



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McFee*

REVELATION

BIBLE COMPANION



PROPHECY

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of Revelation heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." This study of Revelation doesn't just satisfy the curious, it points you to Jesus Christ. Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/Revelation (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

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LESSON 1

GOD'S GRAND FINALE

INTRODUCTION TO REVELATION



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 1–22**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.ttb.org/Revelation) to *Revelation Introduction*

We look around at a dark world today and wonder how it's going to end. All we need to do is turn to the last book of the Bible, the Revelation. What we read there tells us it's going to work out all right.

It doesn't look that way. In fact, it looks like the devil is having a high holiday in the world. But God is going to work it out. God Himself will gain control—in fact, He has never lost control—and He is moving to the time when He will place His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the throne of His universe down here.

Revelation is the 66th book of the Bible—the last one. This means we need to know 65 other books before we get to this place. Having a working knowledge of all the background of the Bible will give Revelation context. If you know the facts and the feel of Scripture, that will help, too.

Four views dominate the study of the book of Revelation.

Some say all of Revelation has been fulfilled in the past, and it describes the events in the writer, John's day. The purpose of the books was to comfort the persecuted church of that day and was written in symbols the Christians of that period would understand.

Another view holds that Revelation is going on continuously in the history of the church, from John's day to the present time. It isn't prophetic at all but talking about current events. Another related view says it has largely been fulfilled and contains only spiritual lessons for the church today.

Another theory says the world keeps getting better and better, the church will convert the whole world, and then Christ will come and reign. (That viewpoint is almost dead today.)

The view which we will base our study on, called the *futurist* interpretation, is the view held by all premillennialists. This view sees Revelation as primarily prophetic.

It begins with the revelation of the glorified Christ. Then the history of the church is given. Then, at the end of chapter 3, the church goes to heaven and we see it, not as the church anymore, but as the bride which will come to the earth with Christ when He comes to establish His Kingdom—that thousand-year reign John will tell us more about. It will be a time of testing, for at the end of that period Satan will be released for a brief season. Then the final rebellion is put down and eternity begins. This is the viewpoint of Revelation we will now explore. History testifies that we have been looking for Christ to come again since He left.

The book of Revelation has six striking and singular features.

1. Revelation is the only prophetic book in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, 17 prophetic books speak of Christ's return.
2. When John, the writer, wrote his Gospel, he reached far back into eternity past and said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Now, writing the Revelation, he reaches far into eternity future and the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
3. Revelation promises a special blessing to anyone reading the book and a warning for those who tamper with its message. Read them in Revelation 1:3 and 22:18-19. It's dangerous to say anything to mislead people looking to God for help.
4. Revelation is not a *sealed* book; it's able to be understood. Daniel was told to seal his book until the time of the end (see Daniel 12:9), but John is told to "not seal ... this book, for the time is at hand" (22:10).

5. Revelation is a series of visions expressed in symbols that deal with *reality*. The literal interpretation is always preferred unless John makes it clear otherwise.
6. Revelation is like a great union station where the great trunk lines of prophecy have come in from other portions of Scripture. We need to understand where each began and how it was developed as it arrives in Revelation. Revelation brings to complete conclusion what began somewhere else in Scripture. It's critical to a right understanding of the book to be able to trace each great subject of prophecy from the first reference to the terminal. This is why you need to know the rest of the Bible to understand Revelation. More than 500 times, it alludes to or references the Old Testament. In its 404 verses, 278 contain references to the Old Testament. In other words, over half of this book depends on your understanding of the Old Testament.

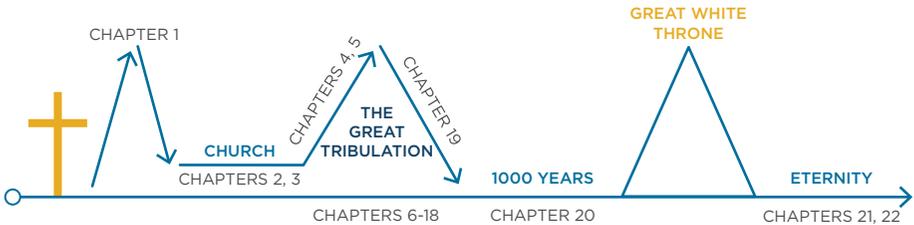
Revelation is like an airport with ten great airlines coming into it. The ten great subjects of prophecy that all land in Revelation are these:

1. The Lord Jesus Christ—He is the subject of the book. Some might be fascinated with the beasts and the bowls of wrath, but the real subject of Revelation is the Sin-bearer. The first mention of Him is way back in Genesis 3:15, as the seed of the woman.
2. The church does not begin in the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus first mentions the church in Matthew 16:18: “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”
3. The resurrection and the translation of the saints (see John 14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-52). Revelation teaches what will happen to those believers in Christ Jesus who have already died at the time of His appearing. This is a great encouragement and comfort to us as our reunion with our loved ones is not more distant than when Jesus comes for His own.
4. The Great Tribulation, spoken of back in Deuteronomy 4 where God says His people would be in tribulation.
5. Satan and evil (see Ezekiel 28:11-18).
6. The “man of sin” (see Ezekiel 28:1-10).
7. The course and end of false Christianity (see Daniel 2:31-45; Matthew 13).

8. The beginning, course, and end of the “times of the Gentiles” (see Daniel 2:37-45; Luke 21:24). The Lord Jesus said Jerusalem will be trampled down until the Times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.
9. The second coming of Christ. According to Jude 1:14-15, Enoch spoke of that, which takes us back to the time of the Genesis record.
10. Israel’s covenants, beginning with the covenant God made with Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. God promised Israel five things, and God says in Revelation that He will fulfill them all.

Revelation is *not* a difficult book. Some try to make it symbolic and hard to understand, but it is actually the most *orderly* book in the Bible. John puts down the instructions given to him by Christ (1:19), then it divides itself in series of sevens. No other book in the Bible organizes itself like that.

A danger we need to avoid is thinking Revelation can be put on a chart. If it includes all it should, it is so complicated nobody will understand it. But if it is so brief that it can be understood, it doesn’t give enough information. Here’s a brief sketch to simplify the different stages of the Revelation and also give the overall picture.



Revelation begins with the cross of Christ and His ascension.

In chapter 1, we see the glorified Christ.

In chapters 2-3 we see the church.

In chapters 4-5 we see that the church is in heaven.

Then on earth the Great Tribulation takes place, chapters 6-18.

In chapter 19 we see Jesus Christ return to the earth and establish His Kingdom. Chapter 20 talks about the thousand-year reign of Christ.

Then the Great White Throne is set up, the place where the lost are judged, and in chapters 21-22 eternity begins. That is Revelation.

The primary subject of this book is a revelation of Jesus Christ. In the Gospels you see Him humble, as He subjected Himself to His enemies on earth and died on a cross. But we discover a completely different Jesus Christ in Revelation. When the scene moves to heaven, we see Him in glory, in command of everything that takes place. He fills the horizon of the total Word of God. Keep this in mind as we study Revelation.

The Bible as a whole tells us what Jesus Christ has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. This is the *unveiling* of Jesus Christ:

He is the Lamb, at the center, around which everything else is drawn.

He is the foundation on which everything lasting is built.

He is the nail on which everything hangs.

He is the object to which everything points.

He is the spring from which all blessing proceeds.

The Lamb is the light, the glory, the life, the Lord of heaven and earth, the source from which all fullness of joy is known.

We cannot go far in the study of Revelation without seeing the Lamb.

Like direction posts along the road to remind us that He, who did by Himself purge our sins, is now highly exalted and that to Him every knee must bow and every tongue confess.

Hallelujah! For the Lamb is going to reign upon this earth. That is God's intention and purpose.

THE CHRIST OF THE REVELATION

According to the instructions Jesus gives to him, John divides Revelation according to Jesus' role.

In Revelation 1:18, the Lord Jesus speaks as the glorified Christ. He makes four grand statements about Himself:

"I am He who lives ...

I was dead ...

I am alive forevermore ...

I have the keys of Hades [the grave] and of Death."

Then Jesus gives John his outline: “Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this” (1:19).

Write what you saw, John. Past tense—referring to John’s vision of the glorified Christ in heaven (chapter 1).

Write the things which are. Present tense—referring to Christ’s present ministry (chapters 2-3). The living Christ is very busy today as Head of the church.

Write the things that you are about to see after these things. After the church leaves the earth, the Lord wants us to know what will happen.

These things described for the future are not to be pulled into the present. This gives rise to the wild and weird interpretations we hear in our day. Instead, let’s follow what John tells us.

In the first division of Revelation we will see the person of Christ in His position and glory as the Great High Priest who is in charge of His church. Although He is still the *Lamb* of God, His wrath revealed terrifies the earth as His judgment begins on the earth.

Notice also the tie between Genesis and Revelation, the first and last books of the Bible. Genesis presents the beginning, and Revelation presents the end. Note the contrasts between the two books:

In Genesis the earth was created; in Revelation the earth passes away.

In Genesis was Satan’s first rebellion; in Revelation is Satan’s last rebellion.

In Genesis the sun, moon, and stars were for earth’s government; in Revelation these same heavenly bodies are for earth’s judgment. In Genesis the sun was to govern the day; in Revelation there is no need of the sun.

In Genesis darkness was called night; in Revelation there is “no night there” (see 21:25; 22:5).

In Genesis the waters were called seas; in Revelation there is no more sea.

In Genesis was the entrance of sin; in Revelation is the exodus of sin.

In Genesis the curse was pronounced; in Revelation the curse is removed.

In Genesis death entered; in Revelation there is no more death.

In Genesis was the beginning of sorrow and suffering; in Revelation there will be no more sorrow and no more tears.

In Genesis was the marriage of the first Adam; in Revelation is the marriage of the Last Adam.

In Genesis we saw man's city, Babylon, being built; in Revelation we see man's city, Babylon, destroyed and God's city, the New Jerusalem, brought into view.

In Genesis Satan's doom was pronounced; in Revelation Satan's doom is executed.

Genesis opens the Bible not only with a global view but also with a universal view—"in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Now in Revelation we see what God is going to do with His universe. No other book is quite like this one.

Jesus tells the church, "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (22:12-13).

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (22:20).

NEXT: Is it "Revelations" or "Revelation"?
Find out this and other interesting insights.

LESSON 2

IT'S ALL ABOUT JESUS



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 1:1-11**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 1:1**, **Revelation 1:1-4**, and **Revelation 1:4-9**

In the Gospels we meet Jesus as meek, humble, and dying on a cross. He submitted Himself to the enemies on earth. In Revelation, Jesus is in His glory and in absolute control of the universe. He is still the Lamb of God, but we see the wrath of the Lamb that terrifies the earth. He fills the horizon of the total Word of God.

Jesus makes a promise to all who read and hear this book: “*You will be blessed,*” He said. And both the reader and the hearer are to keep these things which are written in the book (v. 3). Many are frightened by what they see and hear here, but remember Jesus says He loves us; so we have no need to be afraid of anything that is to follow.

First, please note the title of this book is Revelation—singular, not plural. It is *the* Revelation, that is, “the uncovering, unveiling, or revelation” of Jesus Christ.

The Gospels only tell us half the story. Revelation completes it. It takes off the veil so we can see Jesus Christ in His unveiled beauty and power and glory. This book is the opposite of a secret or a mystery. It discloses secrets and uses word pictures and symbols so we can interpret it in light of the entire Word of God.

When will these things happen? John writes, “things which must shortly take place” (v. 1). This doesn’t state a date they will happen but that it will happen with absolute certainty, and once it begins, it will take place in a hurry, in a brief period of time.

The message of this book originated in heaven with God the Father, who gave it to His Son, Jesus Christ, who gave it to an angel, who gave it to John, who wrote about what he saw as an eyewitness of the visions. What John saw and heard and sometimes smelled, he tells us in picturesque language.

John first communicated the account of the Revelation to seven churches in Asia. Having been a pastor in this region, John knows these churches. He writes from Patmos, a small Greek island in the Aegean Sea where he was exiled from about 86 to 96 A.D. It’s a lonely, rugged, volcanic island where he was given this great vision of the Revelation.

John opens, “Grace to you and peace” (v. 4). The word *grace* (*charis*) is the Greek greeting, and *peace* (*shalom*) is the Hebrew. Peace flows from grace, and grace is the source of all our blessings today. The Revelation reveals the grace of God and gives us peace. We don’t need to be frightened as we study this book; God’s children have His grace and peace. This grace is also from the Lord Jesus Christ. In just two verses, Revelation 1:5-6, we learn seven titles for Jesus. (Read the verses yourself.)

1. Jesus is the “faithful witness,” the only trustworthy witness to the facts of this book that are about Him. He testifies of Himself. When it’s difficult to believe other people, we can believe the Lord Jesus.
2. Jesus is the “firstborn from the dead,” the first to rise from the dead, never to die again, back from the dead in a glorified body.
3. Jesus is “the ruler over the kings of the earth,” speaking of the time when every knee should bow and every tongue will confess He is Lord (see Philippians 2:9-11).
4. “To Him who loved us” emphasizes His constant attitude toward His own. Jesus Christ didn’t love us only when He died on the cross, although He loved us at that time, but He also loves us today. Right at this very minute, Jesus loves you.
5. “Washed us from our sins in His own blood.” Jesus Christ gave His *life*. (See also 1 Peter 1:18-19 and 1 Timothy 2:5.)

6. “And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father” (KJV) who will rule with Him. Did you notice that it reads, “unto God and *his* Father.” Why doesn’t it read, “*our* Father”? Because God is the Father of Jesus in a unique way. We *become* sons of God through regeneration, being born from above, by accepting Jesus as Savior. But Christ’s *eternal* position in the Trinity is that of the Son.
7. “To Him be glory and dominion forever and ever,” emphasizing Jesus’ title for eternity. “Amen.” Jesus Christ is the amen, the subject and the object of this book. He is the mover of all events, and all events move toward Him. He is the far-off eternal purpose in everything. All things were not only made *by* Him, but all things were made *for* Him. This universe exists for Him.

John tells us that one day, Jesus Christ will personally and physically come back. *When Jesus appears in the clouds, everyone will see Him.* When Jesus earlier took the church out of the world at the Rapture, He doesn’t appear to everyone nor does He touch down on earth—believers will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. When Jesus Christ returns to earth as King, He will come to establish His Kingdom in the Millennium. But this time, when everyone sees Him, not everyone will be happy. Those who reject Him on earth will wail—they’ll beat their breasts in anguish. The world won’t want to see Him.

But nothing will stop the Lord. Nothing will change the plan. What He started, He will finish. Jesus said, “*I am Alpha and Omega.*” These Greek letters are like saying, *He is the A and Z and every letter in between.* A small detail gives us great insight here. When this was first written, the word “Omega” is not spelled out as is the “Alpha.” Why? Because Christ is the beginning, and the beginning is already completed. But the end is yet to be; so Jesus didn’t spell out the Omega. One day He will complete God’s program. And that is what we are discovering.

He is the “Word of God”—the full revelation and intelligent communication of God. He’s the only language God speaks; Jesus Christ the Son is the only way to God the Father. Since Jesus is the beginning and the end, He embodies all time and eternity.

When we see Jesus on that day, coming in the clouds in His glorified body, He is coming as the Great High Priest in the Holy of Holies.

As we read the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is doing what Jesus promised He would do. He's taking the things of Christ and showing them to us. The Lord's exact words were, "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13-14).

We are beginning to get a vision of the glorified Christ.

"I was in the Spirit," John says (v. 10). The Holy Spirit was moving on John and giving him a panoramic picture in all its reality of sight and sound. Next we will see through John's eyes the beginning of this great and grand revealing.

NEXT: What did John see and hear?

LESSON 3

A VOICE LIKE A TRUMPET



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 1:10-20**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.ttb.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 1:10-17** and **Revelation 1:17-20**

When the Lord Jesus descends from heaven to remove His church from the earth, He will come with a shout. And the shout will be so distinctive that it will sound like a war trumpet. First Thessalonians 4:16 tells us His voice will be *like* an archangel, but it will be Jesus' own voice. John hears the voice and turns to see Jesus standing there, saying to him, *"Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches"*

What a thrill it is to see this picture of the Lord Jesus Christ! When John saw Him, he fainted at His feet as if dead, and Jesus pulled him back on his feet and reassured him that it was Him. This is how John describes Jesus. Notice how many times John said, "it was like..." because he hardly had words to describe what he saw:

"He was like the Son of Man wearing a long robe with a golden sash around his chest. His hair was snow white and His eyes were like flames. His feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and His voice was like the roar of raging waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, from His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and His face was like the sun shining in full strength."

Jesus is standing among seven golden lampstands. This reminds us of the tabernacle, which had one lampstand with seven branches. These lampstands represent seven separate churches, but they all function the same—as lights in the world (see John 8:12).

The Lord Jesus Christ is pictured here with the lampstands as our Great High Priest. His white robe, like a high priest (see Exodus 28:2-4), represents His inherent righteousness. In Him is no sin, and He knew no sin. The gold sash around His chest speaks here not of service (or else it would be girded around His loins), but of strength. He is the strong one who now will judge in truth.

As our Great High Priest, Jesus is currently *judging* the churches, judging believers so our light might continue to shine. Scripture does not leave us in the dark about three specific ministries Jesus is doing today.

1. Jesus Christ intercedes for us at the golden altar in heaven today (see Hebrews 7:25). This is a wonderful part of His ministry to us right now.
2. Jesus intervenes for us. He steps outside of the Holy Place to the laver where He washes the feet of those who are His own who confess their sins. Christians have sin, and those sins must be confessed in order to have fellowship with Him (see 1 John 1:9). He's girded today with the towel and carries the basin. He is on our side, our advocate who defends us when Satan accuses us (12:10).
3. Jesus Christ inspects us. This ministry isn't so popular. We don't like to be inspected, but in Revelation we see Him walking the lampstands, examining them. The lamps represent the Holy Spirit; the golden lampstand itself represents Christ—His glory and His deity. The golden lampstand holds up the lamps, and the lamps, in turn, reveal the beauty and glory of the lampstand. Even now the Holy Spirit will make Christ—in all of His glory, wonder, and beauty—*real* to you that you may see yourself in the light of His presence as He inspects you.

In the Old Testament tabernacle, the high priest had the sole oversight of the lampstand. He lit the lamps, poured in the oil, and trimmed the wicks. If one of the lamps began to smoke and didn't give a good clear light, he snuffed it out. The Lord Jesus is walking among the lampstands today, in the midst of His church made up of individual believers. As He inspects, He trims the wicks. John 15 tells us He prunes the branches of believers so they might bring forth fruit. One of the reasons He lets us go through certain trials on earth is so He might get some fruit off our branches or that He might

make our light burn more brightly. He is the One who pours in the oil, which represents the Holy Spirit. If any light comes from a ministry, it's from the Holy Spirit. No light originates with us.

The Lord Jesus sometimes must use a snuffer. If a lamp won't give good light and it keeps smoking up the place, the Lord Jesus snuffs it out. This is what John meant when he wrote about a "sin leading to death" (1 John 5:16). We can be set aside if our lives do not produce light. (We do not lose our salvation, but we lose the opportunities and rewards.)

Jesus Christ's appearance to John, with white hair and eyes of fire, speaks of His eternal existence. He is the "Ancient of Days" (Daniel 7:9). His penetrating insight and eyewitness speaks of His total knowledge of the life of the church. He knows all about us, all about our churches—for good and for bad.

His feet "like fine brass" (v. 15) represents His judgment. That brass or brazen altar outside the tabernacle proper represents Christ's work down on the cross. There He bore our judgment for sin, and now He judges His own.

Human nature rebels against judgment being passed on it. Instead, we're happy just to have a few little rules to go by. That's why Jesus' work of inspection is largely ignored by the church. He judges the church; He doesn't flatter. He doesn't ignore what He sees or shut His eyes to sin. His constant charge and command to His own is *repent*—"turn around or I will remove your lampstand" (2:5). The church through the ages has always squirmed under this indictment because we've lost sight of the righteous Christ.

The voice that John heard called our universe into existence; that voice will raise His own from the grave; that voice will take His own out of the world to be with Him; that voice roars like raging waters and is the ultimate voice of authority.

All these images of Jesus add up to the picture of Jesus as our Great High Priest, inspecting and judging His church. The Spirit of God will help you see Jesus in all of His beauty and glory.

Jesus explains, "*As for the mystery of the seven stars and the seven lampstands ...*" (see v. 20). A mystery in Scripture means a sacred secret, that which has not been revealed before. Whenever John uses symbols, he helps us understand what they mean. Otherwise, he is not using symbolic language but talks about *literal* things.

Now, what is that in Jesus' right hand? "Seven stars" means He controls this universe. Now Jesus reveals that the seven stars are messengers, or angels, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches of Asia, as we shall see. Then, in turn, these represent the church as a whole, the church as the body of Christ.

The stars represent authority. In Jude 1:13, apostates are called "wandering stars." The word *angel* literally means "messenger" and may be either human or angelic beings. It could refer to a messenger of the angelic hosts of heaven or to a ruler or a teacher of a congregation on earth.

And "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword" representing His Word (v. 16; see also Hebrews 4:12), by which Jesus judges today. His powerful Word is sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, cutting through everything, whether doubt or defense, and lays us open to listen and obey. Nothing and no one is unyielding to God's Word. We can't get away from it—no matter what.

"His [face] was like the sun shining in [full] strength" (v. 16). Ever try to look at the sun? You can't. Do you think you will be able to look at the Creator who made the sun, the One who is the glorified Christ? This is how wonderful He is! John is the only one who has seen the glorified Christ. *But didn't Paul see Christ on the road to Damascus?* No—he said he saw "a light from heaven, brighter than the sun" (Acts 26:13). Paul couldn't have seen Christ in all of His glory, but he knew He was there. The brightness even blinded Paul for a few days. Therefore, John was the first to see the glorified Christ here in Revelation.

And when John saw this Jesus, he fell at His feet as if dead. John is the disciple who had an easy familiarity with Jesus Christ on earth. He's the one who reclined at His side in the Upper Room. John was so close to the Lord Jesus, he didn't even mind rebuking Him on occasion. But when he saw the glorified Christ, he didn't approach Him or even try to begin a conversation. He fell at His feet as dead! John was paralyzed by this vision of Jesus. Just imagine what it will be like for us! We won't approach Him in a familiar way; He's not our buddy. He's the glorified Christ.

Yet listen to the marvelous thing Jesus says to John. He says, "Do not be afraid" (v. 17). This is Deity addressing humanity. And then He gives four reasons why we shouldn't fear.

1. "I am the First and the Last" (v. 17). This speaks of His deity. He came out of eternity, and He moves into eternity (see Psalm 90:2). The word *everlasting* means from the vanishing point in the past to the vanishing

point in the future, He is God. He is first because there were none before Him, and He is last for there are none to follow Him.

2. “I am He who lives, and was dead” (v. 18). This speaks of His redemptive death and resurrection. We are guilty, of course. But Jesus asks, “*Who’s going to condemn you?—I’m not*” (see Romans 8:34). You can confess you are a great sinner, but when Christ died for you and then rose from the dead, He rose to show you are forgiven and you are going to heaven someday. Even now He’s at the right hand of God, praying for you.
3. “I am alive forevermore” (v. 18). He’s alive today, not only judging, but also interceding for us. How we need that!
4. “I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (v. 18). The keys speak of Jesus’ authority and power over death and the grave because of His own death and resurrection. *Hades*, Greek for “the unseen world,” refers to the grave where the body is laid or to the place where the spirit goes. Jesus holds the keys of death and can relieve us of the terrible fear of death.

Jesus then directs John in the chronological order (the past, present, and future) and division of how he should record what he sees.

1. “Write the things which you have seen.” So far, John has only seen the glorified Christ, and that is right since the glorified Christ is the subject of the book. The horsemen and the bowls of wrath and the beasts—they’re just passing through. Fix your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who *was*, who *is*, and who *will be*, the same yesterday, today, and forever.
2. Then write, “the things which are.” This refers to the church in chapters 2–3.
3. Finally, write about “the things which will take place after this” (v. 19). This is the program of Jesus Christ that will take place on the earth after the church leaves it (chapters 4–22).

