and left none of them captive any longer. And I will not hide My face from them anymore; for I shall have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," says the Lord GOD*" (Ezekiel 39:28-29).

In conclusion, it is possible that a pretribulation invasion of Israel will spur them on to build the temple with no opposition. But if not, then it will certainly come about because of the false promises of the Antichrist.

Since we don't know when this may occur, we need to keep that same attitude the early church lived—"Perhaps today ..." If Jesus did come today, what do you wish He would find you doing? That is what you should seek to do. And what would you wish to *not* have Him find you doing? That is what

you should avoid. Such choices make life so simple. There are only two options each day: please Jesus, who may come at any moment, or please ourselves, which is so empty.

THE FUTURE _____ IN JERUSALEM

Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, “Rise and **measure the temple of God**, the altar, and those who worship there.”

—Revelation 11:1, emphasis added

John now begins to weave together one of the longest Old Testament prophecies about Israel’s future. Ezekiel devoted nine long chapters to a prophetic description of a massive temple built in Jerusalem. In Revelation 11, John picks up with God surveying for a temple in Jerusalem.

Almost all prophetic writers place the temple of Ezekiel in the millennial times, but the proximity of Ezekiel chapter 39 to chapter 40 is very interesting. The biggest section in which the Bible discusses a future temple is right after this invasion, which reminds us of God’s long-term plans for Jerusalem. Therefore, whatever mankind does to oppose Israel only serves to accomplish God’s ultimate purposes for them.

In Revelation 11:1 “*measuring*” speaks of someone setting an area aside to claim it for one’s own self. This could be for destruction, preparation for building, restoration, or something else. Now look at the second verse: “*But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth*” (Revelation 11:2-3).

There were four courts in the temple—each opening into the other until the Holy of Holies was reached. These courts were:

The Courtyard of the Gentiles: This was the only place non-Jews could enter without the penalty of death for violation. There was a fence with posted warnings on tablets that spoke of the death penalty for crossing over into the next court by any Gentile.

The Courtyard of the Women: This was next, and it was the extent of a woman’s access to the temple in those days.

The Courtyard of the Israelites: This was the third courtyard, and it marked the limit of where non-priestly men could enter.

The Courtyard of the Priests: This was the final area. In this area were the laver, the brass altar of the burnt offering, and the Holy Place. In the temple proper were the two chambers: the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

Old Testament worship centered first on the tabernacle, and later the temple; that divinely designed liturgy was carried on for 1,500 nearly unbroken years, except when Israel sometimes lapsed into apostasy. The Israelites followed the instructions God gave Moses when he was on Mt. Sinai.

The epicenter of that worship was the Holy Place. In the front half of it stood the altar of incense, golden lampstand, and table of showbread. A curtain divided the room; this curtain was actually a finely woven rug four inches thick, sixty feet high and forty feet wide. It was massive and towering; no natural light ever penetrated its dark depths. Even the light of the ever-burning lampstand never reached behind the veil.

In better times, the shekinah glory of the presence of God made the Holiest of Holies behind the veil brighter than noonday. In all Israel's history, probably no more than fifty men had ever gone into the Holy of Holies. Even David, Daniel, and Jeremiah never went in. Only the High Priest could enter, and then only once a year.

Inside that room was a gold-covered box containing the stone tablets of the Law, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that had budded. Above the ark of the covenant stood two golden cherubim with wings shielding the mercy seat—their faces forever gazing downward, focusing upon the blood to be offered.

When the day came for the High Priest to pass behind that veil, he was garbed carefully in the God-directed robes and priestly garments. He wore bells on the hem of his garment to let the other priests know he was still alive as he was inside. With trembling hands cradling a basin of blood, veiled by a cloud of smoking incense burning in a pot he carried, the High Priest would enter. After sprinkling the blood on that mercy seat on behalf of all the people of God, he hastened out. Why? The only purpose of the veil was to keep people out of the holy presence of God. God was saying: "I AM HOLY. YOU ARE NOT. STAY OUT!"

In Revelation, God's panorama of the end of days has a curious reference to the period of time we call the Tribulation. The Tribulation, and portions of it, are called by many different names such as a "*week*," "*forty-two months*," "*one thousand two hundred and sixty days*," and "*a time, times and a half*." All these refer to the seventieth week of Daniel 9—a week of years, or seven years. The forty-two months, 1,260 days, and "*a time, times and a half*" are all references to half of these seven years. But as often happens in prophetic portions of the Scriptures, there are near and far fulfillments.

In Jewish history, a three and one-half year time period is not only a time measurement for the future, but it is also a memory of an event that deeply touched the Jews of the intertestamental period. For three and one-half years, the rebellion against the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes' desecration of the temple was waged. The brave soldiers of Judas Maccabaeus fought from June 168 B.C. until December 165 B.C. and, through some amazing victories, drove out the pagan intrusion into the

worship of the Lord. Many martyrs fell during this time that was described prophetically four hundred years before it took place (Daniel 7-12).

Regardless of whether God is pouring out great blessings upon His people, or deserved judgment, He wants us to *know* that He is the Lord—and deserves worship. Is that your heart toward Him today?

GOD _____ HIS NAME ON ISRAEL

“At the same time,” says the LORD, “I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people.” Thus says the LORD: “The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness—Israel, when I went to give him rest.”

—Jeremiah 31:1-2

God has staked His name on one nation—Israel. No city on planet Earth has the history of God’s city—Jerusalem! For over 4,000 years Jerusalem has been the city of God. Look with me at this timeline of God’s association with Jerusalem.

Well over 4,000 years ago, Jerusalem was the city of Melchizedek (a type of Christ [see Genesis 14]) and Abraham’s offering of Isaac; over 3,000 years ago Jerusalem was the city of David, the city of Solomon, and of God’s personally designed temple. God calls it “*My city*” (Hosea 5:15). Two thousand years ago Jerusalem was the place of Christ’s Crucifixion—now a place sacred to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. In A.D. 70 the temple (built by Herod) was destroyed. The first temple (Solomon’s) was destroyed in 586 B.C. The second temple was built by Zerubbabel, and then greatly enlarged and embellished for over 40 years by Herod. In A.D. 685-691 the Dome of the Rock was built over the same area, and in A.D. 1520-1566 Suleman the Magnificent added the present walls. Today this city of less than a square mile is the focus of most of the nations of the world for one reason: God has chosen Jerusalem to be the focal point for His plan for the end of the world!

God keeps His Word. Now look at Revelation 11:1-2 again where God says that there will be another temple: “Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for forty-two months.” Daniel also said that there would be another temple (9:27 and 12:11), as did Christ in Matthew 24:15-16 and Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:4. Thus, no matter how bleak Israel’s situation may become in our fast-darkening world, or how impossible it may seem that they can even survive as a nation, God is in control working out His plan. He has a building project, and all that He has written and promised *will* come to pass.

God protects His own—to the finish: “And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.” These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands standing before the God of the earth. And if

anyone wants to harm them, fire proceeds from their mouth and devours their enemies. And if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this manner” (Revelation 11:3-5).

God has always had His witnesses: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Job, Moses, Samuel, and so on. But who are the two witnesses in verse 3? There are several possibilities. Perhaps they are Joshua and Zerubbabel, as mentioned in Zechariah 3-4. Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:9-11) are possibilities because neither saw death, and both were fearless prophets during times of apostasy (Jude 14-15).

Moses and Elijah are the most likely choice, however, because of their presence on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17); position in God’s plan (head of the Law and head of the Prophets); and their God-given power in ministry (Moses’ plagues in Egypt and Elijah’s fire and drought). Note verse 6: *These have power to shut heaven, so that no rain falls in the days of their prophecy [Elijah]; and they have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues [Moses], as often as they desire* (Revelation 11:6).

It is intriguing to read that the two at the tomb of Jesus (Luke 24:4, 7) and the two at the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9-11) were called “men,” and not angels. Malachi 3:3 and 4:5-6 is a very strong prophecy of Elijah’s coming. It is very possible that Elijah and Moses witnessed for Christ at the Transfiguration, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. The timing of the ministries of the two witnesses and the 144,000 evangelists is not entirely clear. But if the two witnesses are in the first half of the Tribulation, then the 144,000 could very well be saved and called into duty by the ministry of these particular witnesses.

Now, the first reference to “the beast” (which appears thirty-six times in the book) is in Revelation 11:7: When they [the two witnesses] finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

While it is true that God protects His own, the two witnesses will be destroyed by the Antichrist. How can that be explained? God’s protection does not preclude disease, death, and martyrdom. However, He protects us from doing anything less than serving Him and fulfilling His will—and His will just might happen to be disease, death, and martyrdom. We don’t know what His plan is. We are simply to serve Him by life or death, and trust that He will grant protection for as long as is needed for us to finish His plan.

Jacob followed his Shepherd: And he blessed Joseph, and said: “... The God who has fed me ... to this day, the Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; let my name be named upon them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (Genesis 48:15-16).

David finished God's purposes for his life: “When David had served God’s purpose ..., he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed” (Acts 13:36, NIV).

Paul finished the race course God laid out for him: I have fought the good fight, ... finished the race, ... kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness,

which the Lord ... will give to me on that Day, and ... to all who have loved His appearing (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Jesus confidently cried out in victory: So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit (John 19:30).

God gives endless life: And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Then [all] ... will see their dead bodies three-and-a-half days, and not allow their dead bodies to be put into graves. [All] ... will rejoice over them ... because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. Now after the three-and-a-half days the breath of life from God entered them, ... and great fear fell on those who saw them. ... And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and ... seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly (Revelation 11:8-14).

Imagine the world's immense shock when they see the two witnesses alive again! Raising the dead is certainly nothing new for our omnipotent God—the One ... who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did ... (Romans 4:17). He gives this same wonderful promise to us: ... He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you (Romans 8:11). Hallelujah!

There will be a quake at the end of each of the series of judgments: the sixth seal, the seventh trumpet, and the seventh bowl. This huge earthquake will kill thousands of people and thereby bring terror to those yet alive. Some will become so afraid that they give "*glory to the God of heaven,*" which may be an indication of the salvation of a Jewish remnant.

We can glean three practical lessons from today's devotional: (1) God keeps His Word; (2) God protects His own; and (3) God gives endless life. Do you trust Him? Do you rest in the confident hope that He will be with you to the finish of the race He's laid out for you? Do you communicate that hope to those around you?

GOD _____ WORSHIP

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

and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.

—Revelation 11:15-19, emphasis added

Heaven is a worship-focused place where God rules and reigns (vv. 15-16). Are you experiencing heaven as you worship Him? Worship flows out of the wonders of God's revelation of himself: He is eternal in character (v. 17a), awesome in power (v. 17b), righteous in judgment (v. 18), and mighty in faithfulness (v. 19)!

The activity in heaven consists almost entirely of worship (Revelation 4; 5; 7:9-12), for there will be no more hunger, thirst, or scorching heat (Revelation 7:16). God will wipe all tears away (Revelation 7:17; 21:4). Death, mourning, and pain will vanish because "*the former things have passed away*" (Revelation 21:4). Heaven is a wonderfully protected place; all evil is excluded: *There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie ...*" (Revelation 21:27). The sheer freedom from fallen experience is pictured by city gates that "*shall not be shut by day (there shall be no night there)*" (Revelation 21:25). Oh, how I hope that your heart is filled to overflowing with adoration for the God who loves you so—the One with whom you will dwell *eternally!*

People of faith will "desire a better, that is, a heavenly country"—for the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 8:18)! God expects worship—do you wholeheartedly adore Him?

Make a choice to live in hope: What is your response to God's plan of the ages? If you want to have living hope for the end of days, reflect upon the glorious afterlife ahead .

The Second Coming

How Long does it take to read the Bible?

72 Hours

Revelation Outline

1. The **Worship Scene** in Heaven (4:1–5:14)
2. The **Great Tribulation** on Earth (6:1–18:24)
3. The **Return** of the King (19:1–21)
4. The **Millennium** (20:1–10)
5. The **Great White Throne** Judgment (20:11–15)
6. The **Eternal State** (21:1–22:21)

The Purpose of Revelation is what, in the very first verse

of the Book?

Reveal Christ

- The Apostle John wrote five books totaling how many chapters?
- The Theme or Purpose of Revelation is?
- Worship is the submission of our whole nature to?
- How many hours does it take to read God's Word the Bible?
- What is Rev. 1 about?
- Rev. 2-3?
- Rev. 4-22?
- Rev. 19?
- Rev. 6-18?
- Rev. 20-22?
- The Apostle John wrote five books totaling how many chapters? 5 books/50 chapters
- The Theme or Purpose of Revelation is? The unveiling or revealing Christ
- Worship is the submission of our whole nature to? Submission of all of me to God
- How many hours does it take to read God's Word the Bible? 72 hours
- What is Rev. 1 about? John seeing Christ on Patmos
- Rev. 2-3? The things that are in the 7 churches
- Rev. 4-22? The things to come in the future
- Rev. 19? Christ's Return
- Rev. 6-18? The Tribulation
- Rev. 20-22? From the Millennium to Heaven

Christ's Perspective (Revelation 12)

SPACE INVADERS

Be sober, **be vigilant**, because your adversary **the devil walks about like a roaring lion**, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith

—1 Peter 5:8-9, emphasis added

Above the softness of our blue-green planet there are hostile forces poised! They range across space lurking and flying about at their master's bidding. They are former angels—Satan the dragon's army. They are deadly, vile, malignant, and very intelligent (in Greek, "demon" means "intelligence").

These aliens to our planet are highly skilled, incredibly powerful, and usually invisible warriors. Demons can hear us talk, pass through walls, fly through space, inhabit human and animal bodies, alter human behavior, and afflict humans with disease, anguish, and turmoil. These extra-terrestrial beings can take on various forms that look human, look powerful, and look fearsome. They are watching over the realm of the serpent and his seed. You see, we saints of God are at war.

There is an intense conflict going on that most of us have not fully comprehended. Swirling around us, the unseen beings of the spirit world are locked in mortal combat. Behind the scenes in every boardroom, political planning session, military strategy session, classroom, worship service, and everywhere else—these unseen spirits watch, listen, and whisper their lies. It is the battle for the planet Earth that rages! The god of this world has dispatched his demon warriors with one target: blind the minds of earth's inhabitants until they cannot see and thus will not follow *God!*

Revelation 12 is one of the more difficult chapters of the Bible because it is so full of pictures and symbols. In no other place in the Word of God is the conflict of the ages more clearly laid out than in Revelation 11:19-12:17 where He names the key players in the battle for planet Earth. And Revelation 12 is His battle plan!

Revelation 11:19-12:7 is divided into three powerful insights for our lives today:

We have victory in Jesus because God is faithful (11:19-12:6). That is why the passage starts with the temple and the ark of the covenant scene. Faithfulness is one of the attributes of God.

We have victory in Jesus because Satan is vanquished (12:7-9). God limits everything about Satan. Many of us tremble before Satan. But when Martin Luther wrote his great hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," he had the right perspective: "We tremble not for him for lo his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him."

We have victory in Jesus because saints suffer (12:10-17). Victory comes through our suffering. Peter tells us in his first epistle that suffering refines us, so we are called to go through various trials. David tells us in the Old Testament that suffering is that which causes us to experience afresh the life-giving and renewing power of God through His Word.

Are you getting the picture that you have victory in Jesus—no matter what is going on in your life? I encourage you to grab hold of that truth and press on with enduring hope for the help that is yours through faith!

My Prayer for You in Revelation 12: Oh Lord, thank You that we can come before Your Word knowing that we have the precious privilege of having the greatest Bible teacher of all time living within us—the author. By Your grace and through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have the anointing of Your Holy Spirit. He who dwells within us teaches us Your Word. As we meet with You, we pray that Your precious Holy Spirit will illumine our hearts to Your Word. As we study and ponder and consider it, gently illumine and quiet our hearts to the truth of the response that You wish from us. In this conflict of the ages, in the swirling celestial battlefield that is amassed around Your children, we are the focal point of the dragon who seeks to disarm us from being able to walk in the power of Your Spirit through Your Word. I pray that we would say *yes* to You, oh God. May we resist the devil so he will flee from us, and may we see many turn from darkness to light around us. May our words of

witness be effectual as Your Spirit wings into the heart of each one we speak to. I pray that we will learn about the victory of Jesus and be confident that we are more than conquerors through Christ. In His name we pray. Amen.

The Stratagems of Satan

- Corruption of Adam's line Gen 6
- Abraham's seed Gen 12, 20
- Famine Gen 50
- Destruction of male line Exo 1
- Pharaoh's pursuit Exo 14
- The populating of Canaan Gen 12:6
- Against David's line 2 Sam 7

Attacks on David's Line

- Jehoram kills his brothers 2 Chr. 21
- Arabians slew all (but Ahazariah)
- Athaliah kills all (but Joash) 2 Chr. 22
- Hezekiah assaulted, etc. Isa 36, 38
- Haman's attempts Est 3

New Testament Stratagems

- Joseph's fears: Matt 1
- Herod's attempts: Matt 2
- At Nazareth: Luke 4
- 2 storms on the Sea: Mark 4; Luke 8
- The Cross
- Summary: Rev 12
 ...and he's not through...

IN JESUS

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

—Revelation 11:19, emphasis added

We have victory in Jesus because God is faithful. Think about this for a moment: *What makes the earth so important that God and Satan are both so interested in this planet?* The answer is simple: God has staked His very name on a person—Jesus Christ; on an event—the cross of Calvary; and on a people—the Jews. God has said that His name is incarnated in Jesus Christ; His power is revealed through the cross; and His plan is centered on the Jews. Those converge on this planet because the center of redemptive history surrounds the earth.

Two lines run through the history of mankind in every event, and they conclude in the culmination of history. To understand the conflict of the ages we need to look at the beginning of Genesis where we are introduced to the two combatants: the line of Christ and the line of Antichrist—the line of the woman’s Seed and that of the serpent. In Genesis 3:15 God declared to Satan: *“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your [the serpent’s] seed and her Seed [Jesus Christ]; he [Jesus] shall bruise [crush] your head, and you [Satan] shall bruise His [Jesus] heel”* (Genesis 3:15).

Satan bruised Christ’s heel on the cross, but Jesus crushed the serpent’s head. The writer of Hebrews says: ... *Through death He ... destroy[ed] him who had the power of death, that is, the devil ...* (Hebrews 2:14). Satan is destroyed—Jesus crushed the serpent!

The serpent’s seed has constantly been against the woman. What is meant by that? The whole Bible can be put into perspective with these two statements: (1) The line of Christ begins with Adam, passes via Golgotha, and leads to the heavenly Jerusalem; and (2) The line of Antichrist begins with Cain, passes via Babel, and leads to the lake of fire. There are only two families—God’s and Satan’s; two destinies—heaven and hell; and two choices—repent or reject. You either belong to one family or the other. You choose your own eternal destiny.

Two programs are at work in the world: God’s program of salvation and Satan’s program of sin, which is called *“the mystery of iniquity”* in the Bible. God has a timetable for His program, and nothing Satan does can change that timetable. Just as there was a *“fullness of the time”* for the coming of Christ (Galatians 4:4), so there is a *“fullness of the time”* for the appearance of the Antichrist. Nothing will be off schedule. Once the restraining ministry of the Spirit of God has ended, the next event can take place.

These chapters are easier to understand when you look at them up close and then step back in order to see the entire picture. We will start with Revelation 11:19 because the victory of Jesus is based on God’s faithfulness.

Although there is a temple in heaven, there won’t be one in eternity because God himself will be the temple (Revelation 21). There is a pattern that is a picture of earthly worship in heavenly places. Moses modeled the tabernacle and Solomon modeled the temple after it. The ark of the covenant will be seen in heaven because God wants us to realize how important it is. What is so important about the ark? And why is the temple opened so that through John we can see that it is there? The ark is a symbol of God’s abiding presence and promises. Do you remember its contents?

The Two Stone Tablets of the Law: On two stone tablets, with His own finger, God wrote the law that He wanted man to follow—the law declaring that our God is unceasingly

holy in the demands of His character. Since the law is so important to God, it should also be important to us. Not that we fulfill it to become righteous, but that the law causes us to realize that God is holy. This is why the law is a schoolmaster that leads us to Christ. Through the law, we realize that we are unable to be as holy as God is, or wants us to be. When we are defeated by sin, we fall before Him and cry out: "We *can't* be holy!" Then God responds: "You can have the righteousness of My Son, Jesus Christ. You can receive the imputed, infused righteousness of Christ."

Aaron's Rod That Budded: This rod reminds us that only God gives eternal life through His Son, for *Jesus said... "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live"* (John 11:25). In contrast, Satan only gives death and destruction. Jesus said, "*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10).

The Pot of Manna: This pot was kept as a picture of Jesus Christ who came as the Bread of Life. On earth, this manna turned to worms if it was kept more than a day, except on the Sabbath weekend. The lesson for us is that we need to gather the Bread of Life daily by reading the Bible. Christ is the only One who can satisfy the hunger of our souls. Just as the manna was good if it was ingested, so Christ is transforming to our lives if we personally receive Him. No one can eat or drink *for* us. Salvation is compared to the bread and water of life because we have to personally partake to have our hunger and thirst satisfied.

When God describes the heavenly pattern, it starts at the ark of His covenant and moves outward. Similarly, the Lord starts in the hearts of those who respond to Him and then He begins the miracle of changing them from the inside out. Salvation is truly of God, and not by self-effort: "... *Salvation is of the LORD*" (Jonah 2:9).

The tragic error of modern ecumenical evangelism is its reluctance to define who God really is in an effort to not offend other religions and cults. It offends God, though, and ecumenicalism is Satan's church: "... *There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

Remembering what God revealed about himself by what He called His ark will help us to understand Revelation 12:

Ark of the Covenant (Numbers 10:33): This name spoke of God's **faithfulness**. He makes covenants and does not break them.

Ark of the Testimony (Exodus 25:22): This name spoke of God's **holiness**. Because we are lost, God sent His Son to show us "*the Way*" of safety. In the Old Testament, the pictures of the sacrifices testified of Jesus; in the New Testament "*the Way*" was shown through the receiving of the finished work of Christ.

Ark of God (1 Samuel 3:3): This name spoke of God's **uniqueness**; there is no other God, nor any other way to Him but His way.

The ark also spoke of God's mightiness because it was the ark of God's strength, which associated it with God's power and miracles (Psalm 132:8). In addition, the ark spoke of God's approachableness: it was the holy ark where God's throne was set, placed in the center of the camp (except for the period

of Israel's sinfulness), with lights never to go out—it was God offering His salvation to all (2 Chronicles 35:3).

Every time we are transported into the throne room, there is a powerful display of God's majesty and omnipotence, and Revelation 11:19 with its "*lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail*" is no exception. We also see similar displays of His awesomeness in Revelation 4:5, 8:5, and 16:18.

These demonstrations of God's might are to remind us of what an incredible God we serve! Are you worshiping and adoring the Lord God Almighty as He deserves?

GOD'S AMAZING _____

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

—Revelation 12:1-2, emphasis added

God shares His plan by opening all the end-time events to us through His servants like the apostle John. Consider these seven openings in heaven:

God opens a door to worship: ... I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice ... was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this" (Revelation 4:1).

God opens the seals of His wrath: ... When the Lamb opened one of the seals ... I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, "Come and see" (Revelation 6:1).

God opens the pit of doom: And he opened the bottomless pit, and smoke arose ... like the smoke of a great furnace. So the sun and the air were darkened because of the smoke ... (Revelation 9:2).

God opens His temple in heaven: Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail (Revelation 11:19).

God opens the tabernacle of His testimony: After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened (Revelation 15:5).

God opens the gates of heaven: "Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war (Revelation 19:11).

God opens the books of judgment: And I saw the dead ... standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works ... which were written in the books (Revelation 20:12).

Revelation 12 also contains two signs—the sign of the woman and the dragon. In this highly symbolic section, God continues to show the unfolding of His plan as the world surrounds His nation, Israel.

The First Sign—“a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet.”

In addition to Revelation 12:1, four other times Revelation mentions women who represent special things. In Revelation 2:20, Jezebel is a picture of Paganism in the church. In Revelation 12:6 the woman is Israel. The scarlet woman described in Revelation 17:1-6 is the apostate church. And in Revelation 19:7, the Lamb’s wife is the true church. Now let’s look at some ways Bible teachers have identified this woman in Revelation 12:1-2.

The woman’s clothing corresponds to Joseph’s dream.

Genesis 37:9-11 reports that Joseph told his brothers and father about a dream in which “*the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowed down to [him].*” His father “*rebuked him*” and his brothers “*envied him, but his father kept the matter in mind.*” Joseph is describing Israel—the twelve tribes—the twelve sons in the family of Jacob, or Israel. The clear correspondence here to that truth made Joseph’s brothers angry.

The woman cries in labor. This speaks of the nation of Israel as they groan. Ever since they were in Egypt, they have complained: *Why is everyone against us?* When God sent forth His Son to be born in Israel, it was a time of oppression at the hand of Rome. All of Creation groans awaiting redemption, and all women groan in childbirth.

The woman’s exalted child can only be Jesus. He is the promised Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15); He is of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10); He is the Star of Jacob (Numbers 24:17-19); He is God with us (Isaiah 7:14); and He is the Son of Abraham and David (Matthew 1:1).

The woman is cared for by God in the Tribulation hours. Only Israel is promised such care. It can’t be the virgin Mary because she is gone. It is not the church because she is never supposed to hide for three and one-half years in the wilderness. It can’t be Eve in the Garden of Eden because Eve is gone too. There is only one group of people who are going to be on earth with Satan chasing them during the Tribulation—a people clothed with the sun, moon, and stars—and that is Israel. What is amazing is that they are the only group of people for whom God has prepared a place in the wilderness to hide!

The Second Sign—“a great, fiery red dragon.” Revelation 12:3 reveals that *Another sign appeared in heaven: ... a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.* This is an easy sign because Satan has been well identified throughout the Scriptures as the serpent, that old dragon, the devil. Satan is the author of the Fall (Genesis 3:14a), the prince of this world (John 12:31; see also 14:30 and 16:11), a murderer and a liar (John 8:44), and an adversary (1 Peter 5:8).

Now that we have identified the “*fiery red dragon*” as Satan, we must address the “*seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.*” The seven heads are later stated to be seven past kingdoms

(Revelation 17:10) and the ten horns to be ten kings of the end times (17:12). This beast is quite similar to the one Daniel saw with one head and ten horns (Daniel 7:7, 20, 24).

As we close today's devotional, I exhort you to remain alert to Satan's mission: he aims "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy" you, so stay vigilant! Remember: that old serpent is a defeated foe, and if you resist him through the power of God's Word and His might, Satan will flee from you!

SATAN'S _____ AND ACTIVITY

His tail drew a third of the stars [angels] of heaven and threw them to the earth. And **the dragon stood before the woman** who was ready to give birth, **to devour her Child** as soon as it was born.

—Revelation 12:4, emphasis added

Where did the devil come from? He was formerly the highest-ranking angel in heaven—Lucifer. Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 tell us that Satan was perfect in his original creation, and that he was the "covering cherub" over the throne of God, reflecting His glory. He walked in the garden of God and then fell into sin. Isaiah describes his fall from heaven through his five "I wills" that culminated in the heart of his iniquity: "I will be like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:12-14). Jesus himself acknowledged this fall when He said: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Satan was thrown out of heaven because of pride. Because pride competes with God for control and glory, it is therefore the root of all sin.

When Satan fell from heaven, it appears that he took one-third of the angels to earth with him (Revelation 12:4). What is Satan doing now? His present activity is detailed in 2 Corinthians 4:3: *But even if our gospel is veiled [by Satan], it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded* ... (2 Corinthians 4:3, emphasis added). When you share the gospel, and a person looks right at you and says, "I don't get it, and I don't want it," you are seeing the blinding power of Satan in this world.

Many books are being written about "out of body" experiences of people who have died. They commonly report going to a great lighted place where a white-haired man talks to them. This is exactly what Satan is and does today. He does not wear red tights and have a pitchfork tail—he is an angel of light and a deceiver: ... **Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.** *Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness* ... (2 Corinthians 11:14-15, emphasis added).

What can Satan do? Satan is powerful, but he can do only what God allows (Job 1:12, 2:4-7). However, that is substantial. He tempted Eve and thereby brought sin into the world (Genesis 3); he tempted Christ (Matthew 4); he perverted God's Word (Matthew 4); he hindered God's servant (1 Thessalonians 2); he fought with Michael (Jude 9); he hinders the gospel (2 Corinthians 4); he snares the wicked (1 Timothy 3); he accuses the brethren (Revelation 12:10); he desires the nations (Revelation 16); and he has the world under his controlling influence (1 John 5).

Now look at Revelation 12:5: *She bore a male Child [Christ] who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and to His throne* (v. 5). In this verse, there are three elements unique

to Jesus in the entire universe: (1) His incarnation (“*bore a male Child*”); (2) His ascension (“*caught up to God*”); and (3) His Second Coming (“*His throne*”).

This “male Child” is to rule all nations with a rod of iron: “Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel” (Psalm 2:8).

Biblical scholars differ as to who this “*male Child*” is, and here are a few of their conclusions: Scott, Newell, Gaebelien, and Alford believe that the “*male Child*” refers to Christ; Ironside thinks he is Christ and the true church—His body; and Seiss considers him to be the invisible church. Personally, after much study, I am convinced that verse 5 is talking about the incarnated, ascended, and glorified Jesus Christ.

The Greek word for Jesus being “*caught up*” is *harpazo*, and is the same word used for both the Rapture of the church (1 Thessalonians 4:17) and Paul being “*caught up to the third heaven*” (2 Corinthians 12:2).

In Revelation 12:6, we now see a reference to the second half of the Tribulation: Then the woman fled into the wilderness [to] ... a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days. Seven years divided in half is three and one-half years, forty-two months, or 1,260 days—all of which are metaphors for the second half of the Tribulation. That is the time the Antichrist goes into the temple of God in Jerusalem, sets up an image for himself, and starts persecuting the Jews. However, God will protect them again.

Aren’t you grateful that as all this is unfolding, you will be safe in your eternal refuge—Jesus Christ? As a child of God, never forget that you are a member of the winning team!

SATAN’S _____

And **war broke out in heaven**: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; [but] the dragon and his angels ... did not prevail, ... So **the great dragon was cast out** ... to the earth, and his angels ... with him,

—Revelation 12:7-9, emphasis added

In Revelation 11:19-12:6, we have seen our victory in Jesus because God is faithful. Next we need to consider our victory in Jesus because Satan is vanquished. It is critical that we understand what is going on in the heavenly places around us.

In the whole universe, there is only God and His Creation. The Bible clearly tells us that the entire universe is involved with what is happening on earth because, after God is finished with the Tribulation and the Millennium, He is going to destroy the whole universe and make it brand new. Everything that is happening is happening right here on earth. There are no civilizations on other planets in need of Jesus as Lord and Savior. There are only the humans on earth and the humans under the earth—in Hades; and there are only the angels sealed by God and the fallen angels who joined Satan’s army.

If that is all there is—God, humans, and angels—what about UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) and science fiction? Why is the world being conditioned for powerful beings that come to earth from somewhere else? The answer is simple: earth dwellers are being prepared for “*the beast*”—the ultimate extra-terrestrial being who will be released from the pit. It is possible that he could arrive in a space

ship, because the world is getting ready for that. But regardless of *how* he comes, he will do so with great powers to control the minds of men.

Can you imagine the effect he will have on this planet? We have terrorists, rogue nations with ballistic missiles and atomic bombs, and biological agents for use in warfare. The world is highly unstable. With all that is going on, it is easy to imagine that someone transported to earth who can perform miracles and control minds will be able to control the world. This is the Antichrist—the one in the place of Christ. So the earth dwellers will conclude: *Who needs Jesus—the lowly One from Bethlehem?*

The advent of “*the beast*” will be an actual historical event, and Revelation shows us the whole panorama in advance. Up until chapter 12 of Revelation, although God had cast Satan out of his place in heaven, He did not restrict his coming into heaven to accuse believers. Presently, when an individual Christian has sinned and Satan becomes aware of it, it is an opportunity to go before God and accuse that person. Always remember that even though we bear God’s image and have His name, we can still “act like the devil” at times. When that happens, Jesus steps forward to remind Satan that He has paid for our sins and we belong to Him now! Charles Wesley’s hymn, “Arise My Soul Arise,” says: *Five bleeding wounds He bears, Received on Calvary; They pour effectual prayers, They strongly plead for me; “Forgive him, O forgive,” they cry, “Nor let that ransomed sinner die!”*

Satan is being allowed to interrupt the worship of heaven for a limited time only before God will cast him down forever, bar his access, and restrict him to troubling the earth only.

You might still be wondering: *What is this celestial warfare all about?* Michael the archangel, a warrior, stands in as commander-in-chief for the King of Kings. He first appeared at the burial of Moses. Because of disobedience (Numbers 20:7-11), Moses forfeited his entrance to the Promised Land, but God let him see it from afar before he died (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). Satan wanted to take Moses’ body to use as a snare for God’s people—like when the brazen serpent used by Moses was transformed into an idol (2 Kings 18:4). The lifeless body of Moses would have been used to start an idolatrous false worship of a messenger in place of the Master. (Miracles associated with dead bones are some of Satan’s biggest lies that enslave and destroy multitudes even today.)

Michael also shows up in Daniel 10 in his work of fighting the principalities (leaders of fallen angels): “But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia” (Daniel 10:13).

In Ephesians 6:12, Paul warns us: We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, ... powers, ... rulers of the darkness of this age, ... spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Paul uses the Greek word *arche*, normally translated “principalities,” seven other times (Romans 8:38; 1 Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21, 3:10; Colossians 1:16, 2:15; Titus 3:1). Each time the context is similar to that of Ephesians 6:12, so we can assume that these listings in verse 12 are classes of fallen angels who oversee the hindering of God’s work in various nations.

Michael will also figure in the final conflict: “At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, ... and at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book” (Daniel 12:1). These words are happening as we open to Revelation 12.

In Revelation 12:7-9, Michael leads God’s angels to victory. This becomes significant when we note that Michael is identified with the nation Israel (Daniel 10:10-21; 12:1; see also Jude 9). Another key is that the name Michael may mean “Who is like God?” This could point to Satan when he rebelled against the Lord and said, “I will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:14). Michael’s very presence fighting Satan is part of the ancient conflict between God and Satan. Satan wanted to be like God, but Michael’s name implies that “no one can be like God”—because there is only *one* God. This battle may occur because the devil’s unbridled hatred of Israel spurs him to make one final assault against the throne of God. However, as recorded, Michael and the angels of God will defeat him.

Amazingly, Revelation 12:9 is the middle verse of the Book of Revelation—and the turning point in eternity!

If you have not yet bowed your knee to Jesus, and embraced Him as your Savior, today can be your “turning point” for eternity. Don’t delay! Time is short!

THAT OVERCOME

...“Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren ... has been cast down. And **they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony**, and they did not love their lives to the death. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them! Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time.”

—Revelation 12:10-12, emphasis added

We have seen our victory in Jesus because God is faithful (11:19-12:6) and Satan is vanquished (12:7-9). Yet, as verses 10-12 above explain, the saints on earth will suffer. In that passage, many avenues of our powerful victories over Satan are stated. They, like us, will overcome as more than conquerors through the blessedness of four powerful weapons:

The Word of Testimony: They will overcome Satan by the reality of their testimony because they have embraced Christ’s salvation by faith, and He lives within them. People are saved not by what they say, but by the Word of God which is ... *living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12).

The Name of Jesus: ... God ... has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name ...”(Philippians 2:9).

The Blood of the Lamb: “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11).

The Cross of Calvary: And you, being dead in your trespasses ..., He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses ... (Colossians 2:13).

Last of all, our attention is drawn to the triumph factor. John says, And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which kept the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17 KJV). Satan cannot win. “Just as the blood of the martyrs has proved to be the seed of the church, so during the Tribulation, persecution will but drive many Jewish people into the arms of the Lord Jesus. Satan, in his rage, displays a notable lack of imagination and originality. He has tried persecution many times before,

and it has always failed to deter faith and conversion. That he tries it again is a mute confession of failure, the last resort of a desperate and darkened mind. The godly Jews will not recant. They will only scatter far and wide, bearing as they go the gospel of the Kingdom and their triumph will be complete".¹

What can Satan do with the likes of these godly Jews? Lock them up in prison, and they will convert their jailers; torture them, and they will become partakers of Christ's sufferings and heirs to a great reward; martyr them, and they will go straight to be with Christ; turn them loose, and they will evangelize the world! The more the saints suffer, the more they will draw on Christ; the more they serve Christ, the more they will defeat the devil and have victory in Christ!

Learn from these faithful saints; do not shrink back from the persecution and affliction that is likely to come at work, in your family, and in society. Through the Word of God, the name of Jesus, the

blood of the Lamb, and the cross of Calvary—be a saint who overcomes through Christ—like the faithful suffering saints in Revelation 12!

THE CONFLICT OF THE _____

... the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood, which the dragon had spewed out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and **he went to make war** with the rest of her offspring, who ... have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

—Revelation 12:16-17, emphasis added

God has a place prepared for Israel; it could even be in Petra or Jordan. It does not matter where it is, but God will send the Jews there. When Satan sees them flee, he will cause the beast to send a mighty army that is like a “flood,” but it will be “swallowed up” (Revelation 12:16).

We see this same type of judgment in Numbers 16:1-40. Because of the rebellion of Korah, the earth opened up and swallowed those who rebelled against Moses and God—and they went alive into the pit. (This is another indication that Hades is most likely in the center of the earth.)

Satan has always tried to destroy his mortal enemy—the Seed of the woman. All of history has been a record of this conflict between the seed of the serpent and the Seed of the woman. Satan has tried to stop God’s plan all along the way.

Satan attempted to destroy God’s plan when Cain murdered Abel (Genesis 4).

Satan attempted to destroy God’s plan by demonic intrusion into the human line before the Flood (Genesis 6).

Satan attempted to destroy God’s plan through Goliath, as the serpent’s seed sought to destroy the line of the woman’s Seed as young David stood before him (1 Samuel 17).

Satan attempted to destroy God’s plan through Haman, a descendent of Agag the Amalekite.

At Satan’s prompting, Haman nearly succeeded at wiping out the Jews (the book of Esther).

Satan attempted to destroy God’s plan by the decree of Herod to kill all the male infants (Matthew 2:13).

Satan attempted to destroy God’s plan by tempting Jesus to take the easy road (Matthew 4).

Satan attempted to destroy God’s plan as he entered the infuriated mob that sought to cast Jesus over a cliff (Luke 4:28-29).

Satan hates the Lamb of God and all His followers—whether Jew or Gentile. Therefore, he actively wages war against those who seek to obey God’s Word above all else!

Make a choice to live in hope: From Eden onward, there have been two groups on earth: two churches, two congregations, and two directions.

Satan and the Rebels	God and the Saints
Drunken harlot	Chaste bride
Followers of lies	Seekers of Truth
Earth dwellers	Pilgrims
Walkers by sight	Walkers by faith
Hellish	Heavenly

But a collision lies ahead: Satan’s kingdom is nearing its final hours on earth—a time when the powers of darkness, demons, and all will rule. The earth will follow the false god, the Antichrist!

There are two competitions—two destinies:

Choose Christ: Follow Adam; pass Golgotha and the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ; trust in Christ and go to heaven.

Choose the Antichrist: Follow Cain; pass Babel and the confusion of religion, and go to the lake of fire.

In this battle for the planet Earth, the victory is in Christ! God’s faithfulness to His Word means that Satan is vanquished. If you already know the Lord Jesus, I pray that you will choose to be an overcomer by living in hope through God’s Word, the blood of the Lamb, the cross of Calvary, and the name of Jesus that is above all names!

In closing, this old song by Francis Havergal captures what your spirit ought to be like during this conflict of the ages. As you meditate upon its words, ask yourself: *Am I really on the Lord’s side?* I

encourage you to then personalize the words of this wonderful song to make it the prayer of your heart.

Who Is on the Lord's Side?

Who is on the Lord's side? Who will serve the King?
Who will be His helpers, Other lives to bring?
Who will leave the world's side? Who will face the foe?
Who is on the Lord's side? Who for Him will go?
By Thy call of mercy, By Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!
Not for weight of glory, Nor for crown and palm,
Enter we the army, Raise the warrior psalm;
But for Love that claimeth Lives for whom He died:
He whom Jesus nameth Must be on His side.
By Thy love constraining, By Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!
Jesus, Thou hast bought us, Not with gold or gem,
But with Thine own life-blood, For Thy diadem;
With Thy blessing filling Each who comes to Thee,
Thou hast made us willing, Thou hast made us free.
By Thy grand redemption, By Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!
Fierce may be the conflict, Strong may be the foe,
But the King's own army None can overthrow;
'Round His standard ranging, Victory is secure,
For His truth unchanging Makes the triumph sure.
Joyfully enlisting, By Thy grace divine,
We are on the Lord's side—Savior, we are Thine!

—Francis R. Havergal

Marvel at the _____ Jesus (Revelation 13)

HOW TO _____ THE MARK OF THE BEAST

[He] ... is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy

—Jude 1:24, emphasis added

As the end of the world approaches, so does earth's darkest hour. Hell will soon open, and the pit will vomit out its demon hordes to run wildly throughout humanity. Other beasts from the abyss will globally wreak death and destruction. Satan himself will invade the earth and seemingly conquer it at last.

At the helm, the visible leader of the world will be the long promised man of sin, the lawless one, the beast, the coming world leader—commonly known as the Antichrist. But behind him, the real power will be the god of this world, the dragon, old Lucifer, the lying serpent of Eden.

Imagine what it would be like if that perfect leader were to step forward tomorrow—a man who appears to seemingly come out of nowhere—almost a person from the past who rolls into one all the great leaders of the world. Imagine one man with the strength of a Caesar, the military genius of an Alexander, the mesmerizing oratory of a Hitler, the warmth of a Ronald Reagan, the ruthless determination of a Ghenghis Khan, and the apparent compassion and tenderness of Jesus Christ!

John Phillips writes: “In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, the Bible clearly teaches that we can expect this invasion from the pit in the last days. During the final days, most people will be led astray by evil spirits and occult teachings. The shadows of these times are already darkening the world. Nothing but the restraining presence of God the Holy Spirit is holding back the floodgates of this time of evil. ... Advanced demonism was the mark of Noah's day; [and] it is becoming an increasingly evident characteristic of the age in which we live.”²

Revelation 13 explains (as do other scriptures) what I consider to be one of the saddest doctrines in the Bible—the teaching about the Antichrist, which tells us that the FALSE Christ will be universally embraced by the world after the TRUE Christ has been rejected! (Emphasis added to the verses below.)

“Therefore **when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’** spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand) ... (Matthew 24:15).

“For false christs [pseudo-christs] and false prophets [pseudo-prophets] **will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect**” (Matthew 24:24).

“I was watching; and the same horn was **making war against the saints, and prevailing against them,** ... He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, **shall persecute the saints** of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. **Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time**” (Daniel 7:21, 25).

The coming of the lawless one is according to **the working of Satan,** with **all power, signs, and lying wonders** ... (2 Thessalonians 2:9).

Far more lethal than rampant viruses, far more poisonous than radioactivity or toxins, a counterfeit Christianity is seeping into our world. Jesus warned of a coming day of deception that was so intoxicating that without His intervention even God's children would succumb. Revelation 13

shows the second flood, which will destroy our world. The first flood in Genesis was with water from God to judge sinful humanity. This second flood is with deception from Satan to seal the doom of humans unwilling to follow the Lord.

Perhaps the Antichrist will step into the world from a battlefield or maybe from the United Nations. Very possibly, a glowing metallic UFO will slowly descend in a globally watched spot and, before the wondering eyes of all the inhabitants of the earth, out will step the ultimate Superman—the first beast! In concise word pictures, John describes the culmination of the lies of Satan. Mankind needs to beware of Satan’s counterfeit authority (Revelation 12:17-13:2), counterfeit resurrection (Revelation 13:3-5), counterfeit citizenship (Revelation 13:6-10), counterfeit worship (Revelation 13:11-15), and counterfeit security—the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-18).

How can you escape these counterfeits of Satan? The only place of safety is to have the security that the *real* Christ gives. May the wonders of this chapter cause you to seek God’s mark—and not the mark of the beast!

My Prayer for You in Revelation 13: Oh Lord, as we read the words in Revelation 13, we are grieved to think of someone who will blaspheme Your name, Your dwelling place—the very God of heaven! We are grieved that he will be allowed to parade and march up and down on this planet for forty-two months, imitating Your three and one-half years of ministry—even imitating Your resurrection from the dead, Lord Jesus—and imitating Your power from heaven. We love You, so our hearts are grieved to think that mankind and humanity would stoop to the depths to be led by this monster from the pit! We want to magnify Your name, for the world is coming to a day when it will seek to obliterate the name of the true and living God—the Creator, the Redeemer, and the righteous judge from the very consciousness of this planet. We pray that You might be praised through us, and that we might be among those who turn many to righteousness that we might all shine like the stars forever. May we have Your compassion, Lord Jesus, to tell everyone about You, and earnestly plead, like Paul, with them so that they might be reconciled to God and avoid the terror of the Lord. Give us an insatiable desire to win souls to You, Lord Jesus. Help us to faithfully tell people that before them is a choice, a destiny, and a destination that is either blessed or horrible, and that they must choose life and look at the Savior. Enable us to see You clearly! We pray all these things in Your precious name. Amen.

THE ULTIMATE _____—THE BEAST

I was considering the horns, and there was ... a little one ... before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were **eyes like the eyes of a man**, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

—Daniel 7:8, emphasis added

Impossible? No. He is coming. He may well be walking around today. Ever since Eden, mankind has sought to be “*like God*” and in this insatiable quest has come the glorification of the “*creature more than the Creator*.” This exaltation of man has allowed men of strong persuasion to be able to rise to extreme heights of power. In history these have been the Ramses, Alexanders, Caesars, and Napoleons. But there is a man on the horizon whose rise shall be as the sun’s rays across the earth; he

shall be the embodiment of such power and personage that the entire world will be astounded by him. Thus, he will be sought after like no other leader before.

He will be one who seems to stop all threats from weapons of mass destruction. He will take charge and bring an end to the simmering hatred and volatile ethnic conflicts around the planet. The global fear of terrorism, biological warfare, and food shortages will cease through his leadership. He also seems to triumph in a global form of religion that the world can finally agree to. It may even be a counterfeit version of Christianity because “anti” means “in place of” Christ.

Here are some of the attributes that the Antichrist—this Superman of evil—possesses: (Emphasis added in the following verses.)

The Antichrist is Super-intelligent. He is portrayed as a Superman of intellect: “... *In this hom, were eyes like the eyes of a man ...*”(Daniel 7:8).

The Antichrist is a Super-communicator. He is notable as a Superman of communication: “... *a mouth speaking pompous words*”(Daniel 7:8).

The Antichrist is a Super-politician. He is a Superman of politics who has unusual abilities to lead and persuade, and seems to conquer in peace: ... *he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue* (Daniel 11:21). In Revelation 6:2 he will ride a “white horse” and go out “conquering and to conquer.”

The Antichrist is a Super-businessman. He possesses extraordinary business abilities, and is a Superman of money: “... *He shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; ... He shall destroy many in their prosperity ...*”(Daniel 8:25; see also Revelation 18.) He will organize or just use a global digitalization of commerce.

The Antichrist is a Super-general. He is the ultimate military strategist, a Superman of the military: “[He] ... *shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces*” (Daniel 7:23). We see the same power revealed in Revelation 13:4 and 7: *So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” ... And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.* He rules the world!

The Antichrist has a Super-ego. He is the Superman of megalomaniacs who lust for great and grandiose performances: ... The man of sin ... opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that **he sits as God in the temple of God**, showing himself that he is God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4). From this, we clearly see his yearning to be “like the Most High God”!

Would it surprise you to know that Americans are actually looking for an ET (extra-terrestrial being) like this “Superman” to come and help? According to pollsters, 72 percent of Americans believe

that there is life beyond the earth; 48 percent believe UFOs are real; and 15 percent have seen one, with 3 percent of Americans (that's almost nine million of us) being abducted by aliens into a UFO.

One noted journalist, after studying UFOs and those in contact with them, concluded: "The earth is not inhabited by them, it is infested." What do UFOs do to the Word of God and our faith? I have concluded that UFOs are demonic!

UFOs would support naturalistic evolution to the point of believing that perfection would overcome death, disease, and so forth. When people believe in extra-terrestrial intelligence, that would mean that evolution has gone on for who knows how many billion years and, somewhere out there, life has ascended higher than here on earth.

ETs lessen the incarnation of Jesus. If there really are many all-powerful aliens out there, this would be the common thinking: *What if Jesus did come? What difference does that really make? After all, it may be possible to overcome death and disease because all these beings that can fly around are superior to us, so they have obviously found the answer!*

That erroneous thinking would lead to this conclusion:

The earth is just an insignificant dot in the universe.

Man is not the crown of God's creation.

Sin is just our problem, or not even a problem at all.

Hope lies in contact with some of these "higher" life forms.

Christ's death was a local rather than a cosmic event.

The Word of God is anachronistic, local, and out of touch with the big picture of the cosmos.

We are not in God's image.

That is what evolution, science fiction, and UFO-ology teaches! And those lies of Satan are deceiving mankind and thus determining their eternal destiny—separated forever from God in the lake of fire with the devil and his angels. We need to spread the Truth to the perishing every chance we get!

THE _____ OF THE ANTICHRIST

And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring who... have the testimony of Jesus Christ. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name. Now **the beast** which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. **The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority.**

—Revelation 12:17-13:2, emphasis added

As we examine the person of the Antichrist, drawn in the words of the apostle John, and see him whose cause is not only to be "anti" (opposed), but also "anti-" (the exact inverse of) Christ Jesus the

Lord of glory, there are five horrible lies that this beast (the Antichrist) will foist upon the earth as he carries out his counterfeit operation of imitating Christ.

Lie One: The beast will offer a false authority. In Revelation 12:17–13:2 *“the beast”* is imitating the Kingdom of God, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Creator. Satan’s counterfeit authority is rebellion against God, which actually started in the Garden of Eden when Eve questioned the goodness, authority, and right of God to limit. You can escape his false authority by keeping yourself under the authority of God.

Lie Two: The beast will offer a false resurrection. In Revelation 13:3-5, the beast causes the whole world to marvel at his counterfeit resurrection as he imitates the prince of life, the firstborn from the dead, the empty tomb, the way, the truth, and the only hope: *“And I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. ... So they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, ‘Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?’”* And he was ... given authority to continue for forty-two months.

God allows the beast to be brought back to life after being mortally wounded. In every point, the beast will be mirroring the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be allowed to rule three and one-half years, which is the length of Christ’s ministry, and he will counterfeit Old Testament miracles as well.

Lie Three: The beast will offer a false citizenship. In Revelation 13:6-10, he offers a counterfeit citizenship to the earth dwellers as he imitates the wonders of our Father’s house. He’s preparing the heavenly city, the streets of gold, and the Water of Life—making them here on earth and telling those people that they are not to wait for the Son of God from heaven: *Then he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over ... All who dwell on the earth ... whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. ... Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.*

In this passage, the beast starts a deadly rampage on the earth that causes a counterfeit citizenship. Those whose names are not in the Lamb’s Book of Life will worship the beast. But Christians know that *our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ* (Philippians 3:20).

Lie Four: The beast will offer false worship or religion. In Revelation 13:11-15, the second beast, the false prophet, affirms his false message that imitates the true worship of the living and true God in spirit and in truth, not self-styled but biblical: *Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast ... and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He performs great signs, ... And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs ..., telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived. He was granted power to give breath to the image ..., that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.”*

The term *“another beast coming up out of the earth”* is the same term used when Saul got the witch of Endor to conjure up Samuel. I am not sure how much God will allow here, but this second beast is an amazing creature. He will lead false worship. It is hard for us to comprehend right now, but we have become such a globally linked society that we know

about things around the world as they are happening. As events happen, it will touch the whole world. This false resurrection will cause everyone in the world to be in wonder, because in the back of everybody's consciousness is the story of Christ. John 1:9 says: *That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.* There is a basic awareness of the true living God. When people see this, most of the world without loving the Truth will start falling for the lie—because they have never known the Word of God.

Lie Five: The beast will offer a false security. In Revelation 13:16-18, through the "mark" he is imitating the Holy Spirit's sealing of those in the Book of Life, betrothed to Christ, His very bride, kept and protected by the power of God unto salvation: *He causes all ... to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666.*

So then, how do we live in hope as we approach these fearsome days?

Examine your address label. Make sure you are addressed to the right destination. Ask yourself: *Am I really a citizen of heaven, or just an earth dweller?* Philippians 3:20 says that the born-again Christian's *citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.* In light of that verse, step back and look at your direction. Honestly ask yourself: *Where am I really headed?* For God says: *Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith ...* (2 Corinthians 13:5a).

Turn on your security system. Ask yourself: Have I really turned on my security system? Am I an authentic, signed original? Am I a sealed and secure container of heavenly treasure? One way to know if your security system is turned on is to watch what comes out of your life as your body ages and weakens. Is it the treasure of the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control—that spills forth from inside? Or is it the works of the flesh that ooze out from within your soul? Second Corinthians 4:7 says, *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. The weaker we get, and the shorter our time on earth, the more the treasure of Christ should spill out of our lives. Oh,*

how we should allow our weakness to show the righteousness of Christ coming out of us! So the next time you are sick, let the treasure of Christ come out instead of being irritable and angry.

Investigate the real thing. How well do you know Jesus by personal contact? How quickly do you recognize Him in His Book? Have you begun a lifelong pursuit of Jesus Christ in the Bible? Do you know the *real* well enough to recognize the *counterfeit*?

Let me remind you again that, to escape Satan's counterfeits, the *only* place of safety is to have the security that the *real* Christ gives! Have you fled to Him as your eternal refuge? If not, don't delay—He could come back *today*!

THE _____ THAT SHALL COME

“... **The prince who is to come** ... shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering”

—Daniel 9:26a, 27a, emphasis added

The coming world leader, commonly known as the Antichrist, has thirty-three titles in the Old Testament and thirteen in the New Testament. One of these titles, “*the prince who is to come*,” is from Daniel 9:26-27 where it was prophesied that the people of this “prince” would destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its fulfillment occurred in history when the Roman legions under Titus Vespasian destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70. This reflexive reference to the Romans in Daniel 9:26 is one of several reasons why many Bible scholars view the future “*prince who is to come*” as a Roman or European.

The Beast from the Sea—Revelation 13:1-10: He is the Roman prince of Daniel 9 who will break his covenant with the Jews at the middle of the week. He is the Antichrist, the man of lawlessness (Pentecost, Seiss, Newell). Some think that verse 3 means that he will be raised from the dead (Seiss, Newell).

The Beast from the Earth—Revelation 13:11-18: He is the false prophet—apparently a Jewish religious leader who causes men to worship the first beast. He has the power to do miracles to deceive men (vv. 14-15). Some interpret the Antichrist as “the one instead of

Christ" (Scott, Ironside, Gaebelien, Kelly); others see him as the "one opposed to Christ" (Pentecost).

These beasts make war with the saints and overcome them (v. 7). All who are not of the elect will worship the first beast (v. 8). By economic warfare they can starve out those who will not worship the first beast (vv. 16-17).

Point by point, the beast is a poor imitation of Christ. As we examine him in his falseness, gaze at Christ's beauty and see Him more clearly for who He is today! Here are some interesting insights on the beast.