And that is the order we will now explore this amazing vision, this revealing of the glorious Christ.

**NEXT: Remember what it was like when
you first came to Jesus?**

A woman with long braids is sitting on a light-colored couch, reading an open Bible. She is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and dark blue jeans. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. A thin gold line hangs from the top center of the frame, ending in a small gold circle.

JESUS MAKES A PROMISE
TO ALL WHO READ
AND HEAR THIS BOOK:

"You will be blessed!"



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 4

PERSONAL LETTERS FROM JESUS HIMSELF



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 2:1-7**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 2:1-4** and **Revelation 2:4-7**

Once we see the Lord Jesus Christ, high and lifted up in glory, we're ready to hear and explore the message of the Revelation.

It begins with the church, the body of Christ. Jesus loves the church and gave Himself for it. The Father gave Him this body of believers, and it is for us Jesus prayed in John 17.

In this second section of Revelation, we see things that *are*—church-related things. The church as a body is mentioned 19 times up to chapter four and then is conspicuous by its absence. Not once after that is the church referenced, as it has been taken out of the world, removed from the earth. Leading up to that, the Lord Jesus Himself sent seven letters to seven churches with unique and challenging messages.

Letter-writing and travel were a common communication in the first and second century Roman Empire. These seven letters from the Lord Jesus were remarkable, if not only because they were direct letters from Christ to the churches. But they were also standouts because they can be understood and applied in three different ways. First, they had a direct message to the local churches of John's day—real people in a real place. But they also, all seven, paint a composite picture of the church in all ages. When we read

each one, there's a message for you and your church today. Lastly, the seven letters also track with the panoramic history of the church, from Pentecost to the Second Coming, from the Upper Room to the upper air. Each letter representing seven distinct periods of church history. For example, Ephesus represents the apostolic church; Laodicea represents the apostate church. What they tell us about church history is largely fulfilled and now on the record, which makes these chapters extraordinary.

When John wrote down this vision, he delivered each one of the letters to the seven churches in a well-defined and definite format that includes these elements:

1. Jesus Christ, glorified, was emphasized in addressing each church.
2. Each letter is addressed to the “angel” of each church. An angel is a human messenger, likely the pastor of the church.
3. Most of the letters begins with the words, “I know your works,” and all with the implication.
4. Most start with a word of commendation, and then a word of condemnation. The exception is there is no word of condemnation to Smyrna or Philadelphia. Smyrna was the martyr church, and Philadelphia, the missionary church, was getting out His Word. Jesus has no word of commendation for Laodicea, the apostate church.
5. Each letter ends with the warning, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Now, let's explore these seven remarkable messages and take to heart what the Lord Jesus is saying to them and to us.

LETTER #1

TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS: LOVE ME AGAIN!

We have two epistles to the Ephesians—one that Paul wrote and now this one that the Lord Jesus gave through John.

Ephesus, called the “Light of Asia,” was a fabulous place when John and Paul lived there in the first century. Paul came to Ephesus on his third missionary journey and sent the Word of God out from the school of Tyrannus. Of this experience Paul wrote, “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Corinthians 16:9). Later

John, the “apostle of love” and the “son of thunder,” came to Ephesus as a pastor. He was exiled to Patmos, where the Lord gave him this Revelation, then after ten years of exile and prison, returned to Ephesus.

As a result of their ministries here, a huge number of people had turned to Christ. Acts 19:10 says that everyone who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus , both Jews and Greeks. Not everyone turned to Christ, but everyone had heard. Even the Roman emperors and the nobility of that day heard the gospel. This was probably the greatest movement of the Spirit of God that never has been duplicated in the history of the church.

The gospel had such an impact on Ephesus that four great towers were placed at the harbor entrance, each inscribed with the emblem of the cross and individually dedicated to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. One pillar still stands today, bearing the symbol of the cross. Other evidences of the gospel’s impact are the many pagan temples turned into churches.

Ephesus was both the religious and commercial center of the world, influencing both East and West—Asia and Europe. When Paul landed at the harbor in Ephesus, he looked down “Harbor Boulevard,” all in white marble. He walked by magnificent buildings and temples. A large market sprawled on his right as he went up the boulevard, and ahead of him on the side of a mountain was a theater that seated 20,000 people. Off to his left, sat an amphitheater that welcomed audiences of over 100,000. It hosted destination resorts where emperors vacationed.

But to say “Ephesus” in the first century, anyone immediately thought of the temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world. It was the largest Greek temple ever constructed, four times larger than the Parthenon in Athens. The temple served as the bank of Asia with a vast depository of money. It boasted an art gallery. But behind a purple curtain stood the lewd and crude image of Diana, the goddess of fertility. She was many-breasted, carried a club in one hand and a trident in the other, and was the most sacred idol of heathenism. Worshipped by more people than any other idol at the time, “Diana of Ephesians” demanded the basest religious rites of sensuality and the wildest sexual deviances, both excessive and vicious.

This was the world before which the church at Ephesus stood as a light in the darkness. Jesus Christ—described here as holding the church in His hand, well under His control—walks up and down, judging the seven golden lampstands.

He has seven words of commendation for this church (vv. 2-3):

1. "I know your works." Jesus is speaking now to believers. The Lord Jesus never asks the lost world for good works. But after you're saved, He encourages us with all we can do for Him as Spirit-filled believers. (See Ephesians 2:8-10, 5:18, and Titus 1:16.) He tells them, "Well done."
2. "I know ... your labor." Labor, unlike just work, implies weariness. The Ephesians church works hard but is weary.
3. "I know ... your patience." Yet even in their weariness, they bear it patiently (the fruit of the Spirit).
4. "You cannot bear those who are evil." They would not endure evil men.
5. "You have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars." They tested everyone who came to Ephesus claiming to be an apostle. They would ask them if they had seen the resurrected Christ. If they were liars, they asked them to leave town. The Lord Jesus commended them for testing people who said they spoke for God; this is needed today more than ever.
6. "You have persevered and have patience." For Jesus' name's sake they were bearing the Cross. They preached Christ. They believed in the virgin birth of Christ; they believed in His deity; they believed in His sacrificial death and resurrection. And they paid a price for their belief.
7. "And have not become weary." You can get weary *in* the work of Christ, but it is tragic if you get weary *of* the work of Christ. They still wanted to work for Him; they were just tired.

These words of commendation the Lord Jesus gave to the local church at Ephesus also apply to the period of church history between Pentecost and A.D. 100, which the Ephesian church represents.

Now He has one word of condemnation: "*You're leaving your first love*" (v. 4). They had lost that intense and enthusiastic devotion to the person of Christ. The Holy Spirit had brought the believers in Ephesus into an intimate and personal relationship to Jesus Christ. Their love for the Lord was very important to Christ. And they weren't yet too far gone, but they were on their way. Their doctrine was on track, but their personal relationship to Jesus Christ was drifting.

What should they do about it? The Lord said, “Remember ...” *“Remember what it was like when you first came to Me.”* Remember what Jesus meant to you. If you’ve become cold to that memory—stir it up. You can get back to that same place.

“... And repent” (v. 5). Christians need to repent—likely often and sincerely. We need to break the shell of self-sufficiency, the crust of conceit, the shield of sophistication, the veneer of vanity, get rid of the fake religious words and looking like we’re some great saint. Repent! Repentance means to turn back to Him, and it’s the message for *believers*. Unsaved people do not repent. Instead, they need to turn to Christ for salvation. When they turn to Christ, they will turn from their sin (see 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10). But the church—we need to remember, repent, and return to Him.

Or else. That’s right, if we refuse to turn back to God, He says, “I will ... remove your lampstand.” Christ is still watching the lamps, and He doesn’t mind trimming the wicks or even using the snuffer when a lampstand refuses to reflect His light.

Then Jesus told them, *“You do have this to your credit: You hate the Nicolaitan business. I hate it, too.”* There was a man, Nicolaus of Antioch, who led a cult that taught you must indulge in sin in order to understand it. (Remember these Ephesians lived their days in front of the temple to Diana.) This cult gave themselves over to sensuality, saying such sins didn’t touch the spirit. The church in Ephesus hated it. A little later on we’ll see that the church in Pergamum tolerated it.

“Do you hear this warning?” the Lord asked (v. 7). Not everyone can hear the Word of God. They may register the audible sound, but they miss the message. The Lord Jesus prompts this phrase to alert dull ears and prompt spiritual perception. (He used this phrase a lot in the Gospels.) Listen to what the Spirit, the teacher of the church, is saying.

As a genuine believer, you can overcome this through the blood of the Lamb. In fact, the overcomers will “eat of the tree of life.” Remember in the Garden of Eden that man was forbidden to eat of the Tree of Life (see Genesis 3:22-24)? But in heaven the “no trespassing” sign will be taken down, and we will all have the privilege of eating of the Tree of Life. We are going to live as we have never lived before in God’s new garden. The “tree of life” also shows up four times in Proverbs, and its use there helps us understand why it’s in Genesis and Revelation. Solomon calls trees of life “wisdom”

(Proverbs 3:18), “righteousness” (Proverbs 11:30), satisfied hope (Proverbs 13:12), and “wholesome [speech]” (Proverbs 15:4). These are all the fruits that Adam *would have* had and what the Lord will provide the overcomers.

This was the hope of the church of Ephesus—the apostolic church, the church at its best.

NEXT: “*Be fearless and faithful ... even to death.*”
That’s the message to a church that was laying down their lives.

LESSON 4



REVIEW THE SUMMARY

Read the section in Revelation to fill in the blanks.

TO THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (REVELATION 2:1-7):

1. Jesus Christ is the One who _____

2. He praises them for _____

3. He criticizes them for _____
4. He calls them to _____

5. He promises them _____

NOTE: REFER TO CHART ON PAGE 49

LESSON 5

LETTERS TO YOUNG CHURCHES



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 2:8-17**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 2:8-12** and **Revelation 2:12-15**

“Be fearless and faithful ... even to death.” That’s the message Jesus Christ writes to the young church in Smyrna—whose name, ironically, when translated into Hebrew means “myrrh,” a resin that becomes beautifully fragrant when it’s crushed.

LETTER #2

TO THE CHURCH IN SMYRNA

The city of Smyrna still exists today, known as Izmir. Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum were “the royal cities” and competed with each other for attention. Smyrna was the great commercial center, Ephesus was the political center, and Pergamum was the religious center.

Smyrna was one of the loveliest cities of Asia. Called “the crown of all Asia,” its acropolis sits on Mount Pagos. Though already ancient, Alexander the Great developed Smyrna into the beautiful city that it became. The city was majestic, with noble buildings and beautiful temples—to Zeus, to Diana, to Aphrodite, to Apollo, and to Asclepius. Smyrna was the home to a theater and music center. In its stadium, Polycarp (bishop of Smyrna and student of the apostle John) was martyred, burned alive in 155 A.D.

Yes, Smyrna has seen its suffering. In His letter, the Lord Jesus said He knew all about it and He knew their poverty. Their experience reflects the church history period from about 100 A.D. to approximately 314 A.D., from the death of the apostle John to the Edict of Toleration by Constantine, which was given in 313 A.D. and ended the persecution of Christians—not only in Smyrna but all over the Roman Empire.

Everything the Lord Jesus says to the church at Smyrna is praise.

To these brothers and sisters in Christ, the Lord describes Himself as *“the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive.”* Nothing came before Christ, and there will be nothing to follow Him. He has the final statement of all things. These dear, persecuted believers needed to know He was in charge and this persecution was in the planning and purpose of God.

“Who was dead, and came to life” has a real message for martyrs (v. 8). His experience with death identified Him with the five million who were martyred during this period of church history. But Jesus said He was triumphant over death and can save to the uttermost those who are enduring persecution and martyrdom.

“I can see your pain and poverty,” He said to them. *“I know you’re suffering.”* The early church was made up largely of the poorer classes, slaves, ex-slaves, runaway slaves, freed slaves, poor people. When the wealthy believed in Christ, their property was confiscated because of their faith. But they were blessed with all spiritual blessings. (When Jesus wrote to the rich church in Laodicea, He said, *“You think you are rich, but you are really poor and don’t know it.”* But to those who were poor materially, He said, *“You’re rich.”*)

Some in Smyrna claimed to be good Jews, but in fact belonged to Satan’s crowd. Smyrna was a city of many cultures in which many Jews had discarded their belief in the Old Testament. They said they were Jews, but they weren’t God’s people.

For the second time in Revelation, Jesus comforted His own while they were being persecuted with, “do not fear any of those things” (v. 10). History tells us thousands went to their death singing praises to God. Of course, Jesus labels Satan as being responsible for the suffering of the saints in Smyrna. Ten Roman emperors served as Satan’s tool during ten intense periods of persecution. The Lord Jesus knew the root trouble.

“Even so,” the Lord said, “*be faithful to death*”—and they were. To these martyrs, Jesus promises “the crown of life.” That would have resonated with these believers who lived in Smyrna, “the crown city.” Their “crown of life” from the Lord will be eternal.

The Lord has special crowns waiting for those who suffer. If you are suffering right now and have wondered if He cares, He has something special for you in eternity. You who have suffered will get something no one else will be getting. (See James 1:12.)

Finally, Jesus ends His message to Smyrna with a favorite expression: “He who has an ear, let him hear” (v. 11) ... “*pay attention.*” Have *you* heard Him today? Is He speaking to you?

LETTER #3 TO THE CHURCH IN PERGAMUM

A little over 250 years after Jesus left the earth, the world at large moved away from believing in Jesus Christ. You could call this season, *paganism unlimited*. Jesus had a message for the local church at Pergamum and also for us today.

The city of Pergamum is 55 miles north of Smyrna, inland a few miles from the Aegean coast. The acropolis still stands on the top of the mountain. The ruins of the great temples and the city can be seen for miles. At the time, it was the most famous city of Asia, certainly the most royal. In the winter when Rome got cold, Caesar Augustus would vacation in this beautiful area. As a fortified, stronghold city, it could withstand the enemy. Built on the cliffs, overlooking the Caicus River valley, Pergamum sat on a strategic location between two rivers that led to the Aegean coast.

Not only did Pergamum boast great temples, but it also had the greatest library of the pagan world. In fact, the parchment (pergamena) used in books is named after the city. Marc Antony gave his girlfriend, Cleopatra, this library and she lugged it off to Alexandria, Egypt. It was considered the greatest library the world has ever seen—and it originally came from Pergamum.

This third letter was addressed, like the others, to the angel or messenger of the church, the pastor. Since Pergamum was the center of false religion, specifically emperor worship, the only way it could be reached would be by the Word of God—a sharp sword with two edges that was able to divide truth from error.

The Lord commends this church for three specific things. First, He takes note of their circumstances. He knew they were living in a difficult place. Did you know the Lord takes note of *your* circumstances, too?

They lived in Satan's headquarters. Satan isn't in hell today. (Though he will be later, as we'll see in chapter 20.) He is loose and the prince of this world, controlling kingdoms and going up and down the earth as a roaring lion, hunting whoever he can devour (see 1 Peter 5:8).

Pergamum reveals religion as big business. It boasted the temples of Athena, Caesar Augustus, Hadrian, the altar to Zeus, the temple of Dionysius, and of the god Asklepios, which in addition to being a temple was also a world-renown hospital of the ancient world. For 700 years, people went to it from all over the world for healing. Good men used medicine there, but basically, it was a satanic stronghold.

Another word of commendation Jesus gave to the believers at Pergamum was He saw they were faithful in defending His deity.

The church in Pergamum represents a period in church history (from approximately 314 to 590 A.D.) that produced great giants of the faith like Athanasius from North Africa who defended the deity of Christ, and Augustine who answered the heresy that denied original sin and irresistible grace. These two giants stood unshakably for the great doctrines of the faith.

Now the two things the Lord condemns in the Pergamum church are also doctrine—the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. “The *doctrine* of Balaam” (v. 14) is different from the *error* of Balaam (see Jude 1:11), when Balaam thought God would curse Israel because they were sinners. It's also different from the *way* of Balaam (see 2 Peter 2:15), which was covetousness. This teaching of Balaam the Lord condemns is the way Israel intermarried with Moabite women, that opened the door of Israel to idolatry and fornication.

“The doctrine of the Nicolaitans” we saw earlier. The church at Ephesus hated it, but here in Pergamum some didn't think it was so bad. It allowed great sensuality in the church and returned religious rituals to the clergy, ignoring that we are all on equal footing at the Cross. Christ says He *hates* it! Jesus Christ hates as well as loves. We had better be careful not to indulge in the things He hates.

More than anything, Jesus Christ hates sin. The only cure for that in our lives is to repent—literally, “change your mind.” And if we admit our sins, calling them out as God sees them, God will be faithful to forgive us of these sins and purge us of all wrongdoing (see 1 John 1:9). If the church at Pergamum would not repent, the Lord said He would fight against them with the sword of His mouth, the Word of God. What a mistake if we think the church has the authority to decide right and wrong.

The true church is made up of believers in Jesus Christ, the body of Christ. We are to be lights in this dark world, identifying first with the person of Jesus Christ and to recognize, not the church, but the Word of God as our authority.

Using His favorite expression, Jesus says “he who has an ear, let him hear.” *“Listen! Wake up!”* We overcome by the blood of the Lamb. (This is for genuine Christians today, too.) Never are we overcomers, but we overcome by Jesus’ shed blood for us. We don’t win the victory; He wins it for us.

“To him who overcomes,” Jesus says, “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” (v. 17).

“Hidden manna” speaks of His own body, crucified for us as He is revealed in the Word of God. In fact, Jesus said He Himself was the Bread (see John 6:32-35). If we want to mature in our relationship with Christ, we must feed on Him. And, actually, Christ is hidden from view; He is not known or understood in our day.

Jesus also says He will give the overcomers a white stone with a new name written on it. It’s helpful to learn that the people of Asia Minor to whom John was writing had a custom of giving to intimate friends a tessera, a cube or rectangular block of stone or ivory, with words or symbols engraved on it. It was a secret, private gift. Jesus says He is going to give to each of His own a stone with a new name engraved on it, perhaps a new name for *Him* that relates something different to each one of us. It will be His personal and intimate name to each of us. What a precious gift that will be.

NEXT: Who was a light in the Dark Ages?

LESSON 5



REVIEW THE SUMMARY

Read the section in Revelation to fill in the blanks.

TO THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA (REVELATION 2:8-11):

1. Jesus Christ is _____

2. He praises them for _____

3. He criticizes them for _____
4. He calls them to _____

5. He promises _____

TO THE CHURCH AT PERGAMUM (REVELATION 2:12-17):

1. Jesus Christ is the One who has _____

2. He praises them for _____

3. He criticizes them for _____
4. He calls them to _____

5. He promises _____

NOTE: REFER TO CHART ON PAGE 49

LESSON 6

WITH A BLOOD-TIPPED EAR



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 2:18–3:6**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.ttb.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 2:16–3:2** and **Revelation 3:3-7**

We're visiting the first century churches represented by the lampstands in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

LETTER #4

TO THE CHURCH IN THYATIRA: STAY TRUE!

As we leave Pergamum, we move inland to Thyatira. Nature itself has marked out this road, a very easy path to Thyatira, conducive for communication between one valley and the other. In ancient times, this was one of the chief travel routes of Asia Minor.

Thyatira sat in this long pass, a city built for defense, not with physical towers or walls, but with the elite Roman guard stationed there. The safety also yielded many guild headquarters and became the center of industries for potters, tanners, weavers, robe makers, and dyers' guilds. Lydia, the seller of purple, who was the first to turn to Christ in Europe, came from here (see Acts 16:14). Lydia's "purple" is today known as "Turkey red," a dye made from a plant that grows in this area.

The church at Thyatira represents the age of the church called Romanism, dominating the Dark Ages from A.D. 590 to approximately A.D. 1000. This season pictures the Son of God in judgment. His eyes are like a flame of fire, searching them out, and His feet are like burnished brass, which represents judgment. Christ is judging this church.

However, He also commends them. Often it's thought that the Roman church during the Dark Ages is to be condemned wholeheartedly, but check your history—there was good happening, too.

The Lord Jesus says, *“I see everything you're doing for Me—including your love and faith, your service and persistence. Yes, very impressive! You get better at it every day.”*

Jesus has six words of commendation for the church of the Dark Ages, when many true believers had a personal love of Christ which they demonstrated in their good works (see James 2:18). The good works were the credentials of real believers. Many lived spotless lives and by their good works “adorned the doctrine” (see Titus 2:10).

The church of Thyatira (and the Dark Ages, in spite of the fact that it had gone in for ritualism) was a church that loved the Lord. Wonderful saints of God lived during that period: Bernard of Clairvaux, Peter Waldo, John Wycliffe, John Huss, Savonarola, and Anselm were all godly saints in the Roman church. Their faith in Jesus Christ was the mainspring that turns the hands of works and love. Their patience increased, as did their good works.

All six of these virtues (good works, love, faith, ministry, patience, and increasing fruit) are produced by the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer.

There is one frightful charge of condemnation: *“You've tolerated Jezebel.”* Jezebel had brought paganism into the northern kingdom of Israel. Evidently in the local church at Thyatira a woman with a reputation as a teacher and prophetess was allowed to teach error.

Like the historical period of the Dark Ages, pagan practices and idolatry were mingled with Christian works and worship. The papacy was elevated to a place of secular power. Rituals and church doctrine took priority over personal faith in Jesus Christ. Worship of the Virgin and Child and the Mass were made a definitive part of the church service. Purgatory became a positive doctrine, and Mass was said for the dead. Bogus doctrinal statements were circulated to give power and rulership to the pope.

As Jezebel killed Naboth and persecuted God's prophets (1 Kings 18-19), so the Roman church instituted the Inquisition during this period.

Jezebel "seduced" them away from the truth (in sharp contrast to Lydia, also from Thyatira, who was the first to turn to Christ). Yet Jesus said He gave her time/space to repent, but she wouldn't. In history, the Lord patiently dealt with this false system for over a thousand years, and yet there has been no real change down through the centuries. In fact, Rome boasts she never changes—*semper idem*, always the same.

Jesus pronounces Jezebel's judgment, and judgment on all who revel against Him (unless they repent). He will lay them low, He wants all the churches to know that He is able to see beyond appearances right into every motive—all our thoughts, feelings, and purposes. When He searches "the minds and the hearts" (2:23), He discerns our entire beings and will reward or judge according to what we deserve.

But to the rest in Thyatira, who didn't get sucked into Satan's schemes, who didn't worship a parody of the Gospel, who didn't think they were spiritual superiors, Jesus promised no other heavy burden. He knows our hearts and knows what we can stand.

Obviously, Christ is beginning to say to His church, "*I am coming to take you out, and because of this, you should stand fast for Me. Overcome the false teachers and the works done only by effort, and not by the Holy Spirit.*" To His church, Jesus promised to give "power over the nations" (2:26; see also 1 Corinthians 6:2) and a rule with a rod of iron, referring to the millennial reign of Christ in which we as believers will share.

When we persevere like this, Jesus said, "I will give him the morning star" (2:28). *He Himself* is the Bright and Morning Star (22:16), and His coming for His own at the Rapture is the hope of the church (see Titus 2:13).

Not everyone who gets this message will really hear it. The children of Jezebel won't. But the true children of the Lord Jesus will hear, for the Holy Spirit opens the "blood-tipped ear." We must be very careful in our study of God's Word, that we not run ahead of His Spirit. Let Him be our teacher. Only the Spirit of God can make His Word real to you.

TO THE CHURCH IN SARDIS: WAKE UP!

The church at Sardis met in a city set on the edge of a steep mountain, with only one entrance up the cliff. All Sardis had to do was put a guard at that one place to watch the city. It was thought throughout the ancient world to be impregnable.

Today the ruins of the temple of Cybele (Diana of Ephesus) and Apollo can still be seen atop the mountain. Here, Diana was the goddess of the moon and Apollo was the god of the sun—they were brother and sister who modeled a corrupt, sexual, vicious style of worship.

Jesus presents Himself to the church at Sardis as the One having the seven Spirits of God; that is, *He* sent the Holy Spirit into the world—which we desperately need today. Too often we think we need methods and all kinds of band-aid courses for believers that we think will solve our problems. But what we really need is to get to Jesus Christ, who only the Holy Spirit can make real and living to us.

In the panorama of church history, Sardis represents the Protestant church between A.D. 1517 and A.D. 1800, an era that started with the Reformation. Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-Five Theses* onto the church door at Wittenberg, Germany, and suddenly the church takes off into the beginning of the great missionary movement.

Following the dark night of the Dark Ages, the Holy Spirit was still in the world doing His work. He moved in the hearts of people like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and many, many others.

“I know your works” (3:1). The Lord commends this church for how their faith produced good works, even when the church as a structure is dead. Many Protestant churches today just go through the form. They may be building all the time, and people may come on Sunday mornings—their name is alive but the church is dead. We did recover some of the critical doctrines like the authority of the Word of God, the total depravity of man, and justification by faith, but in many other ways the church did not recover. Instead, many of our conservative churches are “improving people” and using cosmetics on the carnal nature, thinking that a few little rules and regulations will enable you to live the Christian life. Also, instead of believing “by grace through

faith alone” (see Ephesians 2:8) they preach you have to *do* something in order to be saved. These are the things which characterize Protestantism today; it is very far from its original position.

To them, Jesus says, “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God” (3:2).

This is the second word of condemnation, and a word of warning which meant something specific in Sardis.

Protestantism, as a whole, has turned away from looking for the coming of Jesus Christ. We’ve built up systems that certain things must be fulfilled before He can come—but He could come in the next moment or tomorrow. His imminent return is what we are to look for. Sardis didn’t know when the enemy was coming, and we don’t know when Christ is coming—we have no way of knowing at all.

In view of the fact that the Rapture could take place at any moment, the church is to be alert. The date is not set, nor even the period in which He will come. The church needs to be constantly on the alert for His coming, “looking for the blessed hope ...” (Titus 2:13). You see, anyone can make ready for a fixed hour, but you must *always* be ready for an unexpected hour. The Lord Jesus is saying to Protestantism that we should constantly be on the alert.

“I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you” (3:3). Remember Sardis was built high upon a mountaintop, which was impossible to scale except at one point. But it was captured—two times. What happened? The guard went to sleep. The Lord says to the church at Sardis, “*Don’t you go to sleep. Wake up and watch out.*” He could come at any moment. The people of Sardis didn’t know when the enemy was coming, and we don’t know when the Lord Jesus is coming.

And now for the Lord’s commendation. A few people, a remnant, still walked with the Lord. They lived godly lives. The Lord said they are worthy.

Protestantism today has its saints who love the Word, who are faithful to Him even in these days, and who stand by the Word of God. They don’t play around with sinful things. To these “overcomers,” the Lord said their names are indelible in the Book of Life, and He will present them by name to His Father and the angels. Of course these overcomers never succeed out of their own strength, cleverness, or ability, but only by the blood of Jesus.

In Scripture we read of only two books. One, the book of the generations of Adam (see Genesis 5:1)—we are all in that book, but it is a book of death—and two, “the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ” (see Matthew 1:1), also known as the Lamb’s book of Life. You get into that book by faith in Christ. The book of Revelation places great importance on this Book of Life (see 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19) and the names that are recorded or not recorded in it.

This statement in Revelation to Sardis that He will not blot out their names from the Book of Life (see 3:5), raises the question, *Is it possible for you to be in the Book of Life and then have your name blotted out? Can you lose your salvation?* If that is true, then the Lord Jesus should not have said, “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28). Again and again throughout Scripture we have the assurance that God keeps us saved. So what might this mean?

Some suggest that all names are recorded in the Book of Life because Jesus died for everyone. Everyone is given the responsibility in maturity to choose to accept or reject this gift from God. If they refuse it through their deaths, their names are blotted out. They didn’t want the gift.

The important thing is whether or not your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. If you receive the gift of eternal life, you will never lose that salvation. It is God’s gift to give to everyone who wants it. Listen to the Spirit’s voice speaking through the Word of God the message of Christ to His church today.

**NEXT: What church got only criticism
and what church got only praise?**

LESSON 6



REVIEW THE SUMMARY

Read the section in Revelation to fill in the blanks.

TO THE CHURCH AT THYATIRA (REVELATION 2:18-29):

1. Jesus Christ is _____

2. He praises them for _____

3. He criticizes them for _____
4. He calls the faith to _____

5. He promises _____

TO THE CHURCH AT SARDIS (REVELATION 3:1-6):

1. Jesus Christ is _____

2. He praises some for _____

3. He criticizes them for _____
4. He calls them to _____

5. He promises _____

NOTE: REFER TO CHART ON PAGE 49

*Listen to the Spirit's
voice speaking
Jesus' message to
His church today
through the
Word of God.*



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 7

THE TALE OF TWO CHURCHES



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 3:7-22**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 3:7-13**, **Revelation 3:13-15**,
Revelation 3:16-19, and **Revelation 3:20—4:1**

Our travels to the seven churches of Asia now reach their final two stops. These messages to the churches, blocked off into historical periods, are largely fulfilled; but our final two churches still exist today. They represent two kinds of churches—the church of Philadelphia stands by the Word of God and will soon be raptured, and the church represented by the church at Laodicea has long since departed from the Word of God and from the person of Christ and is moving deeper into apostasy. This “church” will eventually go into the Great Tribulation.

LETTER #6

TO THE CHURCH IN PHILADELPHIA: STAY TRUE!

You can still visit the city of Philadelphia today in Asia Minor (now called Alasehir, Turkey). This beautiful congregation represents the revived church because it still teaches and is hungry for the Word of God. Historically, it dates from the beginning of the 19th century to the Rapture. (Sidenote: Philadelphia means “the city of brotherly love,” but this did not come from the Bible. Rather it was named by Attalus II [190 B.C.] in great love

and loyalty for his brother Eumenes, who was king of Pergamum.) Isn't it interesting that the two churches Jesus didn't condemn are places still in existence today?

In each of these seven messages to the church, the Lord always tells us something of Himself as the glorified Christ, our Great High Priest, in chapter 1. Here in Philadelphia, He reminds us that He is holy—holy at His birth, holy at His death, holy in His resurrection, and holy today in His present priestly office. (See Luke 1:32-35; Acts 2:7; Hebrews 7:26.) He is also “true,” meaning genuine and complete. He also hints about His regal claims as Ruler of this universe (“He who has the key of David”—3:7) and that even today He is sovereign, sitting at His Father’s right hand, waiting for His enemies to be made His footstool.

The church at Philadelphia represents churches the world over—regardless of their labels—which still remain true to the Word of God. The Lord sees their works, the fruit, in the lives of His believers (see Ephesians 2:8-10; James 2:18). If your life doesn't produce fruit, then something is wrong. These works don't save you but are good evidence that you are saved.

The Lord is the One who opens the doors of opportunity for you to know Him and His Word, and nobody hinders it. He intends for you to move in to Him and then out to the world to make Him known. They go together. We have little power, but He blesses us. This church in Philadelphia was humble; it had no impressive numbers, buildings, or programs, but the Lord said *He* will do the counting.

In a day of unbelief and skepticism, the Lord Jesus commends this church because it stands on His Word and remains true to Him by proclaiming Jesus as God and His substitutionary death for sinners. The Lord Jesus says that even the enemies of the Philadelphian church will know He loves this church.

This Bible-believing church lasted longer than any other of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation. Perhaps that was due to the Lord's praise of their patience in keeping the Word of God. They waited for Jesus' coming patiently (see 2 Thessalonians 3:5). In our present century, the doctrine of “end times” (eschatology) has developed more than in all previous centuries combined. People all over the world are interested in the second coming of Christ.

Christ's final word of encouragement to His church is that it will not pass through the Great Tribulation. The church is to be removed from the world (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18), which is its comfort and hope (see Titus 2:13).

Such is the patient waiting of the church “... who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:12). The church is not anticipating the Great Tribulation with all of its judgment (see John 5:24; Revelation 13:1-8, 11-17), but rather it is looking for *Jesus Christ* to call them out at the time of the Rapture. And when He comes, it will be “quickly”—meaning, suddenly. This is the promise that is the hope of the church.

The church is not looking for the Great Tribulation Period. Nowhere are we told to gird up our loins, grit our teeth, and clench our fists because the Great Tribulation is coming and we will certainly be going through it. Jesus never says that, but instead, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Jesus then gives John a vision for what our new identity and home will look like and the access we will have in His name to our new city. This is the passport and visa of the believer that will enable us, as citizens of heaven, to pass freely on this earth or anywhere in God’s universe. We are told to “go out no more” (v. 12), but with God’s passport we can go everywhere. Although paradoxical, it is all wonderfully and blessedly true. God will also give us a new name for Himself as a sign of our personal relationship with Him.

Listen with your whole heart to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.

LETTER #7
TO THE CHURCH IN LAODICEA:
GET ON FIRE FOR GOD!

Now we come to Laodicea, the final stop in our tour of Asia churches. Sadly, this church is now apostate, preferring its own organization and priorities, having left the Word of God and the person of Jesus Christ. The Lord invites them to repent but it won’t and most everyone in this church will miss the Rapture and enter the Great Tribulation period.

Some call Laodicea “the city of compromise.” Laodicea was in a spectacular place in a great valley where people boasted of great wealth, of commerce, and of Greek culture. Ancient medicine was curated here, as was the banking industry. The very impressive ruins of two Roman theaters, a large stadium, and three early Christian churches still stand. The city was finally abandoned because of earthquakes and has never been excavated.

When Jesus revealed to John what to write to the Laodiceans, He told us a little more about Himself. He says, “I am the Amen”—the last word. He will fulfill all the promises of God. This is important because the Laodiceans had rejected the deity of Christ. This is the only place in Scripture where Amen is a name (see also 2 Corinthians 1:20). He says, “I am the Faithful and True Witness”—He alone is the One who will reveal all and tell all. And finally, He says, “I am the Beginning of the creation of God,” meaning *I am the Creator* (v. 14).

Jesus says to the church at Laodicea, “*I know you inside and out, and find little to my liking. You’re not cold, you’re not hot*” (v. 15). This had a background and a local meaning for the people in Laodicea of the first century. Situated in a high valley, they had difficulty getting water. The Laodiceans built an aqueduct to bring cold water down from nearby mountains. When it left the heights, it was ice cold, but by the time it made the trip down, it was lukewarm. From the valley, they brought hot water up from the springs, but by the time it got there, it had become lukewarm too.

When the Lord Jesus said to the Laodicean church, “You are neither cold nor hot,” they knew exactly what He was talking about. They had been drinking the sickening lukewarm water for years. The Lord Jesus said this church was neither cold nor hot and He would spit it out of His mouth.

A *cold* church has denied every essential doctrine of the faith, prefers its formality, and ignores and opposes the Word of God and the gospel of Christ. *Hot* speaks of those with real spiritual fervor and passion like the Christians in Ephesus, although they were even then getting away from their best love.

Lukewarm—this is a picture of many churches today in the great denominations that have departed from the faith. They try to stay in the middle of the road—not coming out against the Word of God but not standing strong for it. This is the worst kind of hypocrisy (see 2 Timothy 3:5). “*You’re professed Christians,*” Jesus says, “*You say you love Me, but you don’t mean it.*”

Listen to these two messages carefully because we are living today in the time of the Laodicean church and of the Philadelphian church. Both of them, side by side, are those who believe the Word of God and follow it, love it, obey it, and those who reject it.

Jesus wasn't done with His condemning observation of Laodicea. He says, *"You brag, 'I'm rich, I've got it made, I need nothing from anyone,' oblivious that in fact you're a pitiful, blind beggar, threadbare and homeless"* (v. 17).

Laodicea believed money was the answer to every problem. They had more of it than the other churches. The church in Smyrna was poor, made up of slaves and poor folk. Yet on the spiritual side of the ledger, the Laodicean church is the "wretched" one, worse off than any of the seven churches. It is to be pitied because it is spiritually poverty-stricken, with no study of the Word, no love for Jesus, and no witnessing of His saving grace. Yet it is blind to its own true condition. It failed to tell people they were sinners, failed to tell them of sin's consequence, and failed to offer them salvation in Jesus Christ. We are living in Laodicea today; the church is failing to witness to the saving grace of God.

In this, Jesus' last message to the church, He says, *"Be hot. Get on fire for God. Get rid of lukewarm Christianity and repent!"* It is not too late even for those in this church today to turn to Christ. Jesus invites anyone to come to Him. "I stand at the door and knock," Jesus says. *"If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you"* (v. 20). This speaks of fellowship, of feeding on the Word of God, and of coming to know Jesus Christ better. This is a glorious, gracious picture of the Lord Jesus at the heart's door of the sinner, asking to be invited in. He will not crash the door. The Lord Jesus has moved heaven and hell to get to the door of your heart, but when He gets there, He will stop and knock. You will have to open the door to let Him in.

SUMMARY OF THE SEVEN LETTERS TO CHURCHES

We must be very careful in our study of God's Word not to run ahead of Him, but instead let Him be our teacher. If you have a blood-tipped ear, He wants you to hear what He has to say. Only the Spirit of God can make the Word of God real to you.

Back in the beginning of John's vision, Jesus told him to write down "the things which are," and now he's done that. We've spent time with these seven churches and learned how they relate to the periods in which the church has lived. If we are a member of His church, we are part of this great company, beginning with the Day of Pentecost and coming down to the present hour—this is us, those who trust the Lord Jesus as their Savior.

In each of these messages to these churches, the Lord Jesus spoke to that local situation. He also blocked off all of church history, with each church representing a season and together covering the complete life of the church on earth. In each of these messages is a word for us today.

To the church at Ephesus, Jesus warns of the danger of drifting from our best love, a personal and loving relationship with Jesus Christ. The real test of any believer, especially those who want to serve Him, is not our methods or systems or even our dedication. The one question is: Do you love Him? Do you love the Lord Jesus? When you love Him, you will be in a right relationship with Him, but when you drift from Him, it will lead to lukewarmness.

The Lord Jesus told the church in Smyrna not to fear suffering. We're frightened of that today. We don't want to pay a price for serving the Lord Jesus, and yet that is sometimes His method.

To the church in Pergamum, Jesus warned of incorrect doctrine; to the church of Thyatira, He warned of being tolerant of living like the world; and He asked the church at Sardis if they were even alive.

The church in Philadelphia was not in any grave danger, but still the Lord told them to be careful to stay true to the faith. *Don't let anything deter you from keeping His Word.*

And finally, to the church in Laodicea, the church He said professes to be Christian but lacks reality, the Lord Jesus extends a final call to repentance and an invitation to come to Him.

NEXT: We'll leave earth for heaven.

LESSON 7



REVIEW THE SUMMARY

Read the section in Revelation to fill in the blanks.

TO THE CHURCH AT PHILADELPHIA (REVELATION 3:7-13):

1. Jesus Christ is _____

2. He praises them for _____

3. He criticizes them for _____
4. He calls them to _____

5. He promises _____

TO THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA (REVELATION 3:14-22):

1. Jesus Christ is _____

2. He praises them for _____

3. He criticizes them for _____
4. He calls them to _____

5. He promises _____

NOTE: REFER TO CHART ON PAGE 50

SYNOPSIS OF REVELATION 2 & 3

CHURCH	CHRIST	PRAISE	CRITICISM	NEED	PROMISE
EPHESUS (2:1-7)	One who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands	Their deeds, toil, perseverance (twice), intolerance of wicked men, testing of professing apostles, hatred of the deeds of the Nicolaitans	Left their first love	Remember your former position, repent, and repeat your first deeds	Will receive permission to eat of the tree of life in God's paradise
SMYRNA (2:8-11)	The first and the last, who was dead and has come to life	Endured tribulation, poverty, and blasphemy by professing Jews		Do not fear temporary suffering and tribulation, but remain faithful	Will enjoy freedom from hurt by the second death
PERGAMUM (2:12-17)	One who has the sharp two-edged sword	Held fast Christ's name and did not deny His faith	Some held the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans	Repent or expect an attack from the sword of His mouth	Would receive hidden manna, a white stone, and a new secret name on the stone
THYATIRA (2:18-29)	The Son of God who has flaming eyes and burnished bronze feet	Their deeds, love, faith, service, perseverance, and recent improvement in deeds	Their toleration of seductive, immoral, idolatrous, and impenitent Jezebel	The faithful should hold fast	Gets authority to rule over the nations with Christ, and the morning star
SARDIS (3:1-6)	He who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars	Some had not soiled their garments	They were dead, had incomplete deeds, and were asleep	Wake up, strengthen what remains, remember what you heard and obey it, and repent	Clothed in white garments, name retained in the Book of Life, and name confessed before the Father and His angels

... CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

SYNOPSIS OF REVELATION 2 & 3

CONTINUED ...

CHURCH	CHRIST	PRAISE	CRITICISM	NEED	PROMISE
PHILADELPHIA (3:7-13)	He who is holy, true, has David's key, and permanently opens and shuts	Their deeds, a little power, had kept His word, had not denied His name, and had persevered		Hold fast what you have	Made a pillar in God's temple that he will not leave; have the names of God, His city (the New Jerusalem) and Christ's name written on him
LAODICEA (3:14-22)	The Amen, the faithful and true witness, and the source of God's creation		Lukewarm, self-sufficient, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked	Buy from Christ refined gold, white garments, and eye salve; repent; open the door to Him	Will sit down on Christ's throne with Him

LESSON 8

A WHOLE NEW DAY IN HEAVEN



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 4**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 4:1-6** and **Revelation 4:7–5:1**

Where did the church go? From Revelation 4 through the end of the book, the church isn't mentioned again, even once. The church goes off the air ... because it went up in the air! At the end of Revelation 3, the Lord called the church to meet Him in the air. The saints entered the opened door to heaven and is now with Christ (see John 14:3). When we see her again, she will be a bride, adorned for her Husband.

During the Philadelphian period of the church, the long-awaited Rapture happened (see 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51) and the so-called "church" left behind is just an organization. This false church, called the great harlot, will meet again the next Sunday after the Rapture and will hardly miss a member. Why? Because they only professed to be Christians but never were. They will go through the Great Tribulation Period. God made promises to the real church, that He would deliver us from judgment. Beginning in Revelation 6, these judgments begin but are not meant for the church. If the church remained in the world, it would run contrary to God's grace.

Chapter 4 begins a whole new day in Revelation. In chapter 1 we saw Jesus, high and lifted up. In chapters 2-3, we saw "the things that are" in the lives of the church age, and now we're going to look at what comes "after these things," an entirely different scene and subject.

When the church arrives in heaven, it is no longer called “the church.” After all, the word “church” isn’t a name but a definition, meaning “a group of people called out of the world.” In heaven, the church is represented by 24 elders.

In this third and final section of Revelation (chapters 4-22), let’s remind ourselves that Jesus Christ is central. He directs all the events as He brings them to a successful but determined conclusion. He is there, “the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne” (7:17). Jesus Christ is a Lamb, slain for the sins of the world. He’s the Lamb who is our Shepherd, guiding us to springs of living water. But now He is also the One who will judge.

After Jesus snatches His church out of the world, the scene follows us from earth to heaven. This is a radical change—and a journey only hosted by the Holy Spirit. Only He could describe things in heaven as easily and clearly as what was happening on earth. If a person wrote about heaven, we would hear about all kinds of wild and startling things. (That’s one way you can tell a book is false.) You don’t have the sensational here in Revelation. We simply move to heaven, and the scene is awe-inspiring, but it lacks the sensational we would have put in it.

The church is now the priesthood of believers with the Great High Priest, Jesus our Savior. Heavenly scenes and creatures greet us in this section (chapters 4-5) before our attention is drawn back to earth where, at the opening of the Great Tribulation, the four horsemen are to ride.

What does the Holy Spirit reveal to John about heaven? What do we see?

We see the throne of God. As the door to heaven opens, we first find our way to God. Just imagine! The first thing we see is Jesus Christ in His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King, and we fall down in worship of Jesus Christ as God. In John’s vision, he enters heaven with his senses engaged. He sees and hears things as he walks through the open door.

This is one of the four open doors in Revelation:

1. The Lord Jesus, talking to the church in Philadelphia, says, “I have set before you an open door” (3:8) that describes a door of opportunity for giving out the Word of God.
2. The Lord stands before the door to your heart and knocks, asking you if you hear His voice. Open the door and He will come in and fellowship with you (3:20).

3. This open door in heaven (4:1) is the way to God through Jesus Christ.
4. Heaven opens again at the end of the Great Tribulation and out comes Jesus Christ on a white horse, ready to judge all unrighteousness and rebellion against God and to establish His Kingdom at last.

The open door to heaven has always been the Lord Jesus Christ. He also is the One who will come to the door of your heart—that is the wonder and glory of it all.

“Come up here” is heaven’s invitation to John, and it is an invitation to all of the fellowship who know Christ as Savior. John is saying in effect, *“We heard it, we saw it, and how we’re letting you know how you can have fellowship with Jesus Christ too, and one of these days you will be going up through that open door”* (see also 1 John 1:3).

And it all begins for the church at the Rapture. The Greek word for “caught up” is *harpazo*, meaning “caught up, raptured, or snatched up.” The sound that signals this amazing event is a voice that sounds like a trumpet. Of course, it’s Jesus’ voice, calling the church to meet Him in the air (see also 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). It pulls John up, and someday it will pull us up.

“Come up here,” Jesus says, “and I will show you things which must take place after this [for the church]” (v. 1).

At once John was in the Spirit and saw God’s throne in heaven.

“Immediately” describes how brief the time, one of the characteristics of the Rapture. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15:52 that we will be caught up “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye” (a 1/1000 of a second). That’s how quick the Rapture is going to be—immediately, straightway, at once.

John was found “in the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit guides John into this new truth and shows him things to come (see John 16:13).

WE SEE GOD’S THRONE

Now for the first time, John sees the throne, the center of attraction. God’s throne represents the universal sovereignty and rule; it means He is in control. This is the center of this universe and the Lord is in charge of all events here. (See also Psalm 47:8, 97:2, 103:19; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Hebrews 1:3, 12:2.) The throne of grace now becomes a throne of judgment.

This is God the Father's throne, but the three persons of the Trinity are distinguished: God the Holy Spirit (4:2, 5), God the Father (4:3), and God the Son (5:5). The Trinity is on the throne.

All we see here is beautiful, vibrant color. John could distinguish no form of a person on the throne, only the brilliance and brightness of precious stones. The jasper stone was the last stone identified in the breastplate of the high priest (see Exodus 28:20). It was first in the foundation of the New Jerusalem and also the first seen in the wall of the New Jerusalem (21:18-19). It was mostly purple, some say it's like a diamond.

The "sardius stone" is the sixth stone in the foundation of the New Jerusalem (see 21:20). A fiery red stone, the sardius was the first in the breastplate of the high priest, representing the tribe of Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob. And Christ is the Son of God, the firstborn from the dead.

"Rainbow" is the Greek word *iris*, which can also mean "halo." Usually a rainbow is many colors, but here it's emerald green (see Ezekiel 1:28). After the judgment of the Flood, the rainbow appeared as a reminder of God's covenant not to destroy the earth again with a flood (Genesis 9:13-15). Now it appears before the judgment of the Great Tribulation as a reminder that God will not use a flood again.

THE 24 ELDERS

Around the throne sit 24 elders dressed in white, like in the righteousness of Christ, with gold crowns on their heads. These are representatives, just like elders in our churches today appointed to rule and represent the church (see Titus 1:5). These elders stand for the total church from Pentecost to the Rapture. (One more indication this is the church in heaven.) Their crowns speak of their role as rulers with Christ (see 1 Corinthians 6:3). Crowns are also given as rewards (see 2 Timothy 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4) when the bema judgment, the judgment seat of Christ, takes place. The rumbling of thunder and flashes of lightning speak to the judgment that is coming.