The Peacemaker—Revelation 6:1–2: Certainly, this man will be on the scene before the Rapture occurs. He will be a peaceful political leader who unites ten nations of Europe into a strong power bloc (see Revelation 17:12–13). The rider on the white horse will imitate Christ (Revelation 19:11ff). He will go forth to conquer peacefully, and will have a bow, but no arrows. He will bring a brief time of peace to the world (1 Thessalonians 5:1–3) before the storm of the day of the Lord breaks loose.

The Protector—Daniel 9:24–27: Although we examined the exciting details of this prophecy in Week 31, it is important to recall certain facts. First, the prophecy applies to Israel, Jerusalem, and the temple, and not to the church. Second, it announces the time when Messiah will come and accomplish certain purposes for the Jewish people. The word "week" refers to a period of seven years; seventy weeks are equal to 490 years. Note that these 490 years are divided into three parts: (1) seven weeks or forty-nine years, during which the city would be rebuilt; (2) sixty-two weeks or 434 years, at the end of which time Messiah would come and be cut off; and (3) one week or seven years, during which a "prince" would have a covenant with Israel. The seventieth week will start with the arrival of Antichrist. He will make a covenant with Israel to protect her and permit her to rebuild her temple. This covenant will be for seven years. He will temporarily solve the Middle East crisis. Israel will rebuild her temple in peaceful times. It is the signing of this covenant, not the Rapture of the church, which signals the start of Daniel's seventieth week, that seven-year period known as the day of the Lord.

The Peace-Breaker—Daniel 9:27: After three and one-half years, Antichrist will break his covenant with the Jews and take over their temple. This was what Paul termed "*the falling away*" (2 Thessalonians 2:3b). A better translation would be "the rebellion, the apostasy." Not simply *a* rebellion, but *the* rebellion. Up to this point, Antichrist has been a peacemaking leader of ten European nations, obligated to protect Israel. But now he will reveal his true character by taking over the Jewish temple and demanding that the world worship him (see Revelation 13). Since the Antichrist will be energized by Satan, it is no surprise that he will seek worship; Satan has always wanted the worship of the world. In church history, there have been various apostasies when groups have turned away from God's truth, but this final rebellion will be the greatest of all. The man of sin will oppose everything that belongs to any other religion, true or false. He will organize a world church that will, by worshiping him, actually be worshiping Satan. Our Lord predicted this apostasy: He called it "*the abomination of desolation*" (Matthew 24:15), a clear reference to Daniel 9:27. The world will wonder at this

great leader who, with Satan's power, will perform signs and wonders and deceive the nations.

The Persecutor—Revelation 13:15–17: Most prophetic students agree that the abomination of desolation will occur three and one-half years after the Antichrist makes his covenant with the Jews (Daniel 9:27—"in the midst of the week," or three and one-half years). This will usher in a period of intense persecution and tribulation. Jesus said, *"For then there will be great tribulation ..."* (Matthew 24:21a). Satan will vent his wrath against Israel. He will so control the world's economic system that citizens must bear "the mark of the beast" to be able to buy and sell (Revelation 13:16-17).

The Prisoner—Revelation 19:11–21: Keep in mind that God has a timetable. Satan will not be permitted to control the world forever. Jesus Christ will return *"in power and great glory"* and take the Antichrist, his associates, and Satan prisoner and cast them into the bottomless pit (Revelation 20:1–3). This will be the climax of the great Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:16), during which the nations of the world unite with Satan to fight Jesus Christ. This leads to our next event.

What insights can we glean from these interesting insights on the beast? We are reminded of these truths: only Jesus is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6); only Jesus is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; only Jesus keeps all His promises; only those who come to Him have peace—the rest are like the restless sea; only Jesus gives true rest for the souls of those who come to Him (Matthew 11:28-30); and only Jesus can set you free (John 8:32-34)! A God like this deserves our *all!*

COMPLETELY _____ TIMES ARE COMING

And **the dragon** was enraged with the woman, and he **went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God** and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. ... It was granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation.

—Revelation 12:17; 13:7, emphasis added

When Christ returns there will be powerful, pervasive, and universal lies backed by the most believable signs and wonders ever witnessed on planet Earth. What will life on earth be like during these dark times? Let's look again at the verses from Revelation 12 and 13 above to remind us.

When Jesus came to earth, He was God in human flesh; as the Christ, He was the expression of all the promises of God. To think that **the Christ** in all His grace and beauty came to earth, stayed for thirty-plus years, was rejected as false and fake, and **almost no one followed Him**, is bad enough. But to know that Satan is going to send to earth the expression of all of mankind's desires in

the person of **the Antichrist**, and in a very short time **almost all the earth will follow him**, is absolutely heart wrenching!

Imagine a leader as winsome as Reagan, as fearless as Alexander the Great, as mesmerizing as Hitler, as beloved by his people as George Washington, as great a leader as Moses, as unstoppable as Ghenghis Khan, and as spiritually charismatic as David—all in ONE man.

Now imagine that man openly displaying supernatural power in public, and being seen worldwide by way of the electronic media! It will appear that he is from heaven, and he will claim to be God. He will do miracles that everyone can see and believe in, and then offer himself to the world as their Christ.

There is a day coming soon when most people on earth will want to follow this ultimate “Superman.” That is the saddest commentary on the fallen heart of humanity there could ever be—always wanting the wrong choice!

We have had several warm-up acts by Satan for this future main event of the final Antichrist. We can see the way Satan works most clearly in the life and accomplishments of Adolph Hitler. Hitler showed the world how just one man can lift a nation from the depths of economic ruin to the heights of power in a very short time (1933-1939)—and then lead the world into the deadliest war of all time (1939-1945). In six years Hitler came uncomfortably close to conquering the world, which is a vivid example of how Satan can indwell and completely harness one man.

Hitler was an Antichrist. Rick Warren writes, “People who had personal contact with Hitler often spoke of the strange hypnotic power he was able to exert. In 1943, 100,000 young people in brown shirts filled the Olympic stadium in Munich, Germany, the largest stadium in the world at that time. They formed with their bodies a sign for a fanatical man standing behind the podium. The message read, ‘Hitler, we are yours.’”¹

At the monument to Hitler’s evil, the death camp Auschwitz, are the words of Hitler’s vision of a generation of young people without a conscience. These words are aptly hung on a wall, grimly reminding the visitor of the hell unleashed when this goal was realized: *I freed Germany from the stupid and degrading fallacies of conscience and morality. ... We will train young people before whom the world will tremble. I want young people capable of violence—imperious, relentless and cruel.*

On display for all to behold are thousands of pounds of women’s hair, retrieved and marketed as a commodity by the Nazi exterminators, architects of the final solution that sent multitudes to the gas ovens. The incredible reminders cast an overwhelming pall of somberness upon the visitor.²

But how did Satan find and use Hitler? Find out in tomorrow’s lesson!

SATAN WAS THE _____ ANTICHRIST

“You are of your father **the devil**, and the desires of your father you want to do. He **was a murderer** from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in

him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for **he is a liar and the father of it.**”

—John 8:44, emphasis added

Lucifer was the original Antichrist. Isaiah 14 reveals that he wanted the power of God and the worship of God for himself. He demanded equality with the Lord God Almighty. In fact, according to Ezekiel 28, he was “*the anointed cherub [angel].*” He was “*full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.*” His response to his endowment by God was one of pride and rebellion.

God rejected his power play and promised his doom in hell in the future. But until that time, Lucifer (Satan) is on the prowl, seeking likely candidates he can lead into occult worship. Rebellion gives Satan an open invitation to establish a stronghold in the rebel’s life. Understand this: occult involvement is actually worship of his infernal majesty—Satan!

Satan looks for rebels. Lucifer was the original rebel, and he is looking for rebels to enlist for his own selfish purposes. Rebellion against authority makes a person a prime target for satanic attack.

Hitler is a prime example of the rebellion-occult connection. His early life could be characterized by one word: failure. He had a meager existence while living on his dead mother’s limited savings and an Orphan’s Pension which came from his father’s service in the Customs Department. His attempt at higher education was thwarted. He wanted to be an artist, so he applied at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, but they refused to accept him because his sketches were not up to required standards. Next, he applied to the School of Architecture and was refused. Author Treavor Ravenscroft observes that because Hitler was unable to make friends, he became a more solitary and embittered figure.

To make a long story short, Hitler was angry at God and society because of his plight in life, so he rebelled against both. In his quest for power to change his plight, young Hitler turned to the occult. He began by spending all his free time in the Hofberg Library in Vienna, Austria. He read books on the history of the occult and Eastern religions, but the occult seemed to offer the power for which he was searching.

Demons controlled Hitler. The demons that controlled the demented soul of Adolph Hitler lured him and Germany into World War II, and then abandoned both him and his country to their fate. Hitler and his fellow conspirators came close to succeeding. They failed because the time was not yet ripe in the counsels of God for the forces of Satan to triumph. However, the whole Nazi era was a dress rehearsal for the coming of the beast and the consequent baptism of unregenerate mankind into just such a religion.³

Hitler—like Satan—was a destroyer. He found that Satan lived up to the titles given him in Revelation 9:11: And they had as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name Apollyon. The translation of both words is “destroyer.” Hitler was used by Satan to destroy six million plus of God’s

chosen people. Multiplied thousands more were destroyed in war. Then in mockery of Hitler himself, Satan motivated him to commit suicide, destroying himself.

One of the primary characteristics of those who get involved in the occult, like Hitler, is rebellion against authority. This rebellion is usually evident in one or more of the following three areas: (1) rebellion against parents; (2) rebellion against society; and (3) rebellion against Christianity.

Why do many of those who rebel against parents, society, and Christianity often end up involved in the occult? Those who know the Bible can tell you: rebellion and occult involvement are linked, “*For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry ...*” (1 Samuel 15:23a).

Beware of giving place to the devil. Listen to Paul’s stern warning to Christians in Ephesians 4:27, “nor give place to the devil.” Everywhere and always demons have lurked in the dark for the moment when a person becomes weak, when he arbitrarily abandons his human situation in the world order founded by God for him. ... After the first voluntary downward step he is compelled to the second and third with rapidly increasing speed. ... Man is unprotected against evil without the living God; he is like a boat without oars, exposed to the tempest, or like a baby without a mother, or like a cloud which dissolves.⁴

Today, thoughtfully and carefully read Ephesians 4:27-5:8 and note each area Paul describes. These are the potential places Satan starts devouring us spiritually. Avoid allowing him to find these “landing spots” in your life.

THE ONLY PROTECTION FROM SATAN—GOD’S _____

[You] ... are **kept by the power of God through faith** for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

—1 Peter 1:5, emphasis added

When you call upon Christ in repentant faith, God saves you. Salvation is the greatest work of God in the universe. Some years ago a man in a penitentiary studied a Moody correspondence course. He found Christ. In answer to one of the questions, which gave him an opportunity to express where he stood in relation to his newfound faith, he wrote down: “I am a new man in an old body.” It was a most perceptive remark. For that is what salvation is.

But salvation will go even further than that prisoner realized. One day he will be a new man in a new body. I like to call the work of salvation the signature of God—when God writes himself across

our lives. Listen to this summary of what happens to each of us who come by faith to God through Christ: (Emphasis added to the verses below.)

Regeneration—when God changes my heart: “I will **give you a new heart** and put a new spirit within you; ... and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Conversion—when God changes my life: “... **Unless you are converted** and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

Repentance—when God changes my mind: “... Bear **fruits worthy of repentance** ...” (Matthew 3:8). When God transforms our minds we change. When we believe right, we begin to behave correctly.

Adoption—when God changes my family: ... **You received the Spirit of adoption** by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God ... (Romans 8:15-16).

Sanctification—when God changes my behavior: For by one offering He has perfected forever those **who are being sanctified**. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us ...: “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them ...” (Hebrews 10:14-16).

Justification—when God changes my state: ... Having **been justified by faith, we have peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). What does it mean to be “justified”? In popular, everyday language, the word can be paraphrased: “just as if I’d never sinned.” It means that God has no record of anything ever having gone wrong in our lives.

Glorification—when God changes my place: “Father, I desire that **they also whom You gave Me may be with Me** where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).⁵ I encourage you to write these in your Bible, then believe them, live them, and share them as you act on the reality of God’s signature across your life!

Make a choice to live in hope: When God writes himself across your life through faith in Jesus Christ, you have the enduring hope that one day you will behold the brightness of Christ’s face for all eternity! No matter how dark it gets in the meantime, Jesus will whisper to your soul: “Fear not, I am with you—peace, be still!” For He has promised to never leave or forsake you; nor will He ever test you beyond what you can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). And every time you recall that *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world* (1 John 4:4, KJV), it gives you cause to keep singing His praises!

Therefore, I hope that you can joyfully sing this song to the Lord today, thanking Him for His faithfulness in giving you such sweet hope in these bitter times.

He Keeps Me Singing

There's within my heart a melody;
Jesus whispers sweet and low,
"Fear not, I am with thee, peace, be still,"
In all of life's ebb and flow.
Tho' sometimes He leads thro' waters deep,
Trials fall across the way;
Tho' sometimes the path seems rough and steep,
See His footprints all the way.
Soon He's coming back to welcome me
Far beyond the starry sky;
I shall wing my flight to worlds unknown,
I shall reign with Him on high.
Refrain:
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Sweetest name I know,
Fills my ev'ry longing, Keeps me singing as I go.

—Luther B. Bridgers, 1884-1948

There are Only Healthy Christians & Sick

Christians: Which are you?

1. The Calvary Road to Holy Living (John 14:21) Starts with Love
2. The Calvary Road to Holy Living: Trained by Grace Titus 2:11-13
3. The Calvary Road to Holy Living: Practice Daily Ephesians 4:22-24
4. The Calvary Road to Holy Living: Make a Sacred Vow Psalm 101:3
5. The Calvary Road to Holy Living: Clear Out Bad Files Hebrews 9:14
6. The Calvary Road to Holy Living: Reclaim Boldness Hebrews 10:22
7. The Calvary Road to Holy Living: Renew Consecration Romans 6:11-19

Feel the _____ of Jesus (Revelation 14)

THE TIDE TURNS IN THE _____ FOR PLANET EARTH

Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him **one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.**

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps.

—Revelation 14:1-2, emphasis added

The tide of the war for planet Earth turns in Revelation 14. In this chapter, Jesus, in His glorified presence, is standing on His holy hill, Zion, and around Him stand His servants. Beneath Zion, the beast from the abyss, empowered by Satan, has crawled ashore. On the earth, death is stalking all who refuse Satan and turn to Jesus.

In Revelation 14, right in the middle of all hell breaking loose across this planet, what do we find? One of the most touching chapters in the Bible—a chapter exposing Christ's great compassion. For

those chosen servants, the 144,000 Jewish evangelists, we find that this chapter sets forth the delights of life with Jesus.

In the first half of Revelation 14 we see that Jesus offers: **security** in the face of dangers (vv. 1-2); **joy** in the midst of desolation (v. 3); **purity** in the sea of filth (v. 4a); **truth** in a world of lies (v. 5); and **hope** in the land of doom (vv. 6-7).

In the second half of Revelation 14, we find that there is: **doom** without Jesus (vv. 8-11); **compassion** in the time of judgment (vv. 12-13); and **understanding** in a time of wrath (vv. 14-20).

Although these words in chapter 14 are directed to this special group called the 144,000, the whole book of Revelation was written to encourage the saints of all ages. So today we, too, can enjoy Jesus' security, joy, purity, truth, and hope! But side by side with all the love and compassion of Christ is the result of choosing to ignore and reject His love. Apart from Jesus there is only hopeless and indescribable torment—torment without rest.

In Revelation 14:12-13, the Holy Spirit speaks for the first time, and a note of hope sounds. As He looks down at the multitudes on earth, the Holy Spirit expresses compassion for those saints who patiently endure.

When Jesus walked on earth as a human and a servant, there were only 250 million people on the planet. Presently, there are over six billion people, but by this point in Revelation, many will have died in the Tribulation. However, as He looks at an even greater multitude than those He saw in His earthly ministry, He is moved with sympathy and will encourage His servants before sending them back out. And if they still need help, He will send an angel to preach the gospel. What a compassionate heart!

In the midst of His children's martyrdom and pain, Jesus will offer His patience, obedience, faith, and hope of blessings. God's Word is so precise and inspired that it gives understanding in the time of wrath, for apart from Jesus there is only senseless and immeasurable bloodshed.

Ray Stedman noted that before this book of Revelation is over, we will look beyond these scenes of judgment, beyond the slaughter, beyond the misery that is to come upon the earth. There is a new day of the "winepress." When "Jacob's trouble" is finally over, Israel will blossom and spread its branches throughout the whole earth like a vine; and Israel's Messiah will reign. It will be the long awaited Utopia.¹ But before that morning dawns, the long night of the human race will grow darker, much darker.

My Prayer for You in Revelation 14: Father, as we reflect upon what is coming in this chapter, we feel the sober nature of this passage—that Your judgment falls upon the earth after Your patience and mercy come to an end. It grieves our hearts to realize that so many will reject You and turn their hearts and souls away from Your mercy and grace. We see the harvest, the judgment, and that the harvester is the Lord of the harvest. You put Your messengers on this planet, and You send an angel to preach the everlasting gospel. You stand among Your servants calling all to come to You. Oh Christ, how we thank You for Your love and compassion! It strengthens our hearts to think of how merciful and gracious You are. How we pray that each of Your saints would be touched by Your compassion—that they would see as You see and have a heart of compassion as You have. Oh, that each one of us would give You our hands to serve You in the lives of others! Since people are all that can be taken to heaven with us, we want to take some with us. We want to be among those who point many to You, Lord Jesus. Touch our hearts with Your compassion and help us to see

the horror of lostness and hardness. As the apostle Paul said, “knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.” That is what You have left us to do. Help us to do it with all our hearts. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

JESUS _____ SECURITY AND JOY

... One hundred and forty-four thousand [have] His Father’s name written on their foreheads. ... And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. **They sang ... a new song before the throne** ... and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.
—Revelation 14:1b-3, emphasis added

As the world plunges into desolation and destruction, God gives us living proof of His care! With Jesus are the blameless, unstoppable witnesses—all who have security because their Father’s name is written on their foreheads. God is saying, “You are mine.” God has named all the stars, which are merely inanimate objects, and He calls them each by name—but God’s servants have the *Father’s name* written on their foreheads.

Jesus offers security in the face of dangers. Because of His seal, the saints don’t have to worry about getting the mark of the beast; they are impervious to it, and will not be tricked into wanting or taking it. As we step back and look at this scene, here is the blessing: all these servants have been deployed like commandos behind enemy lines; they are the ones who are risking their health and lives to give the gospel out during the Tribulation—and Jesus is right there in the middle of them!

Sometimes people quote Matthew 18:20 to me: “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*” But the context of Matthew 18 is church discipline where two or three witnesses are needed to turn someone over to the Lord for discipline. So I tell them that I have something even better—Jesus promised to come for just *one*: “*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20).

Stedman says that heaven, as it is pictured in the Bible, is actually another dimension of existence, just beyond the reach of our five senses. You can be in heaven at the same time that you are on earth. As I read these prophetic passages of Scripture, I am more and more convinced that this is clearly the case: the church will be with the Lord, yet the Lord will be on the earth throughout those seven turbulent years. Amazingly, although the church will be with the Lord ministering to this select group of 144,000 Jews, it will be invisible to the rest of the world.

During this time, Jesus will periodically appear to these living Jews—standing with them and empowering them for their mission. If this is true, then Jesus will be in exactly the same condition with them as He was with the eleven disciples after His Resurrection, when for a period of forty days He appeared to them from time to time. And then He ascended out of sight into heaven in a cloud. As you examine the gospel accounts of the time between the Lord’s Resurrection and Ascension, you find that He was often with them in various times, various places, and then suddenly He would not

be with them. It was as if He would step back into the realm of invisibility after appearing for a while in their midst.²

In a very real sense, we are sitting in front of God's throne right now. While we are here on earth, we are in the presence of Jesus; He is here in the spiritual realm. When He comes again, He will just step between the dimensions of spiritual heaven and physical earth. In chapter 14, we find Him standing on the earth prior to the Second Coming, for He has not yet come in the clouds of glory to reconquer the earth; He is just with His saints.

Jesus offers joy in the midst of desolation. People sing when they are happy, sad, and sometimes when they are scared—but most often when they have joy. These secure saints, the 144,000 servants of the Lord, have joy in the midst of the desolation of the planet. Everything has gone berserk: the sun is too hot; the waters are polluted; meteorites are crashing onto the earth; demons are running rampant, and yet these saints are singing a beautiful new song that rises above the screams of anguish and hatred.

Like Jeremiah in the smoking ruins of Jerusalem (see the book of Lamentations), God's faithfulness is seen anywhere and at any time. These saints express their intimacy with Jesus by a new song that no one knows but them. This is the second of three new treasures God gives His servants: (1) a new name (v.1); (2) a new song (v. 3a); and (3) a new destination (v. 3b).

When we are redeemed by the substitutionary work of Jesus on our behalf, we receive a *new name* to show that we are His new creations in Christ. We then get to live full of the Holy Spirit and experience that *new song*, which we sing all through life. (The Word of God describes nine new songs: Psalm 33:3; 40:3; 96:1; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10; Revelation 5:9; 14:3.)

If you get a report that your company is downsizing and you are out of a job, or your body is sick and is “downsizing” you right into heaven, or you have a financial crisis or some emotional tragedy, you can still have joy. How is that possible? Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. If you don't have joy in your life, you are quenching the Spirit through coupling your life to your circumstances rather than letting Him produce His fruit of joy in your spirit. Joy is not to be attached to circumstances: joy is produced internally by the welling up of the Holy Spirit within us. So these 144,000 servants have joy in the midst of desolation.

You, too, can have joy today. Ask the Spirit of God to rule in your heart, to help you detach your life from circumstances and to attach to Him.

JESUS OFFERS _____ IN THE SEA OF FILTH

They sang ... a new song before the throne ... **These are the ones who were not defiled** with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb,
—Revelation 14:3a, 4, emphasis added

In the verse above, John further explains who the servants are that sing that new song. At this time the world is intoxicated with fornication, the wine of passion (14:8), for the earth dwellers *did not repent*

of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts (9:21). So in the midst of such wickedness all over the planet, this group of servants stands out in their purity.

What does “*not defiled with women*” mean in verse 4? This phrase has been erroneously used to found all kinds of celibate cults throughout the years. It certainly means no fornication, uncleanness, or any other sexual immorality. It can also mean that they are literally like Jesus—unmarried and kept for God’s glory alone, and as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, “undistracted” by marriage. However, this is a spiritual scene: *For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ* (2 Corinthians 11:2). Does this mean that none of Paul’s converts were married? No. Paul has gone from the physical realm of adultery, fornication, and immorality to the realm of spiritual adultery, fornication, and immorality—just as John does in verse 4.

When we become Christians, we are engaged to Jesus Christ, so we should keep ourselves from other suitors. Who are those suitors? We find the answer in James 4:4-5: *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealousy?”* You and I can commit sin by loving the world.

The world is the earth-dwelling system in which a person only lives for the moment (the pleasure, the thrill, the stuff, the toys, and the entertainment) instead of being a pilgrim and stranger on the earth and looking for heaven. Since you are engaged to Jesus, and He is preparing a home for you to dwell in forever with Him, if another suitor comes to you and says, “He is gone, so spend some time with me,” you must firmly say NO. That is what the Christian life is like. Spiritual fornication is loving something that distracts us from our love for Christ. If you are attracted to the world more than to Christ, you are lusting after the world.

Our world is getting so vile: ... *It is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret* (Ephesians 5:12). I cannot tell you how many times I have been in the car listening to the news and had to turn it off to keep from hearing about the filth going on in our culture in the highest places of society. In our world there is a constant redefinition of sin. Sodomy has become “gay”; fornication and adultery have become “an affair.” But God says fornication is any mental or physical sexual contact with someone who is not your husband or wife. He would thus consider sexual pictures, sensual phone conversations, and fantasy thoughts as adultery and fornication.

Those things destroy spiritual sensitivity, so God tells us clearly: *Do not love the world* [all the lust, immorality, godlessness] *or the things in the world* [toys, trinkets, and distractions]. *If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh* [desires and pleasure], *the lust of the eyes* [chasing after stuff we see], *and the pride of life* [status and power]—*is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever* (1 John 2:15-17).

I meet people all the time who want to know the will of God, and I tell them to stay pure. You will not know the will of God if you are living in impurity. You will not know the will of God if you are not a holy, chaste bride seeking out Christ alone. If you love the world and the stuff in the world you will not know the will of God because it is enmity with God to do so. What is the world? It is the whole system that draws us away from a holy walk with God. Television is a classic example: TV has conditioned us to act superficially. The end result is that many of God’s children have become only “*hearers of the Word*” rather than “*doers of the Word*” (James 1:22-25). This, in turn, causes desensitization to the compassion of Christ. The world’s system promotes our pride, assertiveness, and aggressiveness. And our busyness prevents us from having time for people.

In contrast, those who do not defile themselves, who stay pure with Jesus Christ and seek Him, *These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes* (Revelation 14:4). The Scriptures say that compassion is a universal language that does not require translation. People saw Christ’s compassion in His eyes and His life; He did not have to declare it. A true servant of the Lamb will have His

spiritual sensitivity; they can follow the Lamb and do His will because they will be pure. So then, if you want to know God's will, stay pure. Deny sin!

JESUS OFFERS _____ IN A WORLD OF LIES

And in their mouth was found no deceit, for **they are without fault** before the throne of God.

—Revelation 14:5, emphasis added

In the company of the Lamb are those who rest in the absolute delights of His security, joy, purity, and truth. They are like Jesus of whom it was said: “[He] *committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth ...*” (1 Peter 2:22).

What is so marvelous is that the Holy Spirit presents these martyrs as the heroes of the book of Revelation. In our world it is popular to lie. People generally believe it is only a lie if you are under oath and there is a transcript, but the God of truth says: ... *Do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment* (James 5:12).

Several years ago, someone wrote a book in which the author speculated as to what would happen if everyone told the truth—the government, the military, salesmen, financial markets, and married couples. What this ungodly writer had to say only points out the fact that worldly people know that they are lying.

These servants of the Lord in Revelation 14:5 have Truth in a world of lies, for they know the Christ who says: “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6). The world, however, is so much like their father the devil: “*You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer... and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him ...*” (John 8:44).

How will these servants of the Lamb keep from becoming entrapped in the world's web of deceit? They will believe what God has revealed to them: “*If you abide in My word, ... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32).

Modern history testifies to what will happen to those who hear the Truth of the Bible preached. To illustrate, go back with me to 1931—to a living legend named C. T. Studd. After serving fifteen years in China and six in India, he invested his final twenty-one in the heart of Africa's vast, dark jungles among the fierce, cannibal, head-hunting pygmies.

Once a lean and fit professional athlete, C.T. is now gaunt and emaciated. He is hunched over, halting with each step. But in July 1931 he is surrounded by thousands of glistening black bodies wearing banana leaves. The pygmies of the heart of Africa's jungles have come to hear their beloved Bwana for the last time. He speaks to them only after over two hours of singing the songs he had so lovingly taught them: “Wounded for me, wounded for me, there

on the cross He was wounded for me, gone my transgressions and now I can sing, all because Jesus was wounded for me!”³

There in front of his cot sit 5,000 former headhunters. Once their bodies were the habitation of dark, foul fiends from the pit, but now they are temples of the living God. Once they were naked and grossly immoral lovers of darkness, but now they are not only clothed in Christ but also modestly clothed in banana leaves. Once they lived as a continuation of generations of murderers, years of darkness, and lives of savagery, but now, before their beloved father in the faith, they sit in an immense sea of white-toothed smiles. Once they were all mortal enemies, never without the weapons of war, but now no weapons of war are left, only the bond of love. With faces turned heavenward, these former enemies sit shoulder-to-shoulder, singing of the sweet by-and-by and that beautiful shore they will see some day.

Those saints were converted and transformed by the Lord through the simple passionate preaching of the Truth of God’s Word in the Bible—and that Truth had set them free! Why have believers all through the ages seen lives transformed by the preaching of the gospel? Because they simply obeyed what Jesus left them and us to do—and soon the 144,000 Tribulation servants will be doing it as well.

This company around the Lamb are thus secure, joyful, pure, and truthful; they are like Jesus, “*Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth*” (1 Peter 2:22).

On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your truthfulness? Who are you following—the father of lies or the Father of truth?

JESUS OFFERS _____ IN THE LAND OF DOOM

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth ... saying with a loud voice, “**Fear God and give glory to Him**, for the hour of His judgment has come; **and worship Him** who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

—Revelation 14:6-7, emphasis added

I do not think we are going to turn the world around. We are not going to save the planet, and the ecology is not going to get better. But I still have great hope, knowing that those I lead to Christ will not be sealed by the Antichrist because they will already be sealed by the Spirit of God. They *will* have a future and a hope! That is why we can have hope in a world of doom; we do not simply hide out, sitting on a mountaintop to wait for the end of the world. No, we rescue as many people as we can by telling them about Jesus.

These servants standing with Jesus in verses 6-7 are witnesses of the endless, unchangeable gospel. Mankind’s only hope is to bow to their Creator and reach out to their Redeemer—or face Him as judge. All who have been saved in any age (law, church, or kingdom) were only saved by the sovereign grace of God, on the basis of the work that was accomplished by our Lord’s atoning death. The eternal gospel is a proclamation to all who dwell upon the earth: every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. It is the good news that the judgment of God, so long awaited, is about to be consummated; and that the

groaning earth will be brought back from the reign of the rebel prince, and put under the sway of the Son of God.

“The rod which Satan has held over the earth has been heavy because it has been held by Satan. The rod which the Lord Jesus is about to hold over the earth is an iron rod, but it is held in the hand of the One who has said, *“My yoke is easy, and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11:30). Once more we repeat that men are saved only by the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. We believe that Adam and Eve were saved through believing God’s Word concerning the Seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15) and that in token of that salvation the Lord God made coats of skins (after having some sacrificial victim) and clothed them (Genesis 3:21). So much for the past. We believe that every blessing that will ever come to this earth or to any individual or group of individuals on it will come on the ground of Christ’s death on the cross. But the open preaching of salvation to all who will come on the simple basis of trusting God’s Word about the work that was accomplished on Calvary, is a phenomenon which begins with Pentecost”.⁴

I personally believe that the gospel has always been the same: substitutionary atonement. From the Garden of Eden, as soon as Adam and Eve fell into sin, God killed an animal and clothed Adam and Eve with the skins. He could have taken cotton fiber and spun it, but it took a blood sacrifice to atone. This is the first example of being clothed with the righteousness of a blood sacrifice. Right from the beginning it has always been substitutionary atonement. Abel’s offering on the altar was a lamb. God said that the Seed of the woman would crush the serpent’s head, and that the coming One would sacrifice himself as Isaiah says in chapter 53. The gospel has always been the same: *“Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth ...”* (Revelation 14:7).

There are three elements of the eternal gospel, which are always present.

Conviction—*“Fear God”*: If we preach a gospel without conviction, it is not the gospel of God. That is why it bothers me so much today that people can hear the gospel and desire to get saved, but not be convicted of their sinfulness that separates them from God. I thought about that a lot as a little child, and in the fall of 1962, I came to my mother and told her that I did not want to be separated from God. I did not want to go to hell. Like a little child, you should fear God: His wrath, His judgment, and separation from Him eternally!

Conversion—*“give glory to Him”*: The person who truly fears God will turn from his or her old ways and give Him glory; that is conversion. If you have never been saved from sin, you have never been saved from hell. When the Israelites came out of Egypt they wanted a savior, not a Lord. So God destroyed them. There are groups of people in churches across this nation and around the world that want a savior, but not a Lord, and God will destroy them as well. If there is no genuine and lasting repentance, there is no conversion. If there is no conviction of sin, there is no conversion that gives Him glory—that is what the Scriptures teach.

Consecration—*“worship Him”*: This is the fruit of redemption. When we genuinely fear God, we are convicted of our sin, turn to the Savior, and give Him glory. That is the necessary total change of our lives—no longer giving ourselves glory, but Him. Although we

will imperfectly do this, and fail at times, this is the longing of the heart of one who fears God. Then, when we consecrate our lives to worshipping Him, out of that worship will flow fruitful service.

God, in His infinite grace, will thus send forth a mighty angel—flying back and forth across the skies during the Tribulation—loudly proclaiming the gospel from one place to another, covering every nation and tribe, speaking in every language, so that no one at the coming judgment would be able to say he or she hadn't heard. What a compassionate Savior!

JESUS OFFERS _____ IN THE MIDST OF JUDGMENT

And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Then a third angel [said] ... with a loud voice, "**If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark** on his forehead or on his hand, **he ... shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God** He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night"

—Revelation 14:8-11, emphasis added

The passage above starts the second half of this chapter, in which we are confronted with what happens to those who exist without Jesus—eternal judgment and condemnation. But before I discuss the elements of doom that unbelievers will face, I want to further develop the first half of this fourteenth chapter, in which we see a revelation of Christ's wonderful compassion.

In Revelation 14:1-7, we see Him standing with His servants trying to save those who will come to Him and listen to Him. The most often-noted emotion of Christ's ministry was His compassion. Jesus was shown to be "*moved with compassion*" no less than thirteen times. (We all need a good dose of His compassion!) A great student of the life and ministry of Christ, the apostle Paul, said his ministry

was motivated by Christ's love. What did the compassion of Jesus look like? Let's briefly examine the top ten groups of people who move Him to compassion:

Christ's compassion is for the confused: ... He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd (Matthew 9:36; see also Mark 6:34).

Christ's compassion is for the sick and suffering: ... He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick (Matthew 14:14).

Christ's compassion is for the weak: ... "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way" (Matthew 15:32).

Christ's compassion is for the desperate: "Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt" (Matthew 18:27).

Christ's compassion is for the persistent: So Jesus had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him (Matthew 20:34).

Christ's compassion is for the helpless: Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out His hand and touched him, and said to him, "I am willing; be cleansed" (Mark 1:41; see also Mark 9:22).

Christ's compassion is for the hopeless: ... Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you" (Mark 5:19).

Christ's compassion is for the bereaved: When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep" (Luke 7:13).

Christ's compassion is for the misfortunate: "But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion" (Luke 10:33).

Christ's compassion is for the repentant: "... But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

Jesus was moved with compassion for the confused, the sick and suffering, the weak, the desperate, the persistent, the helpless, the hopeless, the bereaved, the misfortunate, and the repentant!

The Doom of Life without Jesus: When God speaks of himself as being eternal (which He does eight times in Revelation), He uses the very same word for eternal that is used for the eternal

duration of hell (three times in Revelation). So, according to God, it appears that hell lasts as long as He does—forever!

Apart from Jesus there is only hopeless and indescribable torment and judgment. The Word of God describes hell as a place of unending anguish. Jesus talked about hell more than heaven. Revelation 14:11 says that *“they have no rest day or night.”* Remember that Jesus talked about the bottomless pit and a lake of fire in which there is endless falling and no rest. There is no place to stand on to catch your breath—just endless torment.

It is not fashionable to talk about this today. A lot of the mainline denominations disavow hell; they say it is not Christian. It is more Christian than they understand, because Jesus is the One who describes it more than anyone else. The Word of God repeatedly describes hell as unending anguish: *“And they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched. They shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.”* ... *His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire* (Isaiah 66:24; Matthew 3:12; see also Matthew 13:50; Mark 9:43-49; Jude 7).

But a note of hope sounds in verses 12-13 of Revelation 14 as the Holy Spirit speaks for the first time in Revelation; [the second and final time is in 22:17, with the last gospel invitation in God’s Word.] *Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on’ ”* (Revelation 14:12-13).

“The patience of the saints” is a wonderful description of who Christians really are. *“The faith of Jesus”* means that if you have faith in Jesus Christ and keep His commands through the new birth (the regeneration of God who gives us the heart to obey Him), you are a saint. At the beginning of verse 13, John is commanded for the tenth time to write down the Word of God (see also 1:11, 19; chapters 2-3; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). We see here the last call to the earth as the angel is saying to preach the gospel.

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on” is the second of the seven beatitudes in Revelation in which God bestows His blessings. Here is a summary of the Revelation beatitudes:

Blessed are readers, hearers, and keepers (1:3)—this emphasizes the importance of the Word of God.

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord (14:13)—**this emphasizes the blessings of eternal life.**

Blessed are those watching and keeping their garments white (16:15)—**this emphasizes the Lord’s return.**

Blessed are those invited to the Lamb’s supper (19:9)—**this emphasizes the joy of Christ’s presence.**

Blessed are the participants of the first Resurrection (20:6)—**this emphasizes deliverance from death.**

Blessed are those heeding this book (22:7)—this emphasizes obedience to the Word of God.

Blessed are those with a clean robe and access to the tree of life (22:14)—**this emphasizes eternal sustenance.**

It is sad that so many today are departing from the doctrine of eternal punishment. For if they refuse to accept the gift of His grace, they must remain in their lost condition—eternally deserving, provoking, and receiving the holy wrath of God. I pray that you are among the saints who rest securely in Jesus as their eternal refuge rather than aligning yourself with those who scoff at the horrors to come!

JESUS OFFERS _____ IN THE TIME OF WRATH

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and **on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man**, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud. “Thrust

in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

—Revelation 14:14-15, emphasis added

The impenitent earth dwellers face only doom in their lives. They have told God to leave them alone, and so He will—forever: *These shall be punished with everlasting destruction **from the presence of the Lord** and from the glory of His power ...* (2 Thessalonians 1:9, emphasis added).

God responds to man’s impenitence. The greatest illustration of this is seen in the actions of Judas. He was next to Jesus Christ for three and one-half years, and yet his heart was unmoved to confess his sin and turn to Christ for salvation. Amazingly, Judas saw no beauty in Christ after all he had witnessed in Him. In the end, caring only for gain, dominated only by self, he was ready to sell the Lord for the price of a slave. Judas is a picture of what we see going on in the world in Revelation 14, and God has to do something about it. As Ray Stedman has pointed out, God has three choices in the face of human rebellion:

One: He can indulge it and allow it to go on forever. But in that case all the cruelty, injustice, hatred, pain, and death that now prevail on the earth will go on forever, too. God does not want that—and neither does man.

Two: God can force man to obey and control the human race as if it were a race of robots. But to take away our free will would be to take away our capacity to give our love to God freely. Love cannot be forced.

Three: This is God’s only real choice. He must withdraw Himself from those who refuse His love. He must let them have their way forever. Since God is necessary to our existence, the decision to reject God is a decision to plunge ourselves into the most terrible sense of loneliness and isolation a human being can know.⁵

Ultimately, we choose whether God will judge us by deciding either to accept or refuse His grace, love, and forgiveness. As a result, we are choosing everlasting life or everlasting death.

Apart from Jesus there is no other future than verses 14-20 of Revelation 14—senseless and immeasurable warfare and bloodshed. In verse 20b, *the blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs*. To have blood for 1,600 furlongs (1 furlong = 607 feet) means

180 miles. From twenty miles beyond Armageddon, that would stretch to twenty miles past Bozrah, an ancient Edomite stronghold, that is twenty miles southeast of the bottom of the Dead Sea.

How to Develop Compassion as Christ's Servants: A good place to start is to follow the areas that John Ruskin, a famous poet and art critic, first pointed out as three keys to being a good artist. Enduring artists must possess:

- (1) **An eye to see** and appreciate all the beauty they wish to capture on the canvas;
- (2) **A heart to feel** and register within the picture the atmosphere and the beauty of the scene; and
- (3) **A hand to perform** by transforming a blank canvas into an image of what the eye has seen and the heart has felt. The skills that an enduring artist must follow are the same three skills a compassionate disciple of Jesus must learn.

This study of Revelation 14 will be meaningless if you don't see the compassion of Jesus. So prayerfully examine your life in light of the following challenges.

Do you have **an eye to see** how helpless our world is? There are six billion sheep, and most of them are without a true knowledge of the Good Shepherd. There were only 250 million in Christ's day. The population of our world is twenty-four times that today! What do *you* see in a crowd? A businessman sees a potential market, an educator sees a potential classroom, and a politician sees potential voters. Nearly everyone thinks in terms of personal benefit. But Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of a crowd, and that compassion led Him to give His life on a cross of wood, writing a letter of love for the sins of the world.

Do you have **a heart to feel** how much the world needs Jesus? In the Bible, the word for compassion means "to suffer together with." This emotion of compassion constitutes a language that is understood universally. Compassion can be seen and felt by all because it is the language of the heart that needs no translation to be understood. In the twenty-first century, we have lost so much compassion in favor of instant gratification, and have a veneer-thin depth of commitment. The superficiality of emotional expression from TV has seeped into our spiritual lives. We are good actors, but often poor at feeling the pain of others. We need to ask God for a heart of compassion like Christ's—a heart that longs to see people come to Jesus!

Do you have **hands to perform** loving works in the name of Jesus? At the end of Revelation 14:13, it says, "*their works follow them.*" Do you have good works that will follow you to heaven? What ministries are you involved in today that will touch the immortal souls of people for Jesus? Can you name one? Are your hands doing the work of Jesus? Do you share His Word? Do you reach out to point them to Christ? The fruits of such a ministry will follow you to heaven. Your house and car won't; your education and degrees won't; and your

accomplishments and money won't. Are you investing your life with the compassion of Christ? If not, by His grace, start today!

Make a choice to live in hope: The most fulfilling and enduring hope you can ever have is to invest your life in others! Make a choice to live in hope by being a *vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work* (2 Timothy 2:21).

Meditate on the _____ of Jesus (Revelation 15)

SLOWING DOWN TO _____ JESUS

Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!

—Psalm 46:10, emphasis added

To worship Him who is worthy of all worship and praise is our duty and purpose of existence. The Father seeks only one thing: worship. True worship is to ascribe to Christ the honor, praise, glory, and majesty that He is worthy of—His true “worthship.” Let us now peer through the door of heaven into the chambers of the Most High.

In Revelation 15, John, the heir of the apostolic band, tried to capture with his pen that which, when Paul saw it, was inexpressible. Through the eyes of that faithful and true disciple of love who alone remained, we get to listen to the choirs of angels in numberless circles about the glassy sea and its throne as they sing His worthy praise. We get to listen to those eternal creatures chant “*Holy, holy, holy.*” And by faith’s eye we get to see with John that band which no man could number—and listen to their songs of adoration and praise.

In Revelation 15 you will discover: Jesus Christ is patient (v. 1); Jesus Christ’s saints are triumphant (vv. 2-4); Jesus Christ is victorious (vv. 5-7); and Jesus Christ is wrathful (v. 8).

Do you know this Christ the Lord who merits such praise as “*Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!*”? I exhort you to meditate on the beauty of Jesus: worship Him in the splendor of His redeeming love through His perfect patience, perfect holiness, perfect redemption, perfect justice (which has no

mercy), and perfect wrath. But to prepare each of our hearts for meditation truly worthy of the Lamb, we need to first slow down and reflect on the paradox of our time in history. For example:

We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers; wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints; we spend more, but have less; we buy more, but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families; more conveniences, but less time; we have more degrees, but less sense; more knowledge, but less judgment; more experts, but more problems; more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often. We've learned how to make a living, but not a life; we've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor. We've conquered outer space, but not inner space; we've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul; we've split the atom, but not our prejudice; we write more, but learn less; we plan more, but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush, but not to wait; we have higher incomes, but lower morals; we have more food, but less appeasement; we build more computers to hold more information to produce more copies than ever, but have less communication; we've become long on quantity, but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion; tall men, and short character; steep profits, and shallow relationships. These are the times of relative world peace, but increased domestic warfare; more leisure, but less fun; more kinds of food, but less nutrition. These are days of two incomes, but more divorce; of fancier houses, but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throw-away morality, one-night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom; a time when technology can bring the universe to our screens but the God of the Universe can't bring us to our knees¹

So what is the personal solution to all this? Begin by asking the Lord to help you slow down so that you can truly meditate on the beauty of Jesus as we go through chapter 15 this week.

My Prayer for You in Revelation 15: Oh Father, please reveal areas in my own life where I need to slow down the pace and establish Your priorities instead of my own! As we look into this very special portion of your Word, I ask for Your illuminating power to open our eyes that we might behold wonderful things from Your Word! You have forever settled Your Word in heaven, and this chapter is but a glimpse of the beauty of our Lord Jesus

Christ! Thank You for each facet of His beauty and for every word that by Your Spirit You inspired Your servants to write. Your Word is so profitable and meant to guide us in the way of Christlikeness as we, Your servants, seek to follow You wherever You go and serve You all our days. May this chapter encourage us to that end as we bow before You now. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

The Seven Bowls of Wrath Chapters 15 & 16

JESUS CHRIST IS _____

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for **in them the wrath of God is complete.**

—Revelation 15:1, emphasis added

Learning how to slow down the pace of your life to establish God's priorities instead of your own is what patience is all about. Revelation 15 is a wonderful portion of God's Word to teach us about the patience we can have in Christ.

If you recall, the sixth seal commenced the Day of the Lord: *"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"* (Revelation 6:17). If you know anything about the Bible, you know that the Lord is dragging the final judgment out for as long as He can because of His patience and mercy. He has been withholding the final blow when He will melt all His enemies: ... *The LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths* (Zechariah 14:12).

God's patience goes way back, for Jesus has been patient for a very long time. Look at Jude 14-15: Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, [for] ... their ungodly deeds ... against Him." The Lord has been waiting since the time of Enoch to execute His judgment, but His patience will come to an end in Revelation 15:8.

Do you have genuine patience? Patience is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. Amazingly, Jesus never evidences personal irritations at ignominy and wickedness during the Tribulation hour. Instead, He patiently waits while sending wave after wave of witnesses and wave after wave of good news to the earth.

Patience is the "bearing long" with people that Paul spoke of in 1 Corinthians 13. Patience is also one of the supreme attributes of God. Revelation 15:1 is so critical because it talks about how Jesus is waiting. He is waiting with the plagues, and His wrath is going to be complete. But He has waited since Enoch, since Noah, since He came and walked this earth and was rejected; He has waited

through all of the trumpets and the seals, and now He is waiting before He pours out those bowls—the final outflow of His wrath.

It is Christ's character to be gracious and longsuffering, and we should try to be like Him. Since Jesus can wait through all these terrible responses of humanity and keep pouring out His mercy on the earth, we ought to work on being patient in our own lives.

The supreme characteristic of God is His patience: "... *The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth*" (Exodus 34:6). Although God is patient, He does not forget unless we come and plead beneath the shadow of the blood of Christ: "*The LORD is longsuffering and abundant in mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He by no means clears the guilty*" (Numbers 14:18).

Remember: through the pleadings of Abraham, God withheld the destruction of Sodom until a few people were rescued; God withheld the death angel's hand when David sacrificed and stopped the plague of God; and when Moses and Aaron interceded, and ran out with the censers, it stopped the plague that was going through Israel. God is so patient that He withholds His wrath in response.

God is patient, so He gives patience: *Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus* (Romans 15:5). To get along with fellow Christians pray: "God of patience and comfort, make me patient! I need Your comfort so that I will not respond adversely to frustrating situations." Do you know how powerful a church is when its members are patient with one another? One of the great marks of maturity is patience.

Throughout the Tribulation, Jesus Christ patiently offers His salvation: The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, ... but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Ask yourself: *Am I more patient than I was three months ago, or less?* Patience is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Are you letting the Holy Spirit bear that fruit in your life? Or are you spraying the fruit killer of impatience on it? If we are not increasing in patience, it is because we are not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit.

William Barclay has this to say about the meaning of patience, as used in 2 Peter 1:6: "The word never means the spirit which sits with folded hands and simply bears things. It is victorious endurance, masculine constancy under trial. It is Christian steadfastness, the brave and courageous acceptance of everything life can do to us, and the transmuting of even the worst into another step on the upward way. It is the courageous and triumphant ability to bear things, which enables a man to pass the breaking point and not to break, and always to greet the unseen with a cheer."²

Patience is a learned art, and sometimes we need to learn a lot in certain situations. We have to learn to allow the Spirit of God to bring this forth in our lives. The opposite of patience can be seen in the signs of anger: irritability, impatience, glaring eyes, raised voice, hurtful words, explosive

actions, silent treatment, argumentative words, clenched teeth, and heavy breathing. This is not what God wants in us.

How can you stop impatient anger? Note these steps to resolving anger:

Accept responsibility for anger and its symptoms.
See your anger through the eyes of others.
View anger as an alarm for unresolved guilt.
Act quickly to resolve past guilt, offenses, failures, and bless the one making you impatient.
Acknowledge the anger of forefathers.
Regain the ground of past anger.
Fully forgive the offender.
Learn to see the benefits in tragedy.
Exchange all personal rights to God.
Establish daily accountability.

Ephesians 4 & Anger

A word of caution: fueling your anger overnight gives place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27). The tormentors are the destructive emotions of fear, guilt, depression, anger, and anxiety. The way out is to confess specific sins (1 John 1:9); claim the blood of Christ (Revelation 12:11; Colossians 2:14-15); and ask God to restore the place surrendered to Satan. God promises that you can tear down Satan's strongholds with His truth (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

The patience of Jesus is amazing—He waits so long. If it were up to us, we might have resorted to dealing with the world's rebellion with a few H-bombs! But Jesus just waits on the prayers of the saints, and then He waits still further for more prayers of the saints. Next, He allows the devil to start a shuttle

service to heaven by killing so many people in the Tribulation that the martyrs will pile up in heaven. But that is really the beauty of this chapter as Jesus continues to show us His patience.

The lesson: We should act quickly to resolve our impatience and be wrapped in the beauty of Jesus!

JESUS CHRIST'S _____ ARE TRIUMPHANT

And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who **have the victory over the beast**, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

—Revelation 15:2, emphasis added

Now I want to show you the triumph that the patience of Christ produces. “*I saw something like a sea of glass*” is not an actual sea of glass; it is *like* a sea of glass. I don’t know what it is, and we shouldn’t try to figure it out. But it is crystal clear, which is indicative of the holiness of God—nothing is hidden.

“*Mingled with fire*” (also seen in the river of fire flowing out from the throne) speaks of the fire of persecution and refinement through which these saints have gone. They “*have the victory over the beast*” and are now “*standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.*” From a human perspective, all the people standing on the sea were simply killed, and that is the end of them. But Jesus said in Mark 8:35: “... *Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it.*”

Satan will lose because these people will gain the triumph for Christ through martyrdom. Look at how many people Revelation 7:9-12 says are here: ... *I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number ... standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” All the angels ... and the elders and the four living creatures ... fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”*

This is the same group that we see in chapter 15—the martyrs of the Tribulation. Someone once asked me, “If a person takes the mark of the beast, can they go to heaven?” No, they cannot. But there will be a vast amount who will not take that mark. Do you know what the triumph of God is? Through the darkest hour of the earth, there will be the greatest revival the planet has ever known! An innumerable number of people will be saved in a very short period of time. Why? Jesus is patient. And when Jesus is patient, the saints will be triumphant as He conquers through them.

These martyrs will sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the glorious song of the Lamb (Revelation 15:3a). Don’t you think it fascinating that the first song mentioned in the Bible is in *Exodus 15*— and the final song of the Scriptures is in *Revelation 15*? Those two songs come together in this chapter because Exodus gives us “*the song of Moses*” and Revelation gives us “*the song of the Lamb.*” These two songs converge in Revelation 15:3-4.

The first song is a song of deliverance after the safe crossing of the Red Sea. Moses, through his sister Miriam, marvelously leads the nation of Israel in singing this song of triumph. Let’s look at some of its verses from Exodus 15:1-21 to see how greatly this song glorifies the Lord: *Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the LORD, and spoke, saying: “I will sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed*

gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; My father's God, and I will exalt Him" (vv. 1-2).

Note that the Israelites gave the Lord alone the glory for the triumph over their enemies. The strength that leads to ultimate victory is in God, and not ourselves: "*Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*" (v. 11). In verse 21 we see Miriam then leading the women to echo what the men sang in verse 1: *And Miriam answered them: "Sing to the LORD, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!"*

Songs of worship are to be about the Lord. The song of Moses and the song in Revelation 15 do not point at all to the singers. This is a good principle of what God expects in our worship. Today, many of our contemporary songs draw attention to the singers and to everything else but the Lord. I believe that points to one reason why the church is so weak globally—our worship is focused inwardly instead of outwardly on the Lord.

This song of Moses was stamped upon the memory of the Jews. It was sung at every Sabbath evening service in the synagogue. At every Jewish service the recital of the *Shema*, the creed of Israel, was (and still is) followed by two prayers, and one of these prayers refers to this song: "True it is that thou art Jehovah our God, and the God of our fathers, our King, and the King of our fathers, our Savior, and the Savior of our fathers, our Creator, the Rock of our Salvation, our Help and our Deliverer. Thy name is from everlasting, and there is no God beside thee. A new song did they that were delivered sing to thy name by the seashore; together did all praise and own thee King, and say,

Jehovah shall reign, World without end! Blessed be the LORD who saveth Israel.”³ I find it noteworthy that the lives of Moses and Christ parallel in these areas:

- Both were delivered in infancy from great danger.
- Both were named by God.
- Both were able to meet with God on the mountain—Moses on Mount Sinai and Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration.
- Both of them gave out the Word of God.
- Both were prophets to the people of God.
- Both were rejected by God’s people.
- Moses brought redemption from a temporary oppression in Egypt; Jesus brings redemption from the eternal penalty of sin.

It is no wonder then that the song in Revelation 15:3b-4, which is a lovely picture of Christ’s beautiful attributes, is very similar to the song of Moses. (We will go over this song in depth in tomorrow’s devotional.)

There is always a majestic backdrop to remind us of God’s unfailing purpose! What do I mean? There are eleven songs in Revelation that make up the background music to the story. They are songs of worship and triumph:

Revelation	Worship Theme	Worshippers
4:8	Holy, Holy, Holy	Living creatures
4:11	Worthy is the Creator	24 elders
5:8-10	Worthy is the Redeemer	Living creatures, 24 elders
5:11-12	Worthy is the Lamb	Creatures, elders, angels
5:13	Blessing and honor to the One on the throne	Every created being
7:9-10	Salvation belongs to God	A great multitude
7:11-12	Amen! Blessing and glory to our God forever	Angels
11:15	World’s kingdoms are now the Lord’s kingdoms	Loud voices
11:16-18	Thanksgiving to God	Elders
15:2-4	Great and marvelous God	Victors over the beast
19:1-8	Alleluias (4) for the marriage of the Lamb!	Great multitude, 24 elders, living creatures, great voices

The majestic declarations of God’s glory and greatness in praise by the angels, Creation, the redeemed, and all of these together, show the constant backdrop for the shifting scenes in Revelation 15—worship.

Behind the shifting scenes of man’s changing world of human history, portrayed by the symbols of Revelation, is an unchanging and vivid reality. In God’s eternal world: God’s purposes don’t fail; God’s plan doesn’t change; God’s Christ is always victorious!

THE _____ OF JESUS

“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”

—Revelation 15:3b-4, emphasis added

Revelation 15 contains the final song of the Scriptures. Both the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, which are very similar in content, capture well the beauty of Jesus.

Although these victorious martyrs will sing two songs, the song of the Lamb is a song which only they could learn: They sang as it were a new song ...; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth (Revelation 14:3).