A GLASS SEA AND FOUR CREATURES

"A sea of glass" (v. 6) describes its appearance—calm and restful. The sea represents the holiness and righteousness of God bringing the church to its rest, no longer tossed on a stormy sea.

Four living creatures (zoa, from which we get the word zoo) also surround the throne. Like the cherubim and seraphim (Ezekiel 1:5-10 and Isaiah 6:2-3), these living creatures are alert and aware, with eyes before and behind.

These four creatures identify with the four Gospels. The first is a lion, representing the Lord Jesus as the King. Everything He does in the Gospel of Matthew He does as the King (see Genesis 49:9-10; Revelation 5:5). The second living creature is an ox, the servant animal domesticated. In the Gospel of Mark, Christ is presented as the Servant who can do the job. The third living creature has a man's face. The Gospel of Luke presents the Lord Jesus as the Son of Man. He is humanity incarnate. The fourth living creature is like a flying eagle, a picture of the deity of Christ as seen in the Gospel of John.

THE FIRST GREAT WORSHIP SCENE WE SEE IN HEAVEN

Each of the creatures has six wings and circles the throne, they say day and night, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (v. 8).

They echo what Jesus Christ said about Himself in Revelation 1:8, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End." He is the present, the past, and the future. The creatures worship the Creator as the triune God: "Holy, holy, holy." Worship is the eternal activity of heaven. They continually give Jesus glory, honor and thanks for His attributes, because of who He is.

The elders, too, fall down before God's throne, worshipping God for who He is and what He has done. They cast their crowns before Jesus' feet as an act of submission and worship. He's the only One worthy to wear a crown.

They acknowledge Jesus Christ as God and Creator of all things, "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" (v. 11).

God created this earth and everything in it according to His plan and purpose. We may not understand all that He is doing, but this is the way He wanted it. It's His universe and He's in charge, and we are to worship Him because of it.

NEXT: What's the big deal about the scroll?

LESSON 8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The first thing John sees in heaven is God on the throne.
What do these verses tell us about that scene:
Psalm 47:8, 97:2, 103:19; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Hebrews 1:3, 12:2?

2. In this worship scene in Revelation 4, why do they worship Jesus Christ?
What do they celebrate about Him? How can we do the same?

3. Revelation 4-5 offers us some great principles and models for worship—
suggest things from this passage that we can build into our worship of
Jesus Christ now.

LESSON 9

ONLY ONE IS WORTHY



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 5**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 5**

If you're going to heaven, you might want to know about it before you get there. The most important information is from the Lord Jesus Himself when He tells us He'll be there ahead of us. If nothing else wonderful is said about heaven, this would be enough: We're going to be with Him.

In Revelation 4, we saw that God's throne is the center attraction. Now in Revelation 5, we see the Lion and the Lamb, representing Jesus Christ, are on the throne. He is both Sovereign of the universe and Savior of the world. He is completely in charge of all the events which follow in this Revelation. Let's not ever lose sight of Him.

Revelation 5 begins with the conjunction "and," linking it with chapter 4 where John said he heard Jesus' voice. Now John tells us what he sees. At Jesus' right hand, John said he saw a book closed tightly with seven seals.

Seven is not an accidental number. It's significant not only because Roman law required a will to be sealed seven times, but also because seven is God's number for completeness.

This book, rolled and sealed, is the title deed to the world in which we now live. He created it, He redeemed it, and it belongs to Him. (See also Daniel 7:13-14 and Zechariah 5:1-3.) Some think this scroll is the Ten Commandments, and that the world is to be judged by those commandments. Others suggest this book represents God's new covenant with Israel mentioned in Jeremiah 31:31-33, "... And I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (See also Romans 11:26-27 and Hebrews 10:16-18.) We don't really know what was written on this scroll except to say that it depends on the power of the throne of God, on the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, to open them up.

John tells us he saw a strong angel—a powerful one—call out in a voice like thunder, *"Is there anyone who can open the scroll, who can break its seals?"*

Who has the right to do this? Who has the power to make this covenant effective? For our entire history, mankind has thought we can solve our own problems. The Word of God makes it clear we can't. No person could open this scroll. None of us has the right or the power to open the book and take charge of this earth. Many have tried. Adam lost dominion when he sinned. Moses was the lawgiver, but also a lawbreaker. David and his line failed. None of Adam's line qualifies. No one measures up. The Ruler must be a Redeemer, the Sovereign must be a Savior of mankind, and Jesus Christ is the only One who qualifies. Stand aside, Adam, you can't do it, and neither can any of your children. Satan is working at it, but he cannot do it either.

The question is: Who will do it?

John is really bothered by this. He had a holy affection and a sincere curiosity about looking into the things even angels weren't allowed to see. John enters into the drama because he has come from earth and has seen what will transpire. Will sin and sorrow overwhelm us? Is there no future for the earth? Is no one competent to rule it? John is overwhelmed by the possibility that maybe no one is qualified to open the book and to take charge of this earth. And he weeps because he didn't have the answer.

Then one of the 24 elders said to John, *"Don't weep. Look—the Lion from tribe of Judah, the root of David's family line, He has conquered. He can open the scroll. He can rip through the seven seals."*

Evidently, any one of the elders all had spiritual insight and could have answered and they all would have pointed to Jesus Christ. He is the only One who has the right and title to this earth. He not only redeemed us, but He also redeemed the earth. They identify all of His ministries that relate to the earth.

Jesus, as the “Lion of the tribe of Judah,” identifies Him with Israel (see Genesis 49:9-10); Jesus is also “the Root of David.” In 2 Samuel 7, that great chapter of God’s covenant with David, He says, *“I am going to bring One in your line who shall rule, not only over these people, but over the whole earth.”* The Lord Jesus Christ has the right to rule, as He is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the future of the world. All of those prophecies will be fulfilled at Jesus’ second coming to the earth to establish His Kingdom.

Next, John tells us more of what he saw. There, between the throne (with the four living creatures) and with the elders, John said he saw a Lamb (Christ) standing, bearing scars and wounds as though it had been slain.

This lamb is standing before the throne and is ready to act as the righteous Judge. He is “a lamb”—literally, a little lamb in all its gentleness and willingness to be sacrificed. Jesus Christ was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and He didn’t open His mouth (see Isaiah 53:7). He’s the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (see John 1:29). This lamb had the wounds and scars of a violent death that speak of Jesus’ redemptive sacrifice, a substitute for us. Yet this lamb is standing. Jesus is no longer seated at the right hand of God but is moving now, moving to power. He is coming to this earth. The judgment of the Tribulation is about to strike the earth. The winds are blowing on the earth.

The Lamb has seven horns (complete power, omnipotent; see Daniel 7-8) and seven eyes (complete knowledge; omniscient), which are the seven Spirits of God who have been sent on duty into all the earth. Jesus moves in the fullness of the Spirit, who is the Spirit of wisdom and understanding.

The Lord Jesus Christ is a Lion and a Lamb. As a lion refers to His second coming; the lamb character refers to His first coming. The lion is symbolic of His majesty; the lamb is symbolic of His meekness. As a lion He is a Sovereign; as a lamb He is a Savior. As a lion He is a Judge; as a lamb He is judged. The lion represents the government of God; the lamb represents the grace of God.

John continues to tell us what the Lion/Lamb Jesus is doing. Jesus moves to the throne, takes the book, and now takes over through the Tribulation Period. He *judges* the world in righteousness before He *reigns* in righteousness. He is no longer the intercessor of the church, for the church is now with Him.

Now the 24 elders and the four living creatures bow down to Jesus on the throne. As they behold His glory, they worship Jesus. The elders represent the body of Christ and with the “golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints” (v. 8), and along with the four creatures, they sing a worship song to Jesus and the angelic hosts join in praise to the Lamb. They sing about how Jesus is now the Redeemer of mankind from all ages and races, how He alone is worthy.

This “new song” they sing is about redemption. The old song we hear about in the book of Job is the song of creation. They sang about God as the Creator because they didn’t really know anything about His love. Now we can sing about our Savior who loves us and who gave Himself for us. What a beautiful picture!

He is “worthy”—meaning now Jesus Christ fills the entire horizon of praise and worship. Worship means “to return to *worth*,” that which belongs to Him; Jesus Christ is the only One worthy of praise. They sing of Jesus’ shed blood in heaven that redeems us. And not only us, the church, but they also praise the Lamb for those *yet to be saved* on the earth—the tribulation saints.

What a beautiful picture! And looking around, John said he heard the voice of many angels around the throne—so many he couldn’t count them. Ten thousands of ten thousands—God’s created intelligences were praising Him, all saying with one great voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing” (v. 12).

Every created thing, every creature of God joins in this universal act of worship, both in heaven and earth. Evidently, the animals in the earth and the fish in the sea join in this volume of praise! They sing, “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever” (v. 13).

And the four living creatures add their “Amen!” And the 24 elders fell down in silent adoration and praise of Jesus Christ who lives forever and ever.

If we could, we would sing the “Hallelujah Chorus,” for as we come to the end of this very remarkable scene in heaven, we see that all praise and honor and worship must go to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not in the habit of praising and worshiping Him, why don’t you start right now?

NEXT: What are those four riders of the Apocalypse?

LESSON 9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you look forward to in heaven?
What about this heavenly scene moves you?

2. Write a list of 10 things this passage shows us about Jesus.
(Then add 10 more things to your list!) **SUGGESTION: WRITE THIS LIST IN THE BACK OF YOUR BIBLE AND KEEP ADDING TO IT AS YOU STUDY GOD'S WORD.**

3. Do you know any worship songs based on Revelation 5? Now would be a good time to sing it to the Lord, no matter if you are in a group or alone before the Lord. Jesus Christ is worthy to receive all glory and honor, majesty and praise. You'll be singing this song for all eternity—it's good to get some practice in now.

NEVER LOSE
SIGHT OF JESUS
AS CENTRAL TO
THE STORY OF
THE UNIVERSE.



THRU the BIBLE



LESSON 10

WHEN THE SEVEN SEALS OPEN



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 6:1-8**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 6:1** and **Revelation 6:1-8**

In Revelation 4-5, we were in heaven with John. The first thing we saw was a throne and the Lord Jesus, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, sitting at God's right hand. He is also the Lamb, the Redeemer, and the One who is able to open the seven-sealed book, which is the title deed of this earth.

The Lord Jesus is the only One who is able to judge this earth. Who He is and what He's done makes Him able to judge. He is God in the flesh, Creator and Redeemer of the universe. The Lord Jesus Christ alone is worthy to sit in judgment.

Now, as we dive into Revelation 6, the judgment will begin. As we study this, we must keep in mind that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation," says 2 Peter 1:20—that is, you don't interpret any prophecy by itself. Each prophecy must be looked at as a part of a system and a program, and it must fit in with the others.

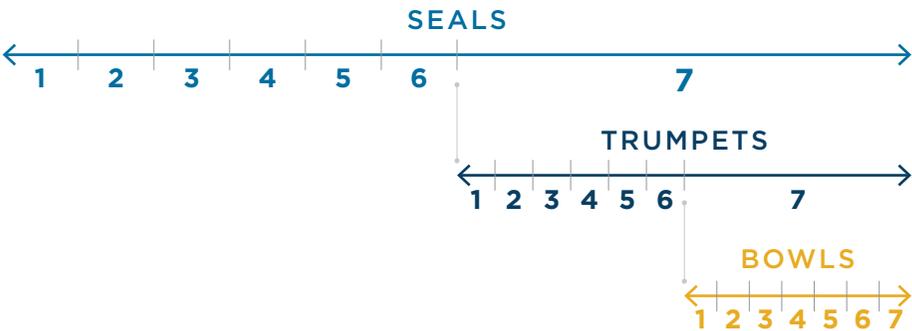
From the beginning of Revelation, John gave us an orderly division of the book. Beginning with chapter 4, we study things to come. Now if it is future and if we today are in the time of "the things which are," the period of the church, we cannot drag any of the seals, the trumpets, the bowls, or the

persons into our own day. The stage is being set, but none of these things are taking place today. (Be careful not to get sucked into sensationalism Bible study. It's not the way John put it down.)

The scene shifts from heaven to earth in Revelation 6–18, and the Great Tribulation takes place.

So what is happening on earth after the church leaves? The Great Tribulation takes place, the subject of chapters 6–18. The seven-sealed book is opened (chapters 6–8). Remember Jesus was entrusted with it (chapter 5) and found to be the only One worthy, the only One with the authority to open it. He breaks the seals, and the four horses ride out.

THE TRIBULATION



We need to get a big picture of the entire Tribulation before we dive into the details. Revelation 6–18, describing the Great Tribulation, is divided into four series. Each of these series describe seven pieces. The seven seals in the book are like an umbrella over the entire period. The first six seals will be open in turn and the judgments will come out. Between the sixth and seventh seal (and also between the sixth and seventh trumpets and bowls), there's a pause, and John either explains something or answers specific questions. Then, within the seventh seal, judgment is announced with seven trumpets. The same pattern follows—six trumpets are sounded, a pause, then within the seventh trumpet, seven bowls of wrath are introduced. The entire process fits within the seals. The seventh thing he describes always opens the door to the next series (which includes seven things). This connects each of the series. The seven seals, the seven trumpets, the seven personalities, and the seven bowls of wrath are all about the same period, but from a little different angle. Sometimes we'll see the scene from heaven, but most of this happens on earth.

In a very orderly way, it unfolds like this:

- The six seals all open and reveal themselves (Revelation 6:1–8:1).
- The seventh seal introduces the blowing of seven trumpets (Revelation 8:2–11:19).
- The blowing of the seventh trumpet introduces seven surprising people (Revelation 12–13).
- The beast out of the sea introduces the seven bowls of wrath (Revelation 15–16).
- The last bowl of wrath brings to us the judgment of Babylon, and that brings to an end the Great Tribulation Period (Revelation 17–18), and then Christ returns to earth to set up His Kingdom.

An interesting note: Remember the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11? This first organized rebellion against God happened in Babylon, and they were judged by it. Babylon also represents the last rebellion against God, both religiously in chapter 17 and politically in chapter 18. Babylon receives the first and the last judgments. This brings to an end man's day on this earth.

In this whole overarching account, it's important to remember that Jesus is directing everything now. He is the only One worthy to open this book. This is the Revelation, the unveiling of ... Him. He is no longer the teacher walking the shores of Galilee or the inspector walking among the lampstands. Neither is He the High Priest, standing as intercessor. Now He is the executor of God's will on the earth as He opens the seals of the book. All the judgments of the Great Tribulation flow from out of the seals. Out of the seals come the trumpets, out of the trumpets come the cast of characters, and out of the cast come the bowls of wrath.

Christ directs the entire operation from heaven. This judgment on earth will take place at the Lord's command.

The church will be delivered from this period of judgment. Why? They are sinners, but they are saved by the grace of God. Only those who reject the grace of God go into the Great Tribulation Period. When they make their decision to refuse God's grace offered them in Jesus Christ, they choose to be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ instead.

What we experience in chapters 4 and 5 prepares us for what follows—the judgment of the earth. In chapter 4 we saw the throne and the triune God; in chapter 5 we saw the book and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Certain factors increase the intensity and the ferocity of the Great Tribulation:

The Holy Spirit will restrain evil no longer. He will still be in the world; He doesn't leave. Even before the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was active. When the church was born in Acts 2, the Spirit began a new ministry of baptizing believers into the body of Christ, a ministry of indwelling them, of filling them, and of leading and guiding them in this world. When Jesus Christ takes the church out of this world, that does not mean His Spirit will leave. He will still be here, but He will not restrain evil any longer. In other words, mankind will have its day during that period, along with Satan. (You definitely don't want to be here then.)

The true church, as light and salt, will be gone from the earth. Although the church has very little influence in the world today, it still has some. But when we leave the earth, there will be none left.

Satan knows he has but a short time. He will take advantage of it during this period, and God will give him free rein. Evil men will be free to carry out their evil plans. And for a short time, the Antichrist will be able to take over this earth.

On this scene, God will execute direct judgment. His day of wrath is come; who is able to face God and stand before the wrath of the Lamb (see Revelation 6:17)?

The Great Tribulation will not break suddenly like a great tornado, but the opening of the seven seals is gradual—one at a time in a logical and chronological order, giving an overall picture of that seven-year period. The Lord Jesus Christ is in full charge, and every creature in heaven is moving at His command. He takes the seven-sealed book, and breaks the first seal right and in order, and the four horsemen ride out, introducing the Great Tribulation. The first six seals describe the events of the first three and a half years, and the last seal, the seventh, details the second half. Beginning with the riding of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, these are terrible, terrific judgments on the earth. They are so tremendous they boggle the mind just to read about them.

OPENING THE FIRST SEAL: THE RIDER ON A WHITE HORSE (VV. 1-2)

John tells us what he saw and heard: *“I watched the Lamb rip off the first of the seven seals and one of the four creatures called out with a voice like thunder, ‘Come.’ Then, I saw a white horse of victory with a rider who carried a bow; and a crown of victory was given to him, and he rode out conquering.”*

This is the Antichrist, an *imitation* of Christ, one who *pretends* to be Christ. He doesn’t appear as a villain; after all, Satan’s angels are angels of light. He won’t look dark and foreboding or have hidden horns or cloven feet. In fact, he’ll be the most attractive man the world has ever seen, and he’ll promise world unity and peace. The world won’t care if he comes from heaven or hell; they want peace at any price. They’ll elect him with cheers and will think the world is entering the Millennium when it’s actually entering the Great Tribulation. The Great Tribulation comes in like a lamb, but it goes out like a lion. A promise of peace is the big lie the world will swallow whole.

Even today the world is moving in the direction of a world dictator. All the nations of the world are disturbed. Lawlessness abounds and governments are not able to control as they should. This is all preparing the way for the coming of the Antichrist.

OPENING THE SECOND SEAL: THE RIDER ON A RED HORSE (VV. 3-4)

John continues with what he saw and heard: *“When the Lamb broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature call out, ‘Come. And another, a fiery red horse of bloodshed, came out; and its rider was empowered to take peace from the earth, so that men would slaughter one another, and a great sword of war and violent death was given to him.”*

The Antichrist’s counterfeit peace is short-lived. Immediately after the white horse rides the red horse of war on the earth. Antichrist will be revealed as a phony. He won’t bring peace because here goes the fiery red horse of war riding throughout the earth again. This will be a *real* world war.

OPENING THE THIRD SEAL: THE RIDER ON A BLACK HORSE (VV. 5-6)

Famine always follows war. The color of the black horse indicates mourning and a worldwide famine on the earth (see Lamentations 4:8-9; Jeremiah 4:28; Malachi 3:14). The working man will not be able to support his family, but the luxuries of the rich will still flow.

OPENING THE FOURTH SEAL: THE RIDER ON A PALE HORSE (VV. 7-8)

On this fourth horse, a greenish-yellow horse, Death comes riding in. The sword, famine, a pandemic, and wild animals will decimate the earth's population by 25% (see also Ezekiel 14:21). Nothing will be able to stop death.

But death is more than physical. Sin and death entered the world at the same time; death comes as a result of sin. Death has an all-inclusive, three-fold meaning. We think of death as referring only to the body, as *physical* as a result of Adam's sin (see Romans 5:24). But death is also *spiritual* when it separates our rebellious spirit against God. We have no capacity for God and no desire for Him at all. Finally, an *eternal* death separates us from God unless we are redeemed (the kind that is coming in Revelation 20:14).

But God didn't create man to die. Death is a penalty because Adam disregarded God's commands. As the head of the human family, his disobedience is our disobedience. His death is our death. Now Jesus Christ is the head of a new creation. He alone can give life. He is totally responsible for the life and eternal bliss of those who are His own.

During the Great Tribulation, death will ride unbridled. Jesus tells us that the days had to be shortened or else no one would have survived (Matthew 24:22). Finally at the Great White Throne judgment, death will be destroyed (see Revelation 20:14, 21:4; 1 Corinthians 15:26).

These four horsemen riding across the earth is the fulfillment of what Jesus already told us in His sermon on the Mount of Olives in Matthew 24:5-8; John merely widens it out and gives us additional information. What he says is based on what the Lord Jesus said before He left the earth the first time:

“For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many [the white horse]. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars [the red horse]. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come

to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines [the black horse], pestilences [the pale horse], and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

This is the opening of the Great Tribulation.

NEXT: Why is God doing this?

LESSON 10

 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Rehearse in general terms what the Tribulation is going to be like.

It will be a time of great _____

Who will be in charge? Why is it happening? How long will it last?

People will be confused—they thought it was _____

but it really is _____

The four horsemen represent: _____

The white horse: _____

The red horse: _____

The pale horse: _____

The black horse: _____

Why are these horsemen riding?

Read Matthew 24:5-8 and offer insight into Jesus' description of this time.

LESSON 11

“HOLD BACK THE WINDS OF JUDGMENT!”



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 6:9–7:3**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 6:7-17**, **Revelation 7:1**, and **Revelation 7:2-4**

The winds of judgment are blowing on the earth as we've seen the four horsemen do their horrible work. But nothing happens outside of God's purpose. So what is His purpose in all this mayhem?

God's purpose in the Tribulation is as it's always been—to save those in the human family who will turn to Him. He likely wouldn't keep this world running if it wasn't for people turning to Him. Even in this period, multitudes will turn to Him, and He'll welcome them with open arms.

A great company is going to be saved as the Tribulation begins. These initial judgments are accomplishing God's purposes. But for the many who turn to Him, even more will turn against Him. The judgments of God are like the sun's effect on wax and clay—some will be hardened by it; others will melt. As believers, when trouble comes to our lives, it will either draw us to God or drive us from Him. He wants to draw us closer to Himself, and this is His way of doing it (see John 5:24).

OPENING OF THE FIFTH SEAL: PRAYER OF THE MARTYRED REMNANT (6:9-11)

Back in heaven, John next sees an altar where Jesus Christ offers His literal blood for the sins of the world (see Hebrews 9:23-26). Gathered around the altar are the souls of those who have been killed for their faith in God, both in the Old Testament and since the beginning of the Tribulation. (Those who were martyred during the church age are raptured and with the Lord, see Luke 11:50-51.) Both these groups are resting on solid Old Testament ground as they plead for justice on the basis of God's holy law. They cry out in loud prayers, *"How long, Strong God, holy and true? How long before you step in and avenge our murders?"* (see 6:10).

Then each martyr is given a white robe, symbolizing salvation and eternal life. God tells them to be patient, to sit back and wait until the full number of martyrs are filled from among their friends in the faith. More people will experience martyrdom before it will be God's time for Jesus Christ to return to the earth and to judge their living adversaries.

OPENING OF THE SIXTH SEAL: THE DAY OF WRATH HAS COME (6:12-17)

The scene now shifts back to earth and signals the beginning of the last half of the Great Tribulation. The great day of His wrath is before us. The Great Tribulation opens and closes with upheavals in nature: The beginning of the Tribulation (compare Joel 2:30-31 with Acts 2:20) and the end of the Tribulation (see Joel 3:9-17; Isaiah 13:9-13, 34:1-4; Matthew 24:29). God will first send a huge, planet-sized earthquake that will rock the whole world and cause mountains and islands to rise and fall. The sun will grow dark, the moon will redden "like blood," and stars will appear to fall like a meteor shower. The fact that we are having an increase in earthquakes today is not a fulfillment of this but shows that it could happen as God's Word says it will.

Evidently the sky will also appear to split and roll back like a scroll, in opposite directions like it's coming apart. Those on earth will glimpse into the throne room of heaven. (See also Nahum 1:5 and Revelation 20:11.)

Everyone on earth will be overwhelmed with dread and terror, run to hide in caves, and call on the mountains to fall on them. They want to hide from the wrath of the Lamb. More than the physical catastrophes, they're

terrified by their perception of God. The martyrs cry, “*Avenge us*” (6:10); these unbelievers cry, “Hide us.” They don’t want to stand before a holy and righteous God.

WHAT IS “THE WRATH OF THE LAMB”?

“The wrath of the Lamb” (6:16) is a strange phrase that sounds contradictory, but a closer look reveals it’s true. The wrath of God is the Day of the Lord, talked about throughout the Old Testament prophets—a day of judgment coming on the earth, yet future.

The lamb is a familiar figure of Christ. A lamb is gentle and meek (Matthew 11:28-29). A lamb is harmless. You never see a sign, “Beware of the lamb.” From the days of Abel to those of John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus is described as a lamb. The apostle John calls Jesus “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Even before a lamb was created, these things describe who Jesus is. In other words, God did not choose the lamb because it was like Christ or because it was the animal people sacrificed. God *created* such a sacrifice to represent Christ. Christ is the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world, before any lamb was ever created. The lamb sets forth His sacrifice. Abraham said, “... God will provide for Himself the lamb ...” (see Genesis 22:8), and God *did* provide Himself a Lamb.

Christ was all these things when He walked among us. Gentle, meek, humble; Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. His life was marked by winsomeness, like the perfume of a lovely and fragile flower. His coming was a doxology; His stay was a blessing; His departure was a benediction. Even the unbelieving world is fascinated by His life.

But what about “the wrath”? Wrath is strange and foreign when it describes God. God loves the good and hates the evil. His hate isn’t like ours; He’s not vindictive, but righteous and holy. He is strong and mighty in battle. The gospel message reveals God’s judgment, His wrath, against all unrighteousness (see Romans 1:18).

To say “the wrath of the Lamb” is like mixing fire and water, but all the fury of God’s wrath is revealed in the Lamb. God has declared war against sin. A day is coming when the wrath of the Lamb will be revealed. Listen to the Psalmist, “Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ... When His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him” (Psalm 2:11-12).

WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE TURNING TO GOD AND GETTING SAVED DURING THIS PERIOD?

Since you can't turn to God without the work of the Holy Spirit, how does anybody get saved without the Holy Spirit on the earth? Didn't the Holy Spirit leave the earth and take the church to present us to Jesus Christ? (See 2 Thessalonians 2:7.) Good question.

The Holy Spirit is present; He's just changed roles. During our day when the gospel is going out, the Spirit restrains evil so the gospel can penetrate a Satan-controlled and Satan-blinded world. How could the Word go out unless the Spirit of God holds back evil? Even today, satanic forces work against the Word of God being heard and believed.

The Great Tribulation is the devil's holiday. God will give him freedom to do as he pleases. This is part of God's judgment on a world that rejects Jesus as Savior.

But a great company of people will be saved in the Tribulation—more than in any other seven-year period in the history of the world.

The Holy Spirit is in the world after the church is removed, just as He was in the world before Pentecost. Just read the Old Testament and you will find Him working in people's hearts and lives. But in the Old Testament, the Spirit of God didn't restrain evil in the world, and He wasn't baptizing believers into the body of Christ like He is doing today. However, He will still be in the business of getting men and women to Christ. He has always been in the business of taking God's creation and renovating it. Like the Spirit brooded on the face of the waters during creation, the Spirit broods over this earth today. He will have to have an unusual, special program during this period, and now John tells us what that will be.

Between the sixth and the seventh seal, we have a pause. Through John's eyes, we've seen the riding of the four horsemen that gave us a bird's-eye view of the Tribulation, and now the details are going to be given to us, explaining how God would be merciful even in judgment. Revelation 7 answers the question asked at the end of chapter 6: "Who is able to stand?"

"After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth," controlling the wind, John tells us (7:1; see also Psalm 148:8). Then a fifth angel, apparently of a higher rank than the other four, gives them orders. (The spiritual world of angels, both good and bad, are well organized

in military ranks, as we learn in the book of Daniel and also in Ephesians.) The angel cried with a great voice, literally *a megaphone*, getting the angels ready for a fearful judgment about to break on the earth. He says, *“Hold everything! Hold back the winds of judgment, the winds of the Great Tribulation Period, because we have to seal these folk so they can make it through”* (7:2-3). For the sake of these who have been sealed, this terrible time will be shortened. There will be two great companies sealed, one out of the nation Israel and the other out of the Gentiles.

We don't know what sign the Lord uses on the forehead of His people to seal them, but it is some spiritual mark on their lives, in contrast to the mark of the beast, so they can make it through the Tribulation.

NEXT: Who are the 144,000 saved?

LESSON 12

THE 144,000 AND MORE



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 7:4-17**



Listen at TTB.org/Revelation to **Revelation 7:5-12** and **Revelation 7:13-17**

From the day God called Abraham back in Genesis, there has always been a remnant of people who are true to God.

In the Great Tribulation, God will have a remnant of Israel who will be saved and who will witness of Christ, though just a small number. God tells us 144,000 Jews will be saved (literally that many, it's not a symbol of another number).

When God deals with Israel, He always deals with dates and numbers. He doesn't talk about either dates or numbers with the church. Paul never turned in a report to anybody as to how many were saved. Even when we get to the great company of Gentiles who are saved in the Great Tribulation Period, we're not told the number. These people will be the only ones who can say, "And then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). This group is the last who will be saved, and then it won't be long until Jesus Christ will be back. We can't say Christ will be returning soon because we don't know the day or the hour when He will come.

How will these people be saved? They will be saved just as we are today, by accepting the death of Christ as payment of their sins. God has always had one way to save people, by faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). But in this period of the Tribulation, the Holy Spirit

will seal them with a special mark, guaranteeing they will make it through. If it weren't for this mark of protection, they wouldn't make it. (None of us would make it through life without the Holy Spirit. We're weak and would deny Him before the sun went down if it wasn't for His work in us.)

This company of 144,000 doesn't exist today, nor does it refer to the church. They will be saved "of all the tribes of the children of *Israel*" (v. 4). Twelve thousand will be sealed out of each tribe. God has long promised Israel, throughout the Old Testament, that He would come and establish His Kingdom. It will be first a thousand-year kingdom, a time of testing, and then right into eternity. God promised them they would be a nation forever and they will be in the land of Israel forever. Some say God is through with Israel, but that's not true. You'd have to contradict the whole tenor and tone of the Old Testament to believe that. Revelation is like a great union station or an airport where trains or planes come in from everywhere: All the major themes of prophecy come in to Revelation. Therefore, you would certainly expect Israel to be here in Revelation—and, lo and behold, there they are.

We are given here the 12 tribes of Israel. Let's review them.

Notice Judah heads the list. The tribe of Reuben should come first, for Reuben was the oldest, but because of his very gross immorality he lost the first place—but he is still included. The question often arises: When a Christian sins, does he lose his salvation? No, but he may lose his reward. Reuben is a good example of how God deals with us. Reuben lost the place of honor, but he did not lose out altogether. He is number two, but he should have been number one. Judah was the tribe given preeminence (see Genesis 49:8-10) and was the tribe from which the Lord Jesus came.

We also find that the tribes of Dan and Ephraim are omitted from this list. Both of these tribes were guilty of leading the nation into idolatry.

Dan was the first tribe that fell into idolatry (see Judges 18:30 and 1 Kings 12:28-30). That Dan is given top priority in the Millennium (Ezekiel 48) reveals God's grace can reach down and meet the needs of any sinner. The tribe of Dan is in the Millennium, but they are not sealed for the purpose of witnessing during the time of the Great Tribulation. They lost out a great opportunity.

Ephraim was also guilty of idolatry. Hosea 4:17 says, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." Ephraim was also the tribe which led in the division of the kingdom (see 1 Kings 11:26).

In the list of the 144,000 who will be sealed, Joseph takes the place of Ephraim, and Levi takes Dan's place. Levi, the priestly tribe, will be witnesses in the Great Tribulation.

God now turns again to the nation of Israel. He has not given them up. He said through Hosea, "How can I give you up, Ephraim?" (Hosea 11:8), meaning, "I can't do it." God doesn't give Israel up. They will make it through the Great Tribulation Period.

The Holy Spirit will seal these 144,000 because they will be God's witness during this period, and it will cost them a great deal. If they weren't sealed, they wouldn't make it through. But God never leaves Himself without a witness on this earth.

BACK IN HEAVEN

We witness now through John's eyes a fabulous, fantastic worship scene in heaven. A great multitude gathered that no one could number from every nation and out of tribes and peoples and tongues standing before the throne and before the Lamb. This great company has come out of the Great Tribulation Period and are rejoicing in their salvation. These are Gentiles, people from every tribe and nation under the sun. This means that in the Great Tribulation the gospel of the Kingdom will be preached through the world. The 144,000 witnesses in the Great Tribulation Period will do in seven years what the church up to the present has not done in over two thousand years.

The greatest days of God's salvation are in the future.

Most of this company were martyred during the Great Tribulation Period, but they were faithful to the end. Their white robes speak of the righteousness of Christ in which they are clothed in the shed blood of Christ, since our own righteousness is as filthy rags. The only reason we will be able to stand before God is because Christ paid the penalty for our sins. He died that we might live, and that is true of this group here also. They wave palm branches as the sign of victory, victory in Christ. This multitude is part of the great triumphal entry that will occur when Christ returns to the earth.

The triumphal entry has really not taken place yet. The scene in the Gospels (John 12 and Matthew 21) called "the triumphal entry" was actually more like a triumphal exit, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, for He was getting ready to leave the earth. He was on the way to the cross at that time. Since then, there has been a great company who have come to Him,

and in the Great Tribulation there will be another great company. When He returns to the earth, the great company who were martyred for Him in the Great Tribulation will be there. This is a wonderful, glorious picture of a worship scene to yet to come.

This is a fabulous, fantastic scene of universal worship of God by His creatures. The church is here, the Old Testament saints are here, the Tribulation saints are here, and the angels join in. One of the 24 elders now comes over to John with a question.

“Who are the believers dressed in white robes?” And John said, *“I have no idea—but you must know.”* And the elder said, *“These come from the Great Tribulation. They’ve washed their robes, scrubbed them clean in the blood of the Lamb. That’s why they’re standing before God’s throne”* (see vv. 14-15).

If the people in white robes gathered here were Old Testament saints or Israelites, John would’ve known it. But he doesn’t recognize them at all. If they were the church, John would’ve known it, too. The elder, who is a representative of the church now in heaven, knows this company is not the church but an altogether different company. (Doesn’t this prove the church isn’t going through the Great Tribulation?) This is a special company, out of all Gentile tribes and tongues and nations, who have come out of the Great Tribulation.

“Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple” (v. 15). We now know for sure this is not the church, for the church is never identified with the temple. Over this group, God, who sits on the throne, spreads His tent (tabernacle) over them for their protection.

Just imagine what comfort and joy there will be in this scene. This company of believers has been through the Great Tribulation. Most of them laid down their lives for Christ. Now God provides for them what they have suffered without. They’re not going to hunger or thirst—they apparently did. They will be sheltered from the burning heat of the sun. They have been thirsty for spiritual things they didn’t have. And they wept, but now God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. They made it through the Great Tribulation because of the blood of the Lamb. This is a wonderful, comforting scene we get a glimpse of here.

It's a good reminder that the Lord Jesus has other sheep. He told His disciples this, but they couldn't understand (see John 10:16). He could say the same thing to the church today, *"I have other sheep that you don't know anything about."* This company of Gentiles are some of the other sheep who will be redeemed but who aren't part of the church.

There are plenty of seats at the Lord's table. Isn't the Lord Jesus a gracious Savior?

NEXT: What will it sound like when terror breaks loose on the earth? A bomb? No—worse.

A top-down view of a wooden table. In the upper left, a pair of hands is clasped. In the upper right, another pair of hands is clasped. A large, shallow wooden bowl is on the right side. A small, reddish-brown clay jug and a matching cup are on the left. The text "There are plenty of seats at the Lord's table." is written in a white, cursive font across the center of the table. At the bottom center, there is a logo for "THRU the BIBLE" featuring a globe over an open book.

*There are
plenty of seats
at the
Lord's table.*



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 13

30 MINUTES OF SILENCE IN HEAVEN



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 8**



Listen at TTB.org/Revelation to **Revelation 8:1**, **Revelation 8:2-6**,
and **Revelation 8:7-13**

What will be the signal that marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation? Will it sound like a bomb exploding or a war breaking out? No.

Silence. Thirty minutes of ominous silence.

In that stillness before the storm, the fullness of God's wrath will pour out on the earth. It will be the beginning of the end of the earth.

As the seventh seal is opened, a silence will descend on heaven's scene for a half hour. The Lord Jesus Christ in His glory as the Judge of all the earth, still in command, now directs all the action from heaven.

This is a very solemn scene. The Lord Jesus Christ orders a halt on all fronts: heaven, hell, and earth. Nothing can move without His permission. He had already ordered the cessation of natural forces on the earth when He ordered the sealing and saving of the 144,000 and the Gentiles. Now, for a brief moment, there is a heavenly hush.

Why is there this strange silence? God's patience is not exhausted. When the sixth seal was opened and nature responded with a mighty convulsion, brave men weakened for a moment. Christ gave them opportunity to repent.

But like the Pharaoh of Moses' story who, when the heat was taken off, let his willful heart return to its original intention, many men will go back to their blasphemous conduct in the calm. They probably will even rebuke themselves for showing a yellow streak. They will say, *"It was only nature reacting. It wasn't God, after all. Everything can be explained by natural causes."*

This is the lull before the storm. God's steps from mercy to judgment are always slow, reluctant, and measured. He is reluctant to judge for He is slow to anger. Judgment is His strange work (see Isaiah 28:21). He is a God of love who judges His creatures. This silence marks the transition from grace to judgment. God is waiting. If you have not yet come to Him by faith, He's waiting for you today. You *can* come to Him, for He is a gracious Savior.

THE BLOWING OF THE SEVEN TRUMPETS

Judgment is getting ready to come on the earth. The Great Tribulation will break with fury on the earth and is signaled by the blowing of the trumpets (Revelation 8–11).

Seven angels who stood before God were given the seven war trumpets. This is a special group of angels. Gabriel likely is in the group because we're told in Luke 1 that he stood before God.

"Seven trumpets" have a special meaning for Israel, particularly when you recall how God led them on the wilderness march. It took *seven trumpets* to move them out, and the seven trumpets of Revelation will likewise have the positive effect of moving Israel back into the land of Israel. After the seventh trumpet, Israel continues to be the special object of God's protection. In times of war, God responded to their trumpet call (see Numbers 10:9-10). Trumpets are also part of many ceremonies; they gathered Israelites for war, journeys, special feasts, and announced the new year in Israel. Trumpets often announced God stepping into history. Here they announce divine judgments in the day of the Lord (see Zechariah 1:14-16). They declare war.

Then, in addition to the seven-angel band, another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer and incense. He added it to the golden altar where prayers of God's people were offered in front of the throne. (Incense is often compared to prayer; see Psalm 141:2.)

Previously, Jesus Christ interceded for us before the golden altar, but now He is on the throne. Incense is likened unto prayer and is a type of prayer. When Jesus prayed, He didn't need anything given to Him when He prayed.

The prayers of saints offered under the fifth seal (6:9-11) are now being answered because of Jesus' personal sacrifice. And they are heard and answered by God because of Christ.

Now, the angel takes the censer and fills it with fire from the altar and throws it on the earth, causing thunder, lightning, and earthquakes. In the Old Testament, the high priest of Israel took a censer with him as he carried the blood into the Holy of Holies. Here the ritual is reversed, because out of heaven the censer is hurled on the earth.

The prayers of God's people ascended as incense, and now the answer is coming down. The Tribulation saints had prayed, "Oh, God, avenge us!" The people of the earth, having rejected the death of Christ for the judgment of their sins, must now bear the judgment for their own sins. The Tribulation is building to a crescendo.

This is a solemn moment. The half hour of silence is over. The prayers of the saints have been heard. The order is issued to prepare to blow. The angels come to attention, and at the blowing of the trumpets, divine wrath is visited upon rebellious men.

The blowing of the trumpets introduces literal plagues. God means what He says; they're not *symbolic*. At the first trumpet, hail and fire mingled with blood hits the earth and burns up one-third of all trees and all the green grass. This is a direct judgment from God on plant life, from grass to great trees. Every form of botanical life is affected. Plant life was the first to be created, and it is the first to be destroyed.

This is a *literal* judgment upon plant life in the same way that the seventh plague of Egypt was literal (see Exodus 9:18-26). It's no accident that this trumpet judgment has a striking similarity to the plagues in Egypt. All the plagues are literal, just as these plagues in Revelation should be taken literally.

At the second trumpet, the sea, which occupies most of the earth's surface, is next affected by God's direct judgment. A mass *as if it were* a great mountain (see Jeremiah 51:25) falls into the sea; one-third becomes literal blood, and one-third of all living creatures in the sea die. Also, one-third of the ships of all nations are destroyed. The separation of the land and the sea occurred on the same day in which plant life appeared (see Genesis 1:9-10).

The third trumpet unleashes a great star, burning as it falls out of heaven and hits the earth. This star is literal and is a meteor containing poison that contaminates one-third of the earth's fresh water supply. The star's name, wormwood, suggests it's a judgment on man for idolatry and injustice. Calamity and sorrow are the natural compensations coming on man because of his sin.

The fourth angel blew the trumpet and the light from the sun and moon and stars were darkened by one-third. It was on the fourth day of re-creation that these heavenly bodies appeared, and now the light is a third less over the earth.

Under these first four trumpets, the expression "a third" has been used 12 times. This is the divine number of God's government dealing with the earth (12 apostles who sit on 12 thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel).

Now, after the fourth trumpet, a solemn announcement is made with intensity. It's a warning that the final three trumpets will be stepping up in intensity. "Woe!" says an eagle (ASV; rather than an angel) delivering this message. In the Old Testament, the eagle was the symbol of God's grace, like in Exodus 19:4, "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself," and also a symbol of judgment. Deuteronomy 28:49 talks about judgment coming from the end of the earth as swift as the eagle flies ... and that's what happens next.

**NEXT: You think you've seen weird stuff in Revelation?
Wait until you see this ...**

LESSON 13

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What about the “30 minutes of silence” in between the two halves of the Tribulation unnerves you? What else could be going on?

2. Jesus told us about these events in His sermon on the Mount of Olives, one of His last times to teach His disciples before the Cross.
Read Revelation 8 and Matthew 24:29-31 and compare the scenes.
What does this tell you about Scripture?

3. What does the similarity of these disasters following the first four trumpets to the plagues of Egypt say to you? What lessons was God teaching us, then and now? Consider how this can help you share the urgency of turning in faith to Jesus with someone who doesn't yet know Him.

LESSON 14

DANIEL'S 70TH WEEK REALIZED



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 9**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 9:1-6** and **Revelation 9:7-20**

We've traveled some dark days in the Tribulation, but the worst is now upon us. These next events are so weird and wild, it boggles the mind. Unless John tells us otherwise, we'll take them all as literal.

The eagle's announcement, "Woe, woe, woe—a great wrath is coming to those who live on the earth," signal three angels who will blow three trumpets. This covers the last three and one-half years of what the Old Testament prophet Daniel called, "the Seventieth Week," the Great Tribulation. The Bible points to this season as the blackest days in human history.

FIFTH TRUMPET:

FALLEN STAR AND PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS (VV. 1-12)

The fifth angel sounds a trumpet and a star falls from heaven. We've already witnessed two other stars fall, meteors to the earth, but this one is different. This star is alive and not only acts with intelligence, but he is given a key from God.

This falling star is Satan. The prophet Isaiah called him, “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer” (Isaiah 14:12) and Jesus said in Luke 10:18 that He saw Satan as lightning fall from heaven (see also 2 Corinthians 11:14 and Revelation 12:7-9). So what does Satan do as he’s thrown out of heaven? He goes to earth with the key to the abyss.

The abyss is a literal place. The Bible doesn’t teach that heaven and hell are mythological, with heaven as some beautiful island hanging out in space. Heaven and hell are as literal as the place you live today.

God gives Satan the key to the abyss, the long shaft of which is called *sheol* in the Old Testament and *hades* in the New Testament. The shaft leads to the abyss where the spirits of the dead of the ages past have gone. This is where the Lord Jesus went during His three days between His death and resurrection to announce the redemption He accomplished on the cross (see Revelation 1:18 and 1 Peter 3:18-22).

God allows Satan a freedom he never has had before, the authority and power to open this long shaft of the abyss. Then out of the shaft, like a great erupting volcano, pours a vicious smoke that covers the entire earth and darkens the sun and fills the atmosphere.

Out from the smoke come locusts with stingers like scorpions. But unlike locusts, they don’t eat grass, but attack people who don’t have the seal of God’s protection on their foreheads. They aren’t allowed to kill anyone, just torture them with unspeakable agony for five months. Things get so awful people want to kill themselves, but they can’t die. They long for death rather than repenting. Only Satan’s crowd are attacked by these locusts, but he doesn’t want his men to die either because he needs them in the war between light and darkness being waged.

These locusts have other unusual characteristics—human faces, antennae like the glory of girl’s hair, their bodies look like war horses with iron breastplates, and on their heads are golden crowns. Just the sound of their activity is terrifying, like the sound of a battle.

Yet in all this weirdness, this plague of locusts are as literal as the plague of locusts in Egypt. A working knowledge of the Old Testament is essential to understanding Revelation—these locusts were also mentioned by the prophet Joel as having lion’s teeth (see Joel 1:6) and also pictured in Joshua as hornets (see Joshua 24:12).

Another unique characteristic of these locusts is that they have a leader, called “the angel of the abyss” (v. 11). Likely one of Satan’s chief henchmen, this king’s name is Apollyon—literally, “the destroyer.” Apollyon leads them in a terrifying invasion of earth. This confirms what Daniel told us, that the demonic world is divided into military ranks--generals, majors, lieutenants, sergeants, and privates. Ephesians 6 tells us the angels of God are divided the same way.

This locust warfare lasts the first five months. The next two trumpets warns that worse things will follow.

SIXTH TRUMPET: EVIL ANGELS LOOSED AT THE RIVER EUPHRATES (VV. 13-21)

When the sixth angel blew the trumpet, a command came from Jesus Christ Himself at the horns of the golden altar (symbolic of power) in heaven to loosen the four angels bound at the river Euphrates.

They must be fallen evil angels, since no good angels are bound. Sometime in past eternity, they were bound away from the others because of the enormity of their crime.

Why were they bound here at the Euphrates River? Complicated and nuanced, the prominence of this area in Scripture can’t be overlooked. The Garden of Eden was somewhere in this region. The sin of man began here. The first murder was committed here. The first war was fought here. Here was where the Flood began and spread over the earth. Here is where the Tower of Babel was erected. East and west are divided at the Euphrates. And to this area were brought the Israelites of the Babylonian captivity.

Babylon was the fountainhead of idolatry. And here is the final surge of sin on the earth; Zechariah 5 identifies Babylon as the last stand of false religion, and this is where Satan’s last stand will take place.

God had a purpose for these evil angels to fulfill at this specific hour, day, month, and year, and ordered their release to accomplish His will. These angels were ready for a specific assignment at a specific hour in history—to kill one-third of the earth’s population who are in rebellion against God.

Previously, 25% of the population was killed under the fourth seal judgment (6:7-8), and many more died as martyrs (see Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21-22). Now another 33% is removed. In these seven years of tribulation, over 50% of the population of the earth will be killed. No wonder the Lord Jesus said that if those days of tribulation had not been cut short, no human life would be saved.

The four angels lead a world war—the first, literal war to include every nation on earth—with a stunning army of 200 million. This is the wholesale invasion of the earth by the demonic world, the result of Satan’s opening the door of the shaft to the bottomless pit. The description of the horsemen further confirms this fact. The underworld is now making war on mankind.

These creatures from the underworld are frightening and bizarre. The horsemen are striking in their brilliant and toxic colors—fiery red, bright blue, and light yellow. The normal horse is an animal of war (see Job 39:19-25), but these are enhanced—their heads were lions and out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. These unnatural horses are able to kill with their mouths, and instead of horses’ hair for tails, they have serpents which bite and kill mankind.

Hellish forces are at work.