These 144,000 who are with Christ will probably also know this song, will go out and share this message, and then their converts will sing it as well. We don't know what it is, but through the eyes of John we see them singing this song and then breaking forth into this beautifully combined song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

So here they are, these converts of the 144,000 Jewish missionaries, blessing the Lord! The song of Moses commemorated the greatest deliverance in the history of God's people, Israel; and the victorious martyrs, brought through the sea of persecution to the promised land of heaven, will sing that song of Moses. But the martyrs will also have their own special song. Their song is drawn from the Old Testament. Note the lines of the song and the Old Testament foundations:

“Great and marvelous are Your works” (from Psalm 92, 111, 98 and 139).

“Just and true are Your ways” (from Psalm 145:17).

“Who shall not fear ... and glorify Your name” (from Psalm 86:9).

“You alone are holy” (from 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalm 99:3; and Psalm 111:9).

“All nations shall come and worship before You” (from Psalm 86:9).

“For Your judgments have been manifested”—“The Lord has made known His salvation [victory]”—(from Psalm 98).

Do you see how this song is a complete recital of the Old Testament? Let us go through this special song of the Lamb and learn something that can affect our praise to God.

“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!” This very unique title of God is only used in Revelation, and it appears five times. Because saints praise God's works, we are to worship His power, for God is omnipotent!

“Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!” Because saints praise God's ways, we are to worship His plan, and the way that plan unfolds. That is why we should be so

thankful in our lives even for the unchangeable features: the family God put us in, the body He put us in, and the place in life He gave us. We should not chafe against that.

Are you following God's plan? Look at Revelation 14:4: ... *These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes* That includes the plan of God—they will follow God's plan; they will go the way God tells them to go. That is part of our worship; we are to worship God for His great hand leading us in our lives.

"Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy." Because saints praise God's wonders, we are to worship His perfections. God is perfect, but we are not. We should thus say to Him: "God, You are perfect in Your knowledge, perfect in Your ways, perfect in Your Word that You have revealed to us—and I worship You!"

We can cultivate our worship as we look at the power of God, the ways of God, and the wonders of His plan. You will never be disappointed if you wait for God's perfect plan. God wants you to know His will more than you want to know it. It takes a long time to know His will because God is patient, and we are not. So God lets us chafe, fight, and struggle. Then when we don't know where to turn, we turn to Him and He shows us His plan as we let His Word dwell in us.

"For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested." Because saints praise God, we are to worship not only His plan but also His purposes. We are not going to be on earth when all this happens, but God is letting us know ahead of time what will occur. Why? So that we can marvel at how wonderful God is, and how He planned all this—and then tell others!

JESUS CHRIST IS _____

... I looked, and behold, **the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.** And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.

—Revelation 15:5-7, emphasis added

This passage in Revelation 15 speaks of Jesus Christ's coming triumph. What does "*the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony*" in verse 5 signify? The Old Testament states seven elements of the tabernacle.

Element One—The Way to the Presence of God: This is seen in the shekinah—God's sign of His glorious presence from Eden onward. (It is mentioned 100 times in Revelation.) Every time God came, there was the glory cloud: in the burning bush when Moses saw Him; in the flaming cherubim as they kept Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden; over the completed tabernacle; over the completed temple; and leaving the temple in Ezekiel after the

apostasy of Israel. That cloud is the sign of God's presence. The way into God's presence is through the tabernacle of the testimony.

Jesus is our Emmanuel, God with us: "... The virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name 'Immanuel,' which is translated, 'God with us' " (Matthew 1:23).

Element Two—The Way of Access to God: The purpose is to not just get into His presence, for God *spoke* in the tabernacle. Do you remember that in the Old Testament there would be a voice over the mercy seat speaking? God was accessible to the high priest and Moses: *Moses took his tent and pitched it ... far from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of meeting. ... Everyone who sought the LORD went out to the tabernacle of meeting, which was outside the camp* (Exodus 33:7).

Jesus is the image of the invisible God: *No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him* (John 1:18). Jesus declares God. When the tabernacle of the testimony is open it is a testimony of God's presence and His accessibility.

Element Three—The Way of Forgiveness with God: "And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing ..." (Leviticus 5:5).

Jesus is our cleansing: But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). The tabernacle is open. Do you understand what is going on? We are at the high point of the Tribulation in Revelation 15—ready for the sickle to cut the grapes down and squash them. What does God do just before He does that? He opens the tabernacle and says, "I am accessible; My presence is open; My forgiveness is available." What a God of mercy we have!

Element Four—The Way of Guidance by God: Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Whenever the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle, the children of Israel would go onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not journey till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of the LORD was above the tabernacle by day, and fire was over it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys (Exodus 40:34-38).

Jesus wants to guide us: The tabernacle of the testimony opens in heaven and God is saying, "This is the way! Do you want out of this mess? Look up! Follow Me!" Of course, people won't, even

though He continues to offer: “... *I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life*” (John 8:12).

Element Five—The Way of Protection from God: Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ... They brought it into the house of Dagon and set it by Dagon. And when the people ... arose ..., there was Dagon, fallen on its face ... before the ark of the LORD. So they took Dagon and set it in its place again. And ... the next morning, there was Dagon, fallen on its face ... before the ark of the Lord. The head of Dagon and both the palms of its hands were broken off on the threshold; only Dagon’s torso was left of it (1 Samuel 5:1-4). The Philistines got the message that God’s ark was the sign of God’s protection of His people because He started smiting the Philistines wherever they took the ark.

Jesus promised us His care: “*And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand*” (John 10:28). That is why we need to tell people how to get *God’s* mark—the seal of the Holy Spirit—so that they are not eternally separated from God’s presence.

Element Six—The Way of Cleansing with God: “And he shall bring his trespass offering to the LORD The priest shall make atonement for him with the ram of the trespass offering before the LORD for his sin And the sin which he has committed shall be forgiven him” (Leviticus 19:21-22).

Jesus has opened the way for us: Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water (Hebrews 10:22).

Element Seven—The Way of Blessings from God: “... Delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father ...” (Isaiah 58:14).

Jesus alone offers the overflowing life: “... *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly*” (John 10:10). God says, “As long as you will come and worship Me at My tabernacle, I will rain My blessings on you—for I came to give you an abundant life. If you won’t come, however, I will withhold those blessings” (see Zechariah 14:17).

The next verse, Revelation 15:6, can be summarized in three words—Jesus is holy: And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their

chests girded with golden bands. These angels are dressed like Old Testament priests, which is symbolic of the holiness of Jesus.

The final verse of this passage, Revelation 15:7, can also be summarized in just three words—Jesus is eternal: Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. Jesus is God the Son—and He is eternal.

Do you know this holy, eternal Jesus? Are you worshipping Him in the beauty of holiness?

JESUS CHRIST IS _____

The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

—Revelation 15:8, emphasis added

This is one of the saddest points in Scripture! At the end of Revelation 15, Christ has run out of patience. Thus, there is something new in verse 8. There has always been a glory cloud, but never smoke. Smoke showed up on Mount Sinai because the law speaks of judgment, but never in the tabernacle or temple—except here, because God’s mercy has ended. The smoke indicates that the way to the presence of God is now closed: the way of forgiveness, guidance, cleansing, and blessing is over, and no one henceforth can enter.

Some day soon it will be too late, just as it was in the days of Noah: Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth ... and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created ..., both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them” (Genesis 6:5-7).

The smoke in Revelation 15:8 portrays God’s judgment. He is basically saying, as He did in Luke 12:20: “Fool! *This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?*” I pray that you will not be among those who hear Christ exclaim: “Fool!”—and face eternal separation from the One who created you, died for you, and yearns for you to be with Him forever!

For Christians, the greatest day of our lives will be the day when we stand alone in front of Jesus Christ and look up at Him, the One who will forever bear in His body the marks of the price of our redemption, and have Him assess our life publicly. Then we will await what we long for—His looking at us and saying: “*Well done, good and faithful servant!*”

Martin Luther, the great reformer, made a statement that I just can’t get out of my mind: “I have but two dates on my calendar: today and the day of the judgment seat of Christ!” He said that was what kept him going on translating the Bible into the vernacular and the language of his people. And that is what inspired him to continue as he stood all alone against the whole religious world. Oh, how God has used him to actually alter the course of history from a human perspective. And all because he had just two dates on his calendar!

Is your life any more complicated than that? Do you want to accomplish something? Do you want to have a life like Martin Luther’s that is still powerful after many years? Then live the simple life of two dates on your calendar: today, living for Jesus because you have a second date on your calendar—the day you are going to stand in front of Him.

Are you getting ready to appear at Christ’s throne? When we take pilgrims to Greece, the most moving spot of all is in the city of ancient Corinth. I have seen travelers who were just “tourists” for

the whole trip until they reached that spot. But there beneath the raised stone platform, called in Greek the *bema*, suddenly the awesomeness of the moment overtakes them and they see themselves at a future day standing before Christ's throne. Often tears, even deep silence, and always reverence, fill each one as the scene unfolds before their eyes.

Jesus said: "... *Whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it*" (Matthew 16:25). The real victory is not to prudently preserve our life as long as possible. Rather, as martyred Jim Elliott once said, we ought to "give what we cannot keep, to gain what we cannot lose."

RESTING IN THE _____ OF JESUS

For we are the circumcision, who **worship God in the Spirit**, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

—Philippians 3:3, emphasis added

To worship is to change. Because heaven is the worship center of the universe, to get ready to appear before Christ's throne you need to learn to worship Jesus as He deserves. For worship and praise are our duty and purpose of existence. The Father therefore seeks that we ascribe to Christ the honor, praise, glory, and majesty of which He is worthy—His true "worthship." Just as worship begins in holy expectancy, true worship ends in holy obedience. If worship does not propel us into greater obedience, it has not been worship. To stand before the Holy One of eternity is to change.

Understanding the nature of worship leads to very practical applications in our lives. For example, resentments cannot be held with the same tenacity when we enter into Christ's gracious light. As Jesus says, we need to leave our gift at the altar and go set the matter straight (Matthew 5:23-24). In worship an increased power steals its way into the heart sanctuary and an increased compassion grows in the soul.

Holy obedience saves worship from becoming an opiate, an escape from the pressing needs of modern life. Worship enables us to hear the call to serve clearly so that we respond, "*Here am I! Send me*" (see Isaiah 6:1-8).

Make a choice to live in hope: As you meditate on the beauty of Jesus—the splendor of His redeeming love shown through His perfect patience, holiness, redemption, justice, and wrath—you will find living hope that spills over into the worship that He longs for! In doing so, you can rest in His

beauty that will fill your soul to overflowing and transform you by His power so that earth's dark shadows flee as you steadily gaze on Jesus, the brightness of the Father's glory!

I exhort you to meditate on the wonderful words of this old song, and then sing it worshipfully to your Lord!

Jesus, I Am Resting, Resting

Jesus, I am resting, resting In the joy of what Thou art;
I am finding out the greatness Of Thy loving heart.
Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee, And Thy beauty fills my soul,
For by Thy transforming power Thou hast made me whole.
Simply trusting Thee, Lord Jesus, I behold Thee as Thou art,
And Thy love, so pure, so changeless, Satisfies my heart—
Satisfies its deepest longings, Meets, supplies its every need,
And surrounds me with its blessings: Thine is love indeed!
Ever lift Thy face upon me As I work and wait for Thee;
Resting 'neath Thy smile, Lord Jesus, Earth's dark shadows flee.
Brightness of my Father's glory, Sunshine of my Father's face,
Keep me ever trusting, resting, Fill me with Thy grace.

—Jean Sophia Pigott

Rejoice That You _____ Christ (Revelation 16)

_____ WITHOUT JESUS

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, **‘Depart from Me, you cursed,** into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ ”

—Matthew 25:41, emphasis added

Have you ever wondered what the world would be like without Jesus? Perhaps you yourself are seeking, but haven’t found. You are considering, but haven’t decided. You are looking, but haven’t placed your heart’s desire on Jesus Christ and willfully chosen to follow Him. If that is your situation, pay close attention to the sixteenth chapter of Revelation, which shows what life without Jesus Christ

would be like. It is the most graphic, vivid, powerful description in the Scriptures of what hell will be like. Life apart from Jesus Christ is nothing less than a living hell.

In the twenty-one dramatic verses of Revelation 16, John sees and records what happens when mankind joins the fallen angels in living without God. He wants us to see that the seven bowls of His wrath are the coming results for a world that rejects what Jesus alone can give them.

First Bowl: Human bodies will ooze malignant sores as all the evil within starts to come out—a sign of humanity’s inward corruption apart from Christ’s power.

Second Bowl: Earth’s oceans will become death washing up on every shore. The waters of the sea filled with life will become a stench of dead blood—a sign of man’s hopelessness apart from God.

Third Bowl: All water will have the stench of corruption rising from every river, stream, well, and faucet on the planet. All waters on earth will be poisoned—a sign of absolute desperation because water is as imperative as Jesus is.

Fourth Bowl: People’s bodies will burn from a solar fire pouring down from the skies. The sun that keeps life sustained on earth will flare up to blaze and burn the planet—a sign of false worship that started with sun worship which is now powerless before the Creator.

Fifth Bowl: There will be an instantaneous impenetrable darkness. From the brightness of a fiercely blazing sun to absolute blackness in the realm of the beast—a sign of the spiritual darkness that Satan brings.

Sixth Bowl: The water of the great dividing Euphrates River will dry up. A demon trio will round up Antichrist’s army to head for Armageddon. All the earth dwellers will seethe with rage toward God and hatred of their Creator—a sign that mankind will always fight against God unless the Holy Spirit brings them to a place of submission before the Father in heaven.

Seventh Bowl: As the earth dwellers gather, God unleashes the greatest earthquake of all time. More devastation occurs in that one earthquake than in all the others combined. All cities will be leveled; islands will sink, and hailstones weighing over sixty pounds will rain down upon planet Earth to obliterate all monuments and the men that built them. This is a sign of humanity’s complete helplessness apart from God.

In the final days, mankind’s unending fight with God will at last bring them the freedom they have always wanted—life without God. What does life become without God? That is what we will see as we go through the sixteenth chapter of Revelation. By this point in the Tribulation, the end has come. In a very brief span of time, the long-awaited moment has arrived. In seven swift strokes the desire of a world wanting no part of Jesus is granted. These seven bowls of plagues are for the lost; Revelation 16 is no less than a foretaste of hell. Think of how the earth dwellers will feel as they begin their inescapable plunge toward hell!

For the redeemed, however, the glory of Jesus shines from each plague. Jesus offers the ultimate security in contrast to the utter insecurity of the earth dwellers. Revelation 16 is an art gallery with

seven divinely inspired portraits of Christ. Against the darkened screen of His wrath poured out upon sin are seven glowing pictures of Jesus:

Jesus has sanctifying power (vv. 1-2). He is the One who cleanses and keeps (Jude 23-24). Have you let Him sanctify and clean you from the inside out? I am not talking about just turning over a new leaf, making promises you can't keep, but letting Him thoroughly change you from the inside out. That is Christianity.

Jesus has life-giving power (v. 3). He is the One who gives abundant life (John 10:10).

Jesus has satisfying power (vv. 4-7). He is the One who promises that we will never thirst (John 7:37-39). Are you thirsting because of sin?

Jesus has liberating power (vv. 8-9). He is the One who sets us free (John 8:31-36).

Jesus has enlightening power (vv. 10-11). He is the One who gives us daily light and true spiritual sight (John 8:12; Acts 26:18).

Jesus has conquering power (vv. 12-16). He is the One who will always lead you into triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Jesus has securing power (vv. 17-21). He is the One who gives you your ultimate eternal security (Romans 8:31-39; Hebrews 7).

Are you worshiping Jesus for His sanctifying and life-giving power? Have you been set free from sin? Do you let Jesus give you daily light in His Word? Are you following Him? Have you received His security through faith? I hope that you can answer each of these probing questions with a resounding “Yes!”

My Prayer for You in Revelation 16: Dear Father, as we think about the last moments of human history, we are amazed to see repeated blasphemy and hardened hearts. It is blatant during the Tribulation, but more subdued in our present world. But those who have heard the good news of Jesus, and yet have rejected and hardened their hearts, are actually blaspheming You in the same way as these at the end of the Tribulation will do. We thank You that You so loved that You gave, and You gave so much that You emptied the very treasure of heaven—the Lord Jesus Christ sent to earth for sinful mankind. May we not simply read the gory details of this chapter, but see the marvelous power and beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. May the glory of what You are, and what You wish to accomplish in the lives of those who will respond to You, be very present in our hearts. Lord, we pray that we will see Your power and draw upon You by allowing Your Spirit to minister the power of Jesus in our lives. That is our heart's desire. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

JESUS HAS _____ AND LIFE-GIVING POWER

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.” So **the first** went and **poured out his bowl** upon

the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Then **the second** angel **poured out his bowl** on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.

—Revelation 16:1-3, emphasis added

In this passage, we find that the world without Jesus is decaying and corrupting. Since Jesus is the One who cleanses and keeps, corruption and decay do not have to occur, for He ... *is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy* ... (Jude 24). As the first bowl is released, look at what happens to those who have spurned Christ.

The First Bowl—Malignant Sores: This judgment reveals the horrors of locked hearts.

As someone once said, "Perhaps the most terrible situation in life, is when Almighty God is powerless to gain an entry into the citadel of the human heart ... for God has given men the terrible responsibility of being able to lock their hearts against Him."

In the first bowl, malignant sores will thus ooze out the unmitigated corruption, the filth of unrepentant souls (see also Exodus 15:26; 23:25; Deuteronomy 32:39). God will let everyone see on the outside what they are really like on the inside. This is the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy of Deuteronomy 28:27, 35: *"The LORD will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. ... The LORD will strike you ... from the sole of your foot to the top of your head."*

Einstein once said, "It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man."

Judgment will not produce repentance because only God's kindness does: *"... Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?"* (Romans 2:4).

Jesus has sanctifying power. What is the lesson for the Christian in Revelation 16:1-2? Only Jesus has the power to cleanse us on the inside and keep us. At the end of verse two, those who have the mark of the beast will ooze corruption. In contrast, out of those who have the seal of the Holy Spirit will flow love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

The Second Bowl—The Sea of Death: This sea of death in Revelation 6:3 will affect the world's food chains and hydrological cycle. From time to time, off the coast of California and elsewhere, a phenomenon known as "the red tide" occurs. These red tides kill millions of fish, and poison those who eat contaminated shellfish. In 1998, one of these red tides hit Hong Kong. First the water turned yellow, but by midsummer it was thick and viscous with countless billions of dinoflagellates, tiny one-celled organisms. Miles of stinking fish fouled the beaches. Much marine life was wiped out, even bait used by fishermen died upon the hooks. Eventually the red tide subsided, only to appear again the following year. Eating fish contaminated by the tide produced severe symptoms caused by a potent nerve poison. An unchecked population explosion of toxic dinoflagellates would kill all the fish in the sea. The phenomenon is well known, but scientists do not know what causes the proliferation of these

creatures or what normally limits it. This may not fully explain what will happen when the second vial is outpoured, but it certainly illustrates it.¹

Right now, even without God's intervention, the mechanism is present on earth to kill everything in the oceans.

Jesus has life-giving power. As the Creator, He is the One who has the power to say, "Fear not!" Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, says in John 10:10: "... *I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.*" Christianity (being born again and receiving Jesus Christ) is no less than abundant life. It is an utter internal transformation from the inside out and produces life "*more abundantly*"— it just overflows.

In Revelation 16:3 we see that without Jesus there is death and hopelessness, but with Jesus we have life-giving power from the One who gives abundant life. Those who come to Christ live according to the power of an endless life. No death ... no decay ... no destruction ... no lifelessness.

JESUS HAS _____ POWER

Then **the third angel poured out his bowl** on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

—Revelation 16:4-7, emphasis added

Have you ever given thought to how important water is, and what will happen when every drop of water on the planet turns to blood?

Water is the wonder fluid; for a brew that is colorless, tasteless, odorless, and calorie free, water packs a punch. It is the only substance necessary to all life. Many organisms can live without oxygen, but none we know of can live without water. Life, and life to come, can both be reduced to a simple common denominator: no known life-form on earth can exist without water. And no life-form will ever be able to exist in eternity without Jesus, the Water of Life.

Water comes closest to being the universal solvent. While you drink from a tumbler, the water is busily dissolving molecules from your glass. It travels upward in defiance of gravity. So strongly do water molecules adhere to one another that when one evaporates from the leaf of a tree, it pulls up those behind, like links of a chain. This molecular attraction forms the surface film on which water bugs race without wetting their feet, and which permits you to float a darning needle atop a glass of water. The average American uses eighty-seven gallons a day to drink, flush, and shower. One hundred twenty gallons are needed to produce one hen's egg, and thirty-five hundred gallons per steak. With these indirect uses, our daily need soars to some two thousand gallons each. Four trillion gallons of precipitation falls on the United States each day, yet we use a mere tenth of it. None is lost:

the water that John used for baptizing Jesus still exists—its billions of molecules are now dispersed around the world.

God gives an unbelieving world a graphic picture. No water—no life. Why? To portray the spiritual truth that only Jesus satisfies; only He can give the Water of Life! To not thirst can only mean that we come to Him. For that reason, Revelation ends with a call—the last gospel invitation. The Bible begins with God seeking us and it ends the same way: ... *Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely* (Revelation 22:17).

The Third Bowl—Poisoned Waters: God is saying to a world that is plunging toward destruction: “Have you in your heart experienced the thirst that comes without Christ? Have you come to the place where you desire to have Him? Then take Christ, the Water of Life, freely!” And to the very end of the Scriptures God offers salvation. Yet, even in churches today, there are some who have never said yes to Jesus Christ and submitted to Him. They have not acknowledged that they are lost apart from Him and are thus without hope.

Hell is a place where people will have eternally unsatisfied desires for drugs, alcohol, and sex. However, those desires will be multiplied without the means to satisfy them. They will live forever in the blackness of darkness, in a bottomless pit, suffering fire with those desires just eating them up from the inside out. This is the unending consuming worm of hell—the lusts accumulated over a lifetime.

Only Jesus Christ can satisfy your righteous desires or take away the wrong ones to replace them with a spring of fresh water so that you no longer desire the saltwater of this world: *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God ...* (Psalm 42:2). Only Jesus can satisfy your soul; only God can quench your thirst.

Each day the sun evaporates a trillion tons of water from the oceans and continents and pumps it as vapor into the atmosphere—the greatest physical force at work on earth. Each day the same amount of vapor condenses and falls as rain, snow, sleet, and hail, replenishing its sources. But this is no natural lack of water; we cause our own thirst by our sin.

Jesus has satisfying power. In Revelation 16:4-7 we see that life without Jesus is endless thirst, but Jesus has the power to satisfy us so that we will never thirst: ... *“If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, ... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:37-38).

I am reminded of the fastest-growing segment of cyberspace: the thirst-inducing segment. Did you know that lust and all the accompanying products that develop lust in human beings (as in pornography and all its deviances) is like a thirsting person in the desert drinking saltwater, hoping to stop their thirst? The more they drink, the thirstier they are; it is a self-destructive pattern. Jesus says,

“If you are not in Me, you will have nothing but endless thirst.” In Christ, we will be constantly satisfied by Jesus and never experience such endless thirst.

JESUS HAS _____ POWER

Then **the fourth angel poured out his bowl** on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

—Revelation 16:8-9, emphasis added

The last words of the Old Testament pronounce a doom upon those who won't allow Jesus to be their Sun of Righteousness: “For behold, the day is coming, ... and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” says the LORD of hosts, “that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings ...” (Malachi 4:1-2).

Jesus is either the Sun of Righteousness who heals you—or the One who will burn you to stubble. The choice is yours. What is your response to Jesus Christ? Have you come to Him to heal your sin-sick soul and to give you eternal life? Or are you turning away from Him and willingly hardening your heart by locking its door to keep Jesus out (Revelation 3:20)? He will consume you if you do, and you will experience a foretaste of it in the emptiness of life right now.

The Fourth Bowl—The Ultimate Sunburn: Every year, around a million people are diagnosed with skin cancer in America, most of which is caused from an overexposure to the sun's rays. Yet people still lay out in the sun. Similarly, when God causes a solar fire to scorch all the earth dwellers, they will stubbornly face the sun's heat rather than repent. So they will curse Almighty God instead.

Listen to what John Phillips has to say in *Exploring Revelation* about Revelation 16:8-9: “The sun, in its normal state, pours out a continuous stream of high-energy particles which race toward the Earth at a peak speed of three million miles an hour. The earth is surrounded by a field of radiation, the magnetosphere, which protects it from full exposure to this deadly assault.

“God who created the sun and the Lord Jesus who lit that solar furnace will turn the thermostat up during this time of the Tribulation. Everyone will find that the earth is a prison house and they are going to be trapped. This will be much like when irresponsible parents leave their child locked in the car and the heat inside builds up and incapacitates or even kills

the child. God is going to let this planet become a locked prison house and it is going to get hotter and hotter until people are scorched.”²

So Jesus, who can free men from doom and liberate them from damnation, will *still* be rejected. What a contrast of choices—to be burned up or blessed beyond description! Have you made your choice?

Jesus has liberating power. Without Jesus, life on earth is a burning prison house (Revelation 16:8-9). But He has the power to set the prisoner free, and “*If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed*” (John 8:36; see also 8:31-35). This is what is wonderful about Christ—He liberates us and breaks the power of sin. However, the world doesn’t want Jesus, and so they are imprisoned.

To all who look to Him, Jesus is liberator in three powerful ways: (1) He leads us in triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14); (2) He crucifies our flesh so that we can die daily to self (Galatians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 15:31); and (3) He washes (KJV) and releases (NASB) us from our sins (Revelation 1:5). Are you in the triumphal procession? Are you dying daily to your flesh? When you fall, do you let Him wash you?

JESUS HAS _____ POWER

Then **the fifth angel poured out his bowl** on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

—Revelation 16:10-11, emphasis added

The next plague is strikingly similar to the ninth plague upon Egypt in Exodus 10:21-29. They will taste the blackness of hell forever. There is one thing that people don’t realize about hell: it is not only fire but also dark fire—it is blackness of darkness. Many times when I preached in the bar districts of southern mill towns, those men would tell me that they would be with their friends in hell. I told them that they would not see their friends there. It will be blackness of darkness: the ultimate loneliness, forever falling in the bottomless pit, with black fire consuming you on the inside and outside.

The Fifth Bowl—Utter Darkness: The bowls will be poured out over a very quick period of time, maybe a month or less. Here, people will still have their sores from the first bowl, and they can smell the dead fish and sea creatures from the oceans and waterways. When they run water to wash off their sores, they will find blood coming out of their faucets.

And while they deal with that, the blazing heat will come. And now they will experience absolute darkness and pain.

According to Ray Stedman, the scope of this bowl of judgment is limited to the realm of the beast—or the revived Roman Empire of Western Europe. This judgment involves a great part of the earth, causing a sudden and unexplainable darkness to fall. Stedman writes:

This is not the first time such a phenomenon has occurred. In the middle of the day on May 19, 1780, the entire region of New England was covered by darkness—a day which has become fixed in New England history as The Dark Day. The mysterious blackout lasted for several hours.

In the early afternoon of March 19, 1886, a similar zone of darkness moved across central Wisconsin, causing the sky to turn from a bright cloud-dappled blue to midnight black in the space of about a minute. This darkness blanketed several villages and towns to the west of Lake Winnebago and lasted about ten minutes. Similar unexplained occurrences of sudden darkness have occurred in Memphis, Tennessee (December 1904), Louisville, Kentucky (March 1911), and other places and times in the United States and around the world. All of these events have two things in common: (1) no one was ever able to explain these events in terms of a known phenomenon such as an eclipse, and (2) most of the people who experienced these events were filled with terror, believing the end of the world had come. The events in the sky or beyond the sky, which caused these midday nightfall's, might have been the same as that which caused three hours of darkness during the crucifixion of Christ.³

In all these earlier events of unexplained darkness, most of the people believed that the end of the world was upon them. They soon discovered that was not true, but when the fifth bowl is poured out, there will be no doubt in the minds of the earth dwellers that the end has indeed come—and yet they still will not repent. Note three penetrating truths:

Closed hearts face judgment. Those who would not embrace the true Light of the World will now face the horrors of absolute darkness. But those who would embrace the true Light of the World—trusting, embracing, and receiving Christ as the Light of Salvation—will never be in impenetrable darkness!

The most horrible judgment is the blackness of darkness in hell. Jesus stands in the way and only you can turn Him down or take Him in.

Jesus is light and salvation. Do you seek His light? Do you walk in His light?

I can't emphasize this enough: the most horrible judgment of all is associated with the hopelessness that the blackness of darkness brings. Egypt's plagues parallel the final judgment of God: the death angel came after the blackness (Exodus 10:21-29; see also Joel 2:2, 10; Amos 5:18, 20; Zephaniah 1:15). Jesus warned of the ultimate judgment, and that the plagues on Egypt (Exodus) and the day of the Lord (Revelation 6-19) were only a foretaste of the horrors to come (see Matthew 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:15; 24:29, 50; 25:30; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 13). Where is the hope in all this?

Jesus has enlightening power. Since closed hearts face judgment, hope is found by opening your heart to Christ. In Revelation 16:10-11, we see that Jesus has the power to give daily light and

true spiritual sight (John 8:12; Acts 26:18). Because judgment in hell is blackest darkness, you can choose to avoid it by meeting and embracing Jesus, who is light and salvation.

Without Jesus there is impenetrable darkness. Because *“men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil,”* God now lets the world experience what they want. The impenetrable darkness causes them to chew and gnaw on their own tongues. They are in such pain that they can do nothing but inflict more pain on themselves because of the horror.

With Jesus, there is endless enlightening power from the One who gives us daily light and true spiritual sight. In Acts 26:17-18, Jesus said in His appearance to Saul (Paul): *“I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”* That is the power of Jesus!

In light of all this, and the terrifying results if you make the wrong choice, I exhort you to prayerfully examine yourself to see if you have really opened your heart’s door to Christ!

JESUS HAS _____ POWER

Then **the sixth angel poured out his bowl** on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

—Revelation 16:12-16, emphasis added

The Sixth Bowl—Called to Armageddon: The time has come for the fighting of that final war of the age, the name of which has become a byword among men since John first wrote it down—Armageddon! God has chosen the Holy Land as the stage upon which two crucial events take place, one on a mountain, and one on a plain. Mount Calvary and the Plain of Megiddo are the two altars of sacrifice that dominate the history of the world.⁴

What is the location of the battle? Dr. Herman Hoyt describes the location as follows: “The staggering dimensions of this conflict can scarcely be conceived by man. The battlefield will stretch from Megiddo on the north (Zech. 12:11; Revelation 16:16) to Edom on the south (Is. 34:5, 6; 63:1), a distance of sixteen hundred furlongs— approximately two hundred miles. It will reach from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the hills of Moab on the east, a distance of almost one hundred miles. It will include the Valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3:2, 12) and the Plains of Esdraelon. At the center of the entire area will be the city of Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1, 2). Into this area the multiplied millions of men, doubtless approaching 400 million, will be crowded for the final holocaust of humanity. The kings with their armies will come from the north and the south, from the east and from the west. ... In the most dramatic

sense this will be the 'Valley of decision' for humanity (Joel 3:14) and the great winepress into which will be poured the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God (Revelation 19:15)."⁵

What will draw all the nations of the world into the area of Armageddon? They will gather themselves there for perhaps various reasons. It would seem that the following are of the more important reasons.

The Sovereignty of God: In at least five distinct passages, we are told that God himself will gather the nations here: Isaiah 34:2; Joel 3:2; Zechariah 14:2; Zephaniah 3:8; and Revelation 16:16 (because of the deception of Satan [Revelation 16:13-14]).

Three special unclean spirits will trick the nations into gathering at Armageddon because of their devilish hatred of Christ (Psalm 2:1-3; Revelation 11:18). The nations, led by Antichrist, will doubtless realize the imminent return of Christ (Revelation 11:15; 12:12). They will also be aware of His touching down on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4; Acts 1:9-12). Thus, it is not unreasonable to assume that they will gather in that area to destroy Him at the moment of His return to earth!

The Destruction of Jerusalem: Their end is **inescapable**. Their defeat is **ultimate**. Our King is **unconquerable**. Perhaps the saddest event during the Tribulation will be the siege and destruction of the Holy City. This will be the forty-seventh and last takeover of the beloved city of David. Consider what Jesus said in Luke 21:20: *"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near"* (see also Zechariah 12:2 and 14:2). Christ saw a near and far fulfillment in this verse. In A.D. 70 the early church remembered this verse and fled to Pella so that none were trapped in the city. But Matthew 24 shows that Christ's words stretch far beyond this to the final siege and attack of God's chosen people of promise—the Jews. When these two events transpire, both the angels in paradise and the demons in perdition will surely hold their breath.

Jesus has conquering power. In Revelation 16:12-16, we see that without Jesus there is only enslavement to demon masters because these demons trick and lure people. The Scriptures say that all idols are demons. I find it very interesting that there are not many world religions—only many facets of Satan's kingdom. Every false religion in the world has demons behind it. There is only ONE revelation of the truth of Jesus Christ: everything else (even the ones who smile on TV and are family friendly) are inspired by demons. Only Jesus has the conquering power to always lead us into triumph (2 Corinthians. 2:14). The way for someone to keep from getting the mark of the beast is to be sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Are you experiencing the triumph of Christ? When I take groups to the Holy Land and we go to the Plain of Megiddo, I always say the same thing: "Most of you who are here will probably never come back again on a bus. But all of you are going to come back on a horse." The Scriptures say that the whole world will converge there. The earth dwellers, following their demon masters, will surround Jerusalem from Megiddo all the way past Jerusalem down into the region below the Dead Sea. Those hundreds of millions of people will try to fight against God; and at that climactic moment the sky will split and the King of Kings—Jesus Christ—will come on a white horse! And all of us will be coming behind Him flying through the air! You and I will have an aerial view, coming in behind the greatest

leader of all time, the great tour guide, Jesus Christ himself, as He comes down to speak a word and incinerate that army of hundreds of millions.

Zechariah 12:10 tells us exactly what will happen: “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.”

Zechariah 14:12-13 says that He is coming though the air and, as He comes, He will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is the Second Coming proper. The mount then splits in two: *And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet [they start melting], their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues [speaking blasphemous things against God] shall dissolve in their mouths. It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the LORD will be among them*

Christians, however, are more than conquerors! Remember: we are assured of victory in Jesus “*who always leads us in triumph in Christ*” (2 Corinthians 2:14). So in verses 12-16 of Revelation 16, Jesus has conquering power as the One who always leads us into triumph.

What kind of response should we have to this truth? We need to establish the right priorities—God’s! For God offers us an unshakable kingdom (Hebrews 12:25-29). So don’t put your treasures where they are going to be destroyed, because Jesus has called us to have an unwavering focus (2 Peter 3:10-18).

The end is coming. The world is going to fall apart. Mankind and life as we now know it will soon cease to exist. So what does God want now that we are listening to His Revelation? He wants us to worship His Son!

JESUS HAS _____ POWER

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each

hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

—Revelation 16:17-21, emphasis added

Against the rumble of the seventh bowl's massive quake comes the final glorious portrait of Christ!

The Seventh Bowl—A Massive Earthquake: As we study this mega-quake, the “Big One” that has long been feared, allow yourself to hold on to the immense and powerful security we have in Christ.

The judgments of Revelation 16:17-21 I take to be literal. What is described here is very possible with today's weapons. Other than the hail and lightning, the same effects would result from both hydrogen and plutonium bombs. Consider what Lehman Strauss has to say about this:

“It is done!” Here is the perfecting of the judgments, the consummation of God's wrath, the final overthrow of all opposition. Once before our Lord uttered similar words from the cross when He cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30), and at the time there was an earthquake (Matthew 27:51). But then He was bearing the judgment for man's sin. However, the next time He speaks of a finished work, it will be the consummation of judgment upon all who have rejected Him.

The seventh angel tips the seventh bowl of judgment in “the air,” the present headquarters of Satan (Ephesians 2:2), followed by thunders, lightning, and hailstones weighing upwards to one hundred pounds. This is the final destruction of every religious, political, and educational institution that man has built apart from God. It is the collapse of all man's hopes and dreams. But with all of this, men still refuse to submit to God's rule. All that men consider stable, they must watch crumble. Many people marvel at such descriptions of the severity of God. I marvel at the unconcern and wickedness of men's hearts.⁶

Have you ever looked at a map of the fault lines of the earth? Like an egg, God has cracked the earth just right for this moment. Note where they run: from Alaska to Chile, from Siberia to New Zealand, from the southern Mediterranean fanning out across the Mideast and then across Asia and south to the heart of Africa. When those tectonic plates move in one quake, the power of 20,000 nuclear bombs is unleashed. On December 26, 2004, the resultant tsunami from just one quake killed 150,000-plus souls. And in Pakistan and India, over 70,000 lost their lives in a quake in the fall of 2005. With more far-reaching devastation than that ahead, our ultimate security can only be found in Jesus.

Jesus has securing power. In verses 17-21 of Revelation 16, we see that without Jesus there can only be hopeless destruction. As the world converges on Jerusalem in Satan's last effort to destroy the Jews, God will convulse the earth and obliterate them with hailstones. But with Jesus there is

securing power from the One who gives us our ultimate eternal security (Romans 8:31-39; Hebrews 7).

On Mount Calvary, grace redeemed the world by the sacrifice of God's Son. On the plains of Megiddo vengeance offers up the armies of the world in a sacrifice of doom. Both are blood baths; both are the descent of wrath upon sin. And both are brought about by God's bitterest foes who, in spite of themselves, work out God's perfect and sovereign will. Across both Mount Calvary and the plains of Megiddo can be written the words of Peter: "*The Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done*" (Acts 4:27-28). From each of these bloodbaths proceeds a supper: one a feast of remembrance for the people of God, and the other a feast of retribution for the carrion.

Make a choice to live in hope: At Calvary there rang up to the gates of heaven a victorious cry, "*It is finished!*" And at Armageddon there rings down to earth an answering cry from the temple gates in glory, "*It is done!*"

Both events shake the earth—the quake of Matthew 27:51-54 at Christ's Resurrection and here in Revelation 16:18, the greatest quake of all time. Both events attack and conquer Satan's domain. At Christ's death the graves opened and saints were raised from death (contrary to Satan's power); in Revelation 16 the seven bowls will be poured out on the air—the present headquarters of Satan.

Both events represent a path: which are you on? One leads to the enduring hope of eternal bliss in the presence of your glorious Savior, Jesus Christ. The other leads to utter hopelessness and

devastation with the ultimate destiny of eternal suffering in hell with the devil and his fallen angels— forever separated from the God who loved you and gave himself for you.

Jesus has sanctifying, life-giving, satisfying, liberating, enlightening, conquering, and securing power. Faith in this beautiful Jesus is the victory that overcomes the world! So rejoice if you have Christ—and sing this wonderful old song with joy in your heart to Him!

Faith Is the Victory

Encamped along the hills of light, Ye Christian soldiers rise,
And press the battle ere the night Shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below, Let all our strength be hurled;
Faith is the victory, we know, That overcomes the world.
His banner over us is love, Our sword the Word of God;
We tread the road the saints above With shouts of triumph trod.
By faith they, like a whirlwind's breath, Swept on o'er every field;
The faith by which they conquered death Is still our shining shield.
To him who overcomes the foe White raiment shall be giv'n;
Before the angels he shall know His name confessed in heav'n.
Then onward from the hills of light, Our hearts with love aflame;
We'll vanquish all the hosts of night, In Jesus' conqu'ring name.
Refrain:
Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory!
O glorious victory, That overcomes the world.

—John H. Yates, 1837-1900

The Armageddon Scenario Daniel 11

Mount Megiddo

Life as God Intended it to Be Psalm 16:11

Understand the True _____ of Jesus (Revelation 17)

THE TRUE BRIDE OF JESUS

I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For **I have betrothed you to one husband**, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

—2 Corinthians 11:2, emphasis added

In Revelation 17 we find the collapse of the apostate world's church. In the process we see Satan's harlot bride: the delusion of religion. From Eden onward, Satan has been building his church. Although Eve was tempted and fell into sin, she never joined the old serpent's assembly. Cain was Satan's first member (1 John 3:12), and that church has flourished ever since.

Today the church of Satan has many congregations. Whenever the God of Scripture is left out, there is only one other source of authority—Satan. Some followers meet in the ivory towers of academia where God is banished from education. Other congregations include those masses who ignore God altogether, and some even worship Satan directly. But the most insidious congregations meet in churches, synagogues, mosques, cathedrals, and temples where organized religion stresses the achievements of humans working their way to God. This “church of good works” promotes self-righteousness: “I will do it my way.” When you join such a church, you are required to “follow the rules”—and hope that the good outweighs the bad in the balance of religions. This religion deceives mankind into thinking that there are many ways to God, and many gods to seek. Refusing to acknowledge that they were created in God's image, these followers create their god in their *own* image instead.

In the seventeenth chapter we see Satan's ongoing system of counterfeiting the true church, the true worship, and the true seeking of God. Revelation 17 can therefore be divided into these sections:

Satan's plan **exposed** (vv. 1-6);
Satan's plan **explained** (vv. 7-15); and
Satan's plan **extinguished** (vv. 16-18).

To pass off counterfeit money, I would not show you a blue twenty-dollar bill, because right away you could tell it is a fake. The best way to fool someone is to choose currency that looks as much like the genuine article as possible. Most who talk and think about Satan's church think of warlocks, witches, and human sacrifices. But I don't think he spends much time on that. His goal is not to make a “blue twenty-dollar bill” but to make one that looks exactly like the real thing. Therefore, Satan slyly represents the real thing as closely as possible while still having a deadly difference that is damnable. So when you think of Satan's church, don't be tricked into assuming that it simply involves

Buddha, animists, and stone gods in the jungle. No, his church will also have Christ, the Bible, and words that are familiar to Christians. The deadly difference that is damnable is that the reality of the substitutionary work of Christ, and the essence of the gospel of grace, will be missing. That is Satan's counterfeit church.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost and make them His bride. He gave himself to purchase her from sin and damnation. Jesus ever lives as a Great High Priest to purify and cleanse His bride from all defilement. The true bride of Jesus is a pure and chaste virgin, washed in the blood of the Lamb, sealed by the Holy Spirit, and awaiting the day of marriage to Jesus.

Satan also has a bride. We meet her in Revelation 17. She is a drunken, licentious harlot. She is the full-grown woman of the Tower of Babel. She is the queen of heaven of the Old Testament. She is the mystery religion in the cults of the Near and Far East. She is the one-world church of the World Council of Churches and National Council of Churches of America. Nothing is more satanic and deceptive in the entire world than the ecumenical (one united) church movement. God hates religious deception! She is also the embodiment of a false Christianity, led by a false Christ and embodied in the image of the very mother of Jesus. That is why John was so shocked. No other beast in sixteen chapters of death, demonism, and destruction shocked him until he saw this false harlot bride.

As we start this difficult topic that is so crucial to the future, please pray that God will open your understanding about the end of days.

My Prayer for You in Revelation 17: Dear heavenly Father, bless us with Your enlightening power. Open our eyes to behold wonderful truths from Your Word. May the humility of Christ, the insights of Your Spirit, and Your blessed plan be present in our lives. As we increase in knowledge, may we not become puffed up with pride, but rather humbly receive Your engrafted Word that we may grow in Christlikeness. We pray that in Jesus' name and love we will go out to reach the world around us—the world that is dying without hope of the Savior. Help us to be constantly ready to step heavenward, and to know less of

this world as our home and be more expectant of heaven. We pray all this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

Mystery Babylon Revelation 17 & 18

- The Great Whore 17
 - Rides the Beast with 7 heads, 10 horns
 - Mother of Harlots and Abominations
 - Drunk with the blood of the saints
- Babylon the Great (City) 18
 - Kings
 - Merchants
 - Those that trade by sea

The Two Women

The Seven Bowls of Wrath

SATAN'S PLAN _____

And no wonder! For **Satan ... transforms himself** into an angel of light.

— 2 Corinthians 11:14, emphasis added

The seventeenth chapter of Revelation describes the doom of the Babylonian system. This system is seen as a woman portrayed as a harlot. She seems to be a symbol of Satan's world religion. This chapter records the demise of the counterfeit church Satan founded at Eden—the one he has worked on ceaselessly ever since. The beast (Satan's incarnation as a false Jesus) finally destroys the apostate church and sets up unhindered satanic worship (via the beast and false prophet's work). To make this happen, Satan's ultimate goals in the world today are to forge global unity politically, religiously, and financially.

In Revelation 17, as God's Word unmasks the apostasy of false religions, we discover the true bride of Jesus. God reveals that the true bride is made up of His own saints who are "*called, chosen, and faithful*" (17:14). They are Christians who are called by God to salvation, chosen by God because He

placed His love on us, and faithful to the One who called us. What a beautiful description of the church!

There is a very significant contrast between the two women of Revelation: God's saints are seen in Revelation 12 and Satan's church is revealed in Revelation 17. God's way is a narrow path, but Satan's way is a broad path. Yet both are seemingly headed in the same direction. God's way is narrow and straight—it is a hard path and few find it (Matthew 7:13-14). However, Satan's way is broad, and the path is easy and level. In fact, the devil gives you a nice little slant so you can coast along. In contrast, God's path is slanted upward, and it is difficult to climb.

God's way is exclusive, which is what bothers people so much. In fact, in a United Nations forum on global religion, the members discussed the bothersome exclusiveness of Christianity. In San Francisco there is now a group seeking to unite all the religions of the world. As they see it, a hindrance to such unity is the small part of religion in Christianity that they call "exclusive"—those who are devoutly committed to following God and His Word. The Bible, God, and His church with its so-called exclusiveness are thus continually attacked; satanic inclusiveness—where anybody can believe anything and go Satan's way—is lauded.

God's way is the true church; Satan's way is the false church. God has a true bride; Satan has a false bride. God says there is no other name under heaven whereby you must be saved. Satan says the way is ecumenical: Muslims, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses believe in one god, so that is good; Hindus, down deep, don't believe in one god, but they believe in truth, so they are also good. They find a way for every belief to fit in, and that is called ecumenical inclusivism.

God says there is one way; Satan says there are many ways. God says that we are to look for a heavenly destination; most satanic, ecumenical religions put their focus on the earth. It is an earthly way, and most of the people in these religions are involved in preserving and worshiping the planet Earth.

God's way is Jerusalem; Satan's way is Babylon. God's way is the city of peace; Satan's way is the city of confusion.

God speaks in spiritual terms; Satan speaks in fleshly terms. God talks about an internal transformation; Satan talks about an external reformation. God is the God of Creation since He initiates; Satan is the god of evolution as things just somehow happen. God is a God of love; Satan is a god of hate.

In God we have spiritual worship that is invisible; no images are involved. Satan is always associated with idolatry. Look at even the self-professed, not-idolatrous Muslims: how do they worship? At the Kabala they worship massed around a black stone in Mecca.

Spiritual worship is at the heart of God's true church; idolatry is at the heart of all earthly religions.

God's way is divine; Satan's way is humanistic. God's way leads to contentment; Satan's way always leads to covetousness. God's way is appropriated by faith; Satan's way is merely intellectually appropriated.

God's way is through the Spirit; Satan's way is through religious rituals and works.

God's way put Christ on a cross of shame; Satan's way puts a crown of pride on men. God's way is a pure bride; Satan's way is a wicked, unfaithful, impure harlot.

Which way have you been following?

SATAN'S PLAN _____

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, **giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons.**

—1 Timothy 4:1, emphasis added

Revelation 17 records the demise of Satan's church. He began building his church in the Garden of Eden in anticipation of the moment when he can install his false Christ at the head of it. At that time he will destroy the scaffolding that built the church. That is why there is going to be a complete break with organized religion sometime in the Tribulation. The most likely time is when the image is placed in the temple of the Jews. All the earth dwellers who were never converted (those never born again) are going to be shocked when the woman portrayed as a harlot is destroyed and the beast installs himself as Christ and demands to be worshiped. Basically, *the beast is Satan's incarnation as the false Jesus.*

Satan's ultimate goals in the world today are to forge global unity politically, religiously and financially. He doesn't care whether Antichrist is called Christ or Satan—just that he is worshiped instead of God. He is content to be called Buddha, Confucius, Mohammad, or any name at all as long as you are not worshiping the true God.

Satan is orchestrating a worldwide political unity (the seven heads of Revelation 17 speak of totality of rule). It is not the world that thought up the concept of the United Nations; Satan is behind the scenes working in men's minds and hearts to establish a one-world political unity: *All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world [Satan is interested in a united earth]. ... He causes all ... to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name* (Revelation 13:8, 16-17).

Satan desires worldwide financial and business unity. He is also looking for a worldwide financial organization (Revelation 13:17). Why is that so critical? Because the one who controls the purse strings is really in charge. This is very interesting: the more you study prophecy the more you realize that it won't be long before we will know who is really committed in the church. As soon as the government moves a little bit further, perhaps through an economic downturn or a non-linearity

in the global economy, there are going to be some changes. When that happens, I am sure that church giving and similar kinds of donations will no longer be tax deductible. It will then be very unprofitable to be a Christian. Right now, it is very profitable for a lot of people; it will get you votes, and you are looked upon as good. But as soon as there is a financial, social, and political step back from Christianity, there will be fallout. Whenever it becomes politically incorrect to be a Christian, like it was for so many years in Eastern Europe, you will be denied privileges. Just as there have been racial barriers in this country, there will be religious barriers.

Satan desires worldwide spiritual and religious unity. This will be achieved as the beast is worshiped (Revelation 13:8, 11-12; 14:9; 16:2), the beast is beloved (Revelation 13:3), the beast is honored (Revelation 13:8), and the beast is confidently followed (Revelation 13:4).

Because Satan has to control the purse strings, there has to be a global financial system. When that happens, a political control will follow right behind, and then a worldwide religion to pull together this worship. That is what it says in Revelation 13:8a, 11-12: *All who dwell on the earth will worship him, ... Then I saw another beast ... And he exercises all the authority of the first beast ..., and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.*

The same concept of global worship appears in Revelation 14:9-10a: ... “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark ..., he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God ...” In Revelation 16:2 we see God’s wrath being poured out on the First Church of Antichrist when ... a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

This reminds me of a book by Peter Kreeft—*Ecumenical Jihad*, which I read in part. On the back cover, two well-known Christians recommend its reading. Do you know what the book is about? Briefly stated, the author, a Dutch theologian, was out surfing, got hit on the head, and had an out-of-body experience and stepped into heaven. The first to supposedly greet him and shake his hand in heaven was Confucius. The theologian asked him, “What are you doing here?” Confucius explained that he believed in one God, too, and assured him that it was the same god. Then he met Buddha and was really shocked. Buddha told him that the four laws of Buddhism are exactly what he, the theologian, believed. After thinking about it, he answered Buddha saying, “Yes, I guess I do.” Next, he met Mohammed and asked, “Mohammed, you are in heaven?” He said, “Yes, I believe in Mary, too.” And I thought: *Okay, this must be a joke.* Then the theologian met Moses in this out-of-body experience in heaven. Moses reportedly informed him, “Yes, Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, and a lot of other people are here because we all are seeking the same thing. We are seeking to worship Jesus and his mother.”¹

I shut the book right then. But as I shut it, on the back cover I noticed this recommendation by J. I. Packer: “Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox alike need to ponder Peter Kreeft’s vision of things—preferably in discussion. **What if he is right?**”² (emphasis added.)

To question whether something that God says is wrong—is *wrong*, and it is dangerous. For example, if parents tell their child no, that child shouldn’t ask a question that directly controverts what they said because that is a rebellious response. So then, as God’s children, we shouldn’t ask if what Kreeft says is true because we already know it is not.

What Jesus promised is that this coming global church is not going to be a church of snake handlers and demon worshipers. It is going to be a church of purported Christ worshipers. Satan will form his

First Church of Antichrist *in place of* Christ—not *against* Christ. Members will worship a convenient Christ—a Christ that anyone can believe in because he doesn't offend them.

Jesus said, "*He who is not with Me is against Me ...*" (Matthew 12:30a). There can be no neutrality in this conflict of the ages: you are either an earth dweller who will worship the Antichrist, or a pilgrim who will be raptured before the Tribulation to worship and enjoy the Lord God Almighty forever!

WHO IS THE _____ ON THE BEAST?

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you **the judgment of the great harlot** who sits on many waters."

— Revelation 17:1, emphasis added

The woman of chapter 17 is in great contrast to the woman of chapter 12, who is of God. There are several clear identifying marks of the harlot bride of Satan in Revelation 17. If you think with me, you will understand what the apostle John is talking about. As we compare current events to the Scriptures, it gives us a good illustration of what may be the Revelation 17 scenario.³

The harlot is the apostate church. I personally believe that the apostate church will be the Roman Catholic Church merged with all the world religions. You may not believe that they would ever do that, but they already are. That is the horror of this. Most Americans don't pay any attention to this fact, but everyone else in the world knows.

The woman is a harlot: Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters ..." (Revelation 17:1). A harlot (prostitute) is a woman who has promised, but not kept her promise. It is a woman without faithfulness in spiritual worship. She is a spiritual fornicator—the great whore "... with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication ..." (17:2).

In verse 3 we see that the woman of chapter 17 is ungodly: ... *I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.* The only thing that conspicuously qualifies here is the Vatican and the Roman Catholic Church. A newspaper article reported that in 1986 the leaders of the world's major religions gathered together with Pope John Paul II in Assisi, Italy.⁴ In addition to an immense group of protestant religious leaders, those present with all their objects of worship included snake worshipers, fire worshipers, spiritists, animists, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, and North American Indian witch doctors. They all came to pray for peace. The Buddhists were allowed to place a drape over the altar of the Catholic church, add their little idols of Buddha, and worship. After the Buddhists took that down, the witch doctors were permitted to come in and dance around in their trance as they called out to their great spirit god. Next were the fire worshipers, the animists, and then all the pagan worshipers with the Dali Lama. The gathering allowed every

religious group to come and worship as they saw fit because they said, “We are all seeking the same god.”

This is the only thing that was true in the whole article: they are all seeking the same god—and that is the problem. The god of this world is not sought on an altar that is given over to snakes, fire, images, great spirit gods, and occult trances. There is only one entity that has continuously sought and conspicuously promoted spiritual fornication, and that is the ecumenical movement that shows up in many world religions, including the Roman Catholic Church. After 1986, Pope John Paul II sought to gather every religious leader of the world, and he found them all willing to make a pilgrimage to his doorstep.

The harlot wears purple and scarlet. This woman is not only a harlot and a woman, she *was arrayed in purple and scarlet ... (17:4a)*. If you have ever watched any of these religious enclaves on the news, purple and scarlet is another identifier pointing to Rome whose external precious treasures of spiritual trappings are to make her beautiful. Purple and scarlet are the colors of the cardinals and the Roman religious system; they are also the two colors of the Roman Empire.

In the ancient world, purple was the most valuable and exquisite material for making clothing. Because it was so costly, only the Caesars and the very wealthy could afford it. That is why they threw a purple robe on Jesus—to make fun of Him; they hit Him with a stick because they knew He could never afford such a robe. It was all a big joke to them. The Roman Catholic Church is conspicuous in the external precious treasures—the spiritual trappings. The first floor’s artwork in St. Peter’s Cathedral is incalculable in its value. Some of those sculptures are forty feet high and twenty feet wide. They are worth hundreds of millions of dollars, and St. Peter’s Cathedral is just one of thousands of buildings and businesses owned by the Roman Catholic Church around the world.

The harlot is wealthy beyond calculation. She is *... adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls ... (17:4b)*. No religious institution, past or present, even comes close to possessing the incalculable wealth of the Roman Catholic Church, which is estimated in the trillions of dollars by some Italian newspapers. Do you remember what Peter said? *“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus [I come] ...” (Acts 3:6)*. In contrast, the Roman Church says, “Silver and gold? I have lots of it! And you can’t come in the name of Jesus anymore!” See how things have changed? This woman, the harlot, is wearing purple and scarlet and has wealth beyond description.

The harlot is a city that sits on seven hills: *“... The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits” (17:9)*. John was shocked at this. Perhaps it was because he saw it was a form of the church. (Or maybe that he also recognized Mary. It is interesting that Jesus commissioned John to take care of Mary until she died, which he did.) It really doesn’t matter what shocked John, but rather that nothing else in Revelation had shocked him until now. Rome, often called the Eternal City, has always been known as “the city on Seven Hills” (the Palatine, Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Quirinal, and Viminal Hills). This city is the home of a church that is intolerant of biblical truth, gives birth to much religious error, is

the center of a mystery, is guilty of spiritual adultery, and has a golden cup. It is wealthy, clothed in purple and scarlet, and is a woman and a harlot.

The harlot rules over the kings of the earth: ... *"The waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues"* (17:15). In verse 3 she is first seated on the beast, which means for a time that she directs the beast. This global political influence where she *"sits on waters"* stands for all peoples, which has often been wielded by the Roman Catholic Church in both European and present world history. There is only one religion that has ruled over the kings of the earth. Yes, the Muslim religion enslaved a lot of people. Yes, there are different religions that have political connotations, but there is only one church that has "sat" to raise up and put down kings. There is only one church that has determined the fate of the nations. If you read history, you will know that church—the Roman Catholic Church. She is sitting on the beast when we first meet her, and then the beast will consume her.

But what does that mean for our lives today? This truth prompts me to want to follow the disciplines that Paul charged Timothy to follow in 1 Timothy 4: nourish my soul in the Word of God daily (v. 4:6b), meditate on God's Word (v. 15), plus take heed to doctrine and hold on to it (v. 16). When we live in the end times, and the world is filled with deceiving spirits (v. 1), our only hope is in God, through His Word, and by His Spirit!

WHAT IS THE _____?

... **not that He should offer Himself often**, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.
—Hebrews 9:25-26, emphasis added

The harlot is a woman wearing purple and scarlet with wealth beyond calculation, but the most graphic telltale mark is that this woman, this harlot, is wicked in spiritual adultery.

If we apply the first law of interpretation of the Bible, we will reason: What did the *apostle John* think about when he heard those words? (Not: What do those words mean to us today? And not: How can we somehow shoehorn somebody to fit into this standard?) All the way through Revelation 17, you have to remember that this is the apostle John who is on a sun-baked island out in the middle of the Aegean Sea as a prisoner of Rome. When he saw purple and scarlet, he saw the Roman Caesars and Legionnaires. When he saw inestimable wealth, he saw the city of Rome. When he saw the city that ruled over the nations of the world, he was looking at the city of Rome.

I find it interesting that the Assyrian Empire, the Babylonian Empire, the Egyptians, and the Greeks came and went. However, the Romans came and they have never gone. Did you know that the Roman Empire was never defeated or destroyed? It just broke up and dissipated. But there have been efforts to regather it: Napoleon, Bismarck, and Hitler all have tried. When John saw it, he saw a kingdom that had not been destroyed and is going to come back. But when he thought of this *"golden cup"* with the *"abominations and the filthiness of her fornication,"* he was not talking about peep shows and

pornography shops. From God's perspective, he was speaking of spiritual abominations, spiritual adultery, and spiritual fornication.

The harlot is wicked (17:4): The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. This woman in purple and scarlet has a golden cup in her hand. This is the holiest instrument in Roman Catholicism: the golden chalice of the Eucharist. No doctrine in the world is more damnable than the Doctrine of Transubstantiation (re-crucifying Jesus at every Mass in every church around the world every day). This cup is a picture of a false and vile counterfeit of true communion with God. The golden chalice is filled with the filthiness of her abominations. Did you know that this is what they teach? They transform the "host" into the real body of Jesus; then they symbolically crucify it again. They pour out His blood again because they do not believe that His blood was sufficient when He shed it on behalf of the sins of the world—past, present, and future. Thus, they have to repeatedly re-offer Him.

The biblical view of the sacrifice of the Mass, the very heart of Roman Catholicism, is a denial of the completed work of the cross, which states that "*Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many*" (Hebrews 9:28a). Verse 28a does away with Romanism: not once an hour in the big cathedrals; not once a day at all the other ones; not all day long at those chapels surrounding St. Peter's Cathedral, the largest Roman Catholic Church in the world, but ONCE FOR ALL. This is the stake in the heart of Romanism. To those who trust in that once-for-all sacrifice, and eagerly wait for Him, He is going to appear—but not to those who are looking to be saved by crucifying Him over and over again. Do you see why this teaching is so important?

Please do not misunderstand what I am saying. I am not against Catholicism: I am against Romanism—the Mass, purgatory, confessions, sacraments, Mary, penance, extreme unction, beads, robes, cathedrals, and Popes. True Catholicism is Peter, Paul, Jesus, John, and the New Testament. I love born-again Catholics, and all Catholics everywhere, but I hate any false teaching that denies salvation, as does Romanism.

Most people don't realize the dominant role the Roman Catholic Church has had. Did you know that the calendar of the world (except for the Muslims, Hindus, and Jews) was instituted by the Pope? The reason why there is a French Canada and a Catholic South America is a result of Papal edicts. The reason we are here in protestant North America is due to a miscalculation of the Pope. So many things in the culture of the world have been decided by the Roman Catholic Church, which has exerted incredible control over civilization for 2,000 years. However, they are not the only culprit.

The harlot is a system (17:17): "For God has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled." This will occur when false world religions are united. As we saw in Revelation 13, the beast will change all religions into the worship of Antichrist. What is amazing is that the Roman Catholic Church is just a part of this whole system Satan has built. This is the system that substitutes God and His way for Satan's way, and God's truth for Satan's lies. The whole system evolved into a religion and, as we saw in Pergamos, when Rome conquered the world, they moved the center of the Babylonian's worship, including all the altars in Babylon, and brought them to Rome. Today, you can go through a building called the Pantheon ("all gods") that houses all the gods brought by people in the Roman Empire. That Pantheon is now a Roman Catholic Church.⁵ not quoted, the ideas I first saw in this source

The problem is not just that they utilize those little temples, but that they worship the same way. Until the Roman Church began its domination under Constantine, there were no robes, no beads, no rosaries, no venerated images, no scapulas, no holy artifacts, no feast days, no confessions, no

penances, no indulgences, no sacraments, no candles, no saints, and no Lent. Those things were assumed or developed after they took over the Babylonian traditions.

The harlot is a city (17:18): *“And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.”* The *“great city”* is Rome. No other existing city in the world has a three-thousand-year history of continuous inhabitation, once ruled the world, and once headed a worldwide empire that has never been destroyed—only Rome. So John was shocked because he saw the church he loved, and had given his life spreading the gospel for, merge into one with the Roman Empire.

Should this city of rebellion that is to come discourage us? No, we must always remember what city we are to be looking for. We should not spend our lives looking for the city that will be destroyed, rather, as Hebrews 11 instructs us, we are to look for *“... the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is god...”* (v. 10). We ought to live each day seeing it *“... afar off...”* (v. 13), and be trusting our great and faithful god who has *“... prepared a city...”* (v. 16) for all who believe in him and seek him here on earth (v. 6).

THE _____ OF PAGANISM IN ROMANISM

“But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to **the queen of heaven** and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble.”

—Jeremiah 44:17, emphasis added

How did Rome inherit such wickedness? Here is a brief overview of world history.

Pagan Origin: It is shocking for Roman Catholics to learn that the proposal of the Lord’s Supper as a sacrifice was first made in the ninth century by a Benedictine monk, Radbertus, who was the subject of many fierce verbal battles by the bishops until Pope Innocent III declared it an official Roman doctrine in A.D. 1215. The very principles found in the bloodless sacrifice of the Mass, as it is in the church of Rome today, can be traced back through the labyrinth of paganism to the fountain of idolatry—ancient Babylon. Rome’s most blasphemous and massive religious fraud originated in Chaldean idol worship and will continue until the time of the end when, according to Revelation 17 and 18, amid the wonder and admiration of the world, Rome will be judged with violence and be thrown down and shall be found no more at all, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. This brutal, bloody, and blasphemous harlot is none other than the universal false church, the wicked wife of Satan!

“God had no sooner begun the blessed work in preparing for himself a people than the devil did likewise. In fact, the first baby to be born on this Earth later became Satan’s original convert!” See Genesis 4:8; this is where religion starts. As 1 John 3:12 explains, Cain was the tool of Satan. We shall now consider the historical, current, and future activities of this perverted prostitute.⁶

The Harlot Viewed Historically: Satan’s church began officially at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9. This is the beginning of organized religion, nearly 24 centuries B.C. Here, in the

fertile plain of Shinar, probably very close to the original Garden of Eden, the first spade of dirt was turned for the purpose of devil-worship.

The first full-time minister of Satan was Nimrod, Noah's wicked and apostate grandson (Genesis 10:8-10). Secular history and tradition tell us that Nimrod married a woman who was as evil and demonic as himself. Her name was Semiramis. Knowing God's promise of a future Savior (Genesis 3:15), Semiramis brazenly claimed that Tammuz, her first son, fulfilled this prophecy.

Semiramis thereupon instituted a religious system that made both her and her son the objects of divine worship. She became the first high priestess. Thus began the mother-child cult which later spread all over the world. From Babylon it spread to Phoenicia under the name of Ashteroth and Tammuz. From Phoenicia it traveled to Pergamos in Asia Minor. This is the reason for John's admonition to the church of Pergamos in the book of Revelation: "*I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is*" (Revelation 2:13).

In Egypt the mother-child cult was known as Isis and Horus. In Greece it became Aphrodite and Eros. In Rome this pair was worshiped as Venus and Cupid. Dr. J. Dwight Pentecost writes, "Several years ago I visited an archeological museum in Mexico City. A recent find had just been put on display, which Mexican archeologists had authenticated as belonging to the period about 200 years before Christ. The object was the center of religious worship among some of the early Indians in Mexico. To my amazement, it was an image of a mother with a child in her arms. This Babylonian religion spread abroad to become the religion of the World"⁷ What was the teaching of Semiramis' false church? That Semiramis herself was the way to God. She actually adopted the title "Queen of Heaven." She alone could administer salvation to the sinner through various sacraments, such as the sprinkling of holy water. Her son, Tammuz, was tragically slain by a wild boar during a hunting trip. He was, however, supposedly resurrected from the dead forty days later. Thus, each year afterward, the temple virgins of this cult would enter a forty-day fast as a memorial to Tammuz' death and resurrection. After the forty-day fast, a joyful feast (Easter) called Ishtar took place. At this feast colored eggs were exchanged and eaten as a symbol of the resurrection. An evergreen tree was displayed and a Yule log was burned. Finally, hotcakes marked with the letter "T" (to remind everybody of Tammuz) were baked and eaten! This is similar to the practice of using wafers in the Mass today that are stamped with a symbol to make it a bloodless sacrifice of Christ's body.

In light of this history, it should be easy to understand the need to be discerning. Most of what is called "Christian" today is engineered by Satan, who masquerades as "*an angel of light*" (2 Corinthians

11:14). Ask the Lord daily to lead you in Truth so that you may be alert to “*the wiles of the devil*” (Ephesians 6:11).

SATAN’S _____ EXTINGUISHED

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that **through death He might destroy him who had the power of death**, that is, the devil . . .

—Hebrews 2:14, emphasis added

How will Satan’s masterful plan be extinguished? This is how. When the true church exits, the wheat and the chaff will be separated—the true bride of Jesus will be with Him in heaven while the false church remains on earth!

What is our hope as believers in Christ? We, like those converted during the Tribulation’s horrors, are those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Revelation 13:8 sums it up: *All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*

You see, those who are in the Lamb’s Book of Life will never worship the beast. Instead, we will joyfully witness of our faith in Christ. Look at Revelation 17:8: *“The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose*

names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.”

There are six glorious elements describing those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life:

They are victorious ones because they are overcomers: “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and ... I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels” (Revelation 3:5).

They are joyful witnesses because they are secure: ... Help these women who labored with me in the gospel ... and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life (Philippians 4:3).

They are newborn ones because it is the Book of Life: Anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

They are blood-bought ones because it is the Book of the Lamb that was slain: ... There shall by no means enter in anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 21:27).

They are glorified ones because they can enter the heavenly city: ... those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 21:27).

They are the before-known ones because the Book of Life was written before the foundation of the world: ... in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world ... (Revelation 13:8).

That is so interesting! God has known what is going on all along, which fits with His sovereignty and omniscience. Those who are in Christ are known and called, chosen and faithful (Revelation 17:14b). There has been and always will be a tension in Christendom between those who are not comfortable with the idea of the sovereignty of God and those who are. But one place where we all meet is at the Scriptures—whether you are of the Wesleyan, Armenian, Charismatic background or of a Reformed Presbyterian Calvinistic persuasion. This we all know to be true: God calls and chooses, and we faithfully respond. That is the gospel. I like the way Warren Wiersbe puts it: “When you are headed toward heaven, you see a giant sign blinking that says, ‘Whosoever will may come.’ When you get there you are going to look back and it will say ‘chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.’”

Did you know that the sovereignty of God is something to be talked about in heaven rather than being a crippling debate fought over on earth? On earth we shouldn’t argue over the implications of “chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.” What we are called to do is tell everyone: “Whosoever will may come and take the Water of Life freely.” There is not a group of people on this planet that I will not preach the gospel to and say, “You, too, can come to Christ today!” That is what Jesus did, and that is what we should do also. People just don’t walk around with a big “E” stamped

on them to show that they are among the “elect.” But because God has said so, the elect will respond to the gospel. But that is only understood in heaven, and not on earth. It is a *mystery*!

Are you worshiping our Lord who has called you—and chosen you—the One to whom you should be faithful all your days?

Make a choice to live in hope: If you are a member of the true bride of Jesus, God has loved you with an everlasting love! With loving kindness He has drawn you to himself. He chose you in Christ before the foundation of the world that you should be holy and blameless before Him. Because you have been called and chosen, be faithful to Him—as a pure bride for her husband. You can choose to live in hope in these end times by rejoicing that your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Rejoice that you will never be plucked out of your Father’s hand! Rejoice that you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and will never be deceived from your faith and hope and joy in Christ! Rejoice that you are thus eternally secure!

I exhort you, with all my heart, to pass on that same faith and hope and joy to others. You are acquainted with many people who don’t share that hope because they don’t know your Savior. God has left you here on earth to take some of them with you to heaven. So I pray that you will streamline your schedule to make time to tell people about Jesus, to nurture them in the faith, and then have them as your hope and joy and crown of rejoicing when He comes or calls you to himself.

In the apostle Paul’s letter to his “beloved and longed-for brethren, [his] joy and crown” at Phillipi, he encouraged them to “stand fast in the Lord” (Philippians 4:1)! To those “whose names are in the Book of Life,” he urged: “Rejoice in the Lord always, Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:3c-4). His exhortation applies to us as well. And I dare say that if he were alive today, Paul would

wholeheartedly sing “Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart.” May the Lord make the words of this beloved song a reality in your life as well.

Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart

Rejoice, ye pure in heart,
Rejoice, give thanks and sing
Beneath the standard of your God,
The cross of Christ your King.
Bright youth and snow-crowned age,
Strong men and maidens fair,
Raise high your free, exulting song,
God’s wondrous praise declare.

Yes, on thro life’s long path,
Still singing as ye go;
From youth to age, by night and day,
In gladness and in woe.
Still lift your standard high,
Still march in firm array,
As warriors thro’ the darkness toil
Till dawns the golden day.

Refrain:

Rejoice, rejoice, Rejoice, give thanks and sing.

—Edward H. Plumptre, 1821-1891

_____ for What Is Eternal (Revelation 18)

THE COMING _____ FINANCIAL COLLAPSE

“No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and mammon** [earthly treasures]” (Matthew 6:24, Emphasis added).

A cataclysmic day is on the horizon of the future that will launch a series of events arresting everyday life on planet Earth! In a single moment—on a single day all over the world—the food supply will end; the transportation system will grind to a halt; the banking system will freeze and default; the luxuries, precious metals, gems, art, and all other hoarded wealth in every country will become worthless; the communications industry will be cut off, and there will be no radio, no TV, no telephone, no Internet; the supply of power will fade and blink off, and darkness will rule in the homes and businesses of the world. In short: there is a day when the lights are going off all over planet Earth—and they won’t be coming on any time soon!

The eighteenth chapter of Revelation gives us a road map for the coming economic collapse of the world. By learning the lessons God has laid down in His Word, we can see what response He desires from His servants not only in the ultimate collapse but also in any other financial reversals or crises that may prompt widespread panic before the big and final crash.

Now let’s look at an overview of Revelation 18, which is a twin to Revelation 17. In Revelation 17 we find the collapse of the apostate world church—Satan’s harlot bride, the delusion of religion. Revelation 18 now reveals the other member of Satan’s family—materialism, worldliness, and covetousness. From the Garden of Eden onward, Satan has been offering the elusive “greener grass” to humans. According to each person’s own vulnerability, Satan thus whispers his lies: *If only you eat this “fruit,” you will have it all! If only you earn this income, you will be happy! If only you reach this level of popularity, power, or success, you will be fulfilled!*

Hand in hand with Satan’s fall is the insatiable desire for more. Lucifer himself was discontented with the highest position in heaven—he wanted still more. Humans are born with a thirst for more of whatever they desire. This is the **idolatry of covetousness**.

The Bible clearly describes covetousness—this concept of the idolatrous worship of things: “to long for, be preoccupied with having what God has not given us.” Possessiveness [which is a cousin

of covetousness] is “to be selfish and un-sharing with what God has given us.”³ The Book of Proverbs is full of illustrations of such idolatry. The Old Testament prophets have provided many examples of people who were preoccupied with and longed for what God had not given to them: they wanted something else—someone else’s wife or land. Worldliness either makes us covetous (we want what we do not have) or possessive (we want to hold on to what we have). Both are evil.

The most visible sign of covetousness is materialism. A sure sign of the covetous nature of materialism is its *insatiability*. Legitimate desires (such as food, drink, and companionship) can be satisfied. Illegitimate desires (such as pride, envy, greed, and lust), by their very nature, can’t be satisfied.

Materialism is the desire for “things” as opposed to spiritual worship, which is the desire for God. Materialism is seen in a passion for money, possessions, and endless pursuits of physical pleasures and recreations. But all that is going to end. In Revelation 18, the music stops, money fails, and possessions are worthless. In other words, the party is going to be over the moment the lights go out!

Revelation 18 describes the coming global financial collapse: Jesus condemns worldliness (vv. 1-3); Jesus calls saints to come out of worldliness (vv. 4-8); Jesus describes the worthlessness of worldliness (vv. 9-19); and Jesus celebrates the end of worldliness (vv. 20-24).

Why would John have such a vision on a prison island? When we come to Revelation 18 we are looking at the fully-grown evils of this world. As we saw in our study of Revelation 17, Babylon is at the same time an ancient city, a kingdom of the past, as well as a system of religion and a present way of life—worldliness, materialism, and covetousness. Babylonian materialism in Revelation 18 may be distilled down to one word in the Bible: covetousness, which is idolatry. It is the worship of “*mammon*” (money, possessions, and so on) instead of God.

In John’s day, Rome had gone to the limits in extravagance. The Caesars would spend fortunes on a single meal by demanding the most exotic and rarest dishes for their personal consumption. Nero decorated his banquets with roses from Egypt that cost \$70,000; he wore an outfit costing \$40,000—which he only wore once, as was his custom. Caligula demanded such meals as hummingbird and flamingo tongues, pearls costing \$200,000 dissolved in wine, the livers of pike fish, and the brains of peacocks. Because the commoners only earned a penny a day at this time, that gives you a better idea of the extreme lavishness of the Roman hierarchy.⁴

In the fifth century, St. Augustine noted the message of Revelation 18: the central problem of mankind is idolatry. Idolatry is when we use what we are supposed to worship—and worship what we are supposed to use.

If you put all the evils of our world into that grid you will come up with this conclusion: Idolatry is using God for our own purposes, such as when we’re in danger (in a foxhole, a hospital, a storm cellar, a plane shaking, and so forth) and worshipping anything else (by our devotion to money, sex, and pleasure). In other words, idolatry is using God, whom we are supposed to *worship*, and worshipping the things of earth that we are supposed to *use*.

So then, what does God want us to learn from Revelation 18? Many things, but primarily this: there is life beyond money. Life is more important than possessions; all you can take with you to heaven is people.

My Prayer for You in Revelation 18: Oh Father, we think about how often our beloved Lord Jesus talked about money. He told us that money is the monitor of our heart—that our money and the pathway of our money show where our true treasures are invested. And by our use of money we prove to You where our allegiance and worship are directed. We pray

³ Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity* (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1989), p. 55.

⁴ William Barclay, *Revelation: Vol. 2* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, ©1976), p. 157.

that we will, in a very sobering and sincere way before You, ponder what it would be like in this world if we did not have money—if all our possessions and material things were stripped away from us either temporarily or permanently. What is left after we have no finances is really important for eternity. We pray that we would start rethinking life—about how to live in a way that counts, whether we have possessions or not. May we truly start thinking eternally, planning strategically, and talking prophetically so that our life’s testimony points to the fact that this world is not our home—we are just parked here temporarily. We pray that You will open our hearts to these truths. For Jesus’ sake, Amen.

JESUS _____ WORLDLINESS

“... I saw another angel ... having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory. And he cried ... with a loud voice, saying, **‘Babylon the great is fallen ... and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit,** and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication ... and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury’ ” (Revelation 18:1-3, Emphasis added).

The first lesson of Revelation 18 is that worldly possessions can’t buy spiritual life, but they *can* buy spiritual death. What we see in the first three verses is the drunkenness of the nations, their fornication, and their living for everything that God will not give them.

In these verses, I can see the rich and powerful families of the world—from Rockefeller to Rothschild, from Getty to Gates—who will stand and watch their billions go up in smoke from the wrath of God. This scene depicts graphically what Jesus said in Matthew 16:26. And I believe it is what the “*loud voice*” of Revelation 18:2 will be booming throughout the earth at this global collapse: “*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*”

In the 1930s, William Randolph Hearst controlled many of the world’s newspapers. He was so wealthy that he did not even know what he owned. He bought castles in Europe, had pieces of them taken apart and shipped to California, and then reassembled on his estate. At one time his desire for art was so insatiable that he wanted to have every painting by a particular great master. He vowed to pay any price to get them all. In fact, he gave a blank check to a man he commissioned to travel throughout the world looking for the last painting. After two years, he finally found it. It was crated up in a storage facility in Long Beach, California, in a high security area. When he finally tracked down the owner—it was Hearst *himself!*

If you possessed all the paintings, money, stock, and comforts of life, but lost your own soul—what would you give back in exchange for your soul? That is what Revelation 18 is about. You can have it all on earth, but miss it all in heaven. What a sobering warning! God therefore says, “... *You rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your*

gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you You have heaped up treasure in the last days. ... You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury ...” (James 5:1-6).

From the Old Testament in the Garden of Eden through today, and to the end of time, God says to all peoples: “Get away from the worship of this world!” Don’t lay up treasures that when you leave home you are afraid something might happen to them. Don’t have so many possessions that you cannot sleep if you forget to turn on the burglar alarm. Don’t have so much stuff that you cut your vacation short because you have to get back to protect it. The care of riches is covetousness and idolatry. So the Lord says, “Give it to Me!”

The Bible has many grim markers that show where an illegitimate desire has given birth to immense disaster.

Achan’s lust for more led to his death by stoning, and a similar death for all his family. (See Joshua 7.)

Balaam’s greed made him fail to hear his own message. He wanted to die the death of the righteous, but he did not want to live the life of the righteous. (See Numbers 22:4-35.)

Delilah betrayed a man who trusted her, for a payoff. (See Judges 16.)

Solomon’s insatiable desire for more of everything led him away from God. He was warned not to multiply gold, women, and horses. However, he multiplied all three. (See Deuteronomy 17:16-17.)

Gehazi was not content with serving God; he lied to get more and paid dearly for it. (See 2 Kings 5:20-27.)

Judas measured the inestimable value of Jesus in pieces of silver. (See Matthew 26:15.)

Annianias and Sapphira could not let go of the money they possessed, nor the applause they coveted, so God killed them. (See Acts 5:1-11.)

Anything can be worshiped. Worship, simply stated, is “anything which captivates and draws us toward itself.” Here are the most common examples plus questions to help you evaluate whether or not you worship something other than God.

Work Worshipers: These are workaholics who are so captivated by work that they are irresistibly drawn to work all the time. *Can you give up your career and your goals in your field to the Lord if He calls you to change directions for Him?*

Escape Worshipers: These persons want to escape reality by worshiping the effects of alcohol or drugs, and thus they become alcoholics or drug addicts. *Can you completely stop taking whatever substances help you escape reality, and give your life to the Lord?* If not, you worship the effects that substance gives you. The Lord says, “You cannot worship both that and Me.”

Pleasure Worshipers: These may worship pleasure in the sensual realm, and thus become sex addicts, perverts, or burn with fornicative and adulterous lust. *Can you completely end all*

selfish sensual pleasure pursuits—pornography, fornication, sodomy, and adultery—and repentantly give those desires to the Lord to deal with in His perfect time and way?

Wealth Worshipers: These persons are drawn by the allurements of wealth and possessions. They may become like the materialistic, greedy, and selfish rich fool Jesus spoke of—one who only planned for prosperity, eating, drinking, and enjoying life. *Can you completely give up your money, security, and power into the Lord's control?* We cannot keep anything that we grasp onto—only what we give away will last forever.

Self Worshipers: These are drawn to the praise of man, and thus they are proud, inward-seeking, calloused, and unfeeling self-centered persons. *Can you give up your pride, self-seeking, self-absorption, and self-focus to humble yourself, deny yourself, and take up your cross to follow Jesus?*

The ultimate test of whether or not you worship something other than God is quite simple: *Can you give it up today?* When nothing satisfies you—you are on dangerous ground!

JESUS CALLS SAINTS TO _____ OUT OF WORLDLINESS

“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘**Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and ... receive of her plagues.** For ... God has remembered her iniquities. Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works ... In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, ... give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, “I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.” Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her’ ” (Revelation 18:4-8, Emphasis added).

Revelation 18:4-8 is a repetition of the continually repeated warning. God wants us, His saints, to live out our high calling. We are called to be holy in all parts of our lives. To “separate from” and “get out of Babylon” is called for seven times in the Word of God. (See Isaiah 48:20; 52:11; Jeremiah 50:8-9; 51:6, 8; Zechariah 2:6-7; Revelation 18:4.) Some of the key calls of God have been for men to get out of worldliness. You may be thinking: *Wait a minute, this is the Tribulation, the end of the world. So what is this?* There are still going to be Christians on the planet. There will always be Christians on this planet because we have the two witnesses (Revelation 11), the 144,000 (Revelation 7 and 14), and the

angel preaching the everlasting gospel (Revelation 14). The gospel is continually going out, and people will be responding throughout the Tribulation.

From the Garden of Eden to the end of time, God has the same call to His saints: “Come out of worldliness! Get away from the worship of this world!” Look at what He has to say about this in the following verses.

God called Abraham out of his world to follow His way: “... ‘Get out of your country, from your family And from your father’s house, to a land that I will show you’ ” (Genesis 12:1).

God called Lot to totally abandon the sinfulness of Sodom: “Then the men said to Lot, ‘Have you anyone else here? Son-in-law, your sons, your daughters, and whomever you have in the city—take them out of this place!’ ” (Genesis 19:12).

God called Moses to stay out of the very presence of those rebelling against the Lord: “... ‘Speak to the congregation, saying, “Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram” ’ ” (Numbers 16:23-24).

God promises great blessing for living a life that avoids the ungodliness around us: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:1-3).

Jesus prayed for our realization that this world is not our home: “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one ...” (John 17:14-16).

God expects His children to come out—and stay out—of worldliness: “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? ... For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ Therefore ‘Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you’ ” (2 Corinthians 6:14-17).

God calls us to be careful to not associate with sin: “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people’s sins; keep yourself pure” (1 Timothy 5:22).

Are you obeying God’s call to come out of worldliness? Are you worshiping God—and God alone? If you are struggling with worldliness, the key to victory and freedom is yielding to and obeying the Lord! For Jesus says, “... *He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*

... *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ... If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love ...*” (John 15:5, 7, 10a).

THE _____ OF WORLDLINESS

“**The kings of the earth** who committed fornication [they knit their lives to the things of this world] and lived luxuriously with her **will weep and lament** for her, when they see the smoke of her burning ...” (Revelation 18:9, Emphasis added).

The possessions of this world are not worth coveting or worshiping. The words “*weep and lament*” speak of an uncontrollable sobbing and beating of the breast in anguish. Worldly possessions won’t last forever—they are insecure and will not endure in the end. Everything you see around you is going to be destroyed. Therefore, “*since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness ...?*” (2 Peter 3:11).

Worldly possessions can’t meet our deepest needs. Look at what happens in these verses: “‘... *“Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.” And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all’*” (Revelation 18:10-14).

That passage lists eight categories of possessions that are going to be destroyed:

Possessions of Security: In the entire world’s history, the wealth of the rich has been protected against inflation, warfare, and decline because of their investments in gold, silver, and precious stones.

Possessions of External Beauty: These are the fine materials of clothing, decorating, and fashion.

Possessions of Exquisite Furnishings: This refers to rare woods such as thyanine (a single table top of this choice wood can cost \$10,000) and other expensive building materials like ivory and marble.

Possessions of Personal Luxury: These are the fragrances of perfumes and incenses, the oils of ointments and beautifiers, the spices of exotic cuisine.

Possessions of Personal Indulgence: The inclusion of wine would cover all the personal intoxicants, including distilled spirits (not known in the ancient world) and drugs (known and

used back then). The oil named may be the olive oil of the ancient world or a prophetic look ahead to the vast petroleum industry.

Possessions of Life: The list also has foodstuffs for daily life; this would be all agricultural products plus the named fine meats.

Possessions of Transportation: The word for chariot is not the normal two-wheeler that we might picture from movies like *Ben Hur*; it is the four-wheeled wagon (Greek: *rheda*) of travel. This may be a prophetic look at the vast automotive industry.

Possessions of Slavery: The inclusion of slaves (“souls of men”) may indicate a resurgence of slavery which, though outlawed by Christian nations in the nineteenth century, continues in Asia and Africa. This could also be a spiritual reference to the sale of indulgences. All these things will be gone.

Worldly possessions can blind the soul to eternal concerns. Look at the depth of these verses in Revelation 18:15-19:

“The merchants ... will stand at a distance ..., weeping and wailing, and saying, “Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls! For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.” Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea, ... cried out when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, “What is like this great city?” They threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, “Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate.” ’ ’ ”

Remember what the prophet Zephaniah said: “Neither their silver nor their gold Shall be able to deliver them In the day of the LORD’S wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured By the fire of His jealousy, For He will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land” (Zephaniah 1:18).

In four verses in Revelation 18 the earth dwellers lament their loss of luxuries, money, and things (vv. 9, 11, 15, 19) as well as the lightning-like speed of their loss (vv. 10, 17, 19). The “*weeping and wailing*” is the sound of the uncontrollable bawling of someone who has lost something irreplaceable. But in all the weeping and wailing, they fail to even notice that the greatest loss is of their own souls! What a tragic scene!

THE _____ OF WORLDLINESS

“ ‘Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and prophets, for God has avenged you on her!’ Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. ... For **your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.** And in her was found the blood of

prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth' " (Revelation 18:20-24, Emphasis added).

The people refused to listen to God's servants—His holy apostles and prophets. Thus they lost their opportunity to live forever; instead, they will die forever.

Worldliness uses the deafening spell of entertainment. Gone will be the diversions. There will be no more music and tunes to drown out God and their problems. Music and entertainment will be shut down. The work that has captivated so many, keeping them from spiritual things, will cease. The regular grind (millstone) of life will stop. There will be nothing left to distract the earth dwellers from thoughts of God. This is just another of the endings of chapter 18: the profits of commerce end in verse 11; the enjoyment of exotic commodities end in verse 14; the whole system of materialism burns up in verse 21; and the very sounds of life—music, industry, and home—cease in verse 22. Finally, even light and social life stop in verse 23.

Why? Because of their sorceries "*all the nations were deceived*" (18:23). The Greek word for "sorcery" is *pharmakeia*, which refers to the drug-induced stupors of addiction, the demonic-induced bondage of the astrology industry, the godless and mindless following of evolution, and the dehumanization of mankind by philosophy and secular education.

Drugs and substances will be very prevalent during the end of days, and this trend is present even now. A friend of mine, who was recently in London, said that 200,000 marched there for the legalization of marijuana. People want their drugs and their escape. So God will say, "You were intoxicated, and did not hear My voice, so there is now no hope for you." All these evils are facing Judgment Day.

Is there any diversion in your life that is distracting you from giving your all to God?

ARE _____ A WORLDLY PERSON?

"... Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever ... wants to be **a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God** ..." (James 4:4, Emphasis added).

In Revelation 18 we also find that there are seven elements of the worldly system that Jesus will bring to an end. This is a cause for rejoicing, as they will no longer cause earth dwellers to ignore Him. The Lord will remove everything that has distracted people from looking at Him. To identify current dangers, traps, and snares, we will examine what the Lord will end. Here are the elements that worldliness is built upon, and thus what disrupts our fellowship with the Lord.

A worldly person's identity is found in this world, and not in heaven: "*Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore*" (18:21b). Such a person's identity is found in what they do, have, and hold onto here. They dress like the

world, act like the world, and are drawn toward the world. But God will destroy any and all identities that are established apart from Him.

A worldly person finds escape through amusements, entertainments, and

pleasure-seeking: *“The sound of harpists, musicians, flutists, and trumpeters shall not be heard in you anymore”* (18:22a). A worldly person has to be amused. Do you know what amusement means?

“Muse” means to meditate, so “amuse” means “without meditation.” One of the fastest growing sectors of our economy and our culture is amusement: parks, games, arcades, and movies. People no longer want to think, they just want to be carried along by the action and excitement. Society has become so captivated by movies, music, and all else in the entertainment field that they never engage with the living and abiding Word of God. But God is going to turn it all off, and there will be no more distractions.

A worldly person uses work, career accomplishments, and even daily life as a way out of spiritual responsibilities:

“No craftsman of any craft shall be found in you anymore ...” (18:22b). Christians act the same worldly way when they say, “I don’t have time for that because I have to work” or “I don’t have time to lead my family or read the Bible.” By the sweat of our brow, and diligent labor, we are supposed to earn money to support our family. If we don’t, the Scriptures say that we are worse than an infidel—an unbeliever. Yet, we must not be so wound up in our work that we are inconsistent in worship, and miss the joys of fellowship. It is a sign of worldliness when our career, plans, finances, work schedule, recreation, and entertainment make us so busy that we infrequently engage with the people of God. Even the needs of daily life, such as food and housing, can keep some people away from heavenly living. But God will stop the cycle of life for all earth dwellers.

A worldly person is tied to the technology, science, and knowledge of this

world—and not the next: *“The light of a lamp shall not shine on you anymore ...”* (18:23a). Such a person constantly looks at the Bible through science rather than looking at science through the Bible. The Bible has always communicated the basic principles of hydrology, astrophysics, the rotation of the earth, and the geodesy-balancing of the continents, but the sciences are just now catching up with the Bible. In the industrialized world there has been a blind acceptance and intoxication of humanity by technological convenience. But God will soon cut short that technology.

A worldly person is tied to social life, party life, the calendar, and holidays: “...

The voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore” (18:23b). This is the person who lives for the weekend. He or she goes from one social event to another because life represents an endless party. Life is more than identifying with this culture and its amusements and entertainment. There is so much more God wants us to know. That is why He lets us see that when He strips away these things, the socialites and partygoers will have nothing left. So they will weep and howl and cry out. But God will stop their partying, and that is all they had to live for.

A worldly person is tied to finances, wealth, and possessions: “... *Your merchants*

were the great men of the earth ...” (18:23c). Our society makes gods of the millionaires and billionaires of this world. These earth dwellers find their greatness in money and belongings.

They live to acquire and hold and enjoy things. But God is going to erase all the worldly person's assets.

If your assets were erased, what would you have left that really mattered? You would have the results of what you have invested in finances and time for Christ. You would have the opportunity, without the baggage of things, to go forward in His kingdom.

A worldly person is intoxicated by the world: "... *By your sorcery all the nations were deceived*" (18:23d). The end of this verse speaks of drugs and sorcery, which can include alcohol as well as drug-induced witchcraft. But there are also people who are intoxicated by the world itself. They can't understand, and don't care, about the gospel. But God is going to bring an end to this familiar world.

What will the earth really be like when God pulls the plug? In Revelation 18:23a, we find some amazing words: "*The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore*" In twenty-first century terms, this verse says the power grid will be shut down. It says that no power, no electricity, and no technology that uses electricity will be running. Revelation 18 marks the end of the world as we know it. According to the Word of God, that will not happen for at least seven years from now. The world that ends in this chapter is a highly technological world that has some type of cashless society. This would require well-functioning computers, or something beyond computers that we don't even know about yet.

Although there is much more that I could say on this, I don't want you to miss the point of today's lesson. And that is to examine yourself in the light of Scripture to see whether any of these descriptions of a worldly person are common in your own life. If you feel convicted by the Holy Spirit, you need to know this truth: "... *You are slaves to the one whom you obey ...*" (Romans 6:16). But you are not without hope.

Through Christ's empowerment, you can break any bondage that manifests itself in a love for the world and all that is in it! The cure begins with the antidote of *contentment*, which we'll administer in tomorrow's lesson. So take heart, for relief is on the way!

SEVEN _____ TO CONTENTMENT

"... **I have learned** in whatever state I am, **to be content** ..." (Philippians 4:11, Emphasis added).

Contentment is a byproduct of following the Shepherd. It is experiencing the inner-peace that only He can provide. It is knowing that He will promote you at the right time. Contentment is the sense of satisfaction that comes to a husband and wife as they emulate the provision and care of the

Shepherd to their own children. Contentment comes from serving Christ instead of money, and from providing not only financially for your family, but also emotionally, morally, and spiritually.⁵

How can such contentment be cultivated in our life? First Timothy 6:6-17 describes seven principles that promote contentment.

Principle 1—Remember that things are only temporary: “... *Godliness with*

contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and ... we can carry nothing out”(1 Timothy 6:6-7). You cannot take it with you. There are no U-Haul trailers behind hearses.

Principle 2—Only seek necessities, and wait for the rest: “... *Having food and clothing,*

with these we shall be content”(1 Timothy 6:8). We need shelter and the basic provisions of life, but everything beyond that is simply a great blessing. Whether it comes or goes is okay. God has said that all we are supposed to expect in life is food and clothing, so we should be happy with that.

Principle 3—Avoid a consuming desire for prosperity: “... Those who desire to be

rich fall into temptation and ... many foolish and harmful lusts For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith ... and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

America has been fed a prosperity diet. You might say, “That is not me—I am not rich.” If you own a car, you are rich. Ninety-five percent of the people in the world can't afford a car. Your watch and the clothes you have on are worth more than what hundreds of millions of people on earth have. Tens of thousands even starve to death around the world each year, but Americans regularly throw away super-sized leftovers.

Principle 4—Flee materialism: “... *Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience,*

gentleness”(1 Timothy 6:11). Do you seek to accumulate possessions—or to grow in Christlikeness? Value what will count for eternity!

Principle 5—Cling to eternal life: “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life,

to which you were also called Keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing ...” (1 Timothy 6:12-14). We need a whole generation of people who are holding tighter to eternal life than they are to this world.

The writer of Hebrews says, “... You had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven” (Hebrews 10:34). When those Christians were persecuted

⁵ Farrar, *Better Homes and Jungles* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1977), pp. 189-190.

and their jobs and possessions taken away, they still rejoiced because their focus was on Christ.

If we're not careful, before long our possessions can possess *us*. They then become an anchor that holds us back. The care of riches clouds our mind from seeking the purity of Christ.

Principle 6—Fix your hope on God: *“Command those who are rich ... not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God ...”* (1 Timothy 6:17). There is nothing wrong with wealth, but we are to recognize the danger of relying upon it. All that we own can evaporate as quickly as a blip on a computer screen. There are few things that are real possessions in this world. Through money, stocks, and bonds you are trusting that a company, a bank, or a government won't fail. But the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy, can never fail us—and our trust in Him is certain!

Principle 7—Give until it hurts: *“Let them do good, ... ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life”* (1 Timothy 6:18). The real cure for materialism is to give until it hurts! Giving “until it hurts” means giving at the cost of personal sacrifice. For example, the widow gave both of her mites, or all that she had (Mark 12:42-44). The woman who anointed Jesus broke the flask of fragrant oil and irrecoverably gave all she had to Him (Luke 7:37-47). Sacrificial gifts are especially important to Jesus.

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: The advantages of contentment are many: freedom, gratitude, rest, peace—all of which are also components of good health. Those who are content do not have to worry about the latest styles or what to wear tomorrow. Those who are content can rejoice in their neighbor's good fortune without having to feel inferior. Those who are content do not fret about wrinkles or graying because they accept what comes. Those who are content do not have to worry how they might buy this or that because they have no desire for this or that. Those who are content are not consumed with how to get out of debt because they have no debt. They thus have time for gratitude even in small things, and they have time for relationships because their possessions and the bank do not own them.

If what was just described seems beyond you right now, I encourage you to ask the Lord to help you move in that direction. In doing so, you will be choosing to live for what is eternal. Be

content—willingly surrender all that you are and have to the Lord. Then faithfully fight the good fight of faith by laying hold on the eternal life to which you were also called.

As this week's devotional closes, I encourage you to softly and worshipfully sing the words of this beautiful old song as a prayer of commitment to the Lord.

Have Thine Own Way, Lord

I will walk in thy truth —Psalm 86:11 KJV

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Thou art the potter, I am the clay!

Mold me and make me After Thy will,

While I am waiting, Yielded and still.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Search me and try me, Master, today!

Whiter than snow, Lord, Wash me just now,

As in Thy presence, Humbly I bow.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Wounded and weary, Help me I pray!

Power, all power Surely is Thine!

Touch me and heal me, Savior divine.

Have Thine own way, Lord! Have Thine own way!

Hold o'er my being Absolute sway!

Fill with Thy Spirit Till all shall see

Christ only, always, Living in me.

—Adelaide A. Pollard, 1862-1934

Look for the _____ Jesus

(Revelation 19:1-10)

HOME AT LAST

“... **Many will come** from east and west, **and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11, Emphasis added).

Are you getting ready for the ultimate banquet? The greatest party of all time is approaching! The King of Kings, the Lord of the Universe, is preparing a wedding feast like none other! In the most breathtaking location imaginable, He is spreading an immense table. The greatest names of all times will be present and seated. At dinner the invited guests will be rubbing shoulders with Adam and his lovely wife, Eve. One of their twin sons, Abel, will be sitting with them as well as Seth and his wife. Not too far away will be the amazing preacher, the earliest known prophet, Enoch and family. His great grandson Noah and family will be nearby. On down the long table lavishly set will be the likes of Job and clan, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph— with all their various family members. What a reunion as Moses and Elijah walk around talking with guests and visiting with old friends!

Further on, Jeremiah sits in rapt attention with Daniel and Isaiah as Ezekiel points out again the wonders they see about the Banquet Hall—angelic creatures moving about, choirs of angels singing, and the brilliance of the galaxies radiating the glory of God shining down upon the gathered saints. Interspersed with all these Old Testament saints will be multitudes of beaming faces well known to us. Matthew and the rest of the twelve will be at the entrances to the twelve gates that the guests will stream through on their way to be seated at the banquet. Paul, at one gate, is weeping for joy as he finally sees so many of his spiritual children and grandchildren. Because he died before many of them had grown up, it is a very precious reunion. At another gate, John also weeps for joy as he returns to this place he saw from Patmos.

Saints of all the ages are taking their places; a name card with a special name (uniquely theirs, and known only by them and their Savior) marks each seat.

And then the party begins. With glorious enraptured souls the hallelujahs begin to echo down the aisles of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Expectantly, each guest personally invited by Jesus looks up. And then they see Jesus, the glorious and majestic Savior, as He comes to each, calling them by name, extending His nail-scarred hands, and touching them with His love. We have come to the culmination of the desires of all hearts of all saints of all time. It is the wedding banquet, the Marriage

Supper of the Lamb, and it is the scene of Revelation 19 when those who have loved Him, and waited all their life for Him, honor Jesus. It is the assembly of those who have and love the testimony of Jesus.

The first ten verses of Revelation 19, which we will cover this week, have these very glorious themes:

The Celebration (vv. 1-6) and

The Consummation (vv. 7-10). There are four hallelujahs in the first six verses, and in verse 7 a calling to the celebration starts. If verses 1-6 are the celebration *preparation*, then verses 7-10 are the *consummation* of all that God has promised.

It is hard to put these things on a time line chart, however. God knows the end from the beginning. What that means is that when you are God, and you are outside and above time, the beginning of Creation, the present time, and the consummation of all things are all equally happening at the same time. We are linear: when we try to illustrate time, we draw a straight line and mark events on it. But to God, past, present, and future occur all at the same time—the end and the beginning are all equally before Him. If you think about it, in a very real sense, that means that at this banquet Enoch, Paul, and the people at the end of the Tribulation will all get there at the same time we do. Chronologically, it is different times; but in eternity it is all happening at the same time. Thus, John was actually seeing these events because everything is unfolding before God simultaneously. Amazing!

In physics, time is a different dimension than space and matter. There is something beyond that that the scientists cannot quite quantify—and it is God. I believe that everyone is going to get to the banquet table at the same time. That is why I don't believe that the bride of Christ refers to only the church; I believe it encompasses all the saints of all time. The Bible never specifically says that the bride is the church, only that the church is an espoused virgin and is going to be married (1 Corinthians 11:2), like Ephesians 5 says. Israel is His wife, but the saints are all collectively coming to the marriage supper and will be married to the Lord in Christ. What these verses picture is a marvelous event!

God does not distinguish between pre-Flood saints, pre-Abrahamic saints, pre-Mosaic saints, pre-New Testament saints, pre-Tribulation saints, pre-millennial saints, and pre-eternity saints. In heaven, there is one great merger of them all.

As you reflect upon the prayer below, imagine that you are at that banquet even now and think of the delights you shall soon experience with Jesus.

My Prayer for You in Revelation 19: Father, the love that sent Your Son to die the most cruel and humiliating death imaginable to pay the penalty for our sin is beyond comprehension! Now, not only are we going to be able to get to heaven, but also You are preparing a banquet for all Your saints to celebrate with the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. You are going to allow us to be married to our Savior forever! Oh, Father, we do not understand the concept of spiritual union with You, the awesome God of the Universe. But what we can understand is that it is going to be glorious, and that there is something we need to do here to get ready for that wedding—to make sure that we have the appropriate attire. We pray that Your Spirit would touch our hearts with the fact that with every day that goes by, the marriage celebration is getting closer. And it is such a special day that we ought to be sure that we are getting ready. We ask that You would bless our hearts

through Your Word this week, and may we respond in a pleasing manner to You. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

A CELEBRATION OF JESUS' _____ AND JUDGMENT

“... I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘**Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!** For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her’ ” (Revelation 19:1-2, Emphasis added).

What we are going to see in Revelation 19:1-6 is God’s greatest celebration of all the ages. Verse 1 starts off with “*Alleluia!*”—which is the same word as “hallelujah.” There are 144 mentions of this word in the Bible; four of these are in verses 1-6. Seventy-six are in the Psalms where it says “*may God be praised*”; sixty-four occur in the rest of the Bible. “Alleluia”—meaning “Praise God”—is an imperative.

Each “*alleluia*” in these celebration verses is related to one of these themes:

- A celebration of Jesus our **SALVATION** (v. 1);
- A celebration of Jesus the **JUDGMENT** (vv. 2-3);
- A celebration of Jesus we **WORSHIP** (vv. 4-5); and
- A celebration of Jesus our **SOVEREIGN** (v. 6).

A Celebration of Jesus Our SALVATION: “... I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor, and power belong to the Lord our God!’ ” (Revelation 19:1). This is the first celebration of salvation because Babylon, the false worship of God in world religions, has been overthrown; materialism and Satan’s kingdom have also been overthrown. Finally, as God is gathering all to the banquet table, salvation is celebrated.

We should recognize that, all through the ages, each saint has been saved the same way. I am saved because I personally looked back and believed that Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God—who bore the pain and paid the price of my sins with His own blood on the cross. Adam, Enoch, Job, and Abraham all looked forward to that same Lamb of God—the One who would come as a sin offering. All of us who are redeemed believe in a substitutionary atonement. They looked forward to the cross, and we look back. The people in the Tribulation and Millennium will look even further back to the Substitute. All who are saved say, “I cannot save myself; Someone paid the price in my place, and that was God in human flesh, the Lamb, Jesus Christ.” That is what is complete here: He has brought His redeemed to be with Him, and He is now there in their presence.

Here is why it is so hard to make a time line chart of this: do the events in chapter 19 verses 1-10 (heaven exalts over Babylon) have to happen before verse 11 (Christ on a white horse)? What is absolutely remarkable is that John is seeing these events from God’s perspective. We know that they are going to happen precisely as God wants them to happen, but Revelation cannot be charted well. Why is that? As soon as my chart doesn’t match your chart, you won’t listen anymore due to human nature. As 19:10 tells us, this book was written to draw us to worship Christ, and this banquet does,

too. This is a celebration of His salvation completed, and at this point we will forever be in the presence of God and the saints of all times!

How can all that take place before the Millennium is over? From God's perspective, no one is going to be late; that is why I believe that everyone gets to the banquet at the same time. Yes, those who are already dead are absent from the body and present with the Lord. How does that work? I don't know. I am not God, and I can't figure that one out. But I do know that Scripture assures us that those who die are immediately in the presence of Christ. I also know from Scripture that the Old Testament saints before the cross went to a place of waiting for the presence of Christ. When Jesus finished His work on the cross, He went and got them, and took them to live in His presence. And I know that all the people in the future, who have not yet trusted in Christ, are going to have to do that. Do what? God is not going to let anybody be late and miss this great event. He will work it out, so you needn't worry, just file the matter in your "too hard to understand" folder—and trust Him!

A Celebration of Jesus the JUDGMENT: "For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her." Again they said, 'Alleluia! Her smoke rises up forever and ever!' " (Revelation 19:2-3).

Praise God! Jesus has judged the harlot—the false religions of the world that corrupted the church. Is this celebration proper? Isn't it fascinating that hell is talked about at this banquet? To God, it is not distasteful to talk about hell. You can praise God that the same One who promises that our life will be endless also promises that the judgment of the unrighteous will be eternal. To us, it is hard to understand the two at the same time. It is too awful to contemplate. But God is just and righteous, and He says, "I have so freely offered this salvation that if some reject the offer, it is righteous that I judge them forever." If you struggle with that, as I think all of us do, look at these verses: Psalm 104:35; Romans 12:19; 2 Thessalonians 1:8; Hebrews 10:30.

As Psalm 104:35 reveals, when you worship God, part of the worship should thank God for His sacrifice; the other part should thank Him that He is going to condemn sinners to eternal destruction who refuse His free gift of salvation. Romans 3:5 asks, "... *Is God unjust who inflicts wrath? ...*" NO—God is just.

So then, the answer to whether it is proper to celebrate God's judgment is repeatedly yes. As He said at the overthrow of Sodom: "*Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*" (Genesis 18:25).

A CELEBRATION TO _____ OUR SOVEREIGN JESUS

"And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sat on the throne, saying, 'Amen! **Alleluia!**' Then a voice came from the throne, saying, '**Praise our God**, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!' " (Revelation 19:4-5, Emphasis added).

A Celebration of Jesus We WORSHIP: The twenty-four elders may represent the twelve tribes of Israel and the twelve apostles. The twelve foundations of heaven are the apostles, and the twelve gates are the twelve tribes. All of the Scriptures were written through the Jews, and the apostles

were the foundation writers of Jesus Christ's gospel of the church; these two groups of twelve merged together. The four living creatures represent all the angels that worship God. They are the ones saying, "Amen! Alleluia!" That is a celebration of worship. But the number twenty-four is only used in Scripture when it relates to priests; so the church plus Israel's twelve plus the apostle's twelve may speak of all of us as Christ's priests in worship.

The "voice came from the throne" could be God speaking, or a voice He creates out of the throne. "His servants and those who fear him, both small and great" are bondservants—those who will be in heaven, at the Marriage Supper, and those who will enjoy God forever. These are His servants, and His servants worship Him. Worship and bowing before Him acknowledges that God is who He said He is, and thus obedience is His due. A bondservant is someone who does what the Master says. Those who are going to be in heaven are those who have given themselves up to do the will of God.

What is a servant? The Greek word for "servant" (Strong's # 1401) is *doulos*, which means "a slave, bondman, man of servile condition; one who gives himself up to another's will; devoted to another to the disregard of one's own interests." In Philippians 2:7 we see that Christ's servants have His mind; in Colossians 4:12 they are prayerfully minded servants; and in 2 Timothy 2:24 they are gently minded servants—God's servants who don't strive and fight to get their way.

The transformed slaves of God will be there to celebrate worshiping Him. He longs for servants whose hearts well up and say, "God, You are who You say You are! I believe that, bow my life before You, and joyfully want to do whatever You say!" Sometimes we all struggle with obedience, but the direction of our life should be toward greater service to Jesus Christ—because this is what we are going to do forever.

Do you recall the parable of the ten virgins? They were waiting for the groom to come for them. While he was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. At midnight they heard the announcement that he had arrived. The five wise virgins arose and took oil in their vessels with their lamps; the five foolish virgins were not prepared, and their lamps went out. As a result, the foolish ones were not allowed into the wedding because they didn't have any oil for their lamps.

Bible scholars often say "oil" is the Holy Spirit. But oil here does not mean the Holy Spirit because the oil is to be purchased, and the Holy Spirit cannot be purchased. What may fit here is that the burning oil represents their Spirit-energized lives—being and living in righteousness as visible saints of God. They could put on an act for a while, but they eventually ran out of oil and never purchased more. (They never were actually living in righteousness and doing good works.) So when they came to the door, their lamps were out; there were no good works in their lives and they are excluded from heaven even though they thought they were going there. If you are saved, you will do good works, which prove that you are going to heaven. There are a lot of foolish people in the church today whose lamps are out. They are not consumed with the desire to be righteous, and to live out Christ's righteousness. When the Bridegroom comes, they are going to be locked out.

Jesus spent all of His ministry warning people who think they are going to heaven but are not, because they are not doing what He said (see Matthew 7:21-23). These people believe that He is Lord by their words, but their works do not flow from a personal relationship with Christ. Who will get in and spend eternity with Christ and God the Father and the Holy Spirit and all the redeemed of all times? Those who do His will. The person Jesus was speaking of most clearly was Judas. He is the prime example. Judas prophesied and preached in Jesus name; he cast out demons and did other wonders. But Jesus will look at him, and all the other Judases that have filled the church since, and He will say, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:21-28). How do you know if you know Him? Your works will determine your destiny. They won't get you into heaven, but the nature of your works, if driven by the Spirit, will show that you are going to heaven. That is the catastrophic problem now—people

perceive that they can be saved without having a transformed life. Jesus said that those at the Marriage Supper have a transformed life. That is the message of Revelation.