If the population of the world were 1.5 billion at that time, more than 500 million would be killed. Yet ironically, the people left alive refuse to stop worshipping demons who are responsible for their misery under this sixth trumpet judgment. These unresponsive, unrepentant, hard-hearted people will continue in their moral sins: murders, sorceries, immorality, and stealing (21:8; 22:15). “Sorceries” (*pharmakon*—“*pharmacy*”) implies an uncontrolled drug use, which will contribute to a pervasive, violent drug culture and religion. Many will turn to drugs when they are stung or bitten by these weird creatures. Although people won’t die from their injuries, they’ll want to. And as a result, they will take drugs to overcome the pain and help them endure. Of course, these drugs also make them susceptible to sin. The Antichrist will use all these sins to bring mankind into subjection to himself, and they will be easily lured in that day.

Yet none of these severe judgments will move the remaining unbelievers as a whole to repent. The apostle Paul describes what is happening here as only impacting those who reject the Word of God. “And for this reason God

will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

The moment you reject the gospel and shut your heart to God, you are wide open for the big lie when it comes. This is the reason so many today fall for everything that comes along. If you're not standing for the Word of God, you're easy prey for any false teaching, cult, or error that puts you in their bullseye.

NEXT: What did the angel tell John to eat?

LESSON 14

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Perhaps before going on, pause to pray for those who don't yet know Jesus Christ as their Savior. Pray with urgency that they will humble themselves and respond in faith to God's offer of salvation. In light of scenes we've studied in Revelation 9, we plead for their souls before the Lord. Do not refuse God's grace or you will experience His judgment.

2. You'd think after all these judgments, people would be running to God. Talk about how important it is to repent, even during catastrophic times in our lives. What is the natural conclusion to unrepentance? This isn't an easy subject; be kind and compassionate with each other in the truth.

3. Six of the seven trumpets have sounded. See if you can talk through what's happened in these six judgments to get ready for the seventh trumpet and the final events of the Tribulation coming next.

LESSON 15

INTERLUDE

A GLIMPSE OF GLORY



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 10:1–11:2**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 9:21–10:1**, **Revelation 10:2-7**, and **Revelation 10:8–11:2**

Almost as if God knew we needed a mental and emotional rest from the stream of judgments, He gives us a break between the sixth and seventh trumpets. In this interlude in Revelation 10, He fills in some details about what's happening at this same time back to heaven. Our focus shifts, temporarily, from the outpouring of God's wrath on unbelievers on earth, to the comfort and encouragement of believers in heaven. Like the pause between the sixth and seventh seals when the two groups (Jews and Gentiles) were redeemed and sealed, now between the sixth and seventh trumpets, we are introduced to three personalities.

Just as angels announced Jesus' first coming, they will also announce His second coming to the earth. The first personality we meet is a mighty angel and then later, in Revelation 11, we meet two witnesses.

This mighty angel is no regular angel, but neither is this angel the Lord Jesus Christ, who never appears in Revelation as an angel. When Jesus Christ appeared in the Old Testament before coming to earth as a baby, He was called *the* Angel of the Lord. After He died and rose again and received a glorified body, we only see Him in the place of great power and glory at God's right hand, never as an angel again. When He was here in His

humanity, He was not an angel—He was a man. Therefore, He is revealed in the Revelation as the glorified Christ, as the post-incarnate Christ. He is exalted to the “highest place,” says Philippians 2. This book unveils the full picture of who Jesus Christ is. New glories of His person, of His power, and performance unfold with each chapter. He is now the One judging mankind who rejected Him as Savior.

When John describes this mighty angel coming down from heaven, he said “another” angel. He had previously told us about a strong angel back in Revelation 5:2. The way these angels are dressed identifies them as with Christ. Evidently, they are special ambassadors of Christ, bearing all the credentials of His exalted position. This mighty angel comes down out of heaven from the presence of Christ, the One who is in the midst of the throne and they are a sight to behold!

This mighty angel is “clothed with a cloud,” like the clouds of glory associated with Christ’s second coming. A “rainbow” is the cap of his uniform and a reminder of God’s faithfulness to His covenant with man and His mercy. Although the judgments have come, thick and fast, weird and wild—it beggars language to describe them—this rainbow indicates God will not send a flood to destroy man again.

The mighty angel’s countenance is radiant, with a face “like the sun,” reflecting the majesty of God. This is his badge of identification with Christ, a signature of His glory. Just like Moses’ face shone after he had been in God’s presence (see Exodus 34:29), this angel’s face shines because he’s come out from the Lord’s presence. (Even the angel’s robes glowed at Jesus’ resurrection in Luke 24:4.)

The angel’s feet and legs were “like pillars of fire,” reminding us of the pillar of fire in the wilderness, a manifestation of God’s holiness, mercy, and judgment. This angel has come to make a solemn announcement of coming judgment as a special envoy of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Judge of all the earth.

In his hands, this mighty messenger holds “a little book,” which logically would be the seven-sealed book we’ve seen before. John used a different and rare Greek word to describe it (*biblaridion*, not *biblion*), but it’s likely the same scroll since it’s already been opened, unrolled in the angel’s hand.

This little book, if it is the same as the seven-sealed book, was originally in the hands of the Father in heaven (5:1) who transfers it to the nail-pierced hands of God the Son, the only One who had the right to open it. When Jesus broke open the seven seals on the book, it introduced the seven trumpets, six of which have already been blown. After He removes the seals, the Lord Jesus Christ in turn gives the book to the angel, who then finally, gives it to John to eat.

This is the title deed of the earth, and contains the judgments the Lord executes in the Great Tribulation. The book is now open, and the judgments are on display. This book gives the angel authority to claim both the sea and the earth for Christ. He puts one foot on the sea and the other foot upon the earth, and says they belong to God. We are but tenants in the world God created. In a great voice, this angel claims it all for Christ. As Creator and Redeemer, the world belongs to Him.

The angel's message involves the whole world, too. This book is "little" because the time of the Great Tribulation won't be long. The Lord Jesus said it was brief. The prophet Daniel labeled it as seven years. There's not much time left. Romans 9:28 tells us "He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness, because the Lord will make a short work upon the earth."

As the angel declares this, a majestic loud cry produced "seven thunders"—this is God's amen! (See also Psalm 29:3 and Job 37:5.) The voice of the Lord Jesus, now in heaven, confirms the angel's claim that He will soon come to power on this earth.

John took down this confirmation as the visions were given to him, and he was about to write what the seven thunders had spoken—he heard it, and they were audible words—but he was forbidden to do so. Why? This is the only place in Revelation where anything is sealed—everything else is revealed. God makes it clear at the end of the book that He has told everything. Yet, the Lord Jesus Christ said to John, "*Seal them up. Don't write this down.*" To this day, they remain a secret. Although Revelation reveals Jesus Christ, there are still many things God doesn't tell us.

The mighty angel, standing both on the sea and the land, takes an oath in the name of Christ who is in heaven; and as Christ's representative, he claims it all for Christ (see Colossians 1:16). The angel also comforts God's saints on earth in the middle of this trouble, that it won't last much longer. Christ will return soon, he promises. This glad announcement from heaven says the time is short, "*Don't worry. He who endures to the end will be saved*"

(see Matthew 24:13). Why? Because God has sealed them, and they will make it through the Great Tribulation. The martyrs in heaven have been praying for this, too. The kingdom is coming, as we've prayed in the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:10).

The seal and trumpet judgments take time to unfold, giving people time to repent—and many do (see 6:15-17; 9:20-21). The bowl judgments that come with this seventh trumpet will happen so quickly in succession that people will have little time to turn around (see 2 Peter 3:1-9).

This all takes place when the seventh angel is ready to blow the trumpet. As this seventh trumpet announces the second half of the Great Tribulation, God will fully reveal His mystery, His plans for humanity. We've been told many single facets of this mystery—including the nation Israel, judgment, suffering, injustice, the silence of God, and the coming Kingdom—but this mystery is greater than the sum total of all.

Why did God permit evil, and why has He tolerated it for so long? That's the foundation to this mystery, and God hasn't handed in *His* answer yet. He will someday. He has a whole lot to tell us, and when we get into His presence, we'll find out.

After this, John apparently returns to the earth in spirit and hears the Lord Jesus' voice from heaven directing him to take the book from the angel. Jesus is in full charge of every operation recorded in Revelation. God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name above every name. He is now acting as Judge of all the earth.

As John takes the book, the angel invites him into the great drama unfolding. He tells John to do a very strange thing—*eat it*. Eating the book means to receive the Word of God with faith. The prophet Jeremiah and Ezekiel instructs the same (Jeremiah 15:16, Ezekiel 3:1-3; see also Psalm 119:103, Proverbs 16:24).

The part of God's Word John was told to eat was God's judgment—first sweet, then bitter. It's sweet to know what God is going to do, but bitter when you realize judgment is coming. John eagerly received the Word of God, but it was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his digestive system. John believed that all nations, all peoples, and all tongues need to hear the Word of God to be warned of the coming judgment. This is why this little book became bitter to him: He must prophesy against many before Christ

comes to His Kingdom. Just like us—we can delight in reading this section of the Word of God and know what God intends to do, but the prophecy of coming judgment to a world who rejects the Lord Jesus Christ is bitter.

We can also take this to heart. Many people begin the study of prophecy with enthusiasm, but when they find that it applies to their lives and makes demands on them personally, they lose interest, and it becomes a bitter thing. Many study prophecy because it's a curiosity to know the future, but they discover the Word of God speaks more to a holy life than coming events (see 1 John 3:3). You can't study prophecy and live a dirty life. The whole Word of God must have its way in our hearts. The study of prophecy will have a definite effect upon your life: It will either bring you closer to Christ, or it will take you farther from Him.

NEXT: Who are those two witnesses doing miracles and pointing people to God?

A close-up, soft-focus photograph of a person's hands clasped in prayer over an open Bible. The person is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved shirt. The Bible is open, and the pages are visible. The background is a textured, brownish surface.

*The study of prophecy will have
a definite effect upon your life:*

*It will either bring you closer to Christ,
or it will take you farther from Him.*



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 16

THE TWO WITNESSES



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 11**



Listen at TTB.org/Revelation to **Revelation 11:3-12**

When will this Tribulation end? During the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet, God gives us extra, encouraging information about His plan for the end.

In the next 42 months, the “Time of the Gentiles” will run out. Jesus talked about this last half of the Tribulation in Luke 21:24, saying, “Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Well, that time is coming quickly. This season when Gentile hostility towards Israel is most intense is when Gentiles will dominate (“trample”) the outer court of the temple and the rest of Jerusalem for 42 months. The Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week (see Daniel 9:27) and anti-Semitism will peak in intensity.

In his vision, John is given a rod and told to measure how long the Time of the Gentiles will continue, after which judgment will come on them. Every time God directs measurements in either the Old or New Testament, it relates to the nation Israel (see Jeremiah 31:38-39; Zechariah 2). Since you measure your personal property, God’s instructions to measure “the temple” likely means He is resuming possession of it. John isn’t told to measure common things or Gentile things, so measuring the temple indicates God’s favor.

The “temple of God” refers to both the *holy place* and the *holy of holies*, not including the courtyards. This is evidently the temple the Jews will build in Jerusalem either before or during the first three and a half years of Daniel’s seventieth week (see Daniel 7:25, 9:27, 12:11). This puts us back on Old Testament ground, for there’s no temple given to the church. (The church *is* a temple of the Holy Spirit today, see Ephesians 2:21-22.) God also instructs John to measure the altar, referring to the golden altar of prayer since the altar for burnt offering was in the outer court. He was to measure (or count) the worshippers, too—godly Jews who will worship God.

During these 42 months, we also will meet two witnesses who will prophesy in sackcloth for the entire 1260 days. (By the way, Scripture has always required two witnesses to bear testimony to anything before it was to be heard in the Old Testament and the church; see Deuteronomy 17:6 and Matthew 18:16.)

We don’t know exactly who these witnesses are, except that they are human. It might be Elijah, since he was predicted to return (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 17:11). These two witnesses are called “lampstands standing before the God of the earth” (v. 4). Elijah was fond of saying, “The LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand” (1 Kings 17:1). These witnesses are two lampstands; they are lights in the world.

John the Baptist may be the second witness. As the forerunner of Christ at His first coming, he was similar to Elijah in manner and message. Both knew what it was to oppose the forces of darkness and to stand alone for God against impossible odds. They trained well for this task. “Clothed in sackcloth” is becoming both to John the Baptist who would be the witness of the New Testament, and to Elijah who would be the witness of the Old Testament.

These two witnesses likely appeared during the first half of the Tribulation up until the Beast appears. Their work is described in Old Testament language—two olive trees suggest the vision in Zechariah 4 when the lampstands are Joshua and Zerubbabel, whom the Holy Spirit empowered to stand against insurmountable difficulties (see Zechariah 4:6). The Holy Spirit will also be present during the Great Tribulation Period.

These two witnesses are lights before the powers of darkness. The Holy Spirit fills them with miraculous power to bring fire down from heaven (sounds like Elijah in 1 Kings 18:38 and 2 Kings 1:10). John the Baptist also announced the One who would baptize with fire (see Matthew 3:11).

These two witnesses are immortal and immune to all attacks until their mission is completed. (By the way, all of God's people are immortal until God has accomplished His purpose through them.) God gives them unlimited authority, the same power Christ will have when He returns to the earth. The witnesses can control rainfall on the earth, and they can turn water into blood. They can strike the earth with any plague they wish, as often as they wish. They have God's confidence and power to do what they think best.

They will prophesy about God for 1260 days, and then their testimony will be complete. Then, and only then, will God allow their lives to be touched. In the midst of "the week" (halfway through the Tribulation), the Antichrist, also known as "the Beast," and "the Man of Sin" who is moving to power, will bring back first the Roman Empire. Then, when he gets the whole world under his control, he will overcome and kill these two witnesses. This is a temporary victory of darkness over light, evil over righteousness, hell over heaven, and Satan over God, because God is going to let Satan loose during this period.

These witnesses will live up to their name. They are *witnesses*, Greek for *martyr*. They will be killed in the street of Jerusalem, the same sad designation, "where also our Lord was crucified" (v. 8). Their bodies (carcasses) are left on the street like roadkill. (These are crude, cold barbaric days in the Tribulation.)

As their bodies lie in the street, the world will be watching them, startled to hear they are dead. Some will be skeptical. All the television networks will have their cameras trained on their bodies. Three and a half days they will lay there, and the world will celebrate. They hated these witnesses. People will give gifts to each other; it will be the Devil's Christmas, celebrating the Antichrist's victory.

Then three and a half days later, something happens—

While the world is celebrating the death of these witnesses and while the television cameras are focused upon them, God will breathe life back into them, and the witnesses will stand up on their feet (literally they will "resurrect"). All the networks will regret their cameras' focus, because they won't want to give the news.

Then everyone will hear a voice out of heaven saying, “Come up here” (v. 12). And the witnesses will be caught up into heaven in a cloud of glory, just like the ascension and the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a sight!

We’re still in the lull between the sixth and the seventh trumpet in this second “woe!”

In that exact hour, a huge earthquake shook Jerusalem (limited just to Jerusalem, just like when Jesus died on the cross in Matthew 27:51-52). One tenth of the city collapsed, killing 7,000—the expression used here means these were people of prominence, who got their names into the headlines when the Antichrist came to power.

Add these 7,000 slain to those already slain. A fourth of the world’s population were killed at first, and then a third of the population of the world—totaling over 50%—and now thousands more. Again, no wonder the Lord Jesus said the days of the Tribulation had to be short or else no one would be left alive.

In the aftermath, some people turn to God, overwhelmed by His power; others are filled with terror; and still others are furious with God because He is judging sin, going against the lie they believed that God never punishes evil.

This ends the second woe. The third woe begins shortly, though not immediately. The blowing of the seventh trumpet ushers us chronologically right to the entrance of eternity, leading us beyond the Great Tribulation into the Millennium. The seventh trumpet likewise opens up to us the seven personalities of chapters 12 and 13.

The third woe begins when Satan, one of the personalities, is cast down to earth. You can just imagine the havoc that will cause.

NEXT: A broad outline of coming events ushers us to the door of eternity.

LESSON 17

INTERLUDE

A VIEW OF HEAVEN WHEN HELL'S ON EARTH



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 11:15-19**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 11:13–12:1**

John's revelation continues to unfold future events on earth as God reveals them to him in his vision. The scene John saw next was in heaven.

In the middle of all the woes and judgments of the Tribulation, God inserts here an encouragement for the Christians left on the earth. Most of those who have turned to Jesus Christ for salvation have been martyred, and those who are sealed must continue on earth through these intense days. God now gives them a glimpse of glory so they'll know His promised rescue is coming.

"Then the seventh angel sounded [the trumpet] ..." (v. 15). This event is so important to understanding the rest of the book, that it deserves a pause. In God's program, this chapter brings us chronologically to the breathtaking entrance of eternity where the mystery of God finally is revealed. The Holy Spirit now summarizes events that lead us as far as Revelation 21 where eternity begins. This broad outline ushers us to the door of eternity.

At the opening of the seventh seal, there is silence in heaven. Then, immediately after the seventh trumpet sounds, "loud voices in heaven" begin to sing. All of God's created intelligences in the whole host of heaven can see the end now and are jubilant in anticipation of evil's end so close

at hand. It's a time of great joy for them. "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (v. 15).

Today, the kingdoms of this world are under Satan and he rules them as one kingdom. The totality of civilization and society of which men boast self-improvement but which becomes more godless and wicked each day, is a condemned civilization moving toward judgment. Christ Jesus will depose the satanically-energized world rulers who have prevailed for so long, Satan's kingdom will crumble and be delivered to the Lord Jesus Christ to rule. Revelation 19 will unpack the details of this upset when the Lord Jesus puts down rebellion. The seventh trumpet moves us along, step by step, toward eternity.

This revelation of God's Kingdom come causes the 24 elders sitting before God on their thrones to fall on their faces in worship. They sing, "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned" (v. 17). They praise God that finally He will take His rightful place. Until now God had allowed powers hostile to His people to control the earth, but now He will begin to rule directly. Their adoration then causes the church in heaven to worship and celebrate the coming of Christ to the earth. This will at last be the answer to our prayer, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10).

But even as worship fills the halls of heaven, rebellion still sweeps the earth. The nations are filled with rage at God's judgment, revealing how man's stubborn rebellion will continue to the very end. They've believed the lie that God doesn't judge sin and think we only get better every day—while, actually, we just get worse.

As part of this summary, we learn that the dead then will be judged for their sin at the Great White Throne judgment (see Revelation 20:11-15). God will judge sin righteously and reward the faithful graciously. The Old Testament saints and Tribulation saints will stand before Him and be rewarded for their faith as the kingdom begins. The church has already stood before the Lord at the Bema Seat and received the crowns they wear on their heads (we've seen them on the 24 elders).

And then in summary, we read that the time is now here to “destroy those who destroy the earth” (v. 18). This refers to both man and Satan (see 1 Peter 5:8). John will soon tell us of the destruction of some of these destroyers, specifically: Babylon, the Beast, the false prophet, and Satan.

The next scene we see ushers us to the glad gate of eternity. The doors of God’s temple in heaven fly open, and the Ark of His Covenant is clearly seen surrounded by flashes of lightning and thunder, an earthquake, and a fierce hailstorm.

When God’s temple is opened, it means God now is ready to deal with Israel—He opens up access to Himself and receives their worship. He is a covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. His ark is the reminder of His faithfulness, presence, and atonement of Israel. What John saw was not the earthly ark—but its heavenly counterpart (see Hebrews 9:24). God shows it to us now as a sign that He will soon fulfill His covenant promises to Israel. Now He will make a New Covenant with them, writing the Law in their hearts instead of on cold tablets of stone (see Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13).

Revelation 11 opens with the measuring of the temple on earth and closes with the opening of the temple in heaven. It summarizes for us what will be revealed in detail in Revelation 16—19.

NEXT: Meet the seven cast members in the final conflict of the age-old drama between good and evil.

LESSON 18

WHO'S WHO IN REVELATION



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 12**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.ttb.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 12:1-5**, **Revelation 12:6-9**, and **Revelation 12:10-17**

In this cosmic war, John next presents a cast of characters as symbols in this final conflict between Israel and Satan after he is cast out of heaven. This is a pause in the action to describe the players in this age-old drama between good and evil, light and darkness, the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God.

Seven characters represent the natural and supernatural worlds, physical and spiritual, rulers and nations. If you want to understand the drama of Revelation, you need to be clear on the symbolic signs behind these seven cast members.

#1 THE WOMAN:

ISRAEL (VV. 1-2)

The entire book of Revelation revolves around this first personality. Revelation 12 describes a woman as “clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of 12 stars. Then being with child (the Messiah), she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth.”

Who is this woman? Genesis 37:9 decodes her identity for us, with identifying marks of the sun, moon, and stars. This woman symbolizes the nation Israel. No one woman who has ever lived, including the virgin Mary, can fit into this symbol. Neither is this the church of all ages.

The woman is being tormented. Certainly Israel has suffered satanic anti-Semitism from Jesus' birth to the present. Satan knew Jesus Christ would come from this nation and has hated Israel from the start. (See Genesis 3:15.)

To get away from Satan, this woman runs to the wilderness, where God has prepared a place for her. During the most intense part of the Great Tribulation, God protects this remnant of Israel.

#2 THE RED DRAGON:

SATAN (VV. 3-4)

The second character is the red dragon. We must take this symbol for Satan very seriously, not as a comic strip characterization. We know this is symbolic of Satan because Revelation 12:9 tells us so. The red dragon is clearly identified as Satan "that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world."

In this second sign, we see Satan's true character with all the wrappings removed. He's called "great" because he has vast power. He controls the nations of the world and tempted the Lord Jesus with them if He would only worship him (see Matthew 4:8-9). Worship is Satan's ultimate goal. The kingdoms of this world are his, and he controls them today.

The symbolic dragon is "red" because Satan has been a murderer from the beginning (see John 8:44) with no regard for human life. He is called a "dragon" because of his vicious character. Originally, he was created as Lucifer, son of the morning (see Ezekiel 28:12-19), but he is now the epitome of evil and the depth of degradation. He is the most dangerous being in all of God's creation.

The dragon's seven heads suggest the perfection of wisdom which characterized Satan when he was the "covering cherub." Ezekiel 28:12 said in his origin, Satan was "... full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." He's smart and clever and wise. We're no match for him. If we stand against him in our own strength, we will fail. His ten horns suggest the final division of the Roman Empire, which is dominated by Satan and his final effort to rule the world. The crowns represent kingly authority and rulership.

Can't you just picture this hideous dragon, sweeping his tail across the sky and dragging away a third of the stars of heaven? This of course pictures the extent of the rebellion in heaven when one third of the angelic host followed Satan to their own destruction (see Daniel 8:10; Jude 1:6).

The dragon hates the Man-Child, Jesus Christ, because it was predicted from the Garden of Eden that the Child would be Satan's undoing (see Genesis 3:15). He waits for the woman to give birth so he can devour the child.

#3 THE CHILD OF THE WOMAN: JESUS CHRIST (VV. 5-6)

The wonderful "male child" is the Lord Jesus Christ, who will "rule all nations with a rod of iron." When Jesus Christ returns, He will put down all rebellion on the earth. How will He do it? He will break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like pieces of pottery (see Psalm 2:9).

"And her Child was caught up to God and His throne" speaks of Jesus' ascension. The Gospels emphasize the death of Christ. The Epistles emphasize the resurrection of Christ. And Revelation emphasizes His ascension.

The Revelation unveils the ascended Christ, the glorified Christ, the Christ who is coming in glory. The Revelation rests on the fact of the Ascension. He is the One who has been opening the seals that have brought to pass everything that has happened.

#4 MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL WARS WITH THE DRAGON (VV. 7-12)

It's hard to imagine, but John tells us "war broke out in heaven." Up to this point, Satan still has access to heaven and, as long as he does, there will be trouble. Evidently Satan appeared before God and was able to be heard. Remember how he accused Job (Job 1-2) and Peter (Luke 22:31)?