A Celebration of Jesus Our SOVEREIGN: “... *Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!*” (Revelation 19:6). Jesus is above all: all things are through Him, and to Him, and for His glory! What is this attribute of our God? Isaiah 40 clearly develops His absolute sovereignty. What is His name? The Old Testament name *Shaddai* (Strong’s #7706; used 48 times) means “the all-sufficient God, the God who is enough.” In the New Testament, God is called “the Almighty” ten times (nine times in Revelation and once in 2 Corinthians 6:14). It is the key word for God in the Book of Job as he discovers in all his struggles that “God is the God who is enough.”

As you contemplate His glorious sovereignty, doesn’t it just make you want to burst forth and sing: “All hail the pow’r of Jesus’ name! Let angels prostrate fall; Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all: Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all.” I hope that is your spirit because, if it isn’t, you will feel out of place at the ultimate wedding banquet.

THE _____—THE WEDDING BANQUET

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.’ And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write:

“Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’ And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy’ ” (Revelation 19:7-10, Emphasis added).

Look at verse seven above. The result of the elements we have looked at is this: we should be glad and rejoice and give Him glory because the marriage of the Lamb has come! His wife has made herself ready. You cannot get ready for heaven in heaven. We are talking about your time on earth—choices you have made and are going to make. If you are the wife-to-be of Jesus Christ, at that moment you are going to be shown for what you did to get ready.

We can learn how to get ready for that great day by understanding how royal weddings were celebrated in the ancient Near East. In that culture, a wedding feast was inseparable from the wedding which involved a weeklong series of meals and festivities, and was the highlight of all social life. For a royal wedding such as the one Jesus mentions here, the celebration often lasted for several weeks. Guests were invited to stay at the house of the groom’s parents for the entire occasion, and the father would make as elaborate provisions as he could afford. A royal wedding, of course, would be held in the palace, and a king would be able to afford whatever he desired.

A wedding feast that a king prepared for his son would be a feast of all feasts, and Jesus was therefore picturing the most elaborate celebration imaginable. The fact that it was a wedding celebration was incidental to the purpose of the parable in Matthew 22, the only mention of the groom being that of identifying him as the king’s son. No mention at all is made of the bride or of any other aspect of a wedding. The point is that because the feast represents the greatest festivity imaginable,

given by the greatest Monarch imaginable, for the most-honored guests imaginable, a royal wedding feast was chosen as the illustration of the ultimate celebration.⁶

As we discover in the testimony of Jesus in Revelation 19:1-10, we are with Jesus as He celebrates His union with His wife and bride. Why did Jesus never marry while on earth? He was waiting for His perfect bride in heaven. As His perfect bride, on your way to the table at that heavenly banquet, what gift are you going to have with you? What is your offering of love to the One who loves you with an everlasting love?

Marriage is a biblical symbol for the relationship between God and His people. Note these excerpts from Old Testament verses where God is speaking to Israel: “**For your Maker is your husband ...**” (Isaiah 54:5); “... **I am married to you ...**” (Jeremiah 3:14); and “... **I will betroth you to Me ...**” (Hosea 2:19-20).

Salvation—knowing God and being a child of God—is the highest relationship we can know on this planet. God said, “I want you to have the closest human relationship with Me that you will ever know on this planet, only more glorious.” But because of Israel’s continued unfaithfulness, God divorced them: “... **I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce ...**” (Jeremiah 3:8).

In the New Testament we have the symbolism of the church as Christ’s bride: “The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who **arranged a marriage for his son ...** [and] ... the **wedding hall** was filled with guests” (Matthew 22:2, 10). In Matthew 25:1, Jesus told the parable of the virgins who took their lamps and “... **went out to meet the bridegroom**” (Matthew 25:1). In Mark 2:19, He said, “... ‘Can the friends of **the bridegroom** fast while the bridegroom is with them? ...’” In John 3:29, Jesus said that the friend of “**the bridegroom**” rejoices when hearing “**the bridegroom’s voice ...**” In 2 Corinthians 11:2 we see His godly jealousy when He says, “... **I have betrothed you to one husband ...**” And in Ephesians 5:23, Paul states that “... **the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church ...**” (Ephesians 5:23).

As a godly marriage grows in its love, so a relationship with Jesus grows in its love. As the intimate relationship of a husband and wife is meant to be the closest and deepest sharing known on earth, so the relationship we have with the Lord is to be the deepest, closest, and most intimate—and that begins now, while we are still here on earth. As a loving marriage is meant to bring our truest joys, so is a genuine relationship with Jesus. Marriage demands loyalty and faithfulness, so we must offer absolute loyalty to our Lord Jesus.

DO YOU LOVE?

“ ‘He who has My commandments and keeps them, **it is he who loves Me**. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him’ ” (John 14:21, Emphasis added).

When I was engaged to my wife, Bonnie, I was not in America most of those months. I spent ninety-six days touring forty-two countries. Everywhere I checked into a hotel, I went to the manager’s desk and gave them my name. They would look me over, and then pull out a letter for me; Bonnie

⁶ Adapted from Matthew 22, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983, in loc.).

had found me in the most remote parts of the world. I dropped my baggage to the floor, and sat down wherever I was to read her letter. It did not matter to me whether I found my room or not—I read the letter from the one I loved.

Do you know that you have a letter waiting for you every day from your Beloved One? Have you dropped your “baggage” lately because you long for the One you love? As a godly marriage brings the most precious joys we can know on this planet, so does a genuine relationship with Jesus. It gets sweeter as the years go by! That is why I love to get to know saints who have been in love with Jesus for a long, long time. They have discovered the great joys of living by Matthew 22:37: *“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ”*

Now we come to the wedding banquet in Revelation 19—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. But what can we bring to the Lamb as a wedding gift? What gift is worthy of giving to our Beloved at our wedding celebration? How can we express our love to the One who loved us so much that He gave His very life for us?

When I am out shopping with Bonnie, we often meet people who are shopping for baby showers, bridal showers, weddings, and so forth. Most people are very particular about what they buy for those they love. And the greater the love, the more particular they are in the choice of their gift. They want it to be special, useful, and needed, and even want to wrap it to show how important it is. Have you ever thought that you are going to get to give something to Jesus? Do you know what He wants? He has completed His wedding registry in His Word.

Have you been listening to what He says He loves and wants so much? There are at least ten elements of daily life that He will reward whenever He sees them in us. Do you know what they are? Are you practicing these reward-getters at every opportunity?

First let me sketch them; and then we can ponder ways to seek for Christ's “Well done!” Most importantly, Jesus loves to see His character reflected in us. How? Here are the first three of the ten elements that represent the gift He desires from each of us.

Element 1—Christlike Disposition in Adversity: “ ‘Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you’ ” (Matthew 5:11-12). When you are attacked, maligned, or defrauded in any way, remember Stephen. Where did he look for an example? He looked at and followed the example of Jesus!

Element 2—Christlike Secrecy in Spiritual Disciplines: “ ‘But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. And when you pray, ... go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ... Moreover, when you fast, ... anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly’ ” (Matthew 6:3, 16-18).

Jesus loves for us to do secret and sacrificial things—and to be excited to do them even though no one finds out. Start acting like Jesus did. He went out to commune before day

sometimes. He stayed up all night in prayer other times. The key to success is to have an unbelievable longing for God!

Element 3—Christlike Attitude Toward Possessions: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth ...; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21). Take some of your stacked possessions and overnight them to the Bank of Heaven. Jesus says, “Give and you will have forever. Keep and you lose forever!”

LOVING _____ JESUS!

“ ‘And I have declared to them Your name, ... **that the love with which You loved Me may be in them**, and I in them’ ” (John 17:26, Emphasis added).

Remember: Jesus loves to see His character reflected in us. Now here are the seven remaining elements of daily life that we can give to our Beloved Bridegroom. He desires the following from each of us.

Element 4—Christlike Loving of the Unlovely: “... Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil” (Luke 6:35). Do you have a neighbor, co-worker, or relative who is unpleasant to you? Show them love and offer kindnesses in the name of Jesus!

Element 5—Christlike Serving of the Unfortunate: “... When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:13-14). Now look at this verse: “... Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me’ ” (Matthew 25:40). Pick new social companions. Befriend the handicapped, the poor, the informally educated, the lonely, the shut-ins, the dying, the prisoners, and any others God puts in your path. That is the body of Christ—non-shockable, accepting, color blind, and incredibly generous. Make plans right now to use your house, your car, and your money to minister His love unto the least of persons, those who cannot do anything in return. And Jesus will reward you in heaven!

Element 6—Christlike Investment in People Over Things: “Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor” (1 Corinthians 3:8). Jesus counts souls invited in. He counts lives touched by the gospel, by prayer, by deeds of kindness. What have you done this week that He has counted? Have you

prayed for people and given out the gospel? Investments in people last forever; investments in things don't!

Element 7—Christlike Devotion to God's Will: “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23-24). What are you called to do this week? Go to school? Then act like you are a Rhodes scholar for Jesus. Go to work for your company? Be as productive as if it were your own. Are you home rearing children? Raise them like you were Mary raising Jesus! Elevate whatever you do as if you were doing it for Christ.

Element 8—Christlike Loving Expectancy: “... There is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). Does a newlywed husband need to be told to look forward to seeing his beloved after work? Does a new mom need to be prodded into loving that sweet little bundle of joy? Long for Jesus the way He loves to be loved! He wants us to have the fervor of a newlywed with Him.

Element 9—Christlike Endurance in Trials: “... that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ ...” (1 Peter 1:7). What are you struggling with? If it is health, you can be rewarded for having a good attitude. If it is adversaries, you can be rewarded for how you treat them. Regardless of the type of trial, you can be rewarded for how you respond to adversities if your responses are Christlike!

Element 10—Christlike Focus on the Word: “... Love one another. This is love, that we walk according to His commandments ... that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward” (2 John 5-8). Jesus rewards those who love Him so much that they get His Word into their lives.

Are you overflowing with the world—or the Word? Do you long for His Word more than anything else?

CLOTHED _____ CHRIST

“... **Put on the Lord Jesus Christ**, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14, Emphasis added).

In Revelation 19:8 John sees saints clothed in their “*righteous acts*.” What is this? Isn’t salvation by grace alone? Are these works that He is speaking of? Yes, and yes! God has paid the full and final price in Christ for our salvation. However, we were saved for a purpose. Look at Ephesians 2:8-10: “*For by grace you have been saved through faith ...; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we*

are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

The “*righteous acts*” in Revelation 19:8 are not to be confused with the righteousness of God imputed to us at conversion (see Romans 3:21-22). We can only *receive* this gracious gift since it can never be earned. All the good deeds of an unsaved person amount to dirty bandages full of filth (see Isaiah 64:6). Apart from Christ we can do nothing, so any righteous deeds we wear are the result of yielding to the Holy Spirit, “*for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*” (see Philippians 2:13). Oh, what a blessing to be such channels in His hands!

Revelation 19:8, therefore, is referring to the righteous acts of believers during their earthly lives. When will these acts of righteousness be revealed? At the Judgment Seat of Christ. Here are the main portions that deal with this event.

It is a REFLECTION of our SANCTIFICATION—in our body: “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all [be presented] before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10).

It is a REVELATION of our SELECTION—of our building materials: “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. ... If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire ...” (1 Corinthians 3:11-16).

It is a RECEPTION sponsored BY OUR SAVIOR: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, ... whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Now then, here are some probing questions that might make you squirm a bit. Has it ever occurred to you, Christian, that you are making your own outfit to wear at this Marriage Supper of the Lamb—the greatest of all events? What are you putting into this special wedding garment? In the old world a father spent years building the bride’s hope chest, and spent years selecting items to lovingly fill it. Are you giving your preparation for heaven that much care? Are you being sanctified by continual washing by the Word? What good are you doing for God that will be spared by the flames of His refining fire? (All self-glorification will burn up and all self-gratification will go—everything done in the energy of the flesh will turn to soot.) What building materials have you provided that will survive?

Finally, will you be wearing the fruits of a good and godly life? The pure white linen of a self-sacrificed life lived in dedication to Christ is a stark contrast to the purple and scarlet of the harlot of Revelation that lived for self alone. Think about it!

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: You cannot get ready for heaven in heaven. Choices you have made and are going to make will determine both your wedding garment at the Marriage Supper

of the Lamb and the type of room in the mansion He's building for His bride. And that determines what rewards you will receive in heaven.

What are these rewards, and how are they described in Scripture? What we know about rewards is given in terms that are more general than specific. The following are those Christ has promised.

The Promise of His Crowns: This seems to be used as a symbol of victory, authority, and responsibility. On display at the Bema seat will be five great crowns for loyal and trustworthy servants of Christ. To steadfast believers tested by prison and persecution even to the point of death, God will give a crown of life (Revelation 2:10). A never-fading, never-tarnishing diadem awaits the self-sacrificing pastor-shepherds of the flock (1 Peter 5:2-4). Everyone who ran life's race with patient endurance and perseverance will receive a crown of righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8). Evangelists and soul winners can eagerly anticipate receiving the crown of rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). Finally, all who overcome will be handed a wonderful victor's crown (1 Corinthians 9:25).

The Promise of His Treasure: This reward stresses their eternal value and security (see Matthew 6:20; 1 Peter 1:4).

The Promise of His Commendations: This is seen in those passages where a reward is administered in the form of acknowledgements such as "*Well done, good and faithful servant ...*" (cf. Matthew 25:21; Luke 19:17; 1 Corinthians 4:5b).

The Promises to His Overcomers: Rather than a general promise to all believers, these rewards could refer to a special blessing of those believers who overcome unique trials and tests. (See Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26, and others.)

The Promise of Special Responsibilities and Authority for Him (cf. Matthew 19:28; 24:45-47; 25:21, 23; Luke 19:17-19; 22:29-30; Revelation 2:26).

I encourage you to ask the Lord to work in you whatever is necessary to give Him the greatest gift possible at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Get excited about this time of great praise and rejoicing! Just think: the King of Kings and the Lord of the Universe is preparing a wedding feast like none

other, and, if you are a Christian, you are invited! So make the choice today to live in hope by lovingly preparing yourself for His return!

Are you eagerly looking for the returning Jesus? Can you honestly, and with great joy, sing this song? I pray so!

Christ Returneth!

Be ready, for the Son of Man is coming
at an hour you do not expect. —Matthew 24:44
It may be at morn, when the day is awaking,
When sunlight through darkness and shadow is breaking,
That Jesus will come in the fullness of glory,
To receive from the world His own.
It may be at midday, it may be at twilight,
It may be perchance, that the blackness of midnight
Will burst into light in the blaze of His glory,
When Jesus receives His own.
While hosts cry “Hosanna,” from heaven descending,
With glorified saints and the angels attending,
With grace on His brow, like a halo of glory,
Will Jesus receive His own.
O joy! O delight! Should we go without dying,
No sickness, no sadness, no dread and no crying,
Caught up through the clouds with our Lord into glory,
When Jesus receives His own.
O, Lord Jesus, how long, how long
’Till we shout the glad song
Christ returneth! Hallelujah! hallelujah!
Amen, Hallelujah! Amen.
—H. L. Turner

Are YOU Getting Ready for the Greatest Day of Your Life?

Standing Before Jesus

1 Corinthians 3:10-15
2 Corinthians 5:9-11

Worship is Submission to God

Rev. 19:10

- He **Quickens** our conscience by **His holiness**;
- He **Nourishes** our minds by **His truth**;
- He **Purifies** our imaginations by **His beauty**;
- He **Opens** our hearts to **His love**;
- We **Submit** our wills to **His purpose**.

Revelation Outline

“Write the things...” (Rev. 1:19)

Which You Have Seen: chapter 1

Which Are: chapters 2-3

Which Will Take Place After This : chapters 4-22

Revelation Outline

1. The **Worship Scene** in Heaven (4:1–5:14)
2. The **Great Tribulation** on Earth (6:1–18:24)
3. The **Return** of the King (19:1–21)
4. The **Millennium** (20:1–10)
5. The **Great White Throne** Judgment (20:11–15)
6. The **Eternal** State (21:1–22:21)

Introduction to the Book of Revelation

1. **John** the Apostle is the **author...**
1. The Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ was **written last...**
2. The **theme** of this final book is also the title...
3. Revelation is a self-outlined **book ...**
4. Revelation is the only Book that comes with God’s promised **blessing ...**

Rest in the _____ of Jesus (Revelation 19:11-21)

THE VENGEANCE OF JESUS

“O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongs—... **Render punishment to the proud. Lord**, how long will the wicked ... triumph? They ... speak insolent things; All the workers of iniquity boast in themselves. They break in pieces Your people, O Lord, And afflict Your heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, And murder the fatherless. Yet they say, ‘The Lord does not see, Nor does the God of Jacob understand’ ” (Psalm 94:1-7, Emphasis added).

We usually don't think of Jesus as being vengeful. That is why Revelation 19 is so astounding! Since time began, His saints have pondered the wonder of Jesus' waiting to avenge evil upon the earth. This passage is representative of the heart's cry of God's people for thousands of years.

For all of human history since Eden, Satan has seemingly triumphed. Sin and death have run riotously around the globe. Un-avenged evils, from the time of the first murder until this present hour, are still pending. Human history has been written in blood, tears, and death. Yet Jesus still waits—and we, His children, continue to persevere in the hope of Him that endures and anchors our souls. For we know that somewhere beyond the starry sky is a herald angel standing ready, by the decree of the Lord God Almighty, to sound his trumpet, and the kingdoms of this world shall then become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. In that moment Jesus will return in all His glory to His world!

The climax of all human history unfolds in this week's text (Revelation 19:11-21). The purposes of God long hidden in His eternal counsels are now made clear. When Jesus steps back into history, He will no longer be the Suffering Servant—He will be Lord of All! Hallelujah!

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress

of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, 'Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.' And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (Revelation 19:11-21).

What an awesome event! And in that passage we see two remarkably vivid truths: **1.** the absolute security of trusting the timing of Jesus (vv. 11-16), and **2.** the absolute futility of resisting the offers of Jesus (vv. 17-21).

Contemplate the significance of this majestic scene as you reflect upon the content of the prayer below.

My Prayer for You in Revelation 19: Glorious Lord Jesus, we, with the Apostle John and the saints of all times, say, *"Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus."* Come to wreak Your vengeance upon this world; come to right all wrongs; come to settle all debts—for vengeance is Yours. You who are a consuming fire in Your holiness, oh Father, have committed all judgment to Your Son. How we await His coming! We know that He will come for us, Your beloved ones in Your church, to take us from this world before the hour of the Great Tribulation comes upon the earth. We know that we shall return, as Your Word says, clothed in white, riding on a white horse as a member of Your army at Your return. As we look into this very beautiful passage, may we see the wonderful truth of Your character revealed. And as we see the folly of the world which thinks it can fight against God, grant discernment that will enable us to better live in the light of Your Word. Bless Your Word to our hearts. Help us to be expectant of Your coming, or Your calling of us home. May we be found looking and living in a way that pleases You! We thank You in Your precious name, Lord Jesus, Amen.

THE ABSOLUTE _____ OF TRUSTING JESUS' TIMING

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, **To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be**

glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen” (Jude 24-25, Emphasis added).

No book is more tied to the rest of the Bible than Revelation, for Revelation is not only the conclusion but also the summation of the entire Scriptures. Everything that began in Genesis, and has woven its way through all the other Books of the Bible, comes to a conclusion here.

Now let us look closely at Revelation 19 as God pulls back the veil and reveals the awesome majesty of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in all His glory! Remember that this is the vivid, eyewitness account of John. He briefly saw this whole revelation from God’s perspective—almost at once. Imagine what it would have been like for John to actually *see* the Second Coming of Christ: *“I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war”* (Revelation 19:11, NIV).

The One who ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9-11) and had been seated at the Father’s right hand (Hebrews 8:1; 10:12; 1 Peter 3:22) will return to take back the earth from the usurper and establish His kingdom (Revelation 5:1-10). The nature of Christ’s Second Coming shows how it differs from the Rapture. At the Rapture, Christ meets His own in the air; in Revelation 19 He comes with them to earth. At the Rapture, there is no judgment; the Second Coming is all about judgment. The Day of the Lord (as the Second Coming is called in the Old Testament) is preceded by blackness—a darkened sun, a moon turned blood red, stars seemingly falling from the sky, thick smoke like from a furnace—then lightning and blinding light as Jesus comes. These details are not recorded in Rapture passages (John 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In verse 11 are also two of the wonderful titles of Jesus Christ—Faithful and True. These titles remind us that we can fully trust Him. Not one word He spoke will ever be false. Not one promise He made will ever fail. Christ came for His saints, as He promised (Revelation 4:1), and now He will

return with them. During all of human history, He has been watching and waiting. Nothing has missed His eyes. Now He will begin to bring Truth to bear upon all lies, falsehoods, and deception.

In the broad scope of God's plan for the ages, we know that His timing can be nothing other than perfect. He is never too early and never too late; His timing is always precise. Every genuine prophecy ever made will be fulfilled—exactly as predicted.

On a personal level, the same holds true. We can trust Jesus to hear every prayer that is according to His will, and if He hears us, we have the petition requested (1 John 5:14-15)—at just the right and sometimes absolutely incredible moment.

We can always rest in the absolute security of His perfect timing, whether it is that of fulfilling prophecy or meeting individual needs, for He is the God who does all things well (Mark 7:37)!

In the quietness of your heart, reflect upon God's perfect timing, and then worshipfully sing (or pray) this little chorus to the Lord.

In His Time

In His time, in His time,

He makes all things beautiful in His time.

Lord, please show me ev'ry day as you're teaching me Your way

That You do just what You say in Your time.

In Your time, in Your time,

You make all things beautiful in Your time.

Lord, my life to You I bring; may each song I have to sing

Be to You a lovely thing in Your time.⁷

As you meditate on the wondrous character of Jesus, let your heart feel sweetly secure in the One who is called "*Faithful and True*"—the lover of your soul! No one but Jesus is always faithful and true, and very few are regularly that way. You can expect to be let down at some point by others, but Jesus will never let you down!

JESUS WILL _____ ALL WRONGS

"... Do not avenge yourselves, but ... give place to wrath; for ... **Vengeance is Mine**, I will repay,' says the Lord. ... The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to

⁷ © 1978 Maranatha! Music

reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment ..." (Romans 12:19; 2 Peter 2:9; Emphasis added).

Did you know that the earliest prophecy in the Bible was from the first known prophet in the Bible, one who lived *before* the Flood?

There were three categories of people involved in the Flood:

1. the one who was taken out **before** the Flood came—Enoch;
2. Noah's family which was preserved **through** the Flood; and
3. the earth dwellers who perished **in** the Flood.

The earliest recorded prophecy in the Bible was by Enoch, who was seven generations from Adam. He had a son, Methuselah, who lived the longest of anyone; he was the one whose very name in Hebrew means "when he dies the judgment will come." And so it seems to have happened at the very same year that Methuselah died—the Flood began! Methuselah's son was Lamech, and he fathered Noah. In Noah's six hundredth year, the Flood came.

Have you ever thought about how many people perished in the Flood? If the families were the same size as biblical families, and they kept having children as long as was usual back then, there may have been a billion people on this planet when the Flood came. One creationist, Henry Morris, believes that there were four to six billion. If you want to know about God and His justice, how many people survived the Flood? Only nine—one was taken out just before, and eight went through it. If you think that the majority of the world is going to get to heaven, then you are not thinking like God does. God offers salvation to all, but so few come to Him.

Methuselah, according to Jewish tradition, lived until one week before the rain started. Look at what his father prophesied while he lived here: "... *Enoch ... prophesied about these men also, saying, 'Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands [hundreds of millions] of His saints [His army of the church saints, pre-church saints, pre-Flood saints], to execute judgment on all, to convict ... of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him' "* (Jude 14-15). This is a prophecy of Christ's Second Coming. God's analysis of this planet apart from His intervening grace and hearts responsive to Him is "ungodly, ungodly, ungodly." There is a moment in the future when God will say, "That is it!" He will then execute judgment on all.

Just as it was at the time of the Flood, in the Tribulation we see the same type categories of people: the saints of the church age who will be pulled out just **before** the Tribulation; the Tribulation witnesses—the 144,000 and the two witnesses—who will be preserved **through** it; and the world that will perish under all the horrors of God's wrath **in** the Tribulation.

To His saints, He offers assurance that He is faithful and true. That is important to grasp, especially when it comes to the matter of executing vengeance. If someone harms you or spitefully uses you, God promises that Jesus will execute vengeance, so He says, "Wait for Me to handle it." The ungodly are punished in this life through never experiencing Christ, but they will also be punished in the life to come. Therefore, we don't need to personally add to their punishment.

Jesus will repay every evil—He asks us to trust Him: "... *Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,* ' says the Lord. And again, *'the Lord will judge His people'* "(Hebrews 10:30). Jesus has promised that He will repay every evil, so trust Him. Getting out of sorts spiritually through anger and bitterness expends vital energies that are better spent elsewhere. So the Lord says, "Trust Me.

I will repay every evil if you will just give them to Me instead of trying to handle them yourself.”

Jesus will vindicate all who have been oppressed—He asks us to hope in Him: “The Lord executes righteousness And justice for all who are oppressed. ... The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, A refuge in times of trouble” (Psalm 103:6; Psalm 9:9).

Jesus will reward the righteous—He asks us to work for Him: *“So that men will say, Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely He is God who judges in the earth”* (Psalm 58:11). God asks us to work for Him, hope in Him, trust in Him, and wait for Him. If someone oppresses you because you are a Christian, the most powerful thing you can do is leave vengeance up to the Lord. That will free you up to serve Him: *“Rejoice ..., for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you”* (Matthew 5:12).

Are you assured that Jesus is really the Truth? Are you daily pouring out all your sadness, anxieties, and woes on Him? Only Jesus can give you the rest and peace that all will be well in Him (Matthew 11:28-30). Let Jesus be your pattern for how to respond to offenses. When He was reviled, He never retaliated. Revelation 19:11-16 bears witness that we can go through our earthly days trusting in the timing of Jesus to right all wrongs.

THE ABSOLUTE _____ OF RESISTING JESUS’ POWER

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to **all the birds** that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and **gather together for the supper of the great God ...’**” (Revelation 19:17, Emphasis added).

In Revelation 19:17-21, we see the folly of the world as they finally begin to reap the justice they deserve. What does the Lord reveal as the elements of this futile resistance against God? The earth dwellers will find that God’s plan and His programs are inescapable. Remember Ahab and the bowshot in 1 Kings 22:34? Ahab was the wicked king of Israel. He thought he was smart, so he disguised himself and went into battle with the righteous king of Judah. The king of Judah wore his kingly robes, but he was God’s man. In warfare, the opposing forces always tried to attack the king. If they killed him, his army would scatter. The Syrians started shooting their arrows at the king of Judah, but God protected him. But, when a soldier of the Syrian army decided to shoot an arrow at random, God directed that arrow between a joint in Ahab’s armor and killed him. God had said that Ahab

would face His judgment because of his grievous sins, so Ahab could not escape the plan of God. Though a person may run, he or she can never hide from God!

Now look at these elements that further reveal the absolute futility of trying to resist God's power.

The Inescapable Humiliation of Pride by God: "... [The birds] may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great" (19:18). Do you remember Satan's five "I will's" in Isaiah 14? You can try, but you will never succeed in exalting yourself. That is why the Lord says in James 4:6b: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

The Inescapable Power of God: "And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army" (19:19). All the powerful of the planet will come to fight God. Doesn't that make you wonder: How can anyone fight God? And what will they fight with?

The Inescapable Judgment of God: "Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image" (19:20). The beast will be captured—the one who led the whole world astray. He and the false prophet will then be the first to be cast alive into the Lake of Fire burning with brimstone.

The Inescapable Execution by God: "And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (19:21). All the Lord will have to do is speak and there will be a 180-mile-long river of blood draining from human bodies! Their blood will flow to the horse's bridles! At one point near the end of World War II, so many had been killed at Okinawa (150,000

Japanese troops and 15,000 American troops) that survivors tell of walking for miles through pools of blood as they carried away the wounded.

Why does the Lord give such a horribly graphic view of these, His enemies? To remind us of the absolute futility of resisting the power of Jesus! Are you “spinning your wheels” trying to resist Him? Or have you submitted and are now basking in His love?

JESUS _____ INTIMACY

"And this is eternal life, **that they may know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent" (John 17:3, Emphasis added).

Not many experience intimacy with Jesus because they often don't seek Him deeply. When we read some of the old hymns like the eleventh-century song by Bernard Clairvaux—"Jesus the very thought of Thee, with sweetness fills my breast"—the wording seems foreign because we are not customarily prone to thinking in such a manner. Why is that? The old saints intimately spent hours with the Lord. Martin Luther translated the whole Bible from Hebrew and Greek to German, and yet he prayed three to four hours a day. Most of today's Christians can finish prayer in five minutes or less. Men like Luther weren't "asking" the Lord for things—they were "basking" in the delights of Him! "Basking" is resting and nourishing ourselves in the presence of the Lord, getting to know Him personally. Have you ever thought about what a precious, blessed privilege that is?

Jesus said in John 14:21: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Think about it! The Lord is waiting to unveil more of Himself to you. Do you want to experience the God of the Universe intimately? Then spend both quality and quantity time with Him.

Do you know why I love astronomy, oceanography, and science in general? What intrigues me so much about all that is getting to learn more about God in nature because I want to know as much as possible about my Lord. If you want to know God, will you accept the greatest offer of all? A personal, always-present relationship with the Majesty on High? The One who is the very center of all-that-ever-will-be wants to show you more of Himself every day.

Jesus wants us to remember what salvation is: *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"* (John 10:27). That is the Christian life in one short statement: we are His sheep because we can hear His voice—He knows us, and we follow Him. If you struggle with assurance of your salvation, are you hearing the voice of the Lord? Is He revealing Himself to You? Are you following Him?

Jesus offers us the enjoyment of intimacy. Are you enjoying an intimate relationship with Him today? Are you enjoying the personal revelation of Him? Do you enjoy talking to Him? Are you reading His letters to you—the Bible's books? Are they at the top of your pile? When the mail comes, I usually sort through it very quickly. Half of it normally goes into the trash, and half can be read any time. But there is usually a letter or two that I just can't wait to open because I can tell by the handwriting or some other sign that they are of personal interest to me.

In America, one of the most anticipated events is the mail delivery. But far greater is the fresh letter the Lord Jesus mails to us through His Word every day, and He wants us to put it at

the top of our pile. I recently met with someone who told me that they were having a bad week and, in fact, a bad summer. I asked, “What is so bad about it?” They admitted that they had not been reading the Bible much. My diagnosis was that they were spiritually sick. At times when we have called the pediatrician about one of our children, their doctor always asks if there is a loss of appetite or lethargy. When that happens, the child is actually sick. As God’s child, if you have lost your appetite for God’s Word, and have become spiritually lethargic, you are likewise sick. The cure: Do not expose yourself to things that grieve and quench the Holy Spirit of God. Someone has aptly said this about the Bible: “This Book will keep you from sin—or sin will keep you from this Book.”

What do you know of Jesus that only comes by long hours shared with Him? I’m not talking about learning from what some great writer has written, but what you personally know from seeing Jesus reflected in His Word until your heart can’t help but rise in intimate worship of God. Now do you see how the old saints could pray for hours? Such prayer is a reflection of a heart panting after Christ: “*As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God*” (Psalm 42:1).

IN HIS REDEMPTION

“In Him we have redemption through His blood, ... and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. ... [He is] ... the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler over the kings of the earth ... who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood ...” (Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5, Emphasis added).

The blood of Christ is the scarlet thread that ties all of the Word into one. It is in His shed blood that we hope. Are you resting in Christ's perfect redemption and in the hope you have? Romans 8:1 says, “*There is ... no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ...*” Our sins are gone, and God will never condemn us for them. We will never have to stand in judgment for our sins because Jesus paid it all.

What are you holding onto to get you to God? Do you trust only in the sacrifice of Jesus for you? Do you trust in all that He did, and His redeeming blood—or is it “Jesus’ blood plus my baptism” or “Jesus’ blood plus ‘I’m a good guy’ ”? It ought to be as hymn writer Count Nicholas Ludwig von Zinzendorf wrote in 1739: *Jesus, thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress; ’midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head.*

Jesus asks us to trust in His faithfulness: “... *The armies of heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses*” (Revelation 19:14). This is wonderful! Not one of the members of His armies is lost, missing, or A.W.O.L. He has (and always will) faithfully cared for them through sickness, health, adversity, prosperity, loneliness, and joy. He is thus called Faithful. The very character of God is that of faithfulness: “*God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord*” (1 Corinthians 1:9; see also 1 Thessalonians 5:24; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Peter 4:19).

Jesus reminds us to wait for His judgment: “Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of

iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:15). At last it comes, the wrath of God falls. This judgment of Christ’s Second Coming is a “compression into a sudden flash, all the inevitable results of wrong doing.”⁸ Just as the crashing down of the Red Sea upon Pharaoh was the demonstration of the danger to any human power that defies the supreme power of God, and the inescapable fiery brimstone God used in the judgment on Sodom was about those who trifle with sexual promiscuity, so the fierce wrath of God here at Christ’s return is the clear judgment of God upon sin.

Jesus asks us to submit to His authority: *“And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”* (Revelation 19:16). Like Job and Jeremiah, we must trust God even when we can’t understand Him: *“... Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches, But let him, who glories, glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight, ’says the LORD”* (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Are you worshiping the Lord, your faithful God? One of the doctrines that some people hold to is the idea of losing your salvation. It attacks the very nature of God because you did not get saved on your own, and you can’t lose salvation on your own. It is a free, gracious gift from God—and He is faithful to keep all that you have committed to Him.

Are you resting in His faithful provision for your needs right now? Are you confident in any adversity that God is above all, and is working His glory through it? How about your health? Is it in His faithful hands? Your children, marital hopes, childbearing desires, or college dreams—are they all given to the Faithful One? God will bring them to fruition according to His perfect plan and timing. Trust in His faithfulness!

So then, what does the Second Coming of Christ teach us? Jesus offers us the assurance that He is faithful and true; Jesus offers us the enjoyment of intimacy with Him; Jesus offers us the rest of His redemption; Jesus asks us to trust in His faithfulness; and Jesus asks us to submit to His authority.

Say “Yes, Lord, yes!” to His will and to His way. Trust and obey Him. And when the Spirit speaks to you, with your whole heart agree with Him.

IS GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; **Great is Your faithfulness**” (Lamentations 3:22-23, Emphasis added).

What should be our response to what we’ve learned through Revelation 19 this week and last? Look at verse 19:10 again: “... I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘See that you do not

⁸ F. B. Meyer, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1978), p. 133.

do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” There are two gems in this verse:

1. worship God, and
2. see Jesus.

Worship God by giving Jesus your consecration. Focus on the reverent presentation of all you have to God, which is your spiritual worship: “... *Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God*” (Romans 12:1-2).

Worship God by giving Jesus your devotion. Let Jesus reveal Himself to you in every page of His Book. Learn to pause and often pray Psalm 119:18 before you study God's Word: “*Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.*” Yield to Him as He opens the Word; earnestly seek Him, and prayerfully allow Him to open your eyes. Give Him the devotion of your spirit in worship, and your body as a living sacrifice.

Worship God by yielding to Jesus: “... Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. ... It came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:27-31).

Worship God by earnestly living for Jesus: “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow” (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Worship God by prayerfulness: “*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you*” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Emphasis added). In these few verses, God gives the prerequisites for living the kind of life that truly honors Him: rejoice, pray, and give thanks!

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: To live in enduring hope, reaffirm today that you will not let anything interfere with consecrating your body and your life to Him. Ask the Lord to empower you to not walk in pride, to not walk undisciplined in lust, to not let anything wicked be before your eyes, and to not let your hands be used for things that defile and thus grieve and quench the Holy

Spirit. Make this commitment to Jesus: *By Your grace, I will not let myself be any less than a consecrated sacrifice to You.* That is how you can worship the Lord as He deserves.

So then, I exhort you to choose to see Jesus as Faithful and True. See Him as the faithful One who always speaks Truth. See Him as the One who will never break a promise. See Him as the One you can always trust!

Doesn't reflecting upon the wondrous character of Jesus prompt your spirit to want to worshipfully sing this song to Him?

Great Is Thy Faithfulness

The Lord's mercies ... are new every morning.

—Lamentations 3:22-23

Great is thy faithfulness, O God, my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou forever wilt be.
Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love.
Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Refrain:

Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed, Thy hand hath provided;
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

—Thomas A. Chisholm, 1866-1960⁹

⁹ ©1923. Renewal 1951 by Hope Publishing Company, Carol Stream, IL 60188.

Look for _____ on Earth (Revelation 20:1-10)

THE REAL UTOPIA

“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent’s food. **They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,**’ Says the LORD” (Isaiah 65:25, Emphasis added).

We now come to the incredible part of the Book of Revelation! So much of what we think about this book will now be covered—heaven and the perfections of a restored earth.

I grew up in a church where we often recited the Lord’s Prayer. Part of it prays: *“Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”* (Matthew 6:10). Recitation of that prayer is not common today. Yet, from God’s perspective, everything related to the coming of His kingdom is right on schedule, and in this week’s devotionals we will see what is going to happen.

It is time to focus our attentions on the new world God has planned, because this old one is dying. Although this old world is doomed, He has some great plans for the future of this planet. God has planned for a whole new world—far beyond anything we could ever plan or do. The Lord is preparing to restore an Eden-like paradise on earth again! There are dozens of promised changes until the world blossoms like a rose garden—yet with no blight and no bugs! When will all that happen? It will occur in the Millennium.

Revelation 20 is the step between Earth, as we know it, and Heaven for Eternity. It declares that the golden age will arrive. The armies of the nations have been disbanded, and the great military academies have fallen into ruin and decay. The machinery of war has all been smelted down and converted to the implements of peace. Jerusalem has become the world’s capital. The throne of David is there, and the twelve apostles are there judging the twelve tribes of Israel, for Israel rules the World. The millennial Temple has been built to crown Moriah’s brow, and the nations of the Earth come there to worship the living God. Prosperity is evident from pole to pole. Poverty is unknown. Every man has all that his heart can desire. There are no prisons, no hospitals, no mental institutions, no barracks, no saloons, no houses of ill repute, no gambling dens, and no homes for the aged and infirm. Such things belong to a past and lesser age. The bloom of youth is on everyone’s cheek, for a man is a stripling at a hundred years of age. Cemeteries are crumbling relics of the past, and tears are rare. The wolf and the lamb, the calf and the lion, the cow and the bear, the child and the scorpion, all are at peace. Jesus has come, and the millennium is here. The golden age, so

frequently heralded by the prophets of Israel's past, has dawned at last, and the Earth is filled with the knowledge of God. Jesus is Lord, and He rules the nations with a rod of iron. His reign is righteous, and the nations obey. The principles of the Sermon on the Mount are the laws of the Kingdom, and men obey them because infractions are not allowed. Sin is visited with swift and certain judgment. The era lasts for a thousand years.¹⁰

As you read that description of what it will be like in the Millennium, didn't your heart respond with joy at the very thought of what God has planned?

My Prayer for You in Revelation 20: Oh Lord, as we think about this twentieth chapter in Your Revelation, we are reminded of what so many in our world are longing for—to preserve the beauty of Your Creation. But it is so sad because they do not know the Creator! They want to preserve the wonder of life that You breathed into this planet, but they have never met the Lord of Life. They want to see Paradise restored, but they do not understand why Paradise was lost in the first place. Help us to better comprehend Your plan for bringing about the temporary abatement of the curse on this earth. And yet, it will only further reveal that human hearts are not influenced by their environment. Oh God, only the blood of Jesus can deal with and cleanse away the deep dark stain of sin that all of us were born with! For even on a *perfect* earth, the whole planet and the population will once more turn against You in the end. Oh, how we want to be numbered among those who say YES to You, Lord, and be among those who want to do Your will every day. Thank You for this glorious chapter! We pray that we will rejoice in Your Word, and rejoice in the future of this world, by laboring for those things which shall never perish. Thank You for illuminating our eyes as we look into Your Book. In Jesus' name, Amen.

THE _____ OF CHRIST—THE KING OF KINGS

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and **on His head were many crowns**. He had a name written that no one knew

¹⁰ These are the headlines of Revelation 20 through the eyes of John Phillips, a noted Bible teacher, as he blends dozens of OT prophecies into a picture for us in *Exploring Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishing, 2005), p. 251.

except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and **His name is called The Word of God**" (Revelation 19:11-13, Emphasis added).

To best understand chapter 20, we need to first look at Revelation 19:11–20:10 where we see God's mighty plan in three distinct strokes:

1. the **return** of Christ—the King of Kings (19:11-21);
2. the judgment of Satan—his **restraint** (20:1-3); and
3. the Millennium—the **rule** of the Messiah (20:4-10). Those are the three general divisions of this Scripture passage that we will be learning about this week.

The Apostle John and others vividly show us Christ's re-entry. Here are the biblical elements that burst forth in this moment as Christ returns.

Christ returns in judgment—seen by everyone on the planet. As heaven opens, Jesus enters the sky, and the sign of the Son of man appears (Matthew 24:30). He rides on a white horse, accompanied by the armies of heaven. Out of His mouth goes forth a sharp two-edged sword, and He Himself treads the winepress of the wrath of God Almighty (Revelation 19:11-16). Jesus wears blood-dipped garments (Revelation 19:13), and holds a ruling rod of iron (Revelation 19:15, which is a response to Psalm 2:9).

Jesus pours out His wrath on sin as One who treads the winepress (Revelation 19:15, which refers back to Isaiah 63:1-6). The "*robe dipped in blood*" makes us think primarily of Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross. Isaiah says that He is the One who is trampling the earth in His wrath, and the grapes squirt up on His white robe. The blood of Him trampling out the winepress of His wrath is why His garment is spoken of as "*dipped in blood.*"

Jesus gathers all the rebels as One who threshes the harvest floor (Micah 4:12-13; Matthew 3:12). He reaps the earth with the sickle of Divine Judgment (Joel 3:13; Revelation 14:17-18).

Christ returns in judgment—feared by all rebels. No one can escape, even though some will have dislocated the bats out of caves during the Tribulation in an effort to hide from God (Isaiah 2:19). Jesus is recognized by the earth dwellers when the despised Jesus of Nazareth appears on earth again, and all the families of the earth will wail (Matthew 24:30)! The Day of the Lord that was spoken of by Joel and Amos will have arrived (Joel 1:15, 3:14; Amos 5:20). Jesus is visibly angry: this is the "*day of His fierce anger*" (Isaiah 13:13) and the "*great and terrible*" day (Malachi 4:5).

Jesus' return is like the worst storm imaginable. This will be a "*day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness*" (Joel 2:2; Zechariah 14:6). Jesus terrifies the earth: in horror, the earth dwellers will creep into the clefts and ravines (Revelation 6:15) or hide in the caverns of the rocks and the holes of the earth (Isaiah 2:19). They will cry out to the mountains, "*Fall on us! And to the hills, cover us!*" (Luke 23:30; Revelation 6:16; 9:6). But, it will be impossible to escape from God's judgment.

Christ returns in judgment—poured on all rebels. His arrival will be like the swift and blinding flash of lightning (Matthew 24:27). All the chariots of His army will sweep the earth as a tempest (Isaiah 66:15). His eyes are as flames of fire (Revelation 19:12). His voice is

as the voice of a lion (Joel 3:16; Isaiah 30:30), and the slain of the Lord will be many (Isaiah 66:15-16; Psalm 110:6).

Jesus' vengeance is as a flaming fire (2 Thessalonians 1:8; Isaiah 66:15-16). His day is as a fiery oven (Malachi 4:1; Matthew 13:41-42) and is an inescapable snare (Luke 21:35). His fear is a sudden destruction that will "seize all" (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Jesus' wrath is as inescapable as the Flood in the days of Noah (Matthew 24:38-39), and as the fiery judgment that overtook Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28-32).

Christ returns in judgment—glorified by all rebels. The Lord will first appear on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4), where He formerly ascended (Acts 1:9, 12). Every eye will see Him (Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30). All the people will be so terrified and transfixed that they can't hide. Every contradiction will be silenced (Matthew 22:12; Job 9:3)—everything they have ever spoken against God. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the honor of God the Father (Philippians 2:11). This will include everyone who has ever lived! The KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS has returned! Hallelujah!

THE JUDGMENT OF _____—HIS RESTRAINT

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

In this passage, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords has now returned. He has squelched the rebellion, terrified the inhabitants of the earth, and He has slain the rebels.

What the Apostle John started seeing in chapter 19 takes us from the earth to the end of the earth, into the Millennium to the end of the Millennium, and then into the eternal state. These events happened in chronological sequence to show that the Millennium is actually a literal 1,000 years. Up until St. Augustine (A.D. 354-430), everyone believed that the return of Christ was to be followed by a literal 1,000 year reign. But when he wrote *The City of God*, confusion entered in. St. Augustine viewed the city of God as the church on earth; thus the 1,000 years was merely figurative. That would mean that we would be fulfilling God's kingdom here on earth, and thus people ought to invest all they have on earth—and not in heaven. But St. Augustine's interpretation was mistaken, and it has confused people ever since.

Some people have felt that the twentieth chapter of Revelation isn't actually going to happen—even though Scripture specifically says "thousand years" five times in verses 2 through 7 of chapter 20. According to Scripture, the Millennium is a literal event, and this is a chronological sequence. The only way that God can fulfill all the millennial passages is through this literal event. Not only is there a sequence that shows the literal event, verse 3 states that Satan is placed in the bottomless pit. If you

recall, this bottomless pit (or abyss) was last opened by Satan in chapter 9. He had a key, so he let out all those monsters! But now the angel has the key, opens the pit, and throws Satan in.

In Revelation 20:2, notice the names that are given in this biography of the devil: *“the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan.”* That is basically the history of Satan’s career. He is the dragon that took the heavenly hosts with him; he is the serpent that tempted Eve who then led Adam into the rebellion; he is the devil who has been seeking to tempt and pervert humanity; he is Satan, the adversary, who has always stood against God’s plan and God’s people.

Satan gets true justice when he is bound and placed in the bottomless pit. John says that the angel *“cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him.”* There is a poetic justice in God’s dealings with Satan. Centuries ago, the evil one saw to it that the mortal remains of God’s beloved Son were shut up in a tomb and sealed. So it is interesting that God has Satan put in a tomb and sealed just like the Son of God. But that is where the similarity ends: the Son of God rose triumphantly, and Satan is held captive.

Look at what John Phillips has to say on this subject: “Throughout the tribulation era, Satan has opened the abyss to plague mankind, once with horrible demons and once with the recalled soul of the beast. Now he himself is consigned to that dark hole and sealed in by an act of God, and there he rages in the most secure prison cell in the universe. It is the condemned cell, and he knows it.

“He has his thoughts to keep him company, and terrible thoughts they are—Thoughts of the day of his creation when he sprang mature, magnificent, and mighty from the hand of God; ... as the anointed cherub ... once he led the worship of the angel hosts; Thoughts of God’s throne and his attempts to seize it for himself; Thoughts of his fall, of his entrance into Eden, of his short-lived triumph over the first human pair; Thoughts of the sentence passed upon him by God and of his futile efforts to prevent the coming of the promised Seed; Thoughts of Calvary and of his utter defeat; Thoughts of the fleeting moments when he brought the World to the foot of his incarnation, the beast, and had seemingly triumphed at last; Thoughts of the lake of fire just ahead. He is given a thousand years in confinement to think of his own eternal destruction.”¹¹

THE MILLENNIUM—THE _____ OF THE MESSIAH

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

¹¹ Phillips, p. 253.

but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4-6, Emphasis added).

But what is the final state of earthly history? It is the rule of Christ. Let us now note these views on the Millennium.

The Millennium is God establishing what He promised in Daniel 2:35: “³⁵Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.’ This is the millennial kingdom. The insignificant stone, which shatters Nebuchadnezzar’s imposing colossus (comp. Matt. 21:44), but afterwards it increases to a great mountain and fills the whole earth (Dan. 2:35, 44, 45). The stone cut without hands is divine, it is Jesus Christ coming and crushing this image that is a representation of the kingdoms of the earth—Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome.

“The image—all earthly government—is crushed by the Rock—Dan. 2:44, ⁴⁴And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. ⁴⁵Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold—the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure.’ What we are seeing here is the Millennium—Rev. 20—the establishment of this kingdom that God cut without hands out of the rock and crushes all the kingdoms of the earth and this rock grows into a Kingdom that will never cease.”¹²

The Millennium is God confirming the kingdom of the Son of man which prepares an end for the bloodthirsty beasts of Daniel’s world empire. For the first time, it exalts to the throne of international history true humanity in the sense of Holy Scripture—humanity in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27; Daniel 7:13, comp. 2-7; Matthew 26:64).

The Millennium is God revealing the kingdom of heaven, which comes down from heaven, and therefore brings into this earthly world heavenly nature and heavenly happiness (comp. Daniel 4:23). Don’t confuse the Millennium with heaven. Sin is only held in abeyance; it is not removed. That is why people can still sin during the 1,000 years. Much of Isaiah is about the Millennium, and he says that if someone dies at the age of 100 they are considered a mere child. People live the whole 1,000 years—unless they are in rebellion, and then God cuts them off. We will be here on earth reigning and ruling with Christ. And Jesus will be here literally. There will be a massive temple in Jerusalem which is so big that all the inhabitants of the earth will come through regularly to observe what is going on in there. Literal sacrifices will even be offered. Just as the Lord’s Supper looks forward until Jesus comes, the sacrifices will be reinstated to atone for people, but they will look back on the sacrifice of Christ. Like the Old Testament covenant that pictured Christ for the Jews, so in

¹² Erich Sauer, *The Triumph of the Crucified* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), pp. 154-165.

the Millennium they are going to have the same thing pointing back to His sacrifice on the cross. No one was saved in the Old Testament by killing a lamb, and no one will be saved in the Millennium by killing a lamb. No one is saved by taking part in the Lord's Table either. They are all pictures to illustrate a biblical truth. It will be a very fascinating time when God reveals His kingdom and brings such heavenly joys!

The Millennium is God fulfilling the kingdom of God, which was planned from the very beginning—"Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' " (Matthew 25:34). This kingdom was striven for through the ages (Matthew 6:10); founded by Christ (John 18:36-37); preached by His followers (Acts 20:25; 28:31); expected by mankind (Romans 8:19); and set up on the old earth (Revelation 11:15; 19:6), after the final catastrophe of the hitherto existing world (Revelation 20:7-15), to run on into the new eternal creation (Revelation 21 and 22).

What will planet Earth be like during the Millennium? The sky will change (Isaiah 4:5-6; 30:26; 60:19). The earth will apparently be surrounded by a new kind of atmospheric light that will accelerate productivity. It will be like living in a greenhouse again. Harmful solar radiation will be gone, and there will be a global tropical climate.

The world of nature will change during the kingdom—the curse will be removed! The animal kingdom will find compatibility with human life. There will be no more predators or scavengers. (Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:25). Agricultural production will be abundant (Isaiah 30:23-25; 35:1-2; 55:12-13).

The threat of disease will change as there will be no sickness or deformity of any kind (Isaiah 29:17-19; 33:24; 35:3-6). There will be exceptionally long life (Isaiah 65:19-23).

The political climate will change as Jesus brings real peace and justice to the earth during His reign (Isaiah 2:4; 42:6-7; 54:14-15). Christ will be the perfect ruler: no lawsuits, no crime, no political machinations, and no unfulfilled promises.

The spiritual climate will change as earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord and His Word (Isaiah 2:3; 11:9; 12:4-5; 52:6-10). Everyone will go to Jerusalem to see the King on His throne, the temple, and all that points to God. In fact, if you don't come to the temple, it won't rain on your part of the world. God will rule and show His power!

The Millennium Revelation 20

- Promised to David (2 Sam 7:12-17; 23:5; Under oath: Ps 89:34-37)
- Predicted in the Psalms and the Prophets (Ps 2; 45; 110; Isa 2:1-5; 4:1-6; 11:1-9; 12:1-6; 30:18-26; 35:1-10; 60, 61:3-62; 66; Jer 23:3-8;

32:37-44; Eze 40-48; Dan 2:44-45; 7:13-14; 12:2-3; Mic 4:1-8; Zech 12:10-14:21).

- Promised to Mary: (Luke 1:32; Micah 5:2; Isa 9:6, 7; Dan 2:44; reaffirmed to apostles: Luke 22:29-30).
- Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come" (Matt 6:10, 13; Acts 1:6; Ps 45, 46, 47, 48)
- Rule: Psalm 2; 110;
 - "Rod of Iron" (Rev 12:5; 19:15);
 - "Every knee will bow," (Phil 2:6-11)

The Millennium Revelation 20

- Creation changed:
 - Physical changes Zech 4:9,10; Isa 35:1-10
 - Curse lifted Isa 11:6-9
 - Creation redeemed Gen 3 → Rom 8:20-22
 - Earth full of knowledge of Lord Isa 11:9; Hab 2:14
- Yet, not eternity: Isa 65
 - Death, sin Isa 65:20
 - Each to have land Micah 4:15
 - Fruitful Amos 9:13

THE RELEASE AND _____ OF SATAN

"The devil, who deceived them, **was cast into the lake of fire** and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20:10, Emphasis added).

Now that we have seen that the King of Kings will return, Satan will be restrained, and Christ will rule in the Millennium, what is next? Look at Revelation 20:7: *"Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison"*

When will that happen? Satan's release will occur immediately at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ. It is almost like a meter: God puts in a thousand-year quarter, turns the knob, and the timer starts. Satan will have been raging, and thinking about everything, but then he gets one

more chance to afflict the earth: "... [Satan] will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea" (Revelation 20:8).

It is mind boggling to think that people could sink so low as to listen to Satan after 1,000 years of seeing Jesus and what the world was like under His rule! There was perfect justice, perfect peace, perfect health, and perfect agricultural production. But then the old dragon gets out—and he has a huge following once again. "Gog and Magog" is just another way of saying "all the peoples of the world." There will still be nations, but this is not identifying Russia as the evil ones. "Gog and Magog" is a euphemism for the people who are in rebellion against God.

So then, Satan gathers them to do battle. He gets the whole planet to rebel and try to attack the Beloved City. Look at verse 9: "They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city."

Heaven is Home. Life is Camping

Just a note on the "camp" of the saints. Note they stay close to God's Temple, and close to each other. That has always been God's desire that we stay close to him, and not ever get comfortable with the world.

As Peter and Paul remind us, our lives here are like living in a "tent". Heaven is home; and life is just camping. The best is yet to come. This world is not our home, we are just pilgrims and strangers passing through.

And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them." God didn't say a word. Remember the rebellion of Korah in the Old Testament where Nadab and Abihu disobeyed and fire came? Satan gets the same fate in Revelation 20:10: "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Let's go back to Revelation 19:20 because I want you to be aware of a terrible theological error called "annihilationism." That view says that God is too good to keep anyone burning in hell, so He simply evaporates them and they cease to exist. Here is what really happens to people who are in the Lake of Fire: "Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone."

Now look at the end of 20:10: "... They will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Those two characters were thrown alive into the Lake of Fire—the first ones in there. What are they like after 1,000 years in the fire? Are they consumed? No, they are still alive and conscious and experiencing the horrors of hell.