This creature warring against God in heaven is no other than "the old serpent" from the Garden of Eden. He's called devil, meaning "slanderer or accuser." He is the Satan, "the adversary." During the Great Tribulation, Satan will be able to completely deceive men (today he deceives only partially, relative to God and the Word of God). He caused Eve to distrust God: "*Has God said you should not eat of that tree? You just can't trust Him, can you?*" (see Genesis 3:1-5). Satan tries to deceive us, making us think we are better

than we are. He builds us up and tells us we can become gods and how wonderful that would be. But it's all a trap. He despises us because God loves us. This is the dragon battling heaven.

Then up steps Michael, an archangel, whose specific ministry is to protect Israel (Daniel 10:13). Once again, a fierce struggle breaks out, since Satan won't back off easily. But Michael and his angels prevail, and Satan and his angels are thrown out of heaven (see Luke 10:18). And a mighty cheer breaks out in heaven from among the redeemed.

This is the first great demonstration of power to be exerted against evil since Jesus' death and resurrection. He paved the way for Satan being cast out of heaven. This is the beginning of the movement that will eventually lead to the Lord Jesus taking over the reins of government on earth.

Though the redeemed in heaven are celebrating Satan, the treacherous, dangerous, and deadly serpent being thrown out forever, there is anguish on the earth. This is the third woe that extends through the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath. The only consolation is that everyone knows, including Satan, that his sojourn on earth will be brief and intense—just 42 months.

THE DRAGON PERSECUTES THE WOMAN (VV. 13-16)

When the dragon lands on earth, he immediately goes after the woman (Israel). This is the last wave of anti-Semitism, called the Time of Jacob's Trouble, that will roll over the world, and it will be the worst. Satan knows his time is short. He hates Israel because Jesus Christ, the man, came from this nation.

God protects the woman by flying her to safety in the wilderness on the wings of a great eagle. This picture reminds Israel of the times God has rescued them in the past (Exodus 19:4). Here again in the Great Tribulation, Israel can't deliver themselves, nor is anyone willing to help them. But God will get them out on eagles' wings by His grace. He will provide for them and sustain them with manna from heaven and water from the rock, possibly the same way He did for Israel when they wandered in the wilderness in Exodus.

Satan, as the dragon, will still try to destroy Israel using every means possible. No one can stop him but God. In Ezekiel's picture of the last days, the king of the north is seen marching on Israel, with nothing to stop him. God destroys the enemy with natural forces when he invades Israel (Ezekiel 38:22).

#5 THE REMNANT (V. 17)

When the dragon sees how God protects the woman, he shifts his strategy of attack and goes after “the rest of her offspring”—perhaps the remnant who is God’s witness in this period: The 144,000 who have been sealed. They are obeying God, holding firmly to the testimony of Jesus, and sharing the good news throughout the world. They are now more than ever in Satan’s bull’s eye. Every act of anti-Semitism is inspired by Satan, and now this is his supreme effort to destroy the nation of Israel. From the brickyards of Pharaoh’s Egypt, Haman’s gallows, Herod’s cruel edict, through Hitler’s purge, and to the world of the Great Tribulation, Satan has led the attack against these people—all because of the Man-Child, Jesus Christ.

#6 & 7 THE FINAL TWO (CH. 13)

The final two personalities in this cosmic drama are similar to the dragon, because they are both empowered and controlled by Satan. The first symbolic character is a wild beast out of the sea. He represents political power and is the Antichrist. The second symbolic character is the wild beast out of the earth—a religious leader who leads the world in worship of the Antichrist.

This is now the midpoint of the Tribulation when the Antichrist sets himself up as God (see 2 Thessalonians 2:4).

NEXT: Meet the final two of the seven players.



God will judge sin
righteously & reward
the faithful graciously.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 19

TWO WILD BEASTS

THE ANTICHRIST AND FALSE PROPHET



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 13**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.ttb.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 13:1**, **Revelation 13:2-8**, and **Revelation 13:9-18**

We're engaged in a cosmic war, with characters symbolically described representing Israel, Satan, Michael the archangel, and of course, Jesus Christ, the victor. Now John describes the final two of the seven players. These are Satan's agents: The wild beast out of the sea—a political power; and the wild beast out of the earth—a religious leader.

John tells us these two beasts are *wild*—it's bad enough to be a beast, but to be a wild beast compounds the injury. There's much debate about who these beasts represent, but to determine a king, you must look at his kingdom. The first beast is the Antichrist, the political ruler over the restored Roman Empire (see Revelation 16:10). The second beast then is a man, the false prophet, a religious leader who leads the world in the worship of the first beast, the Antichrist.

To be antichrist, you must be against the Jesus Christ of the Bible. Any minister or other person who denies the deity of Christ is antichrist—he is *against* Christ. This Antichrist, the wild beast, is a deceiver—he *pretends* to be Christ and can even do miracles, but he is antichrist. The Lord Jesus Christ warned us in Matthew 24:24 that many deceivers will come in His name, saying, "I am the Christ." He tells us to test the spirits to be sure we're following truth.

THE WILD BEAST OUT OF THE SEA: THE ANTICHRIST

Satan calls the first beast out of the sea. John pictures Satan standing on the shore and calling the wild beast out of the nations of the world, of mankind, like the restless sea. This is Satan's masterpiece. The Beast has "seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name" (v. 1). All the heads and horns and crowns link him directly to the dragon and Satan will give "him his power, his throne, and great authority" (v. 2). And of course, its head is guilty of blasphemy—making oneself equal with God, usurping His place, and slandering and taking God's name in vain. This was Satan's primary ambition—to be worshipped as God.

God apparently takes His hands off this earth for a while and turns it over to Satan. God must let Satan demonstrate that, when he is given full sway, he will not be able to produce. Otherwise, Satan would always be able to say to God from the lake of fire, *"You never gave me a chance. If You would have taken Your hands off and let me alone, I would have been able to accomplish my purpose and establish a second kingdom."* Today the Holy Spirit is in the world, and He curtails evil and smothers resistance, although it may not look that way. Just think what it will be like when evil men are permitted to have their day. Satan will have full sway.

Old Testament Daniel's prophecy gives us great insight into Revelation. In Daniel 7, the fourth beast pictures this wild beast out of the sea. There it represents the prophetic history of the Roman Empire, down to "the little horn" and his destruction. That fourth beast went dormant for a little while, and then out of one of its seven heads came up ten horns, out of which came a little horn. The little horn put together three of the horns and overtook the other seven.

At the time John wrote the book of Revelation, much of Daniel's prophecy had been fulfilled. The first three beasts—Babylon, the lion; Media-Persia, the bear; and Graeco-Macedonia, the panther—had all been fulfilled. When Daniel gave it, it was prophecy, but it was fulfilled by John's time. Therefore, John focuses on the fourth beast and on the little horn because the fourth beast, the Roman Empire, had appeared. John was living in the time of the Roman Empire, having been exiled to the Isle of Patmos by the Roman emperor, Domitian. Already, signs of weakness and decay were visible in the empire, and John was witnessing what was still future in Daniel's day.

However, in the Revelation the little horn shows up as a wild beast, now ruling and controlling the restored Roman Empire. The little horn of Daniel 7 and the wild beast of Revelation 13 are identical.

The wild beast is the Man of Sin and Antichrist, the final world dictator (see 2 Thessalonians 2:3). The last verse of Revelation 13 confirms it, identifying the number of the Beast as 666. Even today the stage is being set in world politics; not that prophecy is being fulfilled, but it reveals it *can* be fulfilled—and Satan is going to supply the man.

John describes the Beast as really a weird-looking creature, a composite of animals, just like Daniel saw in Daniel 7. A panther, representing the outward culture of Greece; feet like a bear, devouring wealth and splendor like Media-Persia; a lion with eagle's wings, like Babylon, with unquestioned authority. The Man of Sin will be one of the toes of the image that Daniel saw, composed partly of clay and partly of iron; he will rule with the autocracy and dictatorial authority of Nebuchadnezzar.

This final world dictator comes to his zenith under Satan's domination. Satan will raise him up and empower and energize him for his wicked dictatorial role. The Antichrist is the closest to an incarnation of Satan we have in Scripture.

In his meteoric rise to power, the Antichrist appears to have risen from the dead (impersonating Jesus Christ). This was a deception because Satan has no power to raise the dead. He's not a life-giver; he's a devil, a destroyer, a death-dealer. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can raise the dead. (See what Jesus says about this in John 5:21-29.)

The Antichrist's fake resurrection will be the great delusion, the big lie of the Great Tribulation. God will give them over to believe it (see 2 Thessalonians 2:11). Those who reject the resurrection of Christ will buy the imitation resurrection of Antichrist. The challenge of that day will be: "What has Christ done that Antichrist has not done?" The Antichrist will fool the world. Believers say, "Christ is risen!" And the boast of the unsaved will be: "So is Antichrist!" The Roman Empire will spring back into existence under the cruel hand of a man who faked a resurrection, and a gullible world who rejected Jesus Christ will finally be taken in by this forgery. The Antichrist will promise, "I am going to give you peace," and the people will say "Hallelujah!" and put him into office. He'll have charisma and talk big and the people will love him. This is Satan's supreme moment. The whole world will worship him ... for three and a half years.

Blasphemy is the Antichrist's platform. He'll speak against God, His tabernacle, and everyone in heaven. He'll war against the saints still on the earth (those who have turned to Jesus Christ during the Tribulation; the church is already with the Lord in heaven). Many saints, both Jew and Gentile, will suffer martyrdom. But God still extends grace to anyone who will listen and respond to His Word. He invites anyone to hear the Word of God at any time, in any age, because faith comes from hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

The Antichrist will rule the world like no one has ever done. God tells His own, "Don't resist him." Instead, they were to bear with patience and faith the awful trials that come even on God's children.

THE WILD BEAST OUT OF THE EARTH: A RELIGIOUS LEADER

The first beast is a political leader; the second wild beast is a religious leader, who comes out of the land. This fake messiah will most certainly come from Israel. He has two horns like a lamb, imitating the Lord Jesus. But this pseudo-lamb doesn't "take away the sin of the world," he adds and multiplies it in the world. He will do a lot of talking about loving everyone, but underneath he is a dangerous beast, just as is the first beast, deceiving the whole world (see Matthew 7:15, 24:24). This false prophet is like a "John the Baptist" to the first beast, but with the same power. He presents the world with something new to worship, the Man of Sin, the last world dictator (see Daniel 11:36-39; Matthew 24:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10).

This second wild beast leads a movement to kill the harlot of Revelation 17, which is the false church that enters the Tribulation. John doesn't recognize that group as the church but calls it "the harlot." The true church, which has now left the earth, is called the bride of Christ.

In Satan's power, both the Antichrist and the false prophet can heal and work miracles. Their signs awe everyone and a strong delusion sweeps the world, with the exception of God's elect—those who are His *cannot* be deceived. The Antichrist will put his own image in the temple at Jerusalem, just as Jesus described as the abomination of desolation (see Matthew 24:15). This image will appear to breathe and speak, and everyone is forced to bow and worship the image or else be killed. Everyone is also required to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead that signifies allegiance to the Beast in order to buy or sell.

The false prophet now marries religion and business. Today we have shadows of how this prophecy can certainly happen, though they are not yet “the mark of the beast.” We don’t know yet what that mark will be. Better than speculation, we should spend our time telling others of Jesus Christ that we might reduce the population of those who have to go through the Tribulation.

**NEXT: Previews of coming attractions—
but for a special audience.**

LESSON 19

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Compare Old Testament Daniel 7:1-8, 21, 25 with Revelation 13.
What does this tell you about Satan's schemes and God's plans?

2. Over this whole chapter is written the word, "deceived." From the beginning, Satan has always been a Deceiver, and now his lies have fully spread. To deceive means "to cause to accept as true or valid what is false or invalid, ensnare." How does Satan use "religious" words and pictures to whitewash his evil strategy in Revelation 13? How does he do it today? What are his common deceptions in our culture?

3. How does this description of the Tribulation compel you to tell others of Jesus Christ? What are specific words or phrases that can help you verbalize the truth of what's coming when you talk with those who don't know Jesus today? In addition to escaping judgment, how would you also encourage them to accept His offer of forgiveness?

LESSON 20

INTERLUDE

A VIEW OF THE FUTURE



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 14**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.ttb.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 14:1-4**, **Revelation 14:5-8**, **Revelation 14:9-20**, and **Revelation 14:19–15:1**

As we walk through the days of the Tribulation, John continues to narrate the vision he's been told to write down about the judgments still ahead. The reel continues to roll, and the story continues to unfold. This chapter contains previews of coming attractions—but with a special audience in mind.

Revelation 14 records a message to those still in the conflict, the ones living day to day in a living war against evil and Satan and his henchmen. Will it turn out OK for us?

Yes, John reports. You will be harassed and sacrificed like sheep. But your sacrifice will not be meaningless.

This is the darkest day and the most horrible hour in world history. It is truly hell's holiday. How will God's people make it through this period if they refuse to receive the mark of the beast? Can they remain faithful to the Lord to the end against overwhelming odds? What will happen to the two beasts?

The two wild beasts we met in Revelation 13 are only half the story. Now John reveals the other side of the picture—the victorious stance of the Lamb and His followers in a future so real he writes about it as if its already happened. (Chronologically it will happen in Revelation 16:17–22:5).

Here's the scene: The Shepherd who began with 144,000 sheep now identifies Himself as the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. And no, He didn't lose one! He redeemed them, He sealed them, and He kept them, for He is the Great Shepherd of the sheep. These sheep are of a different fold from the flock we are in today. Their Good Shepherd brought them through the Tribulation.

The Lamb—not the two beasts—has the last word. Babylon—the great political, commercial, and religious capital of the world during the Great Tribulation—will fall. The followers of the Beast will be judged. Even though many of Jesus' own will die for Him, they will not lose. They win in every way that matters.

The Millennial Kingdom opens with a peaceful, pastoral scene. In Revelation 19, the Lamb of God returns to the earth to reign from Mount Zion in Jerusalem, the city of the great King (see Psalm 2:6). This is the same Lamb we saw in Revelation 5—7 and 12—13. The darkness of the Tribulation days are fading away, and the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing in His wings. He stands there with the 144,000 who had His name and His Father's name inscribed on their foreheads.

Then a voice comes from heaven, “like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder” (v. 2). And the voice seemed like music, singing a new song which only the redeemed could sing.

Have you ever heard a choir of 144,000 voices? Up to this time earth has been out of tune with heaven, but now Satan's rule is over, and the earth and heaven are in tune. The 144,000 learn the new song and join the harmony of heaven. They do not go to heaven but have been redeemed to enter the Millennium on earth.

These 144,000 have kept themselves from the sins of the Tribulation day; they've been pure when immorality spread like a virus on the earth. They also kept themselves from the worship of the Beast and his image. They refused to believe his big lie. They would not be deceived. They emerged purified from the fires of the Tribulation—because they were good? No, they are without blemish because they are clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

John then reports on a scene, summarized here, that will be unpacked in detail in chapters 15—20. He saw an angel in a line with six other angels, “flying in the midst of heaven” shouting to the earth, “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” (vv. 6-7). This angel serves as a broadcasting station to the entire world.

Today, the gospel has been given to us to share. Angels would love to proclaim it, but they aren’t allowed to during our age. But in the Tribulation, the times get so intense only angels can get God’s message to the world. Angels are indestructible.

In effect, this angel is saying to God’s people, *“Get wise, get smart, because you need to fear God. God saved you by His grace, but He is going to judge this earth.”* This is God’s final call before the return of Christ in judgment.

Another angel announces the fall of the city of Babylon, the fountainhead of every false religion. The announcement is made as if the event had already taken place. The world is intoxicated by this city. Everyone is fascinated with its satanic worship, exorcism, and the cults based here (see Jeremiah 25:15-26, 51:7; Isaiah 13:11, 19). But just wait until Revelation 17.

A third angel announces that anyone who received the mark of the beast would fall under God’s wrath. Jesus will move personally and directly in putting down the rebellion against Him here on earth.

In this intense time under the Beast, no one could assume a neutral position. If you refused the mark of the beast, you starved. But if you received it, you rebelled against God and will “drink of the wine of the wrath of [God]” (v. 8; see also Psalm 75:8).

Many of God’s Tribulation saints, from the 144,000 Jews and of the untold number of Gentiles who will be saved during that time, will lay down their lives for Christ. During this horrific season, it will be better to die than to live. A voice from heaven told John to “write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on ... that they may have rest from their labors, and their works follow them’” (v. 13). The Lord will reward them for their faithfulness, patience, and good work. God doesn’t save anyone for their works, but He does reward us for them.

John then gets another spectacular view—on a white cloud, the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand—descends from heaven (see Matthew 24:30). The crown on His head confirms this is our Lord Jesus, the hero of Revelation. At last we see Him, not as prophet or priest, but as King, His office that has always been connected with His return to the earth.

The sharp sickle in His hand reminds us of a frequent image in the Bible of God's judgment of the wicked. Just then, another angel comes out of the heavenly temple, crying in a great voice, "*It's harvest time! Swing your sickle and reap. Earth's harvest is ripe for reaping.*" And the Lord gives a mighty sweep of His sickle and begins to harvest the earth in a single stroke (see Matthew 13:39-42). Harvest time in the Old Testament often spoke of this as "the Day of the Lord" (see Joel 3:13-14). The earth had yielded a crop of unbelievers, which now, at the end of the Tribulation, is coming into judgment. The angel gathered them from the earth to be judged in God's great wine press. The treading of grapes was a familiar picture for the execution of divine wrath on God's enemies.

In Isaiah's day men would get into the winepress barefooted to tread out the grapes. The red juice would stain their clothes. In this picture of the Lord Jesus, there is blood on His beautiful garments as though He had trodden the winepress. When Christ came the first time, He shed His blood for all mankind, but some rejected it. Now He is trodding down the wicked, and it is their blood that is shed. What a picture this is! They rejected the precious blood of the Lamb, but now the blood of those who defied God and followed and worshiped the Beast bathes the earth. Frightful! As a ripe grape is mashed and the juice flies in every direction, so will little man fall into the vat of God's judgment. This will be Armageddon—the mount of slaughter that will cover all of Israel in a final war beginning in the middle of the seven years of tribulation and is finished when Jesus Christ returns in person to the earth.

These scenes of judgment are terrifying. The only remedy for sin is the redemption Christ offered when He shed His blood on the cross and paid the penalty for our sins. We deserve this judgment; our only escape is to accept the work of Christ for us on Calvary's cross. Hebrews 2:3 asks a question even God can't answer: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Escape what? Escape judgment—the week of years is *judgment*. The only way out is to accept Christ's offer of salvation. This judgment must inevitably come to those who reject Jesus Christ's sacrifice for them. If God is just (and He is), this naturally leads to *judgment*. Someone must pay. If you refuse Christ's substitutionary death, then you will pay. Nothing straightens out your life like knowing God is holy, that the Lord Jesus Christ is righteous, and that He will not tolerate sin in your life.

With this future view in mind, John unpacks the final judgments that will come next, leading up to Christ's victorious return putting an end to the Great Tribulation.

NEXT: The final set of judgments pour out on the earth.

LESSON 21

THE WORST IS YET TO COME



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 15–16**



Listen at TTB.org/Revelation to **Revelation 15:2-7**, **Revelation 15:8–16:8**, **Revelation 16:9-17**, and **Revelation 16:18–17:5**

If you thought the worst was over, take a deep breath. The worst is yet to come. The seven seals are now opened, the seventh trumpet has blasted, and now comes the seven bowls of wrath to pour out on the wicked earth. These are the last and most intense and devastating of any of the judgments yet.

... Because the purpose of the Great Tribulation is judgment. It's to give Satan his final opportunity and then to render the logical consequence. In His marvelous, infinite grace, God will remove the church before this time of tribulation. If you willingly accept His grace, then you can escape this horrific conclusion. But even the church needs to know what the unsaved will go through, and in that sobering reality make us all a more zealous witness for Christ today.

In a brief interlude before the angels pour out the bowls of God's wrath, now finished, John ushers us to heaven where we see another sign, a dress rehearsal of the last act of man's day on earth. These extra details John has given us starting in Revelation 12 retrace events with added detail. (Like Genesis 1 is a summary of creation and Genesis 2 gives the details. The Gospels also give similar accounts of Jesus' life and ministry but from different perspectives.)

God's wrath, now at its zenith and completely expressed, marks the final judgment. He has been slow to anger, but here ends His longsuffering. Judgment in the final stages of the Day of Wrath comes from God, not from Satan's antics in his thrust for world domination through the wild beasts. Judgment comes directly from the throne of God.

God is now making a final display of His wrath and brings earth's sordid tragedy of sin to its conclusion.

And watching it all from a heavenly perspective are those who gave their lives in the Tribulation. They're standing on "a sea of glass mingled with fire" (15:2), a picture of the Beast's persecution. No one could have made it through without God's protective seal. They've laid down their lives for Jesus and were faithful to Him until death. These Tribulation saints came through the fires of persecution on the earth and yet have not lost their song.

They sang "the song of Moses" (v. 3; see Exodus 15:1-21 and Deuteronomy 32:1-43)—that celebrates God's deliverance, salvation, and faithfulness—and the song of the Lamb. Jesus Christ, the King of the nations, will be universally worshipped. There will be no place He will not be worshipped. Even those in hell will acknowledge Jesus is supreme authority, that He is running the universe, and it belongs to Him. They will acknowledge the truth of the glory of God—they'll have to.

The Tribulation saints sing: "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" (vv. 3-4).

This testimony, coming from first-hand witnesses of the judgment, breaks our hearts in its beauty and settles in the minds of believers the fact that God is *right* in all that He does. It may not appear so at the time, but by faith we can believe He is just (see Psalm 7:9; 11:7; 107:1, 40, 42). This will happen when God takes charge.

From this worship service, the temple of the tabernacle opens in heaven so seven angels with seven golden bowls can come forward. They're dressed for a priestly service (with linen and precious stones) but are leaving that work of mercy for plagues of judgment. Yearly, a priest would carry a gold bowl of blood into the Holy Place as a symbol of redemption for sin. But with that gift rejected, now sin must be judged. God acts in justice, and the wrath of the Lamb will startle the world.

Old Testament prophets often talked about the cup of iniquity and wrath filling up and spoke of God's patience in waiting for it to fill. Then, when it is full, God moves in judgment. That time has come.

"Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth" (16:1), directed the voice from the temple.

Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ is still in full charge. He was the only One found worthy to open the seven-sealed book, which ushered in this entire series of sevens. He is the One marching to victory. The power and the glory and the majesty belong to Him. This is His judgment upon a world that has rejected the grace of God, and the Father has committed all judgment to Him. Christ is the One who gives the command that sends out these seven angels with the final judgments. There is no longer a delay, no longer an interval or intermission. The hour has come. The order is given, and the seven angels now execute His command.

Pouring out the first bowl (16:2): "A foul and loathsome sore" on everyone who had the mark of the beast. Scripture states the life of the flesh is in the blood, and also *death* is in the blood. These putrefying sores are worse than leprosy or cancer. God reveals physically what man is morally: utterly corrupt. This plague is reminiscent of the sixth plague in Egypt and is the same type of "boil" (see Exodus 9:8-12; by the way, Moses predicted this coming judgment in Deuteronomy 28:15, 27, 35).

Pouring out the second bowl (16:3): The sea becomes blood and everything in it dies. The sea becomes a grave of death instead of a womb of life. Like in the first plague of Egypt, carcasses float to the surface and line the shore. Commerce is paralyzed. Human beings die like flies.

Pouring out the third bowl (16:4-7): Rivers and streams become blood. Now the total water supply of the earth is cut off and causes destruction of human life across the planet. But even the angel of the waters agrees this is a righteous judgment and poetic justice with a vengeance. These who are being judged had made martyrs of God's people, and now God is forcing them to drink blood for the righteous blood they spilled. The martyrs in heaven who ask God how long before He judges evil are now vindicated. God answers their prayer.