Why is Satan being released again? He will be released to demonstrate once and for all that a perfect environment does not change man's sin problem. This will illustrate the incurable wickedness of Satan who returns immediately to his deceptive ministry. It will justify eternal punishment and show that man, even though exposed to righteousness for an extended period of time, when given the opportunity to accept Christ, will still reject Him.

Where will Satan go after his release is over? He will be cast into the Lake of Fire where he will be tormented day and night forever.

Mankind was tried—and found guilty on every count. In this brief moment, as all of history flashes before us, man is found to be absolutely guilty! In the Millennium his sin is absolutely inexcusable. Mankind was tested in the Garden of Delight, but he broke the only prohibition laid upon him, and sinned. He was tested under conscience (pre-Flood);

corruption and violence filled the earth, which had to be cleared by the deluge. He was tested again under the restraining influence of divinely appointed (post-Flood) government, but man went into idolatry, thus turning his back upon his Creator.

Mankind was tested under Israel's law, but he cast off all restraint and crucified the Lord of Glory. Mankind was also tested under grace (the church). In this present dispensation of the Holy Spirit, he has shown himself utterly unable to appreciate such mercy, has rejected the gospel, and gone ever deeper into sin.

Mankind was tested under the personal reign (the Millennium) of the Lord Jesus Christ for a thousand years. While He is here on earth in all His glory and power, personally meting out judgment and revealing Himself, He will stand in the millennial temple and say, "This points to Me." Yet the whole world refuses to hear Him. So Satan will lead the whole world astray moments after his release. In conclusion, mankind will have been tested and found guilty at every level!

God cares. (See Hebrews 4:14-16.) He is genuinely interested in this world, its needs, and its inhabitants—now as well as in the future. God cares so much that He has warned us that all of this is coming. That is why President Johnson's Great Society programs in the 1960s did not work. If you clean up every city and slum, and remove every bad influence, the problem still exists because it is inside of us. Therefore, God says, "You don't need a new city, house, job, or clothes. You need a new heart." Even the perfect world with no sin and rebellion, and a perfect Paradise, is polluted by the sin of man's heart, the sin nature that man is born with. By nature, by choice, by God's divine decree we are cursed, but Jesus Christ can remove it.

God controls. (See Daniel 4:35.) He has not lost control. Satan is on a time schedule and he can only go so far before God will shut him up in the pit. God is sovereign, and He is working all things together for good now as well as in the future. All the way through the millennial time, He sovereignly offers the temple to the people. You can read about it in Ezekiel chapters 40-48. It describes the temple in detail (how big it is, the rooms, the courtyard). There is a life-giving river flowing out from under the altar that goes to the Dead Sea, and makes that area one of the most fertile areas in the world. Everybody can see it. God is in total control, yet people still reject Him.

God communicates His Way to us. The God we serve is not a God of silence. He does not want to leave us in the dark. He lets us know what is going to happen—right down to some very minute details. We can have great confidence from knowing what is going to happen. Are you obeying Him? As Christians, we shouldn't spend our time trying to save the earth; we need to focus on saving souls. Give people the good news that God offers a new heart and a new spirit—that He will take away their stony heart and replace it with a soft heart.

It is interesting to live in a world where the enemies of God are getting the most powerful technology. That will lead so fast to Israel being surrounded, and without hope, until they look up.

But until that moment happens, we are supposed to be opening people's eyes to God's Word. Are you faithfully sharing the Word with those who so desperately need to hear it?

A _____ OF OLD TESTAMENT MILLENNIAL PROMISES

“Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this **the words of the prophets agree**, just as it is written: “After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up; So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things.” “Known to God from eternity are all His works’ ” (Acts 15:14-18, Emphasis added).

How does what we've been learning so far in Revelation 20 compare with Old Testament millennial promises? Various prophetic commentators have traced it like this.

Isaiah describes the kingdom in such glowing terms. Throughout his entire prophecy Isaiah sees, through faith's telescope, the glorious time when Israel and Judah shall be one people in their own land, restored in soul to God, dwelling in peace every man under his own vine and fig tree, and the glory of the Lord covering the earth as the waters cover the sea. He tells how even nature itself shall respond to Messiah's rule, and the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. The brute Creation too shall be delivered from the curse. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain. The lion shall eat straw like the ox. The lamb shall lie down with the wolf, and *“a little child shall lead them.”* All nations will then ask the way to Zion; and Jerusalem shall become the metropolis, not only of a rejuvenated Palestine, but also of the whole earth.

Jeremiah takes up the same happy strain, and foresees the God of Israel sending *“fishers”* out into the sea of the nations, fishing out His people no matter where they may be hidden, and bringing them back to the land of their fathers. He sees the city built again and inhabited by a peaceful, happy nation under the reign of the righteous Branch whom God has promised to raise up unto David, and *“in his days, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”* Then they shall no longer need to *“teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know Him, from the least to the greatest of them.”*

Ezekiel adds to the wondrous story, and tells of the Spirit being poured out from on high, and describes the services of the regenerated Israel, a priestly nation, through whom the law of God goes forth to all the lands of the nations. He depicts the millennial temple, and even tells us how the land is to be divided among the tribes, and does not close his remarkable

book until he can say, *"The name of the city from that day shall be Jehovah—Shammah—THE LORD IS THERE."*

Daniel's companion-apocalypse visions conclude with the bringing in of the fifth universal kingdom, and this he tells us is the Kingdom of the Son of Man, which is to displace every other, and is to stand forever. This is the Stone cut out without hands that falls upon the feet of the Gentile image and grinds it to powder, and then becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. This is the Kingdom conferred upon the Son of Man by the Ancient of Days, when the bodies of the beasts (symbolizing the four great empires that have borne rule over all the civilized earth) shall be cast into the burning flame.

Hosea shows that Messiah would come in lowly grace, be rejected by Israel, and return to His place until they acknowledge their sin and seek His face. Then He would come back to restore their souls and to ransom them from the power of the grave, bringing in everlasting righteousness, and making them a blessing to all nations.

Joel sees the Great Tribulation in all its intensity, but beholds the glory that shall follow, and predicts the outpouring of the Spirit, not on Israel only, but on all flesh.

Amos bears witness to the gathering again of the outcasts of Israel, and their re-settlement in their land under Jehovah's perfect rule.

Obadiah wrote the shortest of all the prophecies, and he speaks chiefly of judgment upon Edom, declaring triumphantly, *"The Kingdom shall be the Lord's."*

Jonah alone, of all the prophetic brotherhood, seems to have no reference to that day of Jehovah's power; yet, we may learn through him how wonderfully God will own the testimony of Hebrew missionaries in the beginning of the Kingdom Age, as they go forth to spread the gospel among those who have not heard His fame, nor seen His glory.

Micah joins with Isaiah in describing the time when "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow to it," when "the law shall go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Then "the nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and shall learn war no more."

Nahum predicts the judgments that shall befall the enemies of Jehovah in the day of His preparation; while **Habakkuk**, standing on his watch-tower, sees the coming King bringing in the glory.

Zephaniah and Haggai point onward to the restoration of Israel, and through them the blessing of the whole world, when the Lord their God is enthroned in the midst of them, and they serve Him with one consent.

Zechariah, the prophet of glory, gives minute details that no others have touched upon, and even tells of the provision to be made for children's playgrounds in the restored capital of Palestine, for he says, *"The broad places of the city shall be full of boys and girls, playing in the broad*

places thereof" (literal rendering). He sees every spot in Jerusalem holy to the Lord, and all Nations wending their way thitherward from year to year to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Malachi completes the series and announces the soon-coming of the King, heralded by the prophet Elijah, to tread down the wicked and sit as a refiner of silver to purify the sons of Levi, and to make His name great from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same.

Thus *"to Him give all the prophets witness,"* not only that through His name remission of sins is now to be proclaimed among all nations, but that He is to reign in righteousness over all the world, when He comes the second time to claim the inheritance which is His by divine fiat, as Son and Heir of all things. Then all the earth will rejoice for the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the tongue of the dumb shall sing, the lame man shall leap as the deer, sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and the Lord alone shall be exalted for a thousand glorious years!

TRUTHS THAT _____ HOPE

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, **that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death**, that is, the devil ..." (Hebrews 2:14, Emphasis added).

The following are truths that you are not likely to ever hear, except from the Book that only tells the Truth—the Word of God!

Satan is stoppable and vulnerable (Revelation 20:1-3). We can overcome him by: the way of goodness—a fruit of the Spirit (Romans 12:21); the Word of God (1 John 2:14); the walk of faith (1 John 5:4); and the blood of Jesus and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11).

Suffering is valuable (Revelation 20:4-6). Suffering for Jesus partners us with the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:17-24), and suffering for Jesus is God's plan: *"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake ..."* (Philippians 1:29).

Suffering for Jesus allows us an intimate sharing with Christ's sufferings that we *"... may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death ..."* (Philippians 3:10).

Suffering for Jesus strengthens our walk in the Lord: "... We ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure ..." (2 Thessalonians 1:4). Suffering for Jesus prepares us for future service for the Lord in heaven: "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us" (2 Timothy 2:12). We

can share in His sufferings (1 Peter 4:13), and be strengthened by persevering through the trials (1 Peter 5:10).

People are so deceivable and gullible (Revelation 20:7-9). Christ has therefore warned us to beware of deceptions, especially in the last days: "... 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many' " (Matthew 24:4-5; see also Matthew 24:11, 24).

May Christ's kingdom come! Now let us turn our focus to Christ's coming and the Lord's Prayer. Although I touched on this verse a little earlier, I'd like to develop it a bit more: "Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). These are familiar words in our Lord's giving of a model prayer to His disciples. What kingdom is He talking about? We know that it is not the universal, providential, sovereign rule of God because that is occurring right now.

David had this to say about God's kingdom in this present age: "The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all" (Psalm 103:19). Paul affirmed God's rule in Ephesians 1:11: "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will"

We do not pray for that which already exists. No, the key is in the clause that qualifies all three petitions: "On earth as it is in heaven." So then, what is the petition Christ desired to ever be on the hearts and lips of His own people—we Christians? He wants us to earnestly pray: Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth just like it is in heaven. Therefore, Christ must come to put this rebellion down—and for that, we are to pray!

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: Since God will keep His Word about the kingdom, we can count on Him to also keep His Word about today. Perhaps your life presently seems miserable and difficult, and you long to escape whatever is weighing you down. Sometimes people think that if they could only change their circumstances that they would be happier or better off in some other way. But did you know that external change is powerless?

A change in outer circumstances can effect no real inner transformation. Christ's visible presence on earth during the Millennium proves that even an outward Paradise does not produce godliness within. No, the solution to living in enduring hope is to choose to let Him reign within your life.

God therefore wants you to believe: "My presence is always with you, and I will give you rest!" He wants you to cling to Him in hope because He has promised to bring you victoriously through

whatever trial(s) you may be experiencing. For God works in all things for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28)!

The following song is one of my favorites. It makes a wonderful prayer for how to walk triumphantly in Christ. Read the words carefully, and then worshipfully talk to the Lord about areas where you sense He wants you to yield to His direction in your life.

Teach Me Thy Way, O Lord

Show me Your ways, O Lord;

Teach me Your paths. —Psalm 25:4

Teach me Thy Way, O Lord, teach me Thy way!

Thy guiding grace afford—teach me Thy way!

Help me to walk aright, more by faith, less by sight;

lead me with heav'nly light—teach me Thy Way!

When I am sad at heart, teach me Thy Way!

When earthly joys depart, teach me Thy Way!

In hours of loneliness, in times of dire distress,
in failure or success, teach me Thy Way.

When doubts and fears arise, teach me Thy Way!

When storms o'er spread the skies, teach me Thy Way!

Shine thru the cloud and rain, thru sorrow, toil and pain;

make Thou my pathway plain—teach me Thy Way!

Long as my life shall last, teach me Thy Way!

Where'er my lot be cast, teach me Thy Way!

Until the race is run, until the journey's done,

until the crown is won, teach me Thy Way!

—Mansell Ramsey, 1849–1923¹³

¹³ Kenneth W. Osbeck, *Amazing Grace—366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1997).

the Holiness of Jesus (Revelation 20:11-15)

THE HOLINESS OF JESUS

“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, **‘Depart from Me, you cursed,** into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels ...’” (Matthew 25:41, Emphasis added).

Perhaps no scene in the entire Bible grips our minds and stirs our souls as much as the last verses of Revelation 20. Imagine the scene: in one moment all the angels and all the humans who have ever lived on this planet—perhaps as many as forty-five billion souls will be assembled.¹⁴ In utter silence the scene opens. In the glow of God's glory surrounding His throne stand the redeemed of all the ages. Behind them, in countless ranks, are all the angelic hosts. The four angelic creatures hover about God's presence while our representatives, the twenty-four elders, stand, and then kneel before the throne.

All the dead, small and great, are in this assembly. Every single person who has ever lived is there: not one soul will escape this summons to the court of God Almighty—His last and greatest and final roll call.

All the “Ivan the Butchers” of this world are present. Those evil emissaries of Satan that gassed women and children hide no more in disguise to escape penalty; they each stand exposed. All the “Genghis Khans” of this world who flayed their enemies alive now have no armies to protect them; they, too, stand alone before the Judge.

The Scythians, the murderous horsemen who killed their foes and used their skulls as cups to drink blood, stand silent. The ashes of countless cremated warlords and ruthless business executives cast to the winds and seas, hopeful of escaping God, are now reassembled into bodies. Souls imprisoned in Hades now regain habitation in the bodies in which they sinned and turned from God.

All God-haters, from Voltaire to Hitler, now face the One they despised. The God-resisters who denied God and said no to Him are now assembled, from Pharaoh to the priests of Molech, and they, too, are quaking in dread. They are all present—no one can escape this, their final hour. Before this silent multitude, speechless in the sight of the God they never wanted to know, nor ever wanted to meet, is the eerie flicker of the cauldron of God's holy wrath, the Lake of Fire.

It is a lake; it is on fire. It is already filled with the devil, his two apostles (the beast and the false prophet), and all the malignant hordes of evil angels. They have already sunk into utter blackness to begin their eternal plunge to the never-ending depths of the blackened pit of darkness. Eternally

¹⁴ How many people are we talking about? Some have calculated that there have been up to 40 billion souls who have lived on earth. In a one-hour judgment, 40+ billion people would take over 5 million years! After the Flood until Christ's day, Noah and his family (eight people) produced a population of just over 100 million people. From the time of Christ to George Washington's death (1,800 years later) the population rose to 1 billion; by 1930, which was 130 years later, we arrived at 2 billion; 45 years after that (1975) we doubled to 4 billion. TODAY (2006) we have over 6 ½ billion souls. At the present rate of growth, in less than 25 years we will be at 10 billion. (*TIME*-1/2/89 pp. 26, 48). This growth is despite 4,000 children dying of starvation daily, plus 1,000 each day lost in various wars, plus the death factor of all who die of natural causes each day.

tormented with the very desire that gripped them—to be away from the Light, the Truth, and the Life—they plunge downward.

As for the billions who stand frozen with the dreadful fear of inescapable doom, the last word of the final judgment begins. This section of Revelation divides into five sobering truths which I will state now, and we will examine later in the week:

1. The Judge is great (v. 11);
2. The judgment is inescapable (v. 12);
3. The standard is exact (v. 13);
4. The sentence is final (v. 14); and
5. Blessed is the Book of Life (v. 15).

Before you end up in the congregation of the doomed at that Great White Throne, bow to the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you know Him, as His child by grace, bow your heart before Him in worship. Cry out to Him for insights that will impact your life from His Word!

My Prayer for You in Revelation 20: Father, we know that You are not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the Truth, to repentance, and to life eternal. You have told us that those who go to hell have fitted themselves for destruction by their refusal, either actively or passively, to say yes to Jesus. We pray that the horror of eternity apart from Your grace, and facing Your wrath, will motivate us to be like the Apostle Paul who confessed as his testimony: *“Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.”* May we go out to a dying world and point them to You as their only hope for the resurrection and the life. May we soberly, knowing Your terror, persuade lost souls to receive the free gift of eternal life, to repent, and to follow and obey You. Open our hearts to this challenging portion of Your Word so that Christ will be exalted in our lives! We ask all these things in the precious name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.

JESUS SPOKE OF HELL _____ THAN HEAVEN

“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather **fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**” (Matthew 10:28, Emphasis added).

We are examining the most horrifying doctrine in God's Word for humans to talk or think about. The fact is that God Himself talks more about hell than He does about heaven. Therefore, I want to remind you of the reality of an eternal hell that has been prepared for those Jesus said did not receive Him.

In Christian circles we speak more of *heaven* than hell. Yet, Jesus warned of hell from the very start to the end of His ministry. For example, in the Gospel of Matthew, from chapter 3 through chapter 26, you will find this common theme: eternal judgment. Jesus preached continually about the

horrors awaiting the unsaved lost ones—in public, in private, with saints, and with sinners. Jesus spoke much of it; we speak little of it.

Over twenty years ago I began an intense study of every verse in the Bible. As I read through the Scriptures, I looked for verses on the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the lost. Later this week we will examine some key passages. But for now, I want to give you a summary:¹⁵ *“That hideous doctrine of hell is fading. How often have you thought of it in the past month, for instance? Does it make a difference in your concern for others, in your witness? Is it a constant and proper burden? Our Lord’s words on the subject are unnerving. In Luke 16, He tells us of a rich man who died and went to Hades (the abode of the unsaved dead between death and final judgment).”*

Hades is the place where all who reject Jesus Christ, from the time of Adam and Eve through the time of the end of this planet, go. All of those who die without Christ go to the same place—Hades. From that story and a few other revelatory facts, we can infer several characteristics of hell.

Hell is a place of great physical pain. *The rich man in Luke 16 is a living immortal soul in the vestibule of the Lake of Fire. This is not hell proper. The Bible describes hell in the last book of the Bible, and it is called Gehenna. Jesus talked about that, too, but Hades is “the waiting room” before the final judgment. In other words, Hades is the abode of the dead, and the rich man was there.*

“The rich man’s initial remark concludes with his most pressing concern: ‘I am in agony in this flame’ (Luke 16:24). We do not make enough of this. We all have experienced pain to some degree. We know it can make a mockery of all life’s goals and beauties. Yet we do not seem to know pain as a hint of hell, a searing foretaste of what will befall those who do not know Christ, a grim reminder of what we will be spared from.”

Do you realize why Jesus spoke about hell so often? He wants us to be like Paul, “Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men . . .” (2 Corinthians 5:11a). “God does not leave us with simply the mute fact of hell’s physical pain. He tells us how real people will respond to that pain. Our Lord is not being macabre; He is simply telling us the truth.”

Hell is a place of “weeping” and “wailing.” *“There will also be ‘weeping’ (Luke 13:28). Weeping is not something we get a grip on; it is something that grips us. Recall how you were affected when you last heard someone weep. Remember how you were moved with compassion to want to protect and restore that person? The Lord wants us to know and consider what an upsetting experience it is for the person in hell.*

“Another response will be ‘wailing’ (Matthew 13:42). While weeping attracts our sympathy, wailing frightens and offends us. It is the pitiable bawl of a soul seeking escape, hurt beyond repair, eternally damaged. A wail is sound gone grotesque because of conclusions we can’t live with.”

Hell is a place of “gnashing of teeth” *(Luke 13:28). “Why? Perhaps because of anger or frustration. It may be a defense against crying out or an intense pause when one is too weary to cry any longer.”*

More than heaven, Christ spoke of hell. More than love, Christ spoke of eternal destruction.

More than the church to come, Christ Jesus warned of God’s wrath and judgment and hell.

Every year, about fifty-six million people enter eternity—the vast majority of them without Christ. I believe that it is imperative for us to pause and reflect on the destination of all those travelers who

¹⁵ During the next two days, the text has been adapted, paraphrased, and quoted from: John Thomas, “That Hideous Doctrine,” *Moody Magazine*, September 1985.

are leaving the earth to experience eternal suffering. Why? Because JESUS DID. And what is important to Jesus should be important to us!

THE HORRORS OF ETERNAL _____

“... are set forth as an example, **suffering the vengeance of eternal fire**” (Jude 7b, Emphasis added).

What I am about to share in today’s devotional is a continued summary of what an insightful person once wrote of all the verses on the doctrine of hell.¹⁶ If you synthesized them together, and put them in a flowing passage, this is how it would read.

“Hell has two ... aspects, rarely considered, which are both curious and frightening. On earth we take for granted two physical properties that help keep us physically, mentally, and emotionally stable. The first is light; the second is solid, fixed surfaces. Oddly, these two dependables will not accommodate those in hell.”

Hell is a place of darkness (Matthew 8:12). *Imagine the person who has just entered hell—a neighbor, relative, co-worker, or friend. After a roar of physical pain blasts him, he spends his first moments wailing and gnashing his teeth. But after a season, he grows accustomed to the pain, not that it’s become tolerable, but that his capacity for it has enlarged to comprehend it, yet not be consumed by it. Though he hurts, he is now able to think, and he instinctively looks about him. But as he looks, he sees only blackness.*

In his past life he learned that if he looked long enough, a glow of light somewhere would yield definition to his surroundings. So he blinks and strains to focus his eyes, but his efforts yield only blackness. He turns and strains his eyes in another direction. He waits. He sees nothing but unyielding black ink. It clings to him, smothering and oppressing him.

Realizing that the darkness is not going to give way, he nervously begins to feel for something solid to get his bearings. He reaches for walls or rocks or trees or chairs; he stretches his legs to feel the ground and touches nothing.

Hell is a “bottomless pit” (Rev. 20:1-2, KJV). *The new occupant is slow to learn. In growing panic, he kicks his feet and waves his arms. He stretches and he lunges. But he finds nothing. After more feverish tries, he pauses from exhaustion, suspended in black. Suddenly, with a scream he kicks, twists, and lunges until he is again too dizzy to move, too nauseous to think, and too exhausted to even continue.*

He tumbles onward, alone with his pain. Unable to touch a solid object or see a solitary thing, he begins to weep. His sobs choke through the darkness. Those sobs become weak, then lost in hell’s roar.

As time passes, he begins to do what the rich man did—he again starts to think. His first thoughts are of hope. You see, he still thinks as he did on earth, where he kept himself alive with hope. When things got bad, he always found a way out. If he felt pain, he took medicine. If hungry, he ate food. If he lost love, there was more love to be found.

So he casts about in his mind for a plan to apply to the hope building in his chest. Of course, he thinks, Jesus, the God of love, can get me out of this. He cries out with a surge, “Jesus, Jesus! You were right! Help me! Get me out of this!” He waits, breathing hard with desperation. The sound of his voice slips into the darkness and

¹⁶ Ibid.

is lost. He tries again, “I believe, Jesus! I believe now! Save me from this!” Again the darkness smothers his words.

Our sinner is not unique. Everyone in hell believes. When he wearies of appeals, he does next what anyone would do—assesses his situation and attempts to adapt. But then it hits him—this is forever.

Jesus had made it very clear. He had used the same words for “forever” to describe both heaven and hell. Forever, he thinks, and his mind labors through the blackness until he aches. “Forever!” he whispers in wonder. The idea deepens, widens, and towers over him.

The awful truth spreads before him like endless, overlapping slats. When I put in ten thousand centuries of time here, I will not have accomplished one thing. I will not have one second less to spend here.

As the rich man pleaded for a drop of water, so, too, our new occupant entertains a similar ambition. In life he learned that even bad things could be tolerated if one could find temporary relief. Perhaps even hell, if one could rest from time to time, would be more tolerable. He learns, though, that “The smoke of [his] torment goes up forever and ever; and [he has] no rest day and night” (Revelation 14:11, NASB).

No rest day and night—think of that. Thoughts of this happening to people we know, people like us, are too terrifying to entertain for long. The idea of allowing someone to endure such torture for eternity violates the sensibilities of even the most severe judge among us. We simply cannot bear it.

But our thoughts of hell will never be as unmanageable as its reality. We must take this doctrine of hell, therefore, and make sure we are practically affected by it. A hard look at this doctrine should first **change our view of sin**. Most believers do not take sin as seriously as God does. We need to realize that in God’s eyes and in His actual plan, sin deserves eternal punishment in hell.

We can actually learn, by comparison, to hate sin as God hates it. As the reality of hell violates and offends us, for example, so sin violates and offends God. As we cannot bear to look upon the horrors of hell, so God cannot bear to look upon the horrors of sin. As hell revolts us to the point of hatred for it, so also God finds sin revolting. The comparison is not perfect, but it offers a start.

Second, the truth of hell should **encourage our witness**. Can we ever hear a sigh of weariness, see a moment of doubt, or feel pain without being reminded of that place? In all honesty, can we see any unbeliever, watch his petty human activities, realize what he has in store, and not be moved with compassion? It encourages us to witness in word and in deed. That hideous doctrine may grip our souls in dark terror and make us weep, but let us be sure it also prompts us to holiness and compassion.

GOD’S _____ WORD

“... **Man is destined to die once** and after that to face judgment” (Hebrews 9:27, NIV; Emphasis added).

Two thousand years ago, God spoke these words to His church as a warning to be shared. We need to grasp the implications of this incredible spiritual law from God. It is man’s destiny to die. From Eden onward, anyone who sins dies. Without Christ, no one can escape death’s penalty. Every person born on planet Earth is destined to die ONCE: no reincarnation, no second chance, no intermediate step. God says that life is a one-way street: no returns. Literally, it is a dead-end street.

At God's final appointment with all who ever lived, without Christ, they face *judgment*. They will be lost, forever lost, and they didn't have to be—they *chose* to be! Meditate on the immensity of that thought! Let's now look at Revelation 20:11-15, which divides into five sobering truths.

Truth 1: The Judge is great—"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them" (v. 11). God is great because of His majesty—He is the Creator, Sustainer, God of Gods, Lord of Lords, King of Kings, the Rock, and the Endless of Days! The throne is white because of His holiness; He has revealed Himself as the Light, life everlasting, and the consuming fire.

Truth 2: The judgment is inescapable—"And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (v. 12).

We know from Paul that at death believers are instantly transported to the presence of Jesus in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). As most scholars believe, the Bema Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10) takes place then; as believers we are analyzed by Jesus for our degree of obedience to Him in this life, and then rewarded. John seems to imply that this event is all complete by Revelation 19:8, when the saints are at the great banquet of Christ's redeemed.

In Revelation 20:12, however, we now see the last, the greatest, and the final roll call. No one will go to hell because they didn't know about Jesus; it doesn't say that in the Bible. The only thing that will send someone to hell is sin, not failure to hear of Jesus. He is the only remedy, but the cause of hell is sin. Jesus said, "You will die in your sins." That is the most horrible thing He could say. Anyone who dies in their sins instead of being in Christ is condemned at that moment eternally, and will be banished forever from the presence of God. Why? Because God said, "No sin will be allowed to exist eternally with Me in My holy presence. Only those whose sin is dealt with, who have Jesus as their covering, are allowed in My presence." So the works of every dead person are to be exposed: every act, thought, word, and intent of the heart is revealed one by one.

Truth 3: The standard is exact—"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works" (v. 13). They will be judged both by Christ's words and by their works: "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Jesus has spoken, and He has revealed Himself. Psalm 19 says that His voice has gone throughout the whole world.

All unbelievers will give an account as to why they rejected "the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (John 1:9). The Light has come to all who have been born into this world "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for

Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). Those who reject that Light cannot escape His judgment, which is a very exacting standard.

Truth 4: The sentence is final—"Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death" (v. 14). Each personal account will be finalized. The self-righteous will see that they are wearing filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). The vain babblers will be dumb before Him (Matthew 22:12). The greats of earth will be pitiful in wretchedness that day (Psalm 2:1-5). Each will get their sentencing, but don't think that everyone will receive the same degree of punishment. There will be individual portions (Matthew 24:51). It will be better for Sodom and Gomorrah than for those who were alive during Jesus' ministry and heard His words (Matthew 10:15). It will be easier for Tyre and Sidon than for the city and people of Bethsaida (Matthew 11:21-22). There are different levels of punishment within the horrors of hell. Matthew 12:42 says that the Queen of Sheba will rise up in the judgment and condemn the generation that lived through Christ's ministry. And "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matthew 25:41). God prepared the Lake of Fire for Satan and his angels, not for humans, but those who follow the devil and his rebellion will follow him into the lake.

Truth 5: Blessed is the Book of Life—"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (v. 15). The names of all souls who experience the saving process of Jesus' blood are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. What is our hope as those who believe in Christ? Revelation 17:8 sums it up: "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit [where Satan was kept for 1,000 years] and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is." Lost people—earth dwellers—are not in the Book of Life because verse 15 says that those who are in the Book of Life have eternal life.

Do you know whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life? The ones whom Jesus will bring one at a time before the Father, confessing: "This is My blood-bought child" (see Revelation 3:5). Imagine your joy when you hear the Father saying, "Bring the best robe and put it on My child!" Jesus will say that to all who will come by faith and trust in His finished work. I now ask you what the hymn writer asks:

Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you fully trusting in His grace this hour?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?
Are you washed in the blood,
In the soul cleansing blood of the Lamb?

Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow?
Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

—Elisha A. Hoffman

JESUS DESCRIBES _____

“... ‘Their worm does not die And **the fire is not quenched**’ ” (Mark 9:44, Emphasis added).

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus explains that life has:

Two **entrance gates**—the wide and the narrow.

Two **roads**—broad and difficult.

Two **destinations**—destruction and life.

Two groups of travelers—many and few.

Two **lifestyles**—the sayers and the doers.

Two **inevitable ends**—being thrown in the Lake of Fire and entering the kingdom of heaven.

After the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus specifically warns everyone to flee—to avoid the Lake of Fire at all costs by doing whatever it takes to not end up there. He warns us over forty times in the Gospel of Matthew alone. Since Jesus preached on hell so much, we need to give this doctrine, tough as it may be, the attention He wants it to have. Therefore, today and tomorrow we will look at many references in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus warned about hell. Because the doctrine of hell is being lost by our generation as a true doctrine, it would be a good idea to mark these in your Bible. (Emphasis added to the verses.)

Jesus Describes Hell: The Pharisees and Sadducees who came to Jesus’ baptism were vehemently asked, “*Who warned you to **flee from the wrath to come?***” (3:7). Following that rebuke was an illustration of a tree that does not bear good fruit being “**thrown into the fire**” (3:10) and **worthless chaff that is burned up “with unquenchable fire**” (3:12).

In one of Christ’s most well-attended sermons (probably over 30,000 people), Jesus said that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause “**shall be in danger of hell fire**” (5:22). In verses 29-30, He went on to warn that if one part of your body causes you to practice sin, it is better to get rid of it than have “**your whole body to be cast into hell.**” He was convinced that there is a judgment coming for those who never turn from their sin, repent of their iniquity, and embrace Christ as their only hope. And so it was very loving to warn them of such consequences ahead.

Jesus warned to choose His narrow path because the broad one “**leads to destruction**” (7:13). **The person who does not bear good fruit is to be “thrown into the fire”** (7:19) and will hear His “***I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!***” (7:23). Jesus pointed out that what matters is not merely *saying* the right thing—it is what you *do* in life that counts. Everything Jesus said about salvation in all four Gospels, and the need to bear good fruit, is

summarized right here in these verses where He is basically saying: “Salvation is not based on whether or not you said and did great things; it is whether or not *God* did something inside of you. That is what the gospel is all about. When the gospel takes root in the heart, it brings forth good fruit.”

Jesus said that the “*sons of the kingdom*” would be “**cast out into outer darkness**” (a place of inky black, impenetrable darkness) where there will be “**weeping and gnashing of teeth**” (8:12). **In verses 28-29 we see** a testimony from the other side—from a demon, an immortal intelligence, a living spirit that has phenomenal powers that are thousands of years old, and has been in the very presence of God. Look at what this demon says: “*Have You come here to torment us before the time?*” The demons know that Jesus is the Judge, and that there is a time of torment and inescapable judgment coming. For them, however, there is no hope, no opportunity for salvation; they chose instead to go in rebellion with the devil, thereby denying God and going against Him. But we are the ones that the angels look at in wonder. Why? Because we have the Son of God who became a Son of Man so that the sons of men could become sons of God!

In Matthew 10:15 Jesus warned that “*it will be **more tolerable** for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city!*” Even in hell there are levels of tolerability. For those who have grown up hearing the gospel and seeing it lived before them, it will be excruciating to have that awareness of how close they came to knowing Him, but never embracing Him, than for the person who is in hell because of being a sinner rather than rejecting Jesus. And so it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah (the land characterized by homosexuality, bestiality, and sinful, grotesque licentiousness) than for the people who have had the light of the gospel upon them. Therefore, in verse 28 Jesus says to “*fear Him who is able to **destroy both soul and body in hell***” (10:28).

Jesus warned that it would be “**more tolerable**” (Matthew 11:22-24) in the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon and the land of Sodom than for those who dwelled in cities where He’d done mighty works. Why? Because Jesus lived there; it was His hometown, and His ministry headquarters. Those people actually lived with God and chose to reject Him. Although they lived with the miracles of heaven around them, they told Jesus: “All that You do is great, but we really don’t care about that. We want our sins more than You.”

Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, would “**not be forgiven ..., either in this age or in the age to come**” (12:32). **Hell** is all about unforgiven, unatoned for, and uncleansed sins. In verse 36, Jesus said that for every idle word that man speaks, he will “*give account of it in **the day of judgment***.” No one *goes* to hell; the condemned are *cast* into hell. The initial place called Hades is where people go before the judgment, and it will only be emptied momentarily at judgment time. At the end, as it says in Revelation 20, whoever does not have his name written in the Book of Life will stand before God speechless, and acknowledge that He is just and right to send them to hell.

OF WHAT JESUS SAYS ABOUT HELL

“[Apostates will be] ... wandering stars for whom is reserved the **blackness of darkness forever**” (Jude 13b, Emphasis added).

In the following verses, Jesus gets even more graphic in His description: “ ‘Let both grow together until the harvest, and I will say to the reapers, “First gather together the tares and bind them

in bundles **to burn them**, but gather the wheat into my barn” (13:30) ... Therefore as the tares are gathered and **burned in the fire**, so it will be at the end of this age (13:40). ... And [the angels] will **cast them into the furnace of fire**. There will be **wailing and gnashing of teeth**” (13:42). In verse 48 we see that when the dragnet “... was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but **threw the bad away**.”

Jesus said to let the true and the false, the fruit bearers and the non-fruit bearers, grow together. In the church, there are some who merely appear to be Christians. They can “talk the talk” and even seem to “walk the walk” so well that it is difficult to sort out the real Christians from the fake. It is like wheat and tares, all growing up in the same field. Jesus was saying, “Don’t clear out the church. There will always be believers and unbelievers, but let them be together. At the time of the harvest, I will sort them out.” Notice that all of Jesus’ stories are clear-cut choices: good and bad; righteous and evil; fruit bearing and not fruit bearing; heaven and fire. There is no middle ground here—either you make it or you don’t. In verses 49-50 Jesus therefore warns: “So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come forth, **separate the wicked from among the just**, and cast them into **the furnace of fire**. There will be **wailing and gnashing of teeth**.”

Jesus said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted **will be uprooted**. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, **both will fall into a ditch**” (15:13-14).

Now look at these verses: “... You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the **gates of Hades** shall not prevail against it. For whoever desires to save his life **will lose it**, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and **loses his own soul**? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will **reward each according to his works**” (16:18, 25, 27).

Jesus also told a lot of parables and stories that don’t have what we would call a happy ending. In Matthew 18:34 Jesus speaks about the agony in life of having bitterness and anger: “... His master was angry, and **delivered him to the torturers** until he should pay all that was due to him.” These “torturers of life” that we don’t deal with—emotional pain, depression, and anger—are merely a tiny foretaste of the horrors of hell.

The judgment of the Jewish leaders against the wicked vinedressers turned out to be Christ’s judgment against them: “He will **destroy those wicked men miserably**, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. ... And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it **will grind him to powder**” (21:41, 44). This is speaking again of the intensity of the eternal judgment.

In Matthew 22:7 we see another picture of what judgment will be like: “... When the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, **destroyed** those murderers, **and burned up their city**.” Jesus continued in verse 13: “Then the king said to the servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him **into outer darkness**; there will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth**.’”

Jesus sternly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees: “... Hypocrites! For you devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive **greater condemnation**. ... For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a **son of hell** as yourselves” (23:14-15). Now look at verse 33: “Serpents, brood of vipers! **How can you escape the condemnation of hell?**”

Jesus said that the master of an unfaithful evil servant will come, when he least expects him, to “**cut him in two** and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be **weeping and**

gnashing of teeth” (24:51). The weeping is because of the pain, and the gnashing of the teeth and wailing is due to the inescapable punishment.

Matthew 25:30 speaks of the unprofitable servant who will be cast “ **‘into the outer darkness.** There will be **weeping and gnashing of teeth.**’ ” Have you heard this enough to catch your attention? In verse 41 are Christ’s last words about hell; this is the judgment, and Jesus is sitting on the throne: “ ‘Then He will also say to those on the left hand, “Depart from Me, you **cursed**, into **the everlasting fire** prepared for the devil and his angels” ’ ”

Hell was not made for humans. God did not plan for, and want to deliver, the lost to the place of everlasting judgment. Therefore, He is not willing that any should perish. Now tie that with John 3:16: “... that they should not perish but have everlasting life.” God does not want you to go to **the everlasting fire. It was prepared for the devil and his angels. But look at verse 46:** “And these [the cursed who practice iniquity—who reject Christ, and refuse to believe and repent] will go away into **everlasting punishment**, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Life in heaven will be endless, but so will life in hell. The only reason hell even exists for mankind is because they love their sins instead of the living and written Word of God. Have you embraced God and His Word? Are you sharing His gospel with others so that they do not become **cursed** and be cast into **the everlasting fire?**

THE APOSTLES _____ THEIR WARNINGS OF HELL

“Knowing, therefore, **the terror of the Lord**, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences” (2 Corinthians 5:11a, Emphasis added).

Now that we have seen what Jesus spoke about hell, let us finish up this subject with what Paul, Peter, Jude, John, and the writer of Hebrews had to say on this subject. (Emphasis added to the verses.)

Paul wrote: “... **tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil ...**” (Romans 2:9). In 2 Thessalonians 1:9 he said, “These shall be **punished with everlasting destruction** from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” The writer of Hebrews warned, “It is a **fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**” (Hebrews 10:31). And Peter had this to say: “... God did not spare the angels who sinned, but **cast them down to hell** and delivered them into **chains of darkness**, to be **reserved for judgment ...**” (2 Peter 2:4).

In Jude we learn that “... the angels who did not keep their proper domain, ... He has **reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment** of the great day” The apostates will be “**suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.**” **They are like “... wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”** (See Jude 6-13 for a complete description of this judgment.)

In Revelation 14:11 we are told: “And **the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever**; and **they have no rest day or night**, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

Now look at Revelation 19:20: “Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and

those who worshiped his image. These ***two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.***”

Finally, in Revelation 20:10-15, we see: “The devil, who deceived them, was ***cast into the lake of fire and brimstone*** where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ... Then Death and Hades were ***cast into the lake of fire***. This is the ***second death***. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was ***cast into the lake of fire.***”

What happens when we receive the Word of God? Why did the rich man of Luke 16 go to hell? What happened to him? He refused to let the Word of God change him; it never pierced his heart. When God's Word is received by faith, our life begins to change: self-centeredness begins to die; self-indulgence begins to be disciplined away; self-sacrifice begins to be pursued; and compassion, kindness, caring, and love take root and grow.

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: *This has been a hard week's reading, hasn't it? Although it is painful to have your eyes opened to the realities of the horrors of hell, it is absolutely essential that you not be “in the dark” regarding the Truth about this doctrine.*

What is the most important point that I want to drive home in this week's devotionals? This amazing Truth— Jesus Christ died for sinners. All who receive Him are forgiven of their sins—past, present, and future. All who are forgiven receive eternal life!

Have you received Jesus Christ? Do you know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that your sins have been removed? If they have not been, I exhort you, with all that is within me, to delay no longer! No one knows how long they will live, and you could be ushered into eternity at any moment. Oh,

dear reader, make a choice to live in hope. Choose to bow your knee to Jesus Christ, who loves you and gave Himself for you!

If you know the Lord Jesus, quietly rejoice in your heart that you have been born again, and then glorify the Lord by worshipfully and gratefully singing this song to Him.

Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty;

who was, and is, and is to come. —Revelation 4:8

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning [my] song shall rise to Thee;

Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Mighty!

God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, Holy, Holy! All the saints adore Thee,

Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,

Which wert and art and evermore shalt be.

Holy, Holy, Holy! Tho the darkness hide Thee,

Tho the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;

Only Thou art holy—there is none beside Thee

Perfect in pow'r, in love and purity.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!

All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea;

Holy, Holy, Holy! Merciful and Mighty!

God in Three Persons, blessed Trinity!

—Reginald Heber, 1783–1826

Taste the _____ of Heaven (Revelation 21-22)

THOUGHTS ON HEAVEN

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. **I go to prepare a place for you**” (John 14:2, Emphasis added).

When you think of heaven, what comes to mind? As for me, thoughts of heaven always lead back to sweet memories of my being a little boy in Sunday school and singing this song: *I’m going to Heaven, can’t wait; Going to see Jesus, can’t wait; Heaven is wonderful, bright and fair, Praise the Lord, I’m going there!*

A childlike wonder permeates the minds and hearts of the very young—especially when it comes to things of the Lord. Thus, little lambs can joyfully think: *Can’t wait to get to heaven!* But as lambs grow into sheep, the manifold distractions of this world can crowd out that joy ... childlike wonder begins to fade ... and that sweet song of a soft heart changes to: *I’m going to Heaven, but it can wait; going to see Jesus, but He can wait; Heaven is wonderful, bright and fair, praise the Lord—but it can wait!* In other words: *Heaven with Jesus sounds wonderful, but let’s hold it off for a little while!*

Isn’t that how we become as we age? Usually, not until we are approaching the end of our life do our thoughts go back to: *Can’t wait to get to heaven!* It is that in-between time when we are at the greatest risk of heaven losing its wonder in our minds and hearts. If we’re honest, most of us would say that we are hoping for heaven, but not just yet. Why is that?

Dave Hunt comments, “For most Christians heaven is a place they desire to reach eventually, but not until they have lived out their full days on earth. Their hopes, ambitions, and interests, contrary to what Christ taught and the early Church lived, are really bound up in the life they aspire to live in this world. Heaven is a distant and unreal destination they reluctantly expect to reach at the

end of life, but it is not desired before then. To be suddenly raptured to heaven would be, for most Christians, an unwelcome interruption of their earthly plans and ambitions.”¹⁷

Most of us have thus forgotten how to embrace the awe of being in our Father’s house! Restoring that childlike wonder is my goal for this week’s devotionals. And it is my heartfelt prayer that when you have finished on Saturday that you will, with joy, be singing:

This world is not my home
I’m just a passing through
My treasures are laid up
Somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me
From heaven’s open door
And I can’t feel at home
In this world anymore.
—Albert E. Brumley, 1952

Would the Rapture be an unwelcome interruption of the plans you have for this life, or your greatest joy? Are you an earth dweller at heart, or a pilgrim who longs for “heaven’s open door”?

My Prayer for You in Revelation 21 & 22: Oh Father, we do thank You for heaven! We thank You that the writer of Hebrews says this hope we have is an anchor of our souls. Oh Lord, we pray that You will make sure that we are believing the Truth about You, and following the way that You would have us to go. Open our minds and hearts to embrace the Truth as we detach ourselves from this place and choose to attach our affections upon heaven—to look forward to our Father’s house. We thank You for what You will teach us! In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Breastplate of the High priest

IN MY FATHER’S _____

“**In My Father’s house** are many mansions ...” (John 14:2a, Emphasis added).

Christ’s promise to us in John 14:1-6 comes in the language of the Bible, and it is bound by culture and time. Therefore, understanding the Scriptures involves more than knowing what the words mean. We need to understand those words from the perspective of the people that God chose both to write them and to have those words communicated to them in the New Testament world. Therefore the people God chose as His instruments, the people to whom He revealed Himself, were Hebrews living

¹⁷ Dave Hunt, *How Close Are We?* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1993), p. 320.

in the Near East. We can't divorce ourselves from that context or we won't fully understand God's Word. Remember the world is divided into Oriental and Occidental—we're Occidental, a western culture. They are Oriental—an eastern culture—so they think in terms of concrete reality. The western world is more in ideas and the defined mode rather than the concrete mode, which is the Hebrew and Greek languages. Their language was one of pictures, metaphors, and examples rather than ideas, definitions, and abstractions.¹⁸

If we were to have a little concert of worship in today's church vernacular, someone might say, "Oh, God, I praise Your mighty omniscience!" Or another might say, "I am so grateful for Your omnipotence!" But you wouldn't hear those kinds of words in a Hebrew prayer meeting. A Hebrew preferred to pray: "The Lord is my Shepherd." Do you know what that means to the Hebrew? "The Lord is all-knowing; He never slumbers or sleeps; He is all-providing; He watches over us night and day, and leads us." They are saying that God is the One who is not only with them but also provides for them.

Now look at the concrete imagery of John 14:1-6 as we go through this passage:

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me."—Jesus is speaking to His disciples, who don't know what's ahead.

"In My Father's house"—That is a description of heaven!

"are many mansions"—These are dwelling places, nests, places of rest—an innumerable amount of rooms are there.

"if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you"—Heaven isn't an idea, or merely another dimension; it is a place. Jesus is saying, "I am going away to prepare a special place for you, so be sure that you have your room reserved!" He is preparing a place for all those who make prior reservations before they leave this earth (that is what salvation is about).

"And if I go and prepare a place for you"—"A place" speaks of an individual room for each of His children.

"I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know."—If you search the Scriptures, you know all about this because

¹⁸ Ray Vander Laan, *That The World May Know: Set 4 Leaders Guide for Faith Lessons 19-27* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1997), p. 2.

heaven covers the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. And what beautiful pictures they are!

“Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?’ ”—Thomas is speaking here for all of us!

“Jesus said to him, *‘I am the way, the truth, and the life.’* ”—Jesus told them, “I am the Way to heaven, the Truth about heaven, and the Life that you long for because you will have My unbroken presence!”

“*No one comes to the Father except through Me.*”—Coming to the Father is the same as going to live in the Father’s house, and Jesus is the Door through which we must enter.

Heaven is the unbroken presence of God forever, the unsoiled shores of Paradise, the unending enjoyment of the Living and True Almighty Lord of Heaven and Earth. Thus heaven has always been the source of comfort, hope, and focus of God’s servants.

When Christ’s disciples felt extremely distressed in their hearts because He told them He was going to die, and not be with them anymore, Jesus comforted them with heaven. Heaven is what those in the Coliseum clung to as they went to their death in the arena. Thoughts of heaven gave enduring hope to those in the dungeons, going through the fires of persecution, and dying for their faith. They all clung to heaven as their secure hope for the future. We, too, should cling to heaven because Jesus intended that heaven be our comfort as we walk His path on earth.

The early church lived in such a way that they looked every day for Christ. When they saw the sun rising their thoughts turned to: *When morning gilds the sky my heart awaking cries, may Jesus Christ be praised—perhaps today He will come . . .* That is what those early believers lived, which is so often remote from our culture. We plan our lives so far in advance that if the Rapture happened this week it would ruin our plans. We should be planning according to *His* plans! Yes, we need to prepare wisely for the future, but the real need we have is to long for heaven. That should take precedence over any personal agendas. Long for your Father’s house, but most of all, long for Jesus!

HEAVEN IS A DWELLING _____

“In My Father’s house are **many mansions**; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare **a place** for you” (John 14:2, Emphasis added).

Heaven is the eternal and very distant world that is the abode of God, the angels, and glorified believers. But to help us grasp some of its wonder, join me in a look at: **What is heaven?**¹⁹

Heaven is a dwelling place. Jesus has told us that there are many dwelling places in His Father’s house. The most frequent association with heaven is that it is the place where God dwells. Although God is the central inhabitant of heaven, He is not its only resident. The angels live there as

¹⁹ The following is adapted, drawn, and quoted from Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, © 1998).

well, as more than a dozen verses tell us. The company of the redeemed also lives in heaven; at the end of Elijah's earthly life, God took him up to heaven by a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1), and Revelation repeatedly portrays glorified saints as inhabiting heaven. A preponderance of the Bible's pictures of heaven show it to be a crowded place.

When you think about heaven, though, don't consider it to be an endlessly huge place. Think about it in Bible terms. Let me show you one that just makes me chuckle—a reference to heaven in the Old Testament. I love this one because it reminds me of our family of ten! (You might say that our home is “a little bit like heaven” in this sense.) Right in the middle of warning King Ahab about the consequences of his sin, there is this little note in 1 Kings 22:19: *“Then Micaiah said, ‘Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left.’”*

What is that all about? Well, heaven might be huge, but the idea is that everybody will be crowded right around the throne—as close as they can get to God! Do you see what it is? Heaven is shown to be a massive place that could house 100 billion people—each having a room with space that would equal the size of a whole palace of their own. Yet, in spite of that, the descriptions of heaven almost remind me of what my beehives look like: the queen bee is right there, and all the bees are gathered together as close to her as they can get. That is what heaven is like: we will all be gathered together around our heavenly Father's throne just to be near Him!

What does that have to do with my home? When Bonnie and I are brushing our teeth, I'd say that 90 percent of our family is standing right there by us brushing their teeth as well. And, if Bonnie is in our kitchen, everybody is right around her in the kitchen. Why does my family stay so close by? Because we love to be together! Do you know what heaven is? A dwelling place of those who want, more than anything else, to be where God is. They want to adore Him, worship Him, magnify Him, see Him, know Him, and be with Him! For that reason, Jesus was named Emmanuel, *“God with us,”* so that we could get to be with God!

Being with God forever is the fulfillment of everything about which the Scriptures speak. God created Adam and Eve for fellowship with Him, and to walk with Him, but they fell into sin and broke that bond of fellowship. So, through Jesus, He came back to redeem them—to bring them to Himself by offering a means of escape from the curse of sin—from the penalty they incurred because of their transgression. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ became the fulfillment of those promises (Matthew 1:21, 23).

God came to be with us so that we can go to be with Him. The ultimate description of heaven is the dwelling place where we get to be with God. We get to know Him, to be like Him, to see Him as He is. We get to spend forever with the One who loved us and gave Himself for us! If we die in our

sleep, as David said, “When I awake, I will awake in Your likeness because I want to be like You, and I want to be with You” (see Psalm 17:15).

HEAVEN IS A _____ PLACE

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare **a place** for you” (John 14:2, Emphasis added).

I want to underline in your mind that heaven is not an idea alone. In the Bible, heaven is emphatically a definite locale. To enter it is to enter a definite space. In the verse above, note that Jesus specifically said that He was going to prepare “*a place*.” If we ask where this heavenly place is, the answer overwhelmingly is that it is above the planet Earth. Vertical imagery dominates in the placing of it.

Heaven is a place from which God looks down to the earth: “The LORD looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God” (Psalm 14:2, NIV). Psalm 80:14 says, “... O God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! ...” (NIV). And in Psalm 102:19, “The LORD looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth ...” (Psalm 102:19, NIV).

So what is heaven? Not only the dwelling place of God, but it has an incredible vertical imagery. It is the place, first of all, from which God looks down upon us.

Heaven is the place from which Christ came down: “ ‘For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world’ ” (John 6:33). The Bible describes heaven not only as the place from which God looks down upon the earth but also the place from which Christ came down to the earth.

Jesus said, “ ‘For I have come down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me ... I am the bread which came down from heaven’ ” (John 6:38, 41). So where is heaven? God says, “I am above you—looking down at you!” That is where heaven is, and that is where Jesus came from. For that reason the Jews grumbled at Him saying, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I came down from heaven?’” (John 6:42).

Heaven is the place to which people look up from earth: “It [the Truth] is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, ‘Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?’ ” (Deuteronomy 30:12, NIV). When Elijah and Elisha were on their way

from Gilgal, "... the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind ..." (2 Kings 2:1, NIV).

In Luke 18:13, the repentant tax collector "... would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner' " (NIV). Jesus said that when you raise your eyes toward the sky, you are looking toward heaven.

Heaven is the place to which Christ ascended after His earthly life. As He was ascending, "They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven' " (Acts 1:10-11, NIV). Did you catch the vertical imagery of heaven in these verses? Amazing! Heaven is the place to which Christ ascended after His earthly life; the place to which people look up from earth; the place from which Christ came down; and the place from which God looks down upon us!

Heaven is a literal dwelling place—a place of absolute security. Heaven is always described as being "up" from our perspective of living on earth. Heaven is remote from earth, a higher and superior mode of existence, and a regal place of supreme authority. It is the command center; it is the place where we can be secure. This is indicated by nearly a dozen references to God's throne being situated in heaven. This royal quality indicates both the splendor of heaven and the authority of the God who rules the universe from heaven.

Heaven is sometimes the regal palace of the King of the Universe. It has many rooms, specifically prepared by Christ for His followers, leading us to view it as a place where people live (John 14:1-3).

Heaven sometimes has the features of a celestial temple. This is in keeping with the worship that occurs there: "... I saw the LORD seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of His robe filled the temple" (Isaiah 6:1, NIV). Now look at Revelation 3:12: "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name."

The one who "*overcomes*" is every born-again believer. And every true child of God will become "*a pillar in the temple of God,*" never again to leave God's presence; we will forever be His servants. This is a command center in heaven, and God will write His Name on each believer, and the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from God.

I could take a piece of paper and write just three lines on it—and that one piece of paper would find its way to one person out of six billion if I included the name, address, city, state, and country. Just three lines can separate one person from six billion! Do you want to have some security? In Revelation 3:12, God is saying, "When you are born again, I am addressing you for heaven, so you can be sure to arrive safely. I identify you as Mine, one out of billions, and you are going to go to the place I've prepared for you, a place of ultimate security."

More than anything else—heaven is a city. In Revelation 20-22, we see that this city is replete with walls, gates, and streets. This testifies to us as believers being united in one place

in the worship of God. We are all going to be delivered securely to a city in heaven that is perfect and eternal. But though a city, it is unlike any city we know here on earth, for this city also possesses the features of an earthly paradise. We will have the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God (Revelation 2:7). There is also the crystal-clear river of life that flows from the throne of God. On each side of the river is the tree of life, that bears twelve crops of fruit every year, and its leaves are for healing the nations (Revelation 22:1-2).

Just think: in heaven, we will also be with all our brothers and sisters in Christ! And the great blessing is that we won't be together for just a visit now and then—but for eternity!

HEAVEN IS A _____ PLACE

“... He waited for **the city which has foundations**, whose builder and maker is God”
(Hebrews 11:10, Emphasis added).

Poets have always depended on artistic imagery when portraying heaven. Such images combine hardness of texture and brilliance of light to suggest a realm of superior permanence, value and splendor, when compared with the cyclic, vegetative world in which we live. Jewel imagery is the most prevalent type of artistic imagery.

Ezekiel's vision of a heavenly level of reality is replete with such imagery: flashing fire and lightning, burnished bronze that sparkles, gleaming chrysolite, and sapphire (see Ezekiel 1). To this we can add the memorable pictures in Revelation of a sea of glass, like crystal; the appearance of God in splendor like that of jasper and carnelian; golden crowns, gates of pearl, and a city of pure gold. In addition to jeweled imagery, physical light and its equivalent—glory—are recurrent in biblical images of heaven. In the heaven portrayed in Revelation, the light of the sun and moon are no longer needed *“for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb,”* and by the light of heaven *“shall the nations walk”* (Revelation 21:23-24). There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light, and they will reign with Him forever and ever (Revelation 22:5).

Heaven is a holy place. The purity of existence in heaven and the spiritual perfection of those who are “enrolled in heaven” (Hebrews 12:23) are expressed by imagery of washed robes (Revelation 7:14), white garments (Revelation 3:5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13), clothing of *“fine linen, bright and pure”* (Revelation 19:8), and chaste people who are “spotless” (Revelation 14:4-5).

Daniel pictures the people as shining *“like the stars forever and ever”* (Daniel 12:3)—symbolic of permanence and glory. Revelation also pictures the redeemed receiving such things as the morning star (Revelation 2:28), a white stone with a secret name written on it (Revelation

2:17), and water from a fountain of life (Revelation 21:6). Similarly, those who enter heaven will become pillars in the temple of God (Revelation 3:12).

Heaven is an unimaginable place. While not a major part of the images of heaven, beings that have never existed in human experience are included in the visions of Ezekiel and Revelation. Examples from Ezekiel's vision include living creatures with four faces, four wings, and soles like those of a calf's foot (Ezekiel 1:6–7). These creatures move about in a riot of motion, and something that looks like torches of fire moves among them (Ezekiel 1:13). There is a celestial chariot replete with gleaming wheels which have rims full of eyes (Ezekiel 1:15–18). *"The spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels"* (Ezekiel 1:21)—which mystifies us still further. Revelation's pictures of creatures with six wings *"full of eyes in front and behind"* (Revelation 4:6–8) likewise contain the motif of strangeness.

The effect of all this is to reinforce the difference between heaven and earth and to underscore the sense of mystery surrounding heaven. The far reaches of incomprehensibility enter when we read: *"Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Heaven is a worship-focused place. Compared to the relatively plentiful descriptions of heaven as a place, the Bible gives little information about the activity that transpires there. Activity in heaven consists almost entirely of worship (see Revelation 4; 5; 7:9–12). Revelation 14:4 adds the picture of the redeemed following the Lamb wherever He goes. We also read that God will *"dwell"* with his people and *"be with them"* (Revelation 21:3). In addition, there is also the transformation of our earthly experience into a different mode.

Half of the equation is the negation or canceling out of fallen earthly experience. There will be no more hunger or thirst, no more scorching heat (Revelation 7:16). God will wipe tears away and death shall be no more (Revelation 7:17; 21:4); mourning and pain will vanish, *"for the former things have passed away"* (Revelation 21:4). As part of this exclusion of evil, heaven is a protected place: nothing unclean shall enter it or anything *"that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie"* (Revelation 21:27). The sheer freedom from fallen experience is pictured by city gates that *"shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there)"* (Revelation 21:25).

The other half of the equation is the creation of earthly categories into something "new." The main example is the new heaven and new earth that fills the last two chapters of the Bible, as well as the image of New Jerusalem, with its suggestion of earthly reality raised to a higher level of perfection. The writer of Hebrews claims that people of faith *"desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one"* (Hebrews 11:16, NASB).

Heaven is a joyously satisfying place. The two dominant human responses to new life in heaven are joy and satisfaction. The joy of heaven's inhabitants is pictured by the scenes of praise in Revelation, the white-robed conquerors waving palm branches (Revelation 7:9), and the guests at the wedding supper (Revelation 19:1–9). This is buttressed by the imagery

of some of Jesus' parables, where attaining heaven is compared to attending a banquet (Luke 14:15–24) or entering into the joy of one's master (Matthew 25:21, 23).

From the perspective of life in this world, heaven is the object of human longing and the goal of human existence. Hebrews 11:13-14 employs the imagery of quest to express this reality: *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, ... For ... they seek a homeland."*

In addition to being the goal of a quest, heaven is the reward for earthly toil, as in Paul's picture of himself as having *"finished the race"* and looking forward to *"the crown of righteousness"* (2 Timothy 4:7–8). We see this, too, in Peter's vision of *"the Chief Shepherd"* conferring *"the crown of glory"* on those who have served faithfully (1 Peter 5:4).

There is also the glorious picture of believers having come to *"Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God ... to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly"* (Hebrews 12:22, NIV). Images of satisfaction emerge from the pictures in Revelation of saints being guided by a divine Shepherd to springs of living water (Revelation 7:17) and having access to *"the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month"* (Revelation 22:2, RSV).

Heaven is a rest after labor. Those who die in the Lord *"rest from their labors, and their works follow them"* (Revelation 14:13). Similarly, *"there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God,"* which believers *"strive to enter"* (Hebrews 4:9–11, RSV).

Author and pastor John Piper once said, "The radical pursuit of joy in God may cost you your life. ... But it will be worth it. The world has an inconsolable longing, which it tries to satisfy with anything but God. Scenic vacations. Sexual exploits. Ascetic rigors. Managerial excellence. Sports extravaganzas. We have turned our back on the breathtaking beauty of God and fallen in love with our shadow. To delight in the Light is a dangerous duty indeed. It may cost you your friends. It may cost you your reputation. It may cost you your life. But it will be worth it. Because the steadfast love of the Lord is better than life (Psalm 63:3)!"²⁰

HEAVEN

"And Jesus said to him, '... Today **you will be with Me in Paradise** ...'" (Luke 23:43, Emphasis added).

If the Lord tarries, each of us will cross through the valley of the shadow of death to enter heaven. Erwin Lutzer tells a wonderful story about dying grace. He writes: "When Corrie ten Boom was a

²⁰ John Piper, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight: The Glorified God and the Satisfied Soul* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2001), p.21.

girl, her first experience with death came after visiting the home of a neighbor who had just died. When she thought of the fact that her parents would die someday, her father comforted her by asking, 'When I go to Amsterdam, when do I give you your ticket?' 'Just before we get on the train.' 'Exactly. Just so your heavenly Father will give you exactly what you need when we die—He'll give it to you just when you need it.' ²¹

To have dying grace does not mean that we will be free from sorrow, whether at our own impending death or the death of someone we love. Some Christians have mistakenly thought that grief demonstrates a lack of faith. Thus they have felt it necessary to maintain strength rather than deal honestly with a painful loss (Hebrews 5:7).

As Christians, we live with the tension between what is "already ours" and the "not yet" of our experience. Paul said believers should look forward to Christ's return "*that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope*" (1 Thessalonians 4:13, NASB). Grief was expected, but it is different from the grief of the world. There is a difference between tears of hope and tears of hopelessness.

Donald Grey Barnhouse, on the way home from the funeral of his first wife, was trying to think of some way of comforting his children. Just then a huge moving van passed by their car and its shadow swept over them. Instantly, Barnhouse asked, "Children, would you rather be run over by a truck or by its shadow?" The children replied, "Of course we'd prefer the shadow!" To which Barnhouse replied, "Two thousand years ago the truck of death ran over the Lord Jesus ... now only the shadow of death can run over us!" (see Psalm 23:4). Death is the chariot our heavenly Father sends to bring us to Himself.²²

We are accustomed to talking about the differences there will be when we make our transition from earth to heaven, but there are also some similarities. Given the fact that *our personalities continue*, we can expect continuity. Heaven is the continuation of the glorified and perfected earthly life of the believer.

Personal knowledge continues in heaven. (See Matthew 8:11.) Jesus said at the banquet in heaven we will sit and fellowship with people we know about—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Personal love continues in heaven. I like what a news article once attributed to Chet Bitterman after his missionary son was killed by guerrillas: "We have eight children. And they all are living: one's in heaven and seven are on earth." (See Romans 8:18.)

Personal feelings continue in heaven. (See Psalm 16:11; Revelation 6:9-10; 7:17; 21:4.) David was promised that when he was at last in the presence of God he would experience the emotion of "fullness of joy"!

Personal activities continue in heaven. "We are," says Maclaren, "saplings here, but we shall be transported into our heavenly soil to grow in God's light. Here our abilities are in blossom; there they shall burst forth with fruits of greater beauty. Our death is but the passing from one degree of loving service to another; the difference is like that of the unborn

²¹ Erwin W. Lutzer, *One Minute After You Die* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 46.

²² <http://www.pbc.org/dp/stedman/secrets/3123.html>

child and the one who has entered into the experiences of a new life. Our love for God will continue, but awakened with new purity and purposefulness.”²³

There is no intermediate state. (See 2 Corinthians 5:1 and Revelation 6:9-10.) Believers go directly into the presence of Christ at their moment of death or at His gathering of the church at the Rapture. They are conscious and in command of all of their faculties.

We will each have a resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

We are sown a perishable body, but we will be raised imperishable. Like a seed sown in the ground, there is continuity between the acorn and the tree, between the kernel and the stalk. Not every particle that ever was a part of you has to be raised, and God just might add additional material to make up the deficiencies. In heaven, no one will comment on your age or notice that the years are beginning to take their toll. You will look as young a billion years from now as you will a thousand years from now. As Dr. Hinson wrote: “The stars shall live for a million years, A million years and a day. But God and I will live and love when the stars have passed away.”²⁴

We are sown in dishonor, but raised in power. When a body is transported to a funeral home it is always covered by a sheet to shield gaping eyes from the ignominy of looking upon the corpse. Every dead body is a reminder of our dishonor, a reminder that we are but frail. However, we shall be raised in power.

We are sown in weakness, but raised in strength. The resurrection body is not subject to material forces. Remember how Christ came through closed doors after the resurrection. Keep in mind that the reason the angel rolled the stone from the tomb was not to let Christ out, but to let the disciples in!

We are sown a natural body, but we are raised a spiritual body. To say that we will have a spiritual body does not mean that we will just be spirits. Christ's glorified body was so human that He invited the disciples to touch Him and affirmed, "See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39). There will be continuity with a difference. Our future body will be like Christ's resurrection body: "We know that, when He appears, we shall be like

²³ Lutzer, p. 62.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 67.

Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (1 John 3:2). Just think of the implications. See Revelation 19:7!²⁵

HEAVEN—THE _____ TO BE

"In my Father's house are many rooms; ... I am going there to prepare a place for you. And ... I will come back and take you to be with me **that you also may be where I am**" (John 14:2-3, NIV; Emphasis added).

What we need to believe today is what Jesus taught us—this world is not our home. Our real home is the one He went to prepare for us. All that we see, use, and have here on earth is only temporary. That is the key to a pilgrim view of life.

In John 14:2-3, Jesus assures us that death for His children is only a transfer to permanent housing. Paul declares: "... *As long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8, NIV).

The great English Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, might reflect our feelings best: "Would you like to know where I am? I am at home in my father's house, in the mansion prepared for me here. I am where I want to be—no longer on the stormy sea, but in God's safe, quiet harbor. My sowing time is done and I am reaping; my joy is the joy of the harvest.

"Would you like to know how it is with me? I am made perfect in holiness. Grace is swallowed up in glory. Would you like to know what I am doing? I see God, not as through a glass darkly, but face to face. I am engaged in the sweet enjoyment of my precious redeemer. I am singing hallelujahs to him who sits upon the throne, and I am constantly praising him.

"Would you like to know what blessed company I keep? It is better than the best of earth. Here are the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. I am with many of my old acquaintances with whom I worked and prayed and have come here before me.

"Lastly, would you like to know how long this will continue? It is a dawn that never fades. After millions and millions of ages, it will be as fresh as it is now. Therefore, weep not for me!"²⁶

Oh, the wonders of our promised haven, the glories of that eternal home! But nothing will compare with the knowledge that heaven is the outflow of Jesus Christ. Let us seek Him, like the words of this song so true: "'Tis heaven below, my Redeemer to know, For He is so precious to me." That is heaven.

"My Redeemer to know" is what God created us for; that is what Jesus is preparing for us; and that is what He's coming again for, either in a personal rapture through the valley of the shadow of death or in a corporate rapture when He comes to take His church home—but He *will* come again to take us to that place!

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: As Christians, we look forward to an event that will pale all others. It will happen the second we pass through death's shadow into heaven's splendor and see our Lord face-to-face: "Think of—Stepping on shore, and finding it Heaven! Of taking hold of a hand,

²⁵ Ibid., adapted slightly from pp. 62-67.

²⁶ http://www.bible.org/illus.asp?topic_id=593

and finding it God's hand. Of breathing a new air, and finding it celestial air. Of feeling invigorated, and finding it immortality. Of passing from storm to tempest to an unbroken calm. Of waking up, and finding it Home."²⁷

What a thrilling moment! Thinking about it can make our hearts beat faster! So rejoice in heaven! Rejoice in what your Father has done—and is doing for you even now: "... *You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'* *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God ...—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*" (Romans 8:15-18).

Make a choice to live securely in hope because you have a relationship with God that allows you to cry out to Him, "Abba, Father" (a term of endearment meaning "Daddy" or "Papa")! As His child, heaven means "going home to Daddy"—to enjoy His presence forever! Whatever you go through before your home-going will only make your time in heaven that much more precious because of remembering His Son's sacrifice of love and His faithful companionship during your sojourn on earth. You are a joint heir with Jesus—to be glorified together with Him! What a joyous privilege!

Isn't it hard to live in a tiny two-room apartment when you know that you will soon get a mansion and gardens—and will live forever with the Lord in Paradise?

I encourage you to softly and tenderly sing this song to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords who has lavished His infinite love on you!

Majesty

To God our Savior ... Be glory and majesty,
dominion and power, both now and forever. —Jude 25
Majesty, worship His majesty,
Unto Jesus be all glory, honor, and praise.
Majesty, kingdom authority
Flow from His throne unto His own; His anthem raise.
So exalt, lift up on high the name of Jesus.
Magnify, come glorify Christ Jesus, the King.
Majesty, worship His majesty;
Jesus who died, now glorified, King of all kings.

—Words and music: Jack Hayford²⁸

²⁷ "Heaven," author unknown, in *Poems That Live Forever*, comp. Hazel Felleman (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 331. A version of this poem has also appeared under the title "The Homeland," attributed to Myrtle Erickson in Knight's *Master Book of New Illustrations*, comp. Walter B. Knight (1956; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 279.

²⁸ ©1981 Rocksmith Music c/o Trust Music Management

Discover Our _____ to Jesus (Revelation 21:1-8)

THE BRIDE'S PERFECT HOME

“... I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride adorned for her husband**” (Revelation 21:2, Emphasis added).

Last week, you got to have a taste of the joys of heaven! I hope that you will now savor learning even more about the glories of heaven—just as an amazingly brilliant scientist, Dr. Harry Rimmer, did in his lifetime. In 1953, only a week before his death, he shared his unique perspective of the City of Gold in a letter to the great radio Bible teacher, Dr. Charles Fuller, who was just starting a series on heaven. As you read Dr. Rimmer's letter, ask yourself: *Is my confidence as firm as his?*

“Next Sunday you are to talk about Heaven. I am interested in that land, because I have held a clear title to a bit of property there for more than fifty-five years. I did not buy it. It was given to me ‘without money and without price.’ But the donor purchased it for me at a tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation, since the title is not transferable. It is not a vacant lot.

“For more than half a century I have been sending materials, out of which the Great Architect and Builder of the Universe has been building a home for me, a home which will never be remodeled nor repaired, because it will suit me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old. Termites can never undermine its foundations, for they rest upon the Rock of Ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No locks nor bolts will ever be placed on its doors, for no vicious person can ever enter that Land where my dwelling stands, now almost completed and almost ready for me to enter in and abide in peace eternally, without fear of being ejected.

“There is a valley of deep shadows between the place where I live in California and that to which I shall journey in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that City of Gold without passing through this dark valley of shadows; but I am not afraid, because the best Friend I ever had went through the same valley long, long, ago and drove away all its gloom. He has stuck by me through thick and thin since we first became acquainted fifty-five years ago, and I hold His promise in printed form that He will never forsake me nor leave me

alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of shadows, and I shall not lose my way when He is with me.”

In Revelation 21 we find Jesus taking His bride home to a world that is perfect—just as God wants it to be. What will heaven be like? It certainly won’t be that of sitting around on clouds playing harps for eternity, as some would have us think. No, God paints an entirely different picture in His Word:

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’

Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’ And He said to me, ‘It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death’ ” (Revelation 21:1-8).

Didn’t God paint a beautiful picture of heaven for us? Are you longing for the time when we will all be together with Him *forever*?

My Prayer for You in Revelation 21: Oh Lord God, our Father, Creator, and Builder of that glorious home You are preparing for us, we love You! Thank You that You are going to make all things new so that we need not despair about our body getting old or our world decaying. Nothing is enduring here because our pilgrimage is heading us to the Celestial City, to a building not made with hands, to a place that has foundations that shall never be moved. We praise You, Lord Jesus, for purchasing our place of abode forever with Your own blood! We pray that by Your grace we will enjoy discovering more of the wonders of heaven—the mansions of Jesus to which we are headed, and where we long to be. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus. As we wait, may we not be ashamed before You when You come.

Thank You for what great things You will do in our lives today as we bow before You. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

WHAT _____ THE NEW HEAVEN BE LIKE?

“... ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man **The things which God has prepared for those who love Him**” (1 Corinthians 2:9, Emphasis added).

In Revelation 21, I want you to understand these points in particular: heaven is made of new materials; heaven includes the New Jerusalem; and heaven is inhabited by new people. So then, let us look at these aspects of the new heaven.

The heavens and the earth will be made of new materials (21:1). In verse 1, God says that there will be “*no more sea.*” To the ancients, the seas were dangerous, unpredictable, and caused separation. So it is a glorious thought that God is going to make everything new—including us! Everything will be affected right down to the atomic level. There is a dissonance in the core of every atom—an atomic flux. Paul said that the whole universe is groaning, waiting for the redemption, because Satan, his rebellion, and evil have infected the universe.

Look at what Peter says in 2 Peter 3:10-13: “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements [at an atomic level] will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God ...? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, **look for new heavens and a new earth** in which righteousness dwells*” (2 Peter 3:10-13, Emphasis added).

This passage is not describing the Rapture, because the Rapture does not come as a thief in the night. That has a negative connotation, but the coming of Christ to take His own to be with Him is a positive thing. The “*day of the Lord*” (the major theme of Old Testament prophetic writings) speaks of His return in glory and judgment at the Second Coming. Peter (who wrote after Paul explained the two-part Second Coming of Christ to the Thessalonians and Corinthians) merely lumps all the Old Testament and New Testament prophetic events together; he truncates the whole thing into the “*day of the Lord.*”

Peter envisioned what we see in Revelation 21:1a: “... *I saw a new heaven and a new earth ...*” That which Peter and all the Old Testament prophets longed for is what finally comes about in Revelation 21—the heavens and the earth will be made new. The original was not a failure; rather, God is going to correct and triumph over His initial creation where He allowed man to go into sin and then redeemed him. The place where God intersected with time, winning the victory and paying the price for man’s salvation, will be redeemed and made brand new.

Heaven includes a New Jerusalem (21:2, 10): “*Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God ... And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city ...*” The concept here is like that of a John Wayne western movie in which the hero conquers all the bad guys, and then takes his bride up to the top of the hill to show her his ranch. We are the bride on the honeymoon, and our glorious Husband, who paid a great price for us, will take

us to a mountain top to show off the gorgeous lay of His land. The One crucified in the old Jerusalem will now be crowned in the New Jerusalem.

The gospel message is that the Lamb is the Foundation “... *having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets [the church], Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone ...*” (Ephesians 2:20). The foundation of the New Jerusalem is the Lamb.

Heaven is founded on the Lamb and His sacrifice. The New Jerusalem is the city that all saints of all time have been waiting and longing for: “... [Abraham] *waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ... These all [the heroes of the faith] died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them [the promises of God] and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ... They desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them*” (Hebrews 11:10, 13-16).

Born in 2166 B.C., Abraham was looking for this city. He knew what it was because God had revealed it to him. All of the heroes of faith listed in Hebrews 11 lived their lives with it being “*very far off.*” Isaiah said, “*Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will see the land that is very far off*” (Isaiah 33:17). In spite of that, they embraced the promises of God and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth (a rare attitude today).

When we desire a better country, a heavenly one, God is pleased to be called our God, and He has prepared a city for us: it is a holy city (Revelation 21:27); it is a prepared city (John 14:1-6); and it is a gorgeous city (Revelation 21:10-21).

Heaven is inhabited by new people (21:3-8). At last, Christ’s High Priestly prayer “*that they may be as one*” will be fulfilled (John 17:11). His prayer was not only for His twelve disciples but also for those in the future who would believe. Until this point in Revelation, the church will never have been truly united. Some in the Old Testament were in “the waiting room” of Abraham’s bosom, but after His resurrection Jesus took them to be with Him. However, they presently are still waiting for all the redeemed to come home too. The people yet to be redeemed will be gathered together in Revelation 21. John 17 will then be fulfilled when we are all finally united as one—from Eden’s first

redeemed to the last of every kindred, nation, and tribe. All repentant sinners, transformed by grace, will live together in this new heaven. Will you be among them?

WHAT WILL AND WILL _____ BE IN HEAVEN

“But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, ... but **only those** who are written **in the Lamb’s Book of Life**” (Revelation 21:27, Emphasis added).

What will be in heaven? Fellowship: visible, face-to-face communion with Christ for we “shall see His face, and His name shall be on [our] foreheads” (Revelation 22:4). That is what I long for! First Corinthians 13:12 says that “for now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face.”

Now look at this great passage: “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! ... It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1-2).

That is what we are waiting for. All that God has when we see Him face to face will then come into fruition. At that time, we will have

full and complete **knowledge**: “... *Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known ...*” (1 Corinthians 13:12b).

We will have **abundance** without charge, restrictions, or restraint: “... *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End*” (Revelation 21:6). Christ said that He is the Initiator and the Satisfier. We will possess all that God has promised us, and no longer be limited by our frailties and flesh.

We will have meaningful **service**: “*And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him*” (Revelation 22:3). We’ll be able to do what we have always wanted to do, with no restraints. We can totally serve God the way we long to!

We will have **worship**—the main activity in heaven: “... *The tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people*” (Revelation 21:3). The redeemed will follow the Lamb wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4). We will experience the completion of our worship. In fact, our entire service for Him will be one of worship!

All of these possessions will be joyously treasured as we live together in the Celestial City—a place of unbelievable, shining, brilliant beauty (Revelation 21:10-21)!

What will not be in heaven? To begin with, there will be no time in the sense of yesterday, tomorrow, early, or late. But in Revelation 22:2, there seems to be an allusion to time: “*each tree yielding its fruit every month.*” And now comes a great part! Look at all that God will be doing for us! There will be: no seas (21:1); no tears (21:4); no death (21:4); no crying (21:4); no pain (21:4); no temple or church

building (21:22); no sun, moon, or night (21:23); no sin, unbelievers, or evil forces (21:27); no sickness (22:2); and no curse (22:3). Hallelujah! Praise God!

HEAVEN WILL _____ US FOREVER

“... I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever” (Psalm 23:6b, Emphasis added).

God says that we “shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:5). How long will we be in heaven? Forever—all because of faith in the Lamb who sacrificed Himself for us (Revelation 7:4; 22:14)!

In Revelation 21:1-8 we discover the husbandly love of Jesus unveiling Paradise for His bride. Picture it: standing on the hill, with the rising sun, Jesus says, “Here it is, My beloved!” Let us look to the fair land of our pilgrimage and see that city which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God! And in the wonders that we shall behold, let us see *Him* who has made it our home-to-be, for

the Lamb *is* the glory of Emmanuel's land. God *Himself* should be our greatest desire for reaching heaven!

The founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, A. B. Simpson wrote:

Himself

Once it was the blessing, now it is the Lord;
Once it was the feeling, now it is His Word;
Once His gifts I wanted, now the giver owns;
Once I sought for healing, now Himself alone.
Once 'twas painful trying, now 'tis perfect trust;
Once a half salvation, now the uttermost;
Once 'twas ceaseless holding, now He holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting, now my anchor's cast.
Once 'twas busy planning, now 'tis trustful prayers,
Once 'twas anxious caring, now He has the care;
Once 'twas what I wanted, now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking, now 'tis ceaseless praise.
Once it was my working, His it hence shall be,
Once I tried to use Him, now He uses me;
Once the power I wanted, now the Mighty One;
Once for self I labored, now for Him alone....

—A. B. Simpson

Modern advertisements mesmerize us into thinking we are to be amused, comforted, and secure in this world. But God says that true satisfaction and fulfillment can only be obtained through *Him!*

THE _____ PART OF HEAVEN

“... I will come again and receive you to Myself; **that where I am, there you may be also**” (John 14:3, Emphasis added).

Although I can't wait to see the gates made of pearl, the precious stones of heaven, and the city's numerous other glories, that is not what I am looking forward to most. I can't wait to see Christ face to face! *Jesus* is the best part of heaven!

The Seven Perfections of Jesus: The subject of heaven is often spoken of as “the sweet by and by,” and images of harps, clouds, angel wings, and a seemingly ethereal world of misty spirit form in the mind. But, in reality, heaven is a glorious place of wonder and beauty. Of all its indescribable

beauties and unending glories, there is, above all else, Jesus, who is the most beautiful aspect of heaven. And there are seven wonderful facets of the love of Jesus for all the saints, His bride.

Facet 1—Jesus will be with us: *“... God Himself will be with them and be their God”*

(Revelation 21:3, NAS). First, there will be the unbroken presence of Emmanuel, *“God with us.”* Secondly, there will be the fulfillment of all that He has promised. The Bible contains all the promises of God, but one day we will get to experience the Person behind the promises.

Facet 2—Jesus will comfort us: *“... God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be*

no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying ... nor pain ...” (Revelation 21:4, NAS). Even though we know Jesus and His promises are with us, this present life is hard. However, the sadness of current disappointments will end with the security of divine appointment; the dread of death will end with the Lord of Life; the frailties of the flesh will end when entering our heavenly habitation. The future, like the past, is kept securely by Him with whom our anchor is cast.

Facet 3—Jesus will refresh us: *“... I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who*

thirsts’ ” (Revelation 21:6, NAS). A life of dryness will be gone; the refreshing Spring of Life will be ever with us. Although He can comfort and be with us in this present life, heaven is the ultimate comfort: *“He who believes in Me, ... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water”* (John 7:38). This is an endless supply, for He within us shall be that Fountain.

Facet 4—Jesus will captivate us: *“... I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and*

the Lamb are its temple” (21:22, NAS). This is the culmination of all the types from which they were fashioned: the True One showing facets of His image by His holiness, His character, and His redemption. We are to not make images of Him, but we are to see Him through the types of the tabernacle and the temple. Which satisfies you most—the picture or the Person? The figures have been there for time, but the fullness will be for all eternity. Worship will be unbounded by location or proximity; it will be unending and all-present because our worship will be focused on Him as He captivates us.

Facet 5—Jesus will keep us secure: *“And nothing unclean ... shall ever come into it, but only*

those whose names are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (21:27, NAS). The wonder of heaven is that He will keep us secure, just as He has here on earth. There will now be an exclusion of all evil forever. At last, our freedom will be completed! At Calvary, we were freed from both the penalty and power of sin; at the Celestial City, we will forever be removed from the presence of sin. All the washed ones, those washed in the Lamb’s blood and written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, will be welcomed there.

Facet 6—Jesus will lead us: *“... The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His*

bondservants shall serve Him” (22:3, NAS). He is the Master; we are the servants who will follow Him. The return of Christ’s rule as King of the kingdom will be unhindered—and He wants complete dedication, not mere compliments. He never simply said, “Accept Me!” Rather, He declared: “Leave all and follow Me, or you can’t be My disciple.” Jesus wants glad and

unhindered service forever. After the complete destruction of the curse's doom, we will no longer struggle with the weeds of sin so that we can fully follow the Lamb's wishes.

Facet 7—Jesus will light us: *“There shall be no night there: ... for the Lord God gives them light.*

And they shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:5, NAS). The Source of light in the new heaven will be the Savior, the Lamb, who is the Light. And in that glow we shall walk in unbroken communion. The denial of dark deeds will be consigned to the blackness of darkness forever, but we shall rule by submission to Him forever. The despair of darkness will be ended; there will be no more unfinished plans, for He is the completion of all. This is the fulfillment of Christ's First Coming: *“... The Dayspring from on high has visited us; To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace”* (Luke 1:78-79).

THREE _____ THAT SPOIL THE FRUIT

“Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that **you are ... blind**, and naked—I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments ... that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and **anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see”** (Revelation 3:17-18, Emphasis added).

Jesus promised that He would get all His children home safely, and we will live with Him forever. Although that is exciting news, what we often forget is the need to be sending treasures on ahead because there are only pre-paid treasures in heaven. Our mission on earth therefore is to be transmuting earthly treasures into heavenly currency.

When we take that final trip with Jesus—through the valley of the shadow of death or in the skies through the clouds at the voice of the archangel and the trump of God—no baggage left here can accompany us. Only what we have sent on ahead will make it to heaven. Transmuted wealth is all that will be worth anything in heaven.

Pastor Jan Hettinga wrote a book on this subject that is so good that I just have to share a portion of it with you. Except for the Bible, Hettinga's *Follow Me* is one of the few books I've read more than once. What struck me most when I read it is this: there are three terrible dangers that can rob anyone of finishing well and earning Christ's “Well done!” Afterward, I thought: *Wow! I don't want to be robbed of Christ's “Well done—good and faithful servant!”*

Here are the three dangers that should concern all who seek Christ's full rewards in heaven:²⁹

Danger 1—Beware of the sins of old age. These sins (which can occur at any age) can erase Christ's “Well done!” Remember Solomon: he began by sacrificing thousands of animals and building the most beautiful worship place for the Lord, but he failed to finish

²⁹ Adapted from Jan David Hettinga's *Follow Me* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1996), pp. 83, 189, 190-194.

well. He got to heaven *“yet so as by fire.”* (In today’s language, we’d say that Solomon got into heaven “by the skin of his teeth.”) What are these sins of old age?

The Lust for Comfort and Convenience: This sin is epidemic. We continually lust for comfort. People read magazines on how to make their home or car even more comfortable. We are guilty of lust, which is to have a strong desire for comfort and convenience. Do you know how I know that occurs even in the church? Every time it rains or snows heavily, attendance is down. And excuses like this are common: “It’s just too inconvenient in bad weather to load everybody into the car, slosh through puddles and mud in the parking lot, and then have to deal with all the wet coats once we get into the building.” A life consumed with a lust for comfort and convenience like that won’t finish well.

Greed for Recognition: Older people usually want to receive recognition of some sort. In fact, it seems that almost everyone lusts for the applause of others. We must beware of seeking approval from people and instead seek approval only from God.

Covetousness for Security: Our whole country has become security-obsessed. People want to know how to best secure retirement funds, how to secure college education funds, how to get job security, and how to secure their homes and other possessions. We are caught up in the pursuit of security, and are wasting valuable time and energy to protect things we cannot keep.

These sins of old age—the lust for comfort, greed for recognition, and covetousness for security—can erase Christ’s “Well done!”

Danger 2—Beware of the problem of exceptionism. What is exceptionism? It is thinking that your life is an exception to God’s Word. Thus you excuse yourself from doing anything for heaven because of things like your past, pain, poverty, or poor self-image. The reason exceptionism can erase Christ’s “Well done!” is because when we hear an exhortation to “Go into all the world, speak to every creature, and live your life looking for Christ”—many excuse themselves saying, “Oh, I can’t do that just now. At this time in my life I can’t spare a minute—not even for reading the Word, ministering, praying, or evangelizing.”

Think carefully on this: *you will never be in the future what you are not becoming today.* If you are not responding to and obeying God’s Word now, and you feel like you’re always an exception, that attitude will stay with you till the end. Consider Annanias and Sapphira, who thought they were exceptions to the rule. Since everybody else was sacrificing, and they felt that they couldn’t, they decided to at least *look* like they did. That bad decision not only cost them their lives but also erased Christ’s “Well done!”

Danger 3—Beware of unmortified pockets of pride. “Unmortified pockets of pride” sounds like abscesses in the body, but that is really what he is talking about. Allowing such pockets of pride to grow can make you secretly, inwardly proud of your intellect (thinking you are smarter than others), or proud of your achievements, or proud of your giftedness (even in the church), or proud of your goodness (“I’m not as bad as they are”). Sin, in the light of sin,

never does look bad, but sin in the light of God's holiness always looks bad. Pockets of pride in your life can erase Christ's "Well done!" The cure is to allow the power of God's Word through the Holy Spirit to deal with even the slightest prideful "abscess" at the moment it begins to erupt.

To avoid these dangers and to help you get ready for Christ's "Well done!" in heaven, you must listen carefully to what Jesus has to say about what He expects when He comes back for us. What does He want to see cultivated in our lives? I have located twelve expectations, and we will go over them in tomorrow's devotional.

WILL YOU _____ CHRIST'S WELL DONE?

"... **'Well done, good and faithful servant;** you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord' " (Matthew 25:21, 23; Emphasis added).

Don't you long to hear Christ say, "Well done, My good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Master's home!"? A "Well done!" from Him will make this life on earth all worthwhile. What does God expect from us so that we can faithfully earn His "Well done!"?

Expectation 1—Dream about winning the ultimate prize. (See Matthew 25:14-30.)
When people have something on their mind, it shapes the whole direction of their life. Jesus has told us that when He returns for us He expects to find us doing what He asked us to do. Keeping that utmost in your mind is a strong motivator. It will shape your life if you dream about winning the ultimate prize—Christ's "Well done!" You must want it, and long for it. In fact, that is one of the marks of salvation.

Expectation 2—Seek to be the greatest Christlike servant. (See Matthew 20:28-30.)
Imitation is one of the highest forms of compliments. The Apostle Paul said, *"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ"* (1 Corinthians 11:1). Is your life worth imitating? Do you reflect your Lord in all that you do?

William Barclay has succinctly commented: " 'Out in the world,' said Jesus, 'it is quite true that the great man is the man who controls others; the man to whose word of command others must leap; the man who with a wave of his hand can have his slightest need supplied. Out in the world there was the Roman governor with his retinue and the eastern potentate with his slaves. The world counts them great. But among my followers service alone is the badge of greatness. Greatness does not consist in commanding others to do things for you; it consists in doing things for others; and the greater the service, the greater the honor.' Jesus uses a kind of gradation. 'If you wish to be **great,**' he says, 'be a **servant;** if you wish to be **first of all,** be a **slave.**' Here is the Christian revolution; here is the

complete reversal of all the world's standards. A complete new set of values has been brought into life." (Emphasis added.)³⁰

Those who are most Christlike in their servanthood are the greatest in His kingdom and will hear His "Well done!"

Expectation 3—Love to sacrifice for Him through financial generosity. (See Luke 21:1-4.) Jesus said that *"where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* The key to sacrifice is to do it now. Don't wait. Be sure that while you do have something and can sacrifice, do it! Some day, every dollar, every piece of gold, and every jewel will be devalued, wiped out forever (2 Peter 3:10).

You are sending ahead either *"wood, hay, and stubble"* or *"gold, silver, and precious stones"* for building your mansion. What are you sending? Those who are financially generous for Christ will reap an everlasting treasure Jesus says will never be lost.

Expectation 4—Love trials by joyfully accepting injustice. (See Matthew 5:11-12.) When you are mistreated for Christ's sake, and accept it graciously *"because of conscience toward God,"* Jesus says that you will be rewarded in heaven with His "Well done!"

Expectation 5—Love strangers through biblical hospitality. (See Matthew 10:40-41; 18:27; 25:40-45.) There is a wonderful insight from an outsider named Aristeides who looked at the early church. He wrote this note to the Roman Emperor in A.D. 155: "Now the Christians, O King ... if there is among them a man that is poor and needy, and they have not an abundance of necessities, they fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with their necessary food. For Christ's sake they are ready to lay down their lives." How does that spirit line up with your own life? If you minister Christ's love to those in need, you will hear His "Well done!"

Expectation 6—Restrain your flesh by seeking spiritual disciplines. (See Matthew 6:5.) In his book *Intimacy with the Almighty*, Charles Swindoll writes: "We have reared a generation of strong-willed, belligerent, independent young men and women. Surrender is not a word in their vocabulary. Too bad since it is the key that unlocks the vault of God's best and deepest treasures. He patiently waits for us to yield, to quit fighting Him, to allow His plan to run its course, to turn to Him for our security and significance. As He witnesses our doing that, He begins to reveal Himself and His will in greater depth."³¹

Swindoll also sets forth the need to cultivate these spiritual disciplines: "The decision to reorder one's private world is the spiritual discipline of simplicity. The decision to be still is the spiritual discipline of silence. The decision to cultivate serenity is the spiritual discipline of solitude. The

³⁰ William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Matthew: Volume 2, Chapters 11-18, Revised Edition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000, © 1975), electronic edition, in loc.

³¹ Charles Swindoll, *Intimacy with the Almighty* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996), pp. 66-71.

decision to trust the Lord completely is the spiritual discipline of surrender.”³² Pursuing these spiritual disciplines will earn Christ’s “Well done!”

Expectation 7—Love your lot in life through vocational faithfulness. (See Colossians 3:22-24; Philippians 2:8-9; 1 Peter 5:6.) You should serve your masters (authorities) in the same manner that you serve Christ, for God has promised that if you humble yourself under His mighty hand that He will exalt you in due time. Being faithful in your vocation or service for His sake will earn His “Well done!”

Expectation 8—Love the hard to love. (See Luke 6:27-28.) When others have revealed themselves to be enemies, Jesus expects you to do good to them, and to bless rather than curse them—for His sake. Loving the hard to love will earn Christ’s “Well done!”

Expectation 9—Love God’s Truth. (See 2 John 1-2, 4, 8; Colossians 3:16.) Jesus wants you to love His Word so much that you are literally filled to overflowing with it! Living the Word-filled life will earn Christ’s “Well done!”

Expectation 10—Love to take people to heaven with you. (See 1 Thessalonians 2:19; 1 Corinthians 3:6-8.) Paul says that your hope, joy, and crown of rejoicing should be to see others to whom you’ve witnessed be in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming. Loving to be a soul winner will earn Christ’s “Well done!”

Expectation 11—Love Jesus’ return. (See Luke 12:35-38; 2 Timothy 4:8.) God says that you are a blessed servant if you faithfully watch for His return! In fact, He will give you the crown of righteousness if you love His appearing. This spirit will earn Christ’s “Well done!”

Expectation 12—Love Jesus’ refinement of you through trials. (See 1 Peter 1:7; Hebrews 6:10.) God is greatly pleased when He sees you loving Jesus so much that when He leads you through further refinement, you view it as a blessing. He will not forget your work and labor of love, for you will hear His “Well done!”

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: Are you dreaming about winning the ultimate prize? Are you Christlike? Are you investing in heaven now? Are you suffering joyfully for Him? Are you welcoming strangers? Are you saying no to sin? Are you living contentedly? Are you loving others

³² Ibid., p. 28; format adapted for readability.

with Christ's love? Do you love God's Word? Are you taking others to heaven with you? Are you waiting and watching for Christ's return? Are you letting Him prune you?

If your heart's longing is to be able to positively affirm each of these questions, even though you can't do so perfectly, then you are choosing to live in hope—and you will taste of the joys of heaven and discover the ecstasies of honeymooning with Jesus!

May this song be symbolic of the deepest desire for your life here on earth!

I'd Rather Have Jesus

But as for me and my house,
we will serve the Lord. —Joshua 24:15b
I'd rather have Jesus than silver or gold;
I'd rather be His than have riches untold:
I'd rather have Jesus than houses or lands.
I'd rather be led by His nail-pierced hand.

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause;
I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause;
I'd rather have Jesus than worldwide fame.
I'd rather be true to His holy name.

He's fairer than lilies of rarest bloom;
He's sweeter than honey from out the comb;
He's all that my hungering spirit needs.
I'd rather have Jesus and let Him lead.

Refrain:

*Than to be the king of a vast domain
Or be held in sin's dread sway.
I'd rather have Jesus than anything
This world affords today.*

—Rhea F. Miller, 1922

Behold the _____ of Jesus (Revelation 21:9-27)

THE FIRST AND THE LAST BOOKS

“... Blessed is he who **reads** and those who **hear the words** of this prophecy, and **keep those things** which are written in it; for the time is near” (Revelation 1:1-2, Emphasis added).

Graham Scroggie wrote this wonderful exposition of why the early Christians studied the book of Revelation, and why we should do the same today: “Not without reason did the early Church study this Book. Practically the whole of it is reproducible from the Christian writers of the first three centuries and it is probably true that this cannot be said of any other New Testament Writing. As no other Book, the Revelation stands in certain relations to all other parts of the Bible, a fact that gives the seal of finality to it. Take two illustrations only. It is interesting that those who were closest to Christ spoke most often from this Book.

“The Book of the Revelation completes the whole Bible. In Genesis is the Foundation of God’s redeeming purpose; in Exodus to Jude, the Superstructure of it; and in Revelation, the Completion of it.

“The Old Testament is about the Kingdom; the Gospels are about the Messiah; the Epistles are about the Church; and the Revelation is about them all—completed.

“Revelation completes the Book of Genesis. The first and last Books of the Bible present most striking comparisons and contrasts. By way of comparison: In Genesis are the First Heaven and Earth, and in Revelation, the Last. In Genesis is the First Rest, and in Revelation, the Final Rest. In Genesis Paradise is Lost, and in Revelation it is Regained. In Genesis God makes Husband and Wife, and in Revelation, the Lamb and the Bride.

“But the contrasts between these two Books are even more striking: In the first, Satan is victorious; in the last, he is defeated.

In the first, judgment is pronounced; and in the last it is executed.

In the first, the divine face is hidden; and in the last, we see His face forever more. In the first, the gates are shut against us; and in the last, they are never shut. In the first, Adam and Eve

were banished from the Tree of Life; and in the last, we have a right to it. In the first, we were exiles from the earthly Garden; and in the last, we are inheritors of the heavenly City.”³³

It is truly sin that made the earth bad.³⁴ Before the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, there could be no death, disease, famine, war, natural catastrophe, cancer, weakness, rust, pollution, hatred, murder, rape, lying, corrupt government, wife beating, child molesting, greed, and a thousand other ills that have plagued man for six thousand years of history. Every broken body, every disturbed mind, every hurting heart—the collective tears of the human race—can trace their origin back to the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. As a consequence of sin, man has polluted the ocean, raped the earth, and poisoned the heavens—the very sphere which God committed to man’s authority. Is there any wonder, then, that the present heaven and earth must be dissolved—purged by fire to loose it from the consequences of sin—to make way for a new heaven and earth?

In the new heaven and earth there will be no more twisted wrecks of car and plane accidents; no more lifeless forms that have been shocked, poisoned, drowned, or suffocated; no more crippled bodies; no more torturous therapy and throbbing pain; no more arthritis, insomnia, and bodily dysfunction; no more merciless onslaught of age and its accompanying aches and disintegration.

In heaven we see the wonders of Jesus. In Revelation 21:9-27 we find the wonders of Jesus. I hope you are rejoicing in all that your heavenly Father has in store for you!

My Prayer for You in Revelation 21: Oh, Father in Heaven, why You would let Your Son redeem us, and then go and prepare a place for us, is beyond our wildest imaginations! As we look into Your Word, we pray that Your Spirit would lead us to comprehend the wonders of our Lord Jesus who has prepared this place in which every part radiates Your glory. May we see Your glory, and may Your glory, as the Apostle Paul says, transform us more and more into the image of Him whom our souls love. Open our eyes, and let us

³³ W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1965), pp. 362-375.

³⁴ On the second of the six days during which God created the universe, He created the heavens (Gen. 1:6-8), and on the third day He created the earth (Gen. 1:9-10). The divine commentary on all that God created is this: “And God saw everything that He made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31). But soon Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and because of that disobedience, a curse was placed on man and that domain of heaven, earth, and the sea over which he was authorized to reign (Gen. 1:28). The heaven and earth which were created “very good” now became very bad.

behold magnificent things from the wonders of Jesus. In His precious name we come to You, oh Father, Amen.

THINGS IN THE NEW HEAVEN AND EARTH

“Now I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1, Emphasis added).

Over the next few days we will be looking at seven new things in the new heaven and the new earth.

The first new thing is the new heaven (21:1): *“A new heaven and a new earth”* does not necessitate the annihilation of the present heaven. However, it will be at least a thorough and basic transformation (2 Peter 3:10-13). As you know, the law of the conservation of matter which God built into this universe means that matter is never created or destroyed in the world that we know; it is only transferred back and forth. It is very possible that God just transfers the matter of this universe to energy and in a creative act puts it back like it was. All of that is necessary because there can't be even a trace of sin remaining.

The second new thing is the new earth (21:1): The earth will not be written off as a corrected failure of God's rule, but as an eternal triumph of His rule. There will be sweeping transformations on earth as well as in heaven, for there will be *“no more sea”* in the new earth.

The third new thing is the new peoples (21:3-4). Israel will certainly be one of them (Isaiah 66:22). But all the peoples on the new earth will be God's people (v. 3). Death, sorrow, crying, and pain will be unknown (v. 4). Righteousness will be its great characteristic (2 Peter 3:13).

The fourth new thing is the New Jerusalem (21:9-22:7). This is either a literal city (according to authors Seiss, Newell, Gaebelien, Pentecost); a symbolical city (Scott); or it is both literal and symbolical. It seems to be suspended over the planet Earth during the Millennium (v. 10). What do I mean by “seems to be”? Once we get into eschatological things (things related to the end of the world or the events associated with it), we are in the realm of the Bible in which we should not be dogmatic. Rather, it should cause us to study even further, and be very forbearing of differing opinions. The greatest Christian minds of all time have studied the future. The more I read their commentaries, the less I see of total agreement and the more I see of wondrous diversity. With that said, it therefore seems to me that this heavenly Jerusalem will be suspended out in space during the Millennium because we will be with Christ, and the millennial saints can still see us. However, we will get to come down to the earth even though we won't actually live here any more—working, marrying, and giving in marriage. We will be celestial, yet still be able to come and go from heaven, the New Jerusalem.

In verse 16, the New Jerusalem appears to be in the shape of a cube (Seiss, Newell, Gaebelien, Pentecost); however, Ironside views it as a pyramid, with the reminder that the shape of the most holy

place in both the tabernacle and the temple was a cube. Because there is always a trinity in everything God does, the city will have three dimensions: length, breadth, and height. From the description God gives, that is why I think it will be a beautiful crystal cube.

The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem—the resurrected and glorified New Testament church who sought the coming city (Hebrews 13:14)—are clearly indicated as being there with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (v. 22). The names of the twelve apostles will be on the foundations of the city (21:14). The resurrected and glorified Old Testament saints will also be there because they likewise looked forward to this heavenly dwelling place. Thus, God is preparing a city for them (Hebrews 11:16), and on the city’s twelve gates will be the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (21:12). This is an amazing correlation: the new people of God will be identified with the city’s foundations, and the old people of God will be identified with its gates.

There is a lot of speculation on the height of the walls and the size of the gates. If you read Revelation 21 without trying to make it like something on earth, it appears that the walls will be as high as the city. The only measurement given is 144 cubits, which is 216 feet (probably the thickness of the wall), and it most likely reaches to the top. Why would we need any walls at all? I don’t really know, but God will put them there and He says they look like jasper. To us, jasper is a reddish stone. However, jasper is also the word used for diamonds in Scripture. It could be that the outer wall will glisten like a polished diamond, with its light emanating inside-out through the walls. If after visiting some distant place you were to come to heaven to see God’s glory, you would see something like the largest diamond in the universe spraying light out in every direction. Nothing that defiles can ever enter (v. 27), and its amazing splendor will be absolutely astonishing (vv. 18-21)!

Will anything that defiles still exist? Yes, the last few verses of Isaiah tell us that we will be able to look down, off in the distance, and see the horrors of hell. In the biblical sense, hell never ends just as heaven never ends. We will therefore be aware of God’s wrath, but those in hell will never be able to leave.

THE PEARLY _____ OF HEAVEN

“Also she had a great and high wall with **twelve gates**, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: ... The twelve gates were **twelve pearls**: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass” (Revelation 21:12, 21; Emphasis added).

In Revelation 21:12-21, we notice the twelve gates, each a single pearl. Since God designs twelve gates to enter His city, the focus of today’s devotional will be the wonderful ways that God’s Word has offered us entrance into His fellowship and partaking in ministry for Him. As we look at heaven consider these things.

Our occupation will be the worship of God: “Then a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!’ And I heard ... the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God

Omnipotent reigns!’ ” (Revelation 19:5-6; see also Revelation 4:5 and 1 Kings 8:27). If we want to prepare well for our final destination, we should faithfully worship God here on earth. Our arrival in heaven will only be a continuation of what we have already begun. Praise is both the language of heaven and the language of the faithful on earth. Thus, we will be occupied with worshipful service to the Lord (Revelation 22:3-4; Matthew 4:10; Luke 2:37; Acts 24:14).

Our family will be all our brothers and sisters in Christ: “... Whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother’ ” (Mark 3:35). Jesus said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). All those who have kept His commandments, just as He kept the Father’s, will abide in His love (John 15:10) and get to live together with Him forever!

Our faith that saves will be an assurance of Truth: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Faith is a conviction, a sense of assurance or confidence that something is true. If we are convinced of the Truth of Scripture, we will be saved (1 John 5:9-13).

This faith is directed to Christ alone (Romans 10:9-10). If you are persuaded that Christ did all that is necessary, and all that ever will be necessary to bring you to God, you not only will be saved but also will know it (1 Timothy 1:12; Romans 10:17). This faith is confirmed by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16-17). This faith bears spiritual fruit (Ephesians 2:10). This faith grows (Ephesians 4:11-16).³⁵

Revelation 21:21 tells us that “*the twelve gates were twelve pearls . . .*” The **pearls** represent **the doors to rewards** gained by pursuing what Christ is looking for in His beloved children—His expectations

³⁵ Adapted from Erwin W. Lutzer’s *How You Can Be Sure That You Will Spend Eternity With God* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996), pp. 112-121.

of us. Listed below is a summary of His twelve expectations (one for each gate) that were covered on Saturday of Week 47:

- Love the ultimate prize—seek Christ’s “Well done!”
- Love service—seek to be the greatest servant.
- Love sacrifice—give generously.
- Love trials—joyfully accept injustice.
- Love strangers—show biblical hospitality.
- Love to restrain your flesh—seek the spiritual disciplines.
- Love your lot in life—be faithful in your vocation.
- Love the unlovable—model Christlikeness.
- Love God’s Truth—pursue doctrinal integrity.
- Love ministry—take people to heaven with you.
- Love Jesus—watch for Christ’s return.
- Love refinement—accept suffering.³⁶

Upon hearing of the assassination of John and Betty Stam in China in 1934, Will Houghton, former president of Moody Bible Institute, wrote these words: “So this is life. This world with its pleasures, struggles and tears, a smile, a frown, a sigh, friendship so true and love of kin and neighbor? Sometimes it is hard to live—always to die! The world moves on so rapidly for the living; the forms of those who disappear are replaced, and each one dreams that he will be enduring. How soon that one becomes the missing face! Help me to know the value of these hours. Help me the folly of all waste to see. Help me to trust the Christ who bore my sorrows and thus to yield for life or death to Thee.”³⁷

THE NEW _____ OF WORSHIP

“... **True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24, Emphasis added).

In Monday’s devotional, we learned about four of the seven new things that will be in the new heaven and earth. Today and tomorrow, we will cover the remaining three.

The fifth new thing is the new temple (21:22): “... *I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.*” The entire universe will become a place of worship! God will be the

³⁶ This list was adapted from Erwin W. Lutzer’s *Your Eternal Reward* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), pp. 87-100.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

focus of everything; He will no longer be detached from His children any more. Heaven will be full of new worship—we are going to be totally enraptured in worshipping God! Revelation 21 mentions seven new ways that we will worship Jesus.

First New Way to Worship—Jesus the Lamb as our Beloved: *“Then one of the seven angels ... came to me ... saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife’ ”*(Revelation 21:9).

The first time these angels are mentioned in Scripture it says: *“one of the angels having one of the seven bowls.”* This is now the seventh, and the last time, they appear. It seems that these seven angels that surround God’s throne each unleash a bowl of His wrath during the Tribulation.

The emphasis is that we will be worshipping Jesus the Lamb as our Beloved One. That is what Rutherford wrote in “Emmanuel’s Land”: *The Bride eyes not her garment but her dear bridegroom’s face. I will not gaze at glory but on my King of grace. Not at the crown he giveth but on the Lord Jesus Christ who is the glory of Emmanuel’s land.*³⁸

That is what we will do—worship Jesus because He is our Beloved Husband. It is not the splendors of the city that will captivate us. God doesn’t want us to get caught up in the glory of His riches. He wants us to focus on Jesus, His Son, and worship the Lamb as our Beloved.

Second New Way to Worship—Jesus the Lamb as our Foundation: *“Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb ”*(Revelation 21:14). Our hope for all eternity rests in Jesus the Lamb, and we will worship Him as our Foundation upon whom we as His church have been built, as Peter says in 1 Peter 2:4.

Third New Way to Worship—Jesus the Lamb as our Temple: *“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple ”*(Revelation 21:22). He will be the focus of our worship. Why am I emphasizing all this? After all, we are not in heaven yet. The scriptural principle is this: anything that God is going to like in the future, He likes right now; anything that God is going to do in the future, He would appreciate it if we would get in step with it right now. That is why it is so interesting to read what God does in the future. He wants us to honor Him now to prepare us to later worship Jesus the Lamb as our Temple.

Fourth New Way to Worship—Jesus the Lamb as our Light: *“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light ”*(Revelation 21:23). He is the One who provides all the light we will ever need. In fact, when the Apostle Paul gave his testimony he said, *“This is salvation to open our eyes and to turn us from darkness to light ”* (see Acts 26:18). When Jesus was promised to us in Luke 1:78b-79a, it says that *“the Dayspring from on high has visited us ... who sit in darkness.”* He is our Light, and we will worship Him in heaven as our Light. Therefore, the city will have no need of the sun or the moon to shine in it. It doesn’t mean there aren’t going to be stars or moons, because there will be. We just

³⁸ Anne Cousin’s hymn called “Emmanuel’s Land.”

won't *need* them anymore—the glory of God, the Lamb, illuminates the city. So in heaven, this new worship is that we worship Jesus the Lamb as our Light. What a wonder that will be!

Fifth New Way to Worship—Jesus the Lamb as our Guardian: “... *There shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, ... but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life*”

(Revelation 21:27). We will worship Him who guarded, secured, and kept us. The Lamb is our Guardian; He is the One who writes in the Lamb’s Book of Life; He is the One who keeps all who come to Him from falling, and will present them faultless before His presence. We will therefore worship Jesus the Lamb as our Security, our eternal Guardian.

Sixth New Way to Worship—Jesus the Lamb as our Spring of Life: “*And he showed me a pure river of water of life ... proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb*” (Revelation 22:1). It

is interesting that there will no longer be any seas or oceans, but there is going to be a springing up of the water of life. Why won't there be any oceans? Probably the same reason there isn't any blood in heaven. Jesus has said that flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God. After His resurrection body, Jesus stated that He had a body and bones, but He did not mention anything about blood (Luke 24:39). Why? Blood has to do with corruption; it is the disinfecting system; it is actually the garbage system of our body. Blood takes out all the dead cells and the poisons and filters them out of our bodies.

Do you know how the oceans function on our planet? They act as a giant cleaning system. Rains catch all the impurities and put them into the rivers and streams to run them out into the ocean. After that, only pure water is evaporated, like distilled water, which then goes up into the clouds, comes back down, cleans the air and the ground, and then flushes everything right back into the septic tank of the planet—the oceans.

Just as God doesn't need oceans, we won't need blood. There won't be any waste by-products (we can't conceive of this because we are in a fallen universe). The Lamb Himself will be our Spring of Life. The “*water of life*” no longer carries trash out because it proceeds from the throne of God and of the Lamb. The millennial temple will have water coming out from underneath the altar, which is a symbol of God's throne. But here, when the temple is done away with, the water will flow out from underneath the throne. No longer will we need to have the altar as a symbol, because we will be gathered around God's throne itself. And the Water of Life flowing from under His throne is symbolic of true endless life flowing from God. We will thus worship Jesus the Lamb as our Spring of Life!

Seventh New Way to Worship—Jesus the Lamb as our King: “*And there shall be no more curse, ... and His servants shall serve Him*” (Revelation 22:3). Remember: in Genesis, God

cursed the earth and the universe because of the transgression of Adam as he followed Eve in her transgression. But here it says there will be no more curse—God removes and destroys it—the curse is annihilated. Jesus is our King whom we worship by serving. And that makes

me want to burst forth singing: *King of my life I crown Thee now; Thine shall the glory be!*³⁹ It is no wonder then that we worship Jesus the Lamb as our King!

THE NEW _____ OF GOD

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

The sixth new thing is the new Paradise (22:1-5). We will be living in the new Paradise, the beautiful Garden of God! What a thrill to see again the Tree of Life, a river of the Water of Life! And, most of all, that which makes heaven to be heaven: unhindered access to God. We will experience Emmanuel *at last*—God with us and we with God!

The seventh new thing is the new Light (21:23): *“The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.”* The Garden of God will be lit with a different kind of light. This is hard for us to understand because we can’t conceive of life apart from the sun.

The ancients used to worship the sun because it sustains all life. Most fossil fuels are a product of sunlight being captured through the wonders of photosynthesis and converted into energy stored in plants and trees. Most fossil fuels are compressed and decomposed plants and trees. Here we see that we no longer will be dependent on the sun for the heat, light, and energy it gives because the glory of God lights the city. The Lamb becomes the lamp of the city; His light will illuminate the nations of the earth and day will be supreme. There will be no more darkness, and in the absence of darkness there will be no more fear, death, or evil associated with it.

In James 1:17 we are told that *“with [God] there is no variation or shadow of turning.”* Those are two astronomical terms meaning that there is no eclipsing of God. In other words, nothing will come between Him to cut off His light as an eclipse does on the earth. With God there will be no eclipsing—no variations as when the stars pulsate. Individual stars differ in their light and electromagnetic radiation output, but no longer will we have such variation. There will be no burning out, and no

³⁹ [Jennie E. Hussey](#), 1921

eclipsing. Thus, we will worship Him who is the Light, and who has lighted our souls forever by His Truth.

This focus on worshiping the new Light reminds me of this splendid old song by Phillip Bliss. Note that whether we are on earth or in heaven—the Light of the world is Jesus.

The Light of the World Is Jesus

Christ will give you light. —Ephesians 5:14

The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin—

The light of the world is Jesus;

Like sunshine at noon-day His glory shone in—

The Light of the world is Jesus.

No darkness have we who in Jesus abide—

The Light of the world is Jesus:

We walk in the Light when we follow our Guide—

The Light of the world is Jesus.

No need of the sunlight in heaven, we're told—

The Light of the world is Jesus;

The Lamb is the Light in the City of gold—

The Light of the world is Jesus.

Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee!

Sweetly the Light has dawned upon me;

Once I was blind, but now I can see—

The Light of the world is Jesus.

—Philip P. Bliss

THE _____ OF THE NEW HEAVEN

“... ‘Behold, I **make all things new**’ ...” (Revelation 21:5, Emphasis added).

What other priceless lessons can we learn from Revelation 21? Now that we've seen seven new things in heaven, and seven new ways we will joyously worship the Lamb of God, let us look at ten perfections of the new heaven.

Perfection One—Fellowship: *“And ... there was no more sea”* (Revelation 21:1, KJV).

Vanquished are the depths of the seas that often gave storms and caused separations! The idea of no more seas may take us back to the idea of never being separated by the distance of a sea from those we love, and thus pointing to God as ever near.

Perfection Two—Consolation: *“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ...”*

(Revelation 21:4, KJV). The Comforter will give everlasting comfort for any tears over our

own failures, the hurts caused by others, and the sorrow over the loss and hurt of loved ones. All the ravages of sin will be gone forever.

Perfection Three—Living: “... *And there shall be no more death ...*” (Revelation 21:4, KJV).

Never again will we have to watch the life drain from a beloved spouse, parent, or friend. There will be no more death vigils in Intensive Care Units and waiting rooms. The Prince of Terrors will be gone and the Prince of Peace will reign.

Perfection Four—Joy: “... *And there shall be no more ... sorrow, nor crying ...*” (Revelation 21:4, KJV). Yes, Christians feel sorrow and they cry when parents pass away. They grieve the loss of a marriage partner who goes ahead of them to the presence of Christ. The depth of such losses is fully experienced, but Jesus has promised that we will have abundant life (John 10:10)—and in this world we have only tasted of the Spirit’s fruit called joy. But oh, the joy of our future reunion!

Perfection Five—Health: “... *And there shall be no more ... pain ...*” (Revelation 21:4, KJV).

There will be no more colds, flu bugs, arthritis, painfully incapacitating diseases, or any other physical ailments!

Perfection Six—Sustenance and Resources: “... *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*” (Revelation 21:6, KJV). For the millions who have agonized in hunger and thirst on earth, that will be no more. Gone will be the pressures of securing daily provisions because the Provider will have come (Revelation 7:16). Jesus came that we might never hunger nor thirst (John 6:35)!

Perfection Seven—Worship: “... *The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*”

(Revelation 21:22, KJV). The mere representation or symbols of God will be replaced by the immediate and actual presence of God. There will be no more cold hearts and fainting prayers; no more wandering minds in song, study, and prayer. The personal God who promised to be with us will be there. And we will forever be with Him who loved us and sent His Son to give Himself for us! That is why we will break into worship and song so often in Revelation. It will be absolutely perfect there!

Perfection Eight—Illumination: “... *The Lamb is the light thereof*” (Revelation 21:23, KJV).

No more brownouts, blackouts, power surges, or power failures. No more gloomy days. No more dark days. The Light of the World has come and we will at last walk in the light as He is in the Light!

Perfection Nine—Security: “... *And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day ...*” (Revelation

21:25, KJV). All the fears and phobias of the old world are gone. The dangers of robber and stalker are past. The constant awareness of imminent loss is gone. The need to protect ourselves from intruders and assailants has passed with the arrival of our Protector and Fortress. We will be under the wings of the One we can wholly trust: no more fear of defilement or pollution; no need to purify air, water, and food; no screens, locks, combinations, doors, or guns. We will be free at last!

Perfection Ten—Refreshment: “... *There shall be no night there*” (Revelation 21:25, KJV).

There will be no end to activity; no exhaustion; no place for evil men and their evil plans (John 3:19). All that will be is the enjoyment of a day that knows no end. At last we’ll have

glorious bodies fashioned like our Savior's (Philippians 3:21). Oh, that will be glory for me!
How about you?

THE WONDER OF _____ HEAVEN

"Precious in the sight of the LORD **is the death of His saints**" (Psalm 116:15, Emphasis added).

When your appointment with death arrives, the Lord Jesus Himself will wondrously take you by the hand and usher you instantly into heaven. At the moment you are absent from the body you will forever be in His presence! Jesus Christ, who has guided you through the valley of the shadow of death, will continue to guide you as He takes you by the hand and leads you up past the marshaled ranks of the angels!

The Scriptures talk about what God's throne looks like. It is raised up, and sits in the sides of the north; in front of it is a glassy sea; surrounding it in concentric circles are the angels. When Daniel saw them, he said there were myriads of myriads—ten thousands of ten thousands. What does "ten thousand times ten thousand" equal? Hundreds of millions of standing angelic beings! How powerful are angels? Just one angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night! They are very powerful—and hundreds of millions of these super powerful angelic creations stand by God's throne.

So then, you will walk by the marshaled hosts, the ranks of the angels, up through the golden boulevards of glory, up past the cherubim. When you get closer to God's throne, you will see creatures with four faces and six wings surrounding His throne. Hovering, they constantly say, "*Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord.*" The seraphim, which means "*burning ones,*" join them. So these burning, holy creatures are speaking about God. Finally, Christ will lead you up to the throne of God Himself.

What happens next? Having passed from this life, which is physical, into real life, which is supernatural and spiritual, Jesus will then hold your hand and walk you up past all the angels, cherubim, and seraphim to the very throne of God. Jesus will then confess your name before His Father and the angels (Revelation 3:5). He will introduce you saying, "Father, I would like You to meet one for whom I died—one whom I bring to You as My beloved, as one whom I purchased. I now present My child to You ..." Then you will hear Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, actually say *your* name! Talk about the most unbelievable moment of your existence!

Do you remember how you will be clothed? In a white robe! If you will recall, when Jesus was transfigured, He pulled back the veil of His flesh to let us see what He's really like as God in His eternal divine state. Scripture tells us that His clothing began to glow so white that it was whiter than anything ever seen on earth. His face also began to shine. In fact, when John saw Him He was shining like the sun! And you, too, will have a glowing white robe because you will no longer be terrestrial, but celestial!

Psalm 104:2 tells us that Jesus is clothed "*with light as with a garment.*" Because you will see Him as He is, you will look like Jesus—as white and bright as the day, and pure as light. What a reward it will be to have that robe draped around your shoulders and be invited to walk the shining paths of

glory! But the greatest and richest part will be to hear Jesus Christ confess that you are His good and faithful servant! What a wondrous entrance into heaven!

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: G. Campbell Morgan, a great Bible teacher in Britain a hundred years or so ago, wrote of this moment also, and he said: “You are to remember with the passion burning within you that you are not the child of today. You are not of the Earth, you are more than dust; you are the child of tomorrow, you are of the eternities, you are the offspring of Deity.

“The measurement of your lives cannot be circumscribed by the point where blue sky kisses green earth. All the facts of your life cannot be encompassed in the one small sphere upon which you live. You belong to the infinite. If you only make your fortune on the Earth—poor, sorry, silly soul—you have made a fortune, and stored it in a place where you cannot hold it. Make your fortune, but store it where it will greet you in the dawning of the new morning.”⁴⁰

Since Jesus is going to usher you into heaven and take you to meet your Father sitting on the throne, think about what you want to send ahead. All that you did on earth is going to follow you to heaven!

I once ordered a small technical gadget over the Internet and received an e-mail asking me to track it. I had never done this sort of thing, so I hit the proper key and got this message: “Your package was put in a truck in Philadelphia and headed for the airport at 7:31.” I thought: *Oh, that’s great!* I checked later in the day, and this time it said: “Your package has now arrived at the Philadelphia airport.” I tracked that package’s whereabouts every day until finally, as I checked it for the last time, the doorbell rang and the delivery man was actually dropping it at the door. I then thought to myself: *We think nothing of tracking packages, but God says, “I’m tracking everything you’ve done on earth, and the part that is eternal is going to follow you—it’s going to arrive with you in heaven.”* The question is this: Is anything following you to heaven? When you come face to face with Jesus, what will you bring with you to offer the Lamb of God?

As we close this week’s devotionals, you can live in hope by reflecting upon the wonders of Jesus as you worshipfully sing this lovely song to the Lamb of God.

Behold the Lamb

Behold! The Lamb of God

who takes away the sin of the world! —John 1:29

Behold the Lamb, behold the Lamb,

Slain from the foundation of the world.

For sinners crucified

O holy sacrifice, behold the Lamb of God,

Behold the Lamb.

Crown Him, crown Him,

Worthy is the Lamb.

Praise Him, praise Him. Heav'n and earth resound.

Behold the Lamb, behold the Lamb,

Slain from the foundation of the world. For sinners crucified,

⁴⁰ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: Revell, 1929), pp. 64-65.

O holy sacrifice, behold the Lamb of God,
Behold the Lamb.

—Dottie Rambo, 1934 – ⁴¹

⁴¹ © Mercy Me Music Company

Fall in _____ With Jesus All Over Again (Revelation 22:1-21)

JESUS IS EXTRAVAGANT

“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, **will draw all peoples to Myself**” (John 12:32, Emphasis added).

When the Bible opens in Genesis, we find ourselves transported into the Garden of Eden, a paradise of perfection and beauty. When the Bible closes in Revelation 22, we are transported forward to the fringes of eternity to step out into the Garden of God, that final Paradise which far exceeds anything man could ever envision. And its perfection is absolutely breathtaking!

To realize how glorious heaven will be, we need to go back and meet the first two humans on earth. We need to once again listen to the inspired, accurate, and divine recounting of their experience in the Garden of Eden.

Imagine what it was like in the dawn of Creation. Think about life as a perfect human: Your first memory is that of waking up in God’s garden, Eden. You are in a comfortable world with no extremes of hot and cold, no storms, no disasters to fear. It is a secure home with no pestering bugs, no poisonous snakes, and no deadly spiders. You are surrounded with the continual beauty of fragrant and color-filled flowering orchids on the verdant green trees. Blooms never fall off, yellow, or wilt. Full, juicy fruit hangs ripe on the branches, but none falls off and rots.

Even more, you have a body that never aches, a digestive system that never rebels, eyesight that never needs correction, and your ears can hear the sweet sounds of life all around. There are no pains, never a sorrow, not even a fear. There is no weariness—only peace-filled living.

In God’s perfect Garden of Eden, it is paradise living. Every day is an adventure of new colors, new fragrances, and new symmetry in flowers, butterflies, and all the wonders of a perfect animal world. There are no predators, no scavengers, and no carnivores. There are only placid and magnificent creatures reflecting the majesty of God. Around every corner of towering and graceful trees, which were each perfectly planted by God, are flocks, herds, and gatherings of exquisite animals.

Best of all is the sweet sound of the voice of the Lord. About suppertime each day, a gentle breeze whispers by, and then you hear the voice of God. The Gardener and Planner of the Universe is walking among His creatures in the cool of the day. He desires fellowship with you, His

best friends, whom He made to look just like Himself. Your ears, that He created, hear the sweetest sound of all—the voice of Jesus who created them.

And then enters the bad guy to Paradise—the dragon serpent, Satan! And all of Creation is turned upside down ...

By Revelation 22, however, Satan will no longer be a threat. God will seal him in the Lake of Fire along with those who have refused to stop following him. But we who have listened and followed Jesus will be in the new Garden of God—our eternal and glorious Paradise.

All of God's children, those who have placed their faith in the Lamb's shed blood on the cross, will be dwelling in the city He has prepared for us. And it is described beautifully in Revelation 22: the Celestial City is comforting (vv. 1-5), and the Celestial City is calling us to come home (vv. 6-21).

As you experience the extravagance of Jesus, who saved and washed you from your sins, you will understand just how much He is going to lavish on you in the future Garden of God!

My Prayer for You in Revelation 22: We worship You, oh mighty King, for there is none like You! It is truly extravagant of You to have taken us from the pit, out of the miry clay, to wash and robe us with Your righteousness; to set our feet upon the Rock; to give us a new name, and a personal intimate relationship with You—and to promise to us all the rights of being a joint heir with You, oh Jesus! We are overwhelmed with unspeakable gratitude! At the conclusion of Your Revelation, we pray that we will understand how You are truly pouring out Your grace, mercy, and love in abundance—our inheritance in Christ. And we thank You in advance for that! Bless us as we study this week; fill our hearts with the wonders of who You are, Lord Jesus. Then help us to choose to live in such a way that we, too, will reflect Your wonders. In Your precious name we pray, Amen.

THINGS NEW

“Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, **I make all things new.**’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful’ ” (Revelation 21:5, Emphasis added).

As we come to the twenty-second chapter of Revelation, consider how unlike the first Adam is to this last Adam: Satan challenged the first man, Adam. The Last Adam, Jesus, challenged Satan by resisting him with God's Word. Satan ruined the first Adam. The Last Adam crushed Satan. The First Adam involved the human race in his defeat. The Last Adam included the human race in His victory. The First Adam stood as the head of the race, and falling, dragged the whole race down with him. The Last Adam stood as the Head of the new race, and being victorious, lifted that race with Him.

The Celestial City is comforting. In Revelation 22:1-5, we discover that our heavenly home, the Celestial City, is like a beautiful garden. As we saw a few moments ago, the Garden of God seems much like the Garden of Eden. However, there are also some differences. There were four rivers in Eden (Genesis 2:10–14), but God has only one river in His Celestial City. When Ezekiel saw a river for cleansing and life, it was flowing from under the altar of the millennial temple (Ezekiel 47),

but this river of life flows from God's throne because the Lord God Almighty is the source of all true purity.

In Eden humans were prohibited from eating of "*the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*" and of "*the tree of life*" (Genesis 2:15–17; 3:22–24). But in the Garden of God we will have unhindered access to the Tree of Life. As we ponder this heavenly scene, we realize that the river and the tree are not only literal but also symbolic of the abundant life we inherit in this glorious Celestial City.

When John wrote in Revelation in 22:3 that there is "*no more curse,*" he was reminding us of the dark days of Genesis 3:14–19, when the curse began. It is also remarkable that even the Old Testament closes with the warning: "*Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*" (Malachi 4:6). But with Jesus came hope, life, and liberation from the curse. Because of Calvary, God can announce: "... *There shall be no more curse!*" For the Prince of Death, Satan, will be consigned to hell; the Prince of Life,

our Lord Jesus, has liberated all of creation, and made it new; and in heaven we will see that the curse of sin will be gone forever.⁴²

Note the contrasts between the old and the new in the chart below.⁴³

PROBATIONARY WORLD (Genesis)	ETERNAL WORLD (Revelation)
Division of light and darkness (1:4)	No night there (21:25)
Division of land and sea (1:10)	No more sea (21:1)
Rule of sun and moon (1:6)	No need of sun or moon (21:23)
First heavens and earth finished (2:1-3)	New heaven and earth forever (21:1)
Man in a prepared Garden (2:8, 9)	Man in a prepared city (21:2)
River flowing out of Eden (2:10)	River flowing from God's throne (22:1)
Tree of life in the midst of the Garden (2:9)	Tree of Life throughout the city (22:2)
Gold in the land (2:12)	Gold in the city (21:21)
God walking in the Garden (3:8)	God dwelling with His people (21:3), no longer coming in the cool of the day as in Genesis; we are with Him forever.
The Spirit is energizing (1:2)	The Spirit is inviting (22:17)
Garden accessible to the liar, Satan (3:1-5)	City closed to all liars (21:27)
Man in God's image (1:27)	Man in God's presence (21:3)
Man the probationer (2:17)	Man the heir (21:7)
CURSED WORLD (Genesis)	REDEEMED WORLD (Revelation)
Cursed ground (3:17)	No more curse (22:3)
Daily sorrow (3:17)	No more sorrow (21:4)
Sweat on the face (3:19)	No more tears (21:4)
Thorns and thistles (3:18)	No more pain (21:4)
Eating herbs of the field (3:18)	Twelve manner of fruits (22:2)
Death and returning to the dust (3:19)	No more death (21:4)
Coats of skins (3:21)	Fine linen, white and clean (19:14)
Satan opposing (3:15)	Satan banished (20:10)
Driven from the Garden; kept from the tree of life (3:24)	Eternal access to the Tree of Life (22:14)
Banished from the Garden (3:23)	Free entry to the Garden of God (22:14)
Redeemer promised (3:15)	Redemption accomplished (5:9-10)
Evil continually (6:5)	Nothing that defiles (21:27)
Seed of the woman (3:15)	Root and offspring of David (22:16)
Cherubim guarding (3:24)	Angels inviting (21:9)

So then, the end of history and the beginning of history belong together. The last leaf of the Bible corresponds with the first. Holy Scripture begins with Paradise (Genesis 1:2), and with Paradise it ends (Revelation 22).

THE CELESTIAL CITY IS CALLING— _____!

“And the Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ ... And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely**” (Revelation 22:17, Emphasis added).

The conclusion is greater than the beginning! The future Paradise is not only that which was lost and regained, but also, above all, it is the heavenly and eternally glorified Paradise.

In the lost Paradise there was danger: *“On the day in which you eat thereof you will die the death”* (Genesis 2:17); **in the glorified Paradise** full security reigns, and *“There shall be no more curse ...”* (Revelation 22:3).

In the lost Paradise, the serpent said: *“You will become as God”* (Genesis 3:5); **in the glorified Paradise** Scripture says: *“His name [His nature] shall be on their foreheads”* (Revelation 22:4).

In the lost Paradise stood a tree of knowledge (Genesis 2:9); **in the glorified Paradise** it is no longer required (Revelation 22:1-5)—for we behold with direct vision the face of God (Revelation 22:4) and thus have the true and personal knowledge of Him forever as our heritage.

The lost Paradise had an end through the defeat of man (Genesis 3:24); **the glorified Paradise** abides eternally for the overcomers (Revelation 2:7), and *“They shall reign for ever and ever”* (Revelation 22:5).

Thoughts of the Celestial City are comforting and glorious as we await that day, but the city is also calling to us. I believe that the message of Chapter 22 starts in verse 6: *“Then he said to me, ‘These words are faithful and true’”* The saints of old lived their lives looking for, longing for, and seeking a heavenly city (Hebrews 11:13). And that heavenly city is likewise calling each of us to come—to long to be there.

Revelation 22:6-21 provides these practical applications for us even in today’s age:

Keep the Word—God’s Word is to be our priority (vv. 6–11, 18–19).

Serve God—God’s work is to be our focus (vv. 12–14).

Stay pure—godly purity is to be our goal (vv. 15–16).

Watch for Jesus—Christ’s return is to be our hope (vv. 17, 20–21).

Heaven is more than a destination; it is God’s deeply moving call to action to us who are on earth. Our heavenly destiny ought to make a difference in our present lives. When the Old Testament saints learned that they had a heavenly city, it challenged them to walk with God, and to serve Him better. When Jesus needed encouragement in the Garden of Gethsemane as He faced death on the cross, it

was the hope of returning to His Father in heaven that strengthened Him (Hebrews 12:2). Our heavenly home should be the anchor of our soul that pulls us upward, heavenward, homeward, and Godward.

What is the first call from heaven? We need to keep His Word: *"These words are faithful and true. ... Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book"* (Revelation 22:6-7). This is the sixth of the seven beatitudes in which God promises a blessing.

What does *"keeps the words of the prophecy of this book"* mean? Jesus told us that if you obey His Word, you love Him. To love Him entails hungering for His Word, interacting diligently with His Truth, and yielding to His Holy Spirit that you may be increasingly conformed to the image of Christ. Have you presented your body to Christ as a living sacrifice? Are you being continually transformed by *"the renewing of your mind to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (see Romans 12:1-2)? I pray so!

THE REVELATION BEATITUDES

"Blessed is he who reads ..." (Revelation 1:3a, Emphasis added).

Do you recall that there are seven beatitudes—seven blessings in Revelation? Because these have application for how to prepare for heaven even now, we will go over these blessings today and tomorrow.

The First Beatitude—Christ's Word: "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near" (Revelation 1:3). Those who read, hear, and keep His Word are blessed!

The Second Beatitude—Christ's Gift of Eternal Life: "... Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on ..." (Revelation 14:13). This speaks of the happiness of those who die in the Lord, emphasizing that eternal life is a blessing. What we were, what we did, what through God's power we accomplished in Jesus' name while on earth, will go with us. Unbelievers must leave everything behind; but God's children are blessed because works done in the energy of the Holy Spirit will follow us. Christ's gift of eternal life is a blessing because we get to enjoy Jesus and offer Him our service forever.

The Third Beatitude—Christ's Coming: "... Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame" (Revelation 16:15). This is an emphasis on the Lord's return. Of course, this is for Tribulation saints because Jesus will not come for us as a thief in the night, but as our blessed and loving Bridegroom. However, His coming will be a blessing for us as well as those in the Tribulation. We should therefore all be watching for Him—keeping our garments clean, lest they become soiled with the filth of this

world. For the Christian, Christ's coming is not something to be dreaded, but a glorious blessing!

The Fourth Beatitude—Christ's Presence: "... Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!" (Revelation 19:9). To be invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is a blessed delight because Christ will be there!

The Fifth Beatitude—Christ's Assurance: "Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection ..." (Revelation 20:6). This verse emphasizes deliverance from death. It is an assurance to those who are not raptured, those awaiting the resurrection (sleeping in the dust, as Daniel puts it), that there is a great blessing in that they, too, will reign with Christ during the Millennium. If we have believed Christ's Word, received His gift of eternal life, and have looked for Christ's coming and longed for His presence, then we have the blessed assurance of Jesus Christ.

MORE OF REVELATION'S BEATITUDES

"... **Blessed** is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7, Emphasis added).

Yesterday, we looked at the first five of seven beatitudes—the blessings in Revelation. Today, we will see the remaining two.

The Sixth Beatitude—Christ's Service: "... *Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book*" (Revelation 22:7). There is great blessing and joy for those who heed God's Word because obedience to Him is what Jesus longs for: "*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him*" (John 14:21).

Never forget this point: you will find joy as you not only read and hear God's Word but also keep it! As we keep His Word by the energy and power of the Holy Spirit, to the grace of Jesus Christ, we

will have the blessing of Christ's service. Serving Christ by obeying Him is both a joy and a blessing! This truth is well expressed by the lyrics of this song.

There Is Joy in Serving Jesus

There is joy in serving Jesus, as I journey on my way;
Joy that fills the heart with praises ev'ry hour and ev'ry day.
There is joy in serving Jesus, joy that triumphs over pain;
Fills my soul with heaven's music, till I join the glad refrain.
There is joy in serving Jesus, as I walk alone with God;
'Tis the joy of Christ, my Savior, Who the path of suff'ring trod.
There is joy in serving Jesus, joy amid the darkest night;
For I've learned the wondrous secret, and I'm walking in the light.

Chorus:

There is joy, joy, joy in serving Jesus;
Joy that throbs within my heart
Ev'ry moment, ev'ry hour, as I draw upon His pow'r;
There is joy, joy, joy that never shall depart.

— Oswald J. Smith

The Seventh Beatitude—Christ's Home: “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14). This verse emphasizes the fact that He will eternally sustain us. The home He has prepared for us is the happy result of getting that clean robe and having eternal access to the Tree of Life.

Now look at 22:11: “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.” Some people struggle with this verse because they think it means: “If you are a sinner, stay a sinner.” But God is actually saying that in the eternal state there is no possibility of change.

Consider Warren Wiersbe's comments on this verse: “Does Revelation 22:11 suggest that God does not want men to repent and change their ways? No, because that would be contrary to the message of Revelation and of the gospel itself. The angel's words must be understood in light of the repeated statement, ‘Behold, I come quickly’ (Rev. 22:7, 12), as well as His statement, ‘For the time is at hand’ (Rev. 22:10). Jesus Christ's coming will occur so quickly that men will not have time to change their characters. Revelation 22:11, therefore, is **a solemn warning that decision determines character, and character determines destiny**. Suffering believers might ask, ‘Is it worth it to live a godly life?’ John's reply is, ‘Yes! Jesus is returning, and He will reward you!’ It is worth it to be

righteous, [and] it is worth it to be holy but you won't be able to wait till the last minute. When you see the Lord coming, it will be too late to say yes. You must choose Him now. (Emphasis added.)"⁴⁴

WORTHY IS THE LAMB!

“... **Worthy is the Lamb** who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12, Emphasis added).

Today, I exhort you to step into the worship center of the universe! Through the eyes of the Apostle John, picture yourself standing in the vestibule and peering through the door into the chambers of the Most High. Gaze at the One who is seated on the eternal throne. As you watch, exalt God in your spirit as the endless praise ascends around His throne. Be still and know who it is before whom you stand. And then fall in love with Jesus all over again as He is at the center and focus of your worship!

Through the Apostle John's descriptions, listen to the choirs of angels in numberless circles about the glassy sea and heaven's throne as they say His worthy praise. By faith's eyes and ears, listen to those eternal creatures chant, “*Holy, holy, holy.*” For “*The four living creatures ... do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!"*” (Revelation 4:8).

Listen to the twenty-four elders as they fall down before He who sits on the throne, and cast their crowns before Him, saying: “*You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created*” (Revelation 4:11).

Now see that band which no man can number singing their songs of adoration and praise: “*And they sang a new song, saying: 'You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.'* Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!*’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘*Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!*’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘*Amen!*’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever” (Revelation 5:9-14).

To worship the Lord God Almighty—who is worthy of all worship and praise—is your duty and purpose of existence. The Father seeks only one thing, and that is that you might worship Him. To truly worship Him is to acknowledge His “worthship” by ascribing to Him the honor, praise, glory,

⁴⁴ Wiersbe, in loc.

and majesty of which He is worthy. Do you really know Him, this Christ the Lord, who alone merits such praise?

Oh, may God enable you to see Him, the Lamb that was slain, who alone is worthy to be praised by us who owe Him our all! In quiet reverence of this moment, I encourage you to worshipfully sing this song to our worthy Lamb.

Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain

Worthy is the Lamb who was slain. —Revelation 5:12

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive
Power and riches and wisdom and strength,
Honor and glory and blessing!
Worthy is the Lamb!
Worthy is the Lamb!
Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!
Worthy is the Lamb

—Don Wyrzten, 1970

EXPERIENCING JESUS

“And this is eternal life, **that they may know You**, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3, Emphasis added).

The mission that flows out of our loving fellowship, our spiritual growth, and our praise is that of being God’s faithful and obedient instruments in His divine plan to redeem the world. That plan began in eternity past, before the foundation of the world. But it did not go into effect until Adam chose to sin, fell from fellowship with God, and was spiritually separated from Him.

Since that fateful day in the Garden of Eden, fallen, natural man has been trying to hide from God, and God has been redeeming men back to Himself. From that first time of sin, it has always been God who, solely out of His own gracious love, has taken the initiative to restore men to righteousness. God has always taken the initiative for man’s salvation and restoration, from His first call to Adam, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:9), to His last call in Revelation: “The Spirit and the bride

say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the Water of Life without cost" (Revelation 22:17).⁴⁵

Revelation 22 ends the Word of God with the same themes of practical Christian living that have wound their way across most of God's Holy Scriptures: keep the Word (vv. 6-11); serve God (vv. 12-14); avoid sin (vv. 15- 16); and watch for Jesus (vv. 17-21).

The same Jesus that bids us come calls us to keep on the same path He starts us on, the path of grace through faith: "*As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him ...*" (Colossians 2:6).

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: If you have not yet partaken of the Water of Life, choose to live in hope by drinking of Him, and you will find the first true satisfaction you have ever known in your life. I pray that if your garments are soiled with sins not atoned for that you would turn to the Savior today and say, "Your blood avails for me! Save me Jesus, and forgive me!"

If you already have a personal relationship with Christ Jesus the Lord, may you keep His Word, and serve Him faithfully from now throughout all eternity. Be careful to turn from any sin that weighs you down so that you may live watching for Christ's return. Ask God to continually fill your mind and heart with the wonders of who He is and to choose to live in such a way that you reflect His wonders in your life. When all is said and done, may He enable you to say, with all your heart, "*Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!*"

It is my deep prayer that you will fall in love with Jesus all over again as you reflect upon what He has in store for you—both in this age, and in the age to come. If we learn to live in hope by falling in love with Jesus over and over again we will be able to go through all the hardships, pains, and trials that life will bring.

One of my favorite songs is "His Eye Is on the Sparrow." The author of this hymn once described the inspiration for these precious words. Her account reminds us of how much earthly good comes from being heavenly minded.

When Civilla Martin, the author of this hymn, was visiting at a rest home she happened upon an elderly couple who shared that they were all alone on earth with no children, no family, and had outlived all their friends. But they had such radiance Civilla asked how they managed without despairing through such bleak days with no visitors and no events to ever plan for. They simply said, "How could we ever be discouraged when we know that if God's eye is on a sparrow—He certainly will care for us!" That became the basis for this sweet song of living hope! May the message of its lyrics bring as much comfort and joy to your heart as it has to mine.

His Eye Is On the Sparrow

Do not fear ... you are of more value

than many sparrows. —Matthew 10:31

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,

Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heaven and home,

When Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is He:

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

"Let not your heart be troubled," His tender word I hear,

And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;

Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see;

⁴⁵ *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), electronic edition, in loc.

His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.
Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,
When songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.
Refrain:

I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free,

For His eye is on the sparrow,
And I know He watches me.
—Civilla D. Martin, 1866-1948

The Divine Overview Revelation 1:19

Write the things which thou hast seen,
Vision of Christ on Patmos Chapter 1

and the things which are,
The Seven Churches Chapters 2 & 3

and the things which shall be hereafter;
That which follows after Chapters 4-22

Revelation Outline

1. The **Worship Scene** in Heaven (4:1–5:14)
 2. The **Great Tribulation** on Earth (6:1–18:24)
 3. The **Return** of the King (19:1–21)
 4. The **Millennium** (20:1–10)
 5. The **Great White Throne** Judgment (20:11–15)
 6. The **Eternal** State (21:1–22:21)
- The Apostle John wrote five books totaling how many chapters? 5 books/50 chapters
 - The Theme or Purpose of Revelation is? The unveiling or revealing Christ
 - Worship is the submission of our whole nature to? Submission of all of me to God
 - How many hours does it take to read God's Word the Bible? 72 hours

Worship is Submission to God

Rev. 19:10

- He **Quickens** our conscience by **His holiness**;
- He **Nourishes** our minds by **His truth**;
- He **Purifies** our imaginations by **His beauty**;
- He **Opens** our hearts to **His love**;
- We **Submit** our wills to **His purpose**.

Are You going to pull over each day, hand the keys to

Christ and get in the passenger seat?

Galatians 2:20

That's it, Thanks for Listening!

Please find me on FB & stay in touch

Appendix

Experience Jesus Often (Revelation 1-22)

THE GREATEST EVENT OF ALL TIME

“**The Revelation** of Jesus Christ, **which God gave Him** to show His servants ...”
(Revelation 1:1a, Emphasis added).

God has invited us to the greatest event of all time! The ultimate communication from God has arrived, and it is a beautiful work of art, a picture of vivid color and radiance. It is a full-color portrait of His Son, Jesus. God presents this photograph as His precious gift to us. We can do with it as we please, but He promises an unusual blessing to all those who take the time to look hard and close at this picture.

What is the picture? It is the unveiled Jesus of Revelation—the uncovered glory of the image of God in Christ Jesus. It is God’s great gift of Hope for us to share in and with a sin weary world *looking* for hope!

Have you been captivated by the irresistible attraction and the incomparable satisfaction of experiencing God? To all who have such a desire, our Lord proposes that experiencing His Son Jesus is the highest pleasure and greatest treasure to be found. Worshiping God is the highest calling we can have as His creation!

We were created to worship God. Yet, I find more resistance in my life to worship than anything else. Distractions pour in, doubts arise, and the constant downward tug of the world, the flesh, and the devil all make it hard to focus on Jesus as He deserves. On the positive side, however, we can all agree that the most precious moments in our life are those few that we know were spent standing consciously in the very presence of God. May I ask you to now rise to such a moment in your heart?

This is an invitation to worship Christ, who died in our place, as well as to rejoice in God the Father’s perfect plan for the ages. So I ask you to discipline yourself to lay aside all the plans,

imaginations, and distracting thoughts of other things so that you can give the gift of your total attention to God each day. I exhort you to meditate on the Scriptures and, in a spirit of continual

prayerfulness, ask the Lord to open your heart more and more to Him! This is the hardest and yet most rewarding exercise I can think of!

I am sharing a verse from every chapter of the Revelation so that you can experience the entire book in three minutes. I encourage you to read these twenty-two references aloud right now, and hear the wonder of this powerful book.

“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants—things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John” (1:1).

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands’ ” (2:1).

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (3:6).

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this’ ” (4:1).

“And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals” (5:1).

“Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, ‘Come and see’ ” (6:1).

“After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree” (7:1).

“When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour” (8:1).

“Then the fifth angel sounded: And I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. To him was given the key to the bottomless pit” (9:1).

“I saw still another mighty angel coming down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. And a rainbow was on his head, his face was like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire” (10:1).

“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there’ ” (11:1).

“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars” (12:1).

“Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name” (13:1).

“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads” (14:1).

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete” (15:1).

“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth’ ” (16:1).

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters ...’ ” (17:1).

“After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory” (18:1).

“After these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, ‘Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!’ ” (19:1).

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand” (20:1).

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea” (21:1).

“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. ... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (22:1, 21).

My Prayer for You in Revelation: Father, we thank You for letting us traverse these wonderful verses in Revelation that You have given as a gift to Your people. We can think of no higher honor, no greater privilege, no more solemn responsibility than to come before Your presence throughout today and every day. We come humbly, asking You to clothe us with humility. We come reverently, asking You to cleanse and purge us from any of the leaven of sin that always seeks to attach itself to us. We thank You for Christ's cleansing blood shed on our behalf. We come worshipfully and overflowing with joy, asking that You would accept the upraised hearts we are offering to You. We pray that every part of our upcoming last glimpse through Revelation will have Your favor upon it. Meet with us in an

unusual way—in a very special and transforming and glorifying way in our lives—so we will know that surely we have been with Jesus, in whose name we ask all this, Amen.

YOUR BELOVED BRIDEGROOM

“For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, **that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ ...**” (2 Corinthians 11:2, Emphasis added).

As you worship Jesus you will discover what it means to experience Him, for He is wonderful, glorious, and He is your Beloved Bridegroom! As you start in the process of worshiping Him, I encourage you to sit still before Him in front of His awesome majesty, for He says to you: *“Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth”* (Psalm 46:10, NIV).

Start your worship silently before the majesty of our Lord on high: *“... The LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him”* (Habakkuk 2:20, NIV).

As you comprehend even a fraction of who He is, and how utterly magnificent He is, stop again in awe, with wondrous reverence and sheer delight. Think of the magnitude of His power, might, and infinitude. Agree with the psalmist who said, *“Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him”* (Psalm 33:8, NIV). Honor the Lord for who He is, for how greatly He is to be praised, and how He is infinitely above all that is mundane—and yet He condescends to us of low degree to meet with us. Hallelujah!

As you linger in the glow of His presence, your lack of holiness should become painfully revealed: “For this is what the high and lofty One says—he who lives forever, whose name is holy: ‘I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite’ ” (Isaiah 57:15, NIV).

Are you experiencing a pang of hunger for Christ yet? Do you desire to know Him, love Him, and adore Him more and more? Your heart should be filling up with wonder and gratitude for even the chance to have this moment. And your heart, like the psalmist’s, should echo: *“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water”* (Psalm 63:1, NIV).

Awash with wonder by now, you should be feeling the sheer delight of a new hope as He begins to flood your soul with His response of bearing away the deadening load of your sin. If you feel the burden lifted, the stains removed, the coldness warmed, and the emptiness filled, you are experiencing your God. So go ahead and boldly ask Him: *“One thing I ask of the LORD ...: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple”* (Psalm 27:4, NIV).

The whole Book of Revelation expounds upon that temple in which you can worship the Lord. In His Revelation you will discover that you can: worship Jesus for His majesty (Revelation 1); worship

Jesus for His message (Revelation 2-3); worship Jesus for His mission (Revelation 4-19); and worship Jesus for His mansions (Revelation 20-22).

So worship Jesus throughout Revelation by experiencing your wonderful, glorious, and Beloved Bridegroom!

WORSHIP JESUS FOR HIS MAJESTY

“... **When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead.** But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last’ ” (Revelation 1:17, Emphasis added).

Let us now look at how you can worship every facet of Jesus Christ in Revelation 1.

Worship the ministry of Jesus. In Revelation 1:1-3, Jesus desires to reveal Himself to His bondservants who will pay attention. For “*the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him*” (2 Chronicles 16:9). He is always looking for those whose hearts will be focused on Him so that He can reveal Himself to them. The Spirit of Christ speaking through Moses said, “[If] *you will seek the LORD your God, ... you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul*” (Deuteronomy 4:29). Worship Jesus for His ministry of revealing Himself to His children!

Worship the peace of Jesus. Revelation 1:4 reveals that He offers “*Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come*” This reveals the rest that is yours in Christ; so worship Jesus for the peace that He so freely gives!

Worship the blood of Jesus. In Revelation 1:5 we see that Jesus is “*the firstborn from the dead.*” The blood He shed on the cross is your Source of Eternal Life. Because He sacrificed His life for you, worship Jesus for the blood He shed—give your life back to Him!

Worship the plan of Jesus. Revelation 1:7-8 and 9-20 reveal His heart when He said, “I am coming” and “I am the Alpha and Omega.” He is the One who began, and is going to finish, all things. Worship Jesus for His plan to reveal His heart because He wants you to know and trust Him!

Worship the eyes of Jesus. Revelation 1:14 reveals Jesus’ omniscience: “*His eyes were as a flame of fire.*” He reveals His all-seeing omniscience as He looks into your life and sees what no one else can see. He sees the fears and deepest needs of your heart. As He sees what you don’t want anyone else to see, He will remove those things if you ask Him. So worship Jesus for His eyes that search your soul to see if there is any wicked way in you!

Worship the voice of Jesus. Revelation 1:15 reveals His omnipotence. His voice can be so sweet and yet it can also be like “*the sound of many waters.*” Jesus has the power to accomplish all things in your life as you yield to Him. So worship Jesus for His voice that reveals His almighty omnipotence!

Worship the touch of Jesus. Revelation 1:16-18 reveals His humanity: “*When I saw Him I fell at His feet as dead, but He laid His right hand on me.*” He identifies with you and is able to meet you where you are. Worship Jesus for His gentle and loving touch!

Worship the glory of Jesus. Revelation 1:9-20 reveals His character. When John was on Patmos, he heard the sound of the Spirit raising him up and opening his mind to God and the trumpet

sound. As he turned to hear the voice, he saw a man standing there. It was then that Jesus unveiled that He is the glorious Son of Man. Worship this Jesus for His glory!

Imagine what it must have been like for John to hear a voice like a trumpet and then to see these **seven perfections of Jesus' divinity.**

The Perfect Man: Jesus can identify with us “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). As the Perfect Man in His divinity, He now comes to us as “Son of Man” (eighty-four times He calls Himself this; but no one else does). He came to seek and to save the lost of Adam’s fallen race—as the Son of Man, He is the Conqueror of Adam’s fallen race.

The Perfect Priest: He is robed to the feet as the Perfect Priest. All other priests carried around sacrifices, but this Priest was Himself the Perfect Sacrifice who died for us. As Hebrews pictures Him, He is ever living to intercede for us.

The Perfect Judge: As the Judge, He was girded around His breast with a gold band, which was an ancient symbol of restrained emotions. He judges rightly because He is sinless, and full of love and wisdom. No one but He can make decisions perfectly!

The Perfect Image of God: He is white-haired as the Ancient of Days. His white hair is a sign of maturity, and absolute holiness. (In Daniel 7:9 we see this same description.) Hebrews 1:3 tells us: “... being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”

The Perfect Truth: With His eyes of fire, Jesus is the Seer of All Secrets. He is a penetrating Scrutinizer that can discover and, with consuming light, reveal secrets. As Psalm 19:6 reminds us,

“nothing is hidden” from the eyes of the One who is Truth, sees clearly, and will leave no sin unpunished but those hidden beneath His blood.

The Perfect Defender: He is a trampler of foes! Those feet of military bronze will crush His enemies—even those who cry out: “Lord, Lord!” But Scripture says “He never knew them.” With His brazen feet, the Ultimate Judge will crush all foes!

The Perfect Communicator: With the voice of God as thunderous as the twelve million cubic feet of water crashing at Niagara’s base every hour, commanding all to pay attention, the deaf and the dead can hear it—and so should we!

Jesus is the Christ. Christ is the One who fulfills all the promises of God perfectly. In everything He is perfect, complete, and our all in all. As Dennis Jernigan wrote—we who come to Him find Him to be all we need!

All in All

You are my strength when I am weak,
You are the treasure that I seek,
You are my all in all.
Seeking You as a precious jewel,
Lord to give up I'd be a fool,
You are my all in all.

Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your name.
Jesus, Lamb of God, worthy is Your name.

Taking my sin, my cross, my shame,
Rising again I bless Your name,
You are my all in all.
When I fall down You pick me up,
When I am dry You fill my cup,
You are my all in all.
—Dennis Jernigan⁴⁶

WORSHIP JESUS FOR HIS MESSAGE

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, and I heard behind me **a loud voice, as of a trumpet ...**” (Revelation 1:10, Emphasis added).

Yesterday, we saw that we should worship Jesus for His majesty. Today we will see that we should worship Jesus for His message. Here is the start of a study of all the promises Jesus gave to His seven churches, who represented all of us in His church.

True believers have an abundant life: “... *To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God*” (Revelation 2:7). He is revealed as the Infinite One, and He begins giving His message that true believers will have an abundant life! As Jesus has promised,

⁴⁶ CCLI #1360011, © 1991 Shepherd's Heart Music, Inc.

“He who believes in Me, ... out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). This means that believers will have infinite life in Paradise Regained (John 3:16).

Jesus offers an overflowing life: “Whoever believes in me, ... streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:38, NIV). He also offers an extraordinary life: “... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

True believers have an indestructible life: “... *He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death*” (Revelation 2:11). Jesus’ message also says that true believers will be overcomers. We will not be hurt by anything Satan can throw at us because we are indestructible. We live, as the writer of Hebrews says, after the power of an endless life.

Believers are secure from any physical adversary: “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand” (John 10:28-29). They are also secure from any spiritual adversary: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

True believers have an inexhaustible supply: “... To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it” (Revelation 2:17). Jesus said, “I came to give you an inexhaustible supply. I will nourish you, and intimately reveal myself to you; I will give you all things good.” If we just come to Him, His supply will never run out.

Believers have all their spiritual needs met: “... ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst’ ” (John 6:35). They also have all their spiritual desires fulfilled: “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:13, NIV).

True believers have an inexpressible future: “... He who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—” (Revelation 2:26).

Believers will be rewarded with immeasurable treasures: “... ‘... There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—... and in the age to come, eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30). Believers will also be overwhelmed by God with unbelievable pleasures: “... He was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4).

The more you experience Jesus here on earth, the more you can talk about the unbelievable glory of God seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Oh, how I pray that you long to see that place He is preparing for you!

OVERCOMERS WILL BE BLESSED!

“He who overcomes ...” (Revelation 3:5a, Emphasis added).

True believers have incredible coverage: “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before

My father and before His angels” (Revelation 3:5). The white garments speak of holiness, joy, and honor bestowed upon us by Jesus.

Believers have Christ as their Garment: “... Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Romans 13:14). Believers have Christ as their Advocate: “But He ... has an unchangeable priesthood. ... He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:24-25). Believers also have Christ as their Relative: “... and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:17).

True believers have an inescapable destination: “He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name” (Revelation 3:12).

Believers will be a pillar because we are secure: “Let not your heart be troubled In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And ... I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:1-3). We will never have to fear for our future!

Believers will also have a special name—because we are a love gift from the Father to the Son: “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24).

True believers have intimacy with God: “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (Revelation 3:21).

Intimacy is a promise: “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21). Intimacy is a Person: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only

true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent” (John 17:3). And intimacy is permanent: “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son” (Revelation 21:7).

Jesus came to give, and to give more abundantly! Have you received what He offers? Are you worshipping Him as He deserves? Worship the message of Jesus because it challenges you to listen to Him. Look again at what He has to say to the seven churches in Revelation 2-3:

Ephesus: Worship the **jealousy of Jesus** because He challenges you to exalt Him to be **all that you really love**.

Smyrna: Worship the **hope of Jesus** because He challenges you to exalt Him to be **all that you truly possess**.

Pergamos: Worship the **security of Jesus** because He challenges you to exalt Him to be **all that you cling to**.

Thyatira: Worship the **chastisement of Jesus** because He challenges you to exalt Him to be **all that you fear**.

Sardis: Worship the **riches of Jesus** because He challenges you to exalt Him to be **all that you value**.

Philadelphia: Worship the **approval of Jesus** because He challenges you to exalt Him to be **all that you enjoy**.

Laodicea: Worship the **request of Jesus** as He tells us to repent of anything that keeps us from Him; He challenges you to exalt Him to be **all that you need**.

WORSHIP JESUS FOR HIS MISSION

“Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and **in righteousness He judges and makes war**” (Revelation 19:11, Emphasis added).

Worship Jesus not only for His majesty and His message, but also for His mission, which is clearly seen in Revelation 4-19.

Worship the loveliness of Jesus as He is at the center and focus of your worship, saying: “You are worthy, O Lord!” (Revelation 4)

Worship the sacrifice of Jesus at the throne of the universe as the Lamb of God. For worthy is the Lamb who was slain! (Revelation 5)

Worship the wrath of Jesus as He unleashes the seals that display His holy wrath against sin. (Revelation 6)

Worship the love of Jesus as He, in the midst of the destruction of the planet, sends His witnesses to rescue more lost and helpless sinners by giving them the gospel message. (Revelation 7)

Worship the patience of Jesus as He controls His wrath to listen and respond to prayer while He awaits His perfect timing and continues to freely offer salvation. (Revelation 8)

Worship the judgment of Jesus as He judges hardened and unrepentant sinners. (Revelation 9)

Worship the mystery of Jesus as Judge, for “*the little book*” given to John to eat, and that the mystery of His plan will be finished—just as He declared through His servants, the prophets. (Revelation 10)

Worship the witness of Jesus by trusting His Word through the two witnesses that all things that God has promised will be fulfilled. (Revelation 11)

Worship the victory of Jesus as He shows His people His ultimate triumph. God’s saints are seen overcoming the devil by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony—and by not loving their lives unto death. (Revelation 12)

Worship the genuineness of Jesus as He exposes the *lies* of Antichrist—the Counterfeit Christ who so poorly represents the infinite eternal Jesus. (Revelation 13)

Worship the compassion of Jesus in sending the everlasting gospel even when the earth is falling apart and the nations are under the wrath of God. (Revelation 14)

Worship the beauty of Jesus in the splendor of His redeeming love while the redeemed sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb as they worship His works, His power, His ways, and His plan. (Revelation 15)

Worship the power of Jesus as He judges the horror of locked hearts to show people the atrocities of their sin. (Revelation 16)

Worship Jesus as the bride of Jesus when this chapter unmasks the apostasy of the last days and reveals the true bride (born-again believers) who will sit at the feet of her Beloved Bridegroom. (Revelation 17)

Worship the authority of Jesus judging materialism and acclaiming true values as He keys in to humanity’s great lack of real values. (Revelation 18)

Worship at the banquet for the marriage of Jesus as He celebrates union with His bride—the saints of all the ages. Join in the hallelujahs they offer for His salvation and the judgment of the lost and the wicked. (Revelation 19:1-10)

Worship the re-entry of Jesus as He conquers the rebellion, He who is called Faithful and True in righteousness, He whose name is King of Kings and Lord of Lords! (Revelation 19:11-21)

WORSHIP JESUS FOR HIS MANSIONS

“Let not your heart be troubled In My Father’s house are many mansions **I go to prepare a place for you**” (John 14:1-2, Emphasis added).

Worship Jesus not only for His majesty, His message, and His mission, but also for His beautiful mansions that are so clearly seen in Revelation 20-22. Now we see what He promised to go and prepare for us.

Worship the triumph of Jesus as He vanquishes the devil into the bottomless pit, and renews the earth. (Revelation 20:1-10)

Worship the last word of Jesus damning the rebels to the Lake of Fire—those whose names are not found written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. (Revelation 20:11-15)

Worship the honeymoon of Jesus as He unveils Paradise to His bride, and leads us prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. (Revelation 21:1-8)

Worship the wonders of Jesus as from a high mountain He shows His bride all the beauty of the Holy Jerusalem radiating His glory as it descends out of heaven from God. (Revelation 21:9-27)

Worship the extravagance of Jesus who, like Boaz of old, has freely offered overflowing handfuls of His blessings of salvation to all who will come to Him. (Revelation 22:1-21)

Worship the entire experience of Jesus as He opens and closes the Revelation of Himself! (Revelation 1-22)

Make a Choice to Live in Hope: As you worship the Jesus of Revelation, you are choosing to live in hope by discovering what it means to experience the Son of God for who He is—your Beloved Bridegroom. Whether in this life or the next, what He wants from you most, as His bride, is

your worship and your love! Why not pause and reverently worship Jesus by singing the first few stanzas of this song to Him.

My Jesus, I Love Thee

We love Him because He first loved us. —1 John 4:19

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;

For Thee all the follies of sin I resign;

My gracious Redeemer, my Savior art Thou;

If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I love Thee because Thou hast first loved me,

And purchased my pardon on Calvary's tree;

I love Thee for wearing the thorns on Thy brow;

If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in death,

And praise Thee as long as Thou lendest me breath;

And say, when the death dew lies cold on my brow;

If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

—William R. Featherston, 1846-1873

The last stanza will lift your heart up to glory and you will have an opportunity to worship the Lord through it in a moment. But as an introduction, I want to first share Joni Eareckson Tada's recollection of the beauty of her wedding day because she well relates that event to the greatest day in Paradise when we will all celebrate the Marriage of the Lamb!⁴⁷

“The morning of my wedding day was utterly unique and memorable. And not for reasons you might think. It started in the church bridal salon with my girlfriends laying me down on a couch. They had to shift my paralyzed body this way and that in order to pull my voluminous gown over me. After I was corseted, buttoned, and lifted back into my wheelchair, they gingerly draped my gown over a thick wire mesh covering my wheels so the fabric wouldn't get caught in the spokes. When the organ music began, I wheeled toward the door, stopping for a second in front of a full-length mirror. I looked a little like a float at the Rose Parade.

“The glass doors of the sanctuary opened, and I positioned myself at the top of the aisle, breathing deeply to steady my nerves. Just before the wedding march I glanced down at my gown. I groaned. Somehow I had wheeled over the hem and left a greasy tire mark. My dress hung clumped and uneven—no amount of buckling and binding had helped. My chair was spiffed up, but it was still the big clunky thing it always was. My bouquet of daisies was off-

⁴⁷ Joni Eareckson Tada et al., *When Morning Gilds the Skies* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002), pp. 22-25.

center on my lap since my paralyzed hands couldn't hold them. I was not the picture-perfect bride you see in magazines.

"My last bridesmaid finished her walk down the aisle, and the organ music crescendoed. I inched my chair closer to the last pew, wanting to catch a glimpse of Ken. Suddenly I spotted him way down front, standing at attention and looking tall and elegant in his formal attire. My face grew hot. My heart began to pound. He was craning his neck to look up the aisle. Our eyes met and, amazingly, from that point everything changed.

"How I looked no longer mattered. I forgot all about my wheelchair. Grease stains? Flowers out of place? Who cares? No longer did I feel ugly or unworthy; the love in Ken's eyes washed it all away. I was the pure and perfect bride. That's what he saw, and that's what changed me. It took great restraint not to jam my 'power stick' into high gear and race down the aisle to reach the front and be with Ken. It was the happiest day of my life.

"I think heaven will be a little like that. ... [We] fix our eyes on Jesus, believe and obey, all the while trusting He has clothed us in His righteousness. On that glorious Day, all He'll see is our 'fine linen, bright and clean.' All He'll see is His beautiful bride.

"And one look from Him will change us forever. All the stains of earthly life will be purified away just by one searching of those eyes. Our faces will flush, our hearts will pound, for it will be more than we ever dreamed of, more than we ever longed for. And at the sight of our Bridegroom we just might sing ... *In mansions of glory and endless delight, I'll ever adore thee in heaven so bright; I'll sing with the glittering crown on my brow: If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.*"