Pouring out the fourth bowl (16:8-9): The sun scorches those who blaspheme God yet they still don't repent. Jesus predicted this sign (Luke 21:25) and so did Moses (Deuteronomy 32:24), Isaiah (Isaiah 24:6, 42:25), and

Malachi (Malachi 4:1). To accomplish this, all the Lord has to do is remove one or two blankets of atmosphere. Or He would need only to pull the earth a little closer to the sun—not much—and nothing could survive. Nevertheless, His own are preserved: “The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night” (Psalm 121:6). Though this promise means little to us today, it will be a great comfort to the believer during the Tribulation.

The first three bowl judgments had personal implications; the final three all have political consequences.

Pouring out the fifth bowl (16:10-11): The Beast’s kingdom is darkened. This strange darkness might be called black light. As the sun’s wattage increases, the heat will be greater, but the light will be less. Egypt experienced this during the ninth plague (see Exodus 10:21-22). Isaiah foretold this (Isaiah 60:2) and the prophet Joel described this as the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1-2, 31). Other prophets, Nahum, Amos, and Zephaniah all mention it, as well as our Lord Himself (Mark 13:24). Even the apostle Paul described in Romans 2:4-5 how people will harden their hearts against God’s righteous judgment in the day of wrath. And here it is—and man refuses to turn to God for mercy.

Pouring out the sixth bowl (16:12-16): The river Euphrates dries up. The Euphrates is called “the great river” in the Bible, mentioned over 25 times. It was connected to the sixth Egyptian plague. Once the *cradle* of man’s civilization, now it will be its grave.

Now between the sixth and seventh bowls of wrath is an interlude, like between other sixth and seventh features

John reports a weird and ghastly scene signaling the trinity of hell—Satan, Antichrist, and the False Prophet—along with the demonic masses pouring out of their mouths, acting together to force the nations of the world to march against Israel. They had to destroy God’s purposes on earth. But God made some promises to Abraham and Israel that He’s going to keep.

The Lord Jesus is the only One who can stop this campaign from crushing Israel. Their help doesn’t come from the North or the South or the East or the West—that’s where their *trouble* is coming from. Their help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

It's a tremendous scene: The War of Armageddon, not just a battle, has been going on for half the Tribulation and extends the entire length of the land of Israel. It's God who "gathered them together" (v. 16) on the plain of Esdraelon in central Israel. Satan may think he's commanding the armies, but he is nevertheless fulfilling the Word of God.

Christ, the warrior and King, now says He comes like a thief to end the Tribulation. The whole earth *mourns* His appearing. They would like to shut Him out from ever returning, but He's getting ready to come through space.

Pouring out the seventh bowl (16:17-21): A mighty earthquake shakes the entire world and a hailstorm pummels the earth. As the seventh angel pours out his bowl upon the air, a great voice came from the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" The only One who could deliver His own and set up a righteous kingdom and bring peace to the world is the Lord Jesus Christ. It's His voice that says, "It is done," just like He said from the Cross when the work He accomplished that provides for our salvation was complete. He offers us a finished redemption; but if you won't accept it, there will be a judgment. Those who have refused God's salvation won't escape His judgment.

Let us keep our eyes on Christ through this. He is the Judge now.

Lightning and thunder and voices launched the Tribulation, and now they bring it to an end. This earthquake is so devastating that it divides Jerusalem into three parts, and cities all over the world fall. The earthquake even moves islands and levels mountains. The final act of judgment is the hailstorm—with hailstones ranging between 50 and 100 pounds pummeling the people on the earth. This dramatic deluge brings an end to the Great Tribulation.

NEXT: God turns His attention to Satan's capital city, Babylon.

LESSON 21

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Remember the Old Testament account of Moses being used by God to deliver the children of Israel out of Egypt? Remember the plagues (Exodus 7-12)? Their escape? Their victory song in Exodus 15:1-2 after crossing the Red Sea? In Revelation 15:3-4, the Tribulation saints sing praise to God who has brought victory over Satan, the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and their armies. Read each line aloud and meditate on “the Song of the Lamb.”

2. The Tribulation saints who gave their lives for Christ sing this song from heaven, declaring that God is right in all He does. How does this scene impact you? As a group, read and discuss Psalm 7:9, 11:7, 107:1, 42.

3. “It is done.” After the seventh bowl is poured out, “a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done’” (Revelation 16:17). We’ve heard that phrase before. Jesus said this from the Cross when the work He accomplished that provides for our salvation was complete. How are these two statements connected?

Our Lord
Jesus,
the hero of
Revelation.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 22

THE HARLOT, THE BEASTS, AND BABYLON



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 17–18**



Listen at TTB.org/Revelation to **Revelation 16:18–17:5**, **Revelation 17:6-18**, **Revelation 18:1-8**, and **Revelation 18:9-24**

Since Satan was kicked out of heaven, he's always had a headquarters on earth. In these last days, that home base is Babylon. You may recognize that as the name of an ancient city, but the Bible also uses this name to describe a spiritual world system that wars against God.

The Antichrist, the wild beast that is the restored political Roman Empire, has a partner in his world domination scheme. Called “the harlot,” this evil sidekick is the false church, the group that remains after the true church has been raptured. Rather than being “the bride of Christ,” God calls it a harlot. These people never trusted Christ as Savior and were never in the body of Christ. They wielded religion like a weapon and controlled the masses. When the Tribulation began, the “kings of the earth” saw how an unholy alliance would help them conquer the world.

John describes the harlot as “sitting on a scarlet beast ... arrayed in purple and scarlet ... having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication” (17:3-4). She is the religious intoxication of the anti-church, a fake and false gospel. This cup makes the world drunk.

She doesn't wear a crown, but rather the mark of her profession, a disgraceful title for the "church" which should belong to Christ as a bride. Babylon is the fountainhead for all false religion; therefore she is "the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth" (17:5). She is Rome, the religious capital of the world, having inherited all the religions of the world when the true church left the earth.

John was baffled by this whole scene, and so the angel explains the mystery of this woman. The wild beast "was" speaks of the past Roman Empire. But it "is not" and "will ascend out of the bottomless pit" (17:8). Satan's reactivation of the Roman Empire will be his gift to the Antichrist. Everyone will worship him for his brilliant *coup d'état*. (But God's saints won't believe the lie; see 1 John 2:20, 27). The world rulers willingly or unwillingly hand over their authority to him and become his puppets. The Beast now is a world dictator.

For a time the Antichrist shares the spotlight with the harlot, but he hates it. So he breaks his covenant with her and destroys her with such violence that it's described as a cannibal picking her bones, then burning them with fire. By eliminating the false church, the way is clear for the Antichrist to be worshipped, as promoted by the False Prophet. The religious center shifts to Jerusalem where the False Prophet puts up his image of the Antichrist to be worshiped.

The reign and religion of Antichrist is the darkest hour earth will know, and yet it is the inevitable end of the distrust that began in the Garden of Eden when man failed to believe God. Having rejected the truth, the only alternative left for people is to believe the big lie, the strong delusion. This end is the just payback of error and evil.

The other Babylon, the commercial center of the world, is loved by the world powers and is the final political capital of the Antichrist, its dictator. In that day, Babylon dominates and rules the world. Everything will center in Babylon. The stock market will be read from Babylon—not New York. Instead of Paris, Babylon will set the styles for the world. A play, to be successful, will have to be a success in Babylon, not London. Everything in that city will be in rebellion against almighty God, and it centers in the Antichrist.

And this is how justice is meted out on him ...

Revelation 18 begins with another angel descending from heaven with a message. This angel, faceless and nameless, has “great authority” and power and lightens the earth with his glory, perhaps because he had just come from God’s presence.

He shouts with a mighty voice, “Babylon the great is fallen” (18:2). We heard this prediction before in Revelation 14:8; now it’s happening. In its destruction, Babylon will become the place where demons of the spirit world are imprisoned during the Millennium. The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah confirm this (see Isaiah 13:19-22; Jeremiah 50:38-40).

Babylon has a long history of accumulated sins, and God has kept record. Finally judgment breaks like a flood on this city and its world system. This is God’s judgment on big business that denies His authority. This is the unholy alliance of government and business that exploit the masses. It may seem God’s judgment is slow, but it is sure.

Another angel shouts from heaven for God’s people to get out of Babylon as fast as they can. *“Don’t get caught up in her sins or in her doom.”* God remembers every evil she’s done and will give her back what she’s given. This is poetic justice (see Obadiah 1:15). God is right and just in what He does (see Obadiah 1:15; Psalm 137).

Babylon’s prosperity blinded her to God’s judgment. Trading is active on the stock market, and everyone buys blue chip issues right up to the moment of judgment. Luxury, arrogance, pride, sin, and self-deception characterize the spirit of this godless city. World peace is in sight, and optimism is the spirit of the day. And then God says, “Enough.”

God destroys this city with fast and final judgment. In one hour, wealth so great is laid desolate. No one dreamed it could be humbled, yet by the time the sun went down, Babylon is nothing but smoldering ruins. When the news goes out, the world is stunned. It howls as Babylon goes down.

The kings of the earth loved commercial Babylon because of the revenue she brought to their coffers, but they desert her like rats leaving a sinking ship; their mourning is both pathetic and contemptible. This frightful picture is the final inferno and catastrophic judgment that clears the way for the Lord Jesus Christ to set up His Kingdom on earth.

From heaven, the viewpoint is different. No funeral procession there—instead, it's a party. The saints prayed for this; the Old Testament prophets predicted it. Now all is fulfilled, and everyone's joyful because God's holiness and justice are vindicated and God's name is exonerated.

Even heaven acts out the drama, the end to the violence, the suddenness, and the complete annihilation of Babylon. Like a stone that makes a big splash and then disappears beneath the waves, Babylon has come to an end.

The big business and politics that served the Antichrist are bankrupt. The wheels of the factories will never turn again. The bright lights of the cities will go out forever. Human trafficking will end. The great tycoons of big business will disappear. Man's sinful career on earth is over. This city deceived the world with the worship of Antichrist—this is the strong delusion, but that is now over.

This was Satan's city, and he was a murderer from the beginning. Babylon's final crime was the slaying of God's people. But now the sad story of man's sin has come to an end.

This frightful period, which the Lord Jesus Christ called the Great Tribulation, is done.

**NEXT: Jesus Christ comes to the earth to bring
an end to this dark, disastrous day.**

LESSON 23

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

IN SUMMARY



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 19:1**



Listen at TTB.org/Revelation to **Revelation 19:1**

Though it felt like a long time coming, the events of the Great Tribulation ended with catastrophic and cataclysmic events happening in rapid succession like the firing of a machine gun.

The Tribulation, called the “seventieth week” in Daniel’s prophecy, spanned seven years. In the Old and New Testaments, Daniel and John divided it into two separate and equal periods of three and a half years each.

After the church is snatched from the earth in the Rapture, the Antichrist comes to power as world dictator on a platform of peace, prosperity, and fame. In the first half of the Tribulation, he brings radical changes in world systems that seem to benefit mankind. He brings a false peace and controls all governments and religion. When that time comes, there will be one world, one religion, and one everything. The world will believe they are entering the Millennium. This is the big lie.

Israel will once again become God’s witness on earth—144,000 strong, sealed by the Spirit of God, they’ll witnesses for God on the earth. God will also seal a great company of Gentiles.

Somewhere near the middle of the seven-year season, the king of the north will move against Israel. This opens the floodgates of war. The Antichrist

now begins to move, and his deception will begin to be revealed. Restless mankind, under Satan's control, begins to march and the Man of Sin, the Antichrist, breaks his covenant with the nation Israel.

The Middle East will become the center of world activity during this period. Ancient Babylon on the Euphrates River will become the political and economic center of the world, and Jerusalem (also called Babylon) will be the religious capital. The Antichrist will rule in Rome, and the False Prophet will rule in Jerusalem. They will—together with the kings of the earth—destroy the false church.

But then, judgment from God will fall swiftly and suddenly on a God-rejecting and blaspheming world. In one fell swoop, 25% of the world's population will be destroyed, and later, another 33% will be blotted out. Nature will be stricken—the grass and trees of the earth, the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens. One disaster after another will fall on the earth, but the heart of man will still be unrepentant. In fact, he will defy and blaspheme the God of heaven.

Then armies will march toward Israel. For three and a half years, the War of Armageddon will rage. Millions will march into the land of Israel and engage in a conflict. When they are destroyed by God, there will be blood up to the bridles of the horses—about three feet deep.

Into this horrible arena of chaos—the chaos of man's making and of Satan's scheming—comes the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

We don't know the day this all begins. We don't know when the church will be snatched away to meet Him in the clouds. It may be soon. It could be today. On the other hand, He may not return for several hundred years. No one can say with certainty when the Lord will return for His church, since on this detail the Word of God is silent.

The best that can be said today is that everything happening now is significant. We live in a great period in world history. Our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. We have been given no signs by which to gauge the time of His return, but we do see the setting of the stage. When everything is in position, the church could be raptured at any moment, and the Tribulation could begin.

The urgency of the hour demands that we live ready.

NEXT: What makes heaven, *heaven*?

LESSON 24

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB AND ARMAGEDDON



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 19**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 19:1**, **Revelation 19:2-11**, and **Revelation 19:11-21**

We've walked through the dark days of the Tribulation, but now the somber gives way to song. In Revelation 19, we turn the page from the ominous days of judgment to bright days of blessing. We walk with John in his vision to the greatest events for this earth—the second coming of Christ to establish His Kingdom on earth. This is the bridge between the Great Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom.

Four hallelujahs open this chapter and the opening of hell closes it. John records he heard a great voice of a mass choir in heaven saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God! For true and righteous are His judgments” (vv. 1-2).

In the worship scenes of Revelation 5-7, we saw the elders, the church, and the uncounted numbers of angels and created intelligences all worshipping God. Now more Tribulation saints have been added to the chorus, and they are going to join the song. This is the first time they have been able to utter the great Old Testament word of praise reserved for final victory—*Hallelujah!* (This is the only time the word is used in the New Testament.)

Hallelujah is a fitting note of praise at this transition in Revelation. The Great Tribulation is over. Jesus is coming. The church is to be united with Christ in marriage. Hallelujah!

The great day is coming when the earth will be released from the bondage of sin. In the meantime, it groans. But one day the groaning will change to hallelujahs.

At the conclusion of all these judgments, those in heaven who have more perfect knowledge than we have are able to say God's judgments are true and right. Our perspective today is incomplete.

The church in heaven sings "hallelujah" because as long as the imposter of the true church, the great harlot, is on earth, the marriage of the Lamb will not take place in heaven. God has avenged the blood of His servants. He tells us to let Him do it, and in His time He does.

Then the 24 elders sing "hallelujah"—this is the last time we see these 24 whom we believe represent the church, because now the church becomes the bride of Christ. They will lay their crowns down and sing together the true "Hallelujah Chorus" and the most profound tribute of praise in the entire Word of God.

This wedding in heaven will include us—as believers, we are part of it—and it'll be the most thrilling experience we'll ever have. The church—the body of believers from Pentecost to the Rapture—are presented to Christ as a bride for a marriage. As a bride, we will reveal the Groom's glory. We'll be on display—sinners saved from hell, now in heaven with absolutely no right to be there except that we belong to Him and claim His righteousness as our own. This relationship between Christ and His church is intimate, different, and delightful. No other creatures will enjoy such sweetness.

After the marriage of the Lamb in heaven, the next great event is Jesus Christ's magnificent return to the earth with His bride with Him. The marriage supper will take place on earth and ushers in the Millennium. Both Israelites and Gentiles who enter the Millennium are the invited guests.

When you read the Word of God you become conscious of Jesus Christ's plan and program for this earth that He follows very carefully. His return to the earth is the climax of all that has happened in Revelation and is the first of seven final things John saw and recorded: Jesus' return, Satan's capture, Satan's binding, the Millennium, Satan's final end, the last judgment, and the new heavens and earth, including the New Jerusalem.

We met Jesus in the Gospel narratives first as a baby as He entered the world the first time. He was meek and lowly. He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, which spoke of peace, not war. He was the Savior who died for sinners.

When heaven opened for us in Revelation 4, we saw the church already there. Now in Revelation 19, the gates of heaven open and Jesus Christ the Lord comes out, seated high on a white horse of warfare. Behind Him follow the armies of heaven, all on white horses and dressed in dazzling white linen. Jesus' eyes are a blaze of fire, out of His mouth comes a sharp sword to conquer the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. He is now the judge of a sinful world, and on His head is the crown of the sole ruler of earth. On His robe, dipped in blood, and on His thigh is written, "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." No one alive doesn't tremble at the sight of Him.

If today you've wondered why God doesn't deal with the evil in the world, look to this day yet future. Jesus is called "Faithful and True" because He comes to execute the long-time program of God. He is making good on God's promises. He is inherently true, not just one who tells the truth, but who is the yardstick of truth. He is addressed as "The Word of God."

His eyes are a flame of fire because He has come to judge the earth and put down its unrighteousness. Upon His head are many crowns; He will be the sole ruler of this earth. He is the King of Kings and He is the Lord of Lords.

The Lord Jesus is dressed in a robe soaked with blood, a picture of Him treading the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of God (see Isaiah 63:1-6). The armies of heaven—legions of angels who do His bidding—follow Him, all mounted on white horses and dressed in dazzling white linen. What a scene!

Jesus also has a name that no one knows but Himself. What is the name? We will discover it in eternity, and it will take that long to really know Him. This is eternal life, to know the one, true God. And the more we know Him, the more exciting He will be. He is what makes heaven, *heaven*.

As Revelation ends, the Lord Jesus repeats what He said from the beginning. He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last" (22:13).

Oh, the name and the person of Jesus, the centerpiece of Scripture and focal point of time. How awesome and unspeakably wonderful He is! The Lamb of God slain before the world began now is lifted up in His rightful place. He has come to judge and make war.

Now on earth, an angel stands in the sun and announces the final battle of Armageddon. He cries with a loud voice, saying to all the flying birds, “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” (vv. 17-18).

And there on the plain of Armageddon stand the Antichrist (the Beast), the False Prophet, the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against Jesus. They defy God right up to the very last.

Imagine that scene! The puny armies of the world look up in shock and awe at Jesus Christ coming from the sky and with Him as part of the parade are His angel armies, dressed in fine white linen and riding white horses to witness His victory.

Obviously the outcome is inevitable. There’s not even a battle. Jesus first casts the Antichrist and the False Prophet into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. The rest of the armies are killed by the sword coming out from Jesus’ mouth. And the birds hold a feast on their flesh.

The sword which comes out of Jesus’ mouth is the Word of God. Sharper and quicker and more powerful than a two-edged sword, this Word spoke the universe into existence, and His words completely vanquish His foes. This is also the Word of God that will save you, if you will only believe Him.

NEXT: God’s answer to the Lord’s prayer.

WE LIVE IN A GREAT PERIOD
IN WORLD HISTORY.

*Our salvation
is nearer than when
we first believed.*



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 25

A THOUSAND YEARS



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 20**



Listen at TTB.org/Revelation to **Revelation 20:1-6**, **Revelation 20:4-9**, **Revelation 20:9-13**, and **Revelation 20:14–21:2**

A millennium, by definition, is a thousand years. The Millennial Kingdom is God's answer to what the Lord prayed, "Your kingdom come ... on earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). For a thousand years, the kingdom of Jesus Christ will last on the earth and at the end, mankind will have its final test under near ideal conditions.

More is written about the Millennium in the Old Testament than any other prophecy. It's the theme of Old Testament prophecy. David was promised this Kingdom (see 2 Samuel 7:12-17; 23:5). This is the Kingdom predicted in the psalms and in the prophets (see Psalms 2, 45, 110; Isaiah 2:1-5, 11:1-9, 60, 61:3-62, 66; Jeremiah 23:3-8, 32:37-44; Ezekiel 40-48; Daniel 2:44-45, 7:13-14, 12:2-3; Micah 4:1-8; Zechariah 12:10-14:21). All of the prophets spoke of this Kingdom—not one of them missed it. This is the God-ruling kingdom coming to this earth.

And it begins with what we've wanted all along. On His return, the first thing Jesus Christ does is imprison Satan. An angel comes down from heaven, having the key to the abyss and a great chain in his hand. He captures "the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan" (v. 2) and binds him and throws him into the bottomless pit. Satan's great power is reduced, for

just an ordinary angel becomes his jailor and leads him away captive (see Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7-9). He sets a seal on Satan till the thousand years are complete.

Satan's incarceration and total absence from the earth changes conditions from darkness to light. He is the god of this age; he is the prince of the power of the air. His enormous power and influence must be removed from earth's scene before the Millennium can take place.

Next, Jesus removes the curse of sin from the physical earth. Scripture prophesies that the desert will blossom like a rose.

Many different groups of people make up the world during the Millennium. God follows a very definite program; He always has, and He moves intelligently.

Jesus will first raise the Old Testament saints to life again. "Resurrection" means "to stand up, a bodily resurrection," and only God can do it. Those who gave their lives for Christ in the Tribulation will also be resurrected (see Daniel 12:1-2; Isaiah 25:8-9). They traded in three and a half years for one thousand years with Christ. Imagine what it will be like to live and reign with Christ on this earth!

The group called "the priests of God" (v. 6), referring to the entire nation of Israel, will also have a job. God originally planned Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6), and now they will be.

Multitudes of both Israel and Gentiles who survived the Tribulation will enter the Millennium in their natural bodies. These are the ones, together with those who are born during the Millennium, who are tested during the one thousand years.

What about the church? Just as Jesus Christ mingled with His apostles and followers in a glorified body after His resurrection, so the church in glorified bodies will mingle with the multitudes in their natural bodies here on the earth. In these glorified bodies, we will move about space, from the New Jerusalem to heaven.

The Millennium is mankind's final test. It's the answer to people who think we wouldn't sin if we lived in ideal circumstances. But we are sinners, and by the end of the Millennium mankind is again in rebellion against God.

When the thousand years are complete, Satan is released from the abyss. A great company, who lived under the personal reign of Christ under ideal circumstances, goes over to Satan. Imagine the tragedy of this revolt: People who have been living in a perfect environment, under the perfect government of God's Son, will finally admit the truth, that they hate Jesus Christ, and rebel against Him as King and Savior.

Who are these people? Multitudes entered the Millennium, and multitudes are also born during the Millennium (see Isaiah 11:6; 65:20). This season marks earth's greatest population explosion. With no disease and the curse of sin removed from the physical earth, there will be enough food to nourish its greatest population. But the human heart alone remains unchanged under these circumstances, and many will turn their backs on God and will join with Satan. The opportunity is offered to them to rebel, and they go for it. The nations of the earth again will come under Satan's spell and will plot a rebellion.

But this last resistance and rebellion against God is as foolish and futile as man's first rebellion in the Garden of Eden. God deals with their sin and rebellion definitively, ending man's disobedience to God. Nothing remains now but the final judgment.

One of the imponderable statements of Scripture is why God let Satan loose after He once had him in the abyss in chains? Because He has a great purpose in it. Therein is the great problem of evil: Why does God permit it? He is working out a tremendous program; it's a mystery to us today but will be revealed someday. He asks us to walk with Him by faith. We need to trust God that whatever He is doing is right.

God will throw Satan in the lake of fire where the Antichrist and False Prophet are, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. This is a solemn statement. It's a relief to God's child to know that the enemy—both his and God's—will at last be brought to permanent justice. But the reality of what it means to be lost, to be separated from God for eternity, exceeds description. Our human language can't capture its awful reality. Hell is an actual place, a place of conscious torment. This is the language of the Word of God—you cannot escape it.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

John then tells us in his vision of these events that he sees a great white throne. The lost people of all ages will be raised from death to face God's judgment and given an equitable, fair, and just evaluation of their works in respect to their salvation. This courtroom will be nothing like our modern court cases. There will be a Judge but no jury, a prosecution but no defense, a sentence but no appeal. No one will be able to defend himself or accuse God of unrighteousness. It will be a sober, awesome scene.

The holiness of God's throne is revealed in heaven and earth's reaction to it: "from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away" (v. 11). Seated on the throne is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:22, 26-29).

The Great White Throne judgment is the judgment of the lost. People say today that they want to be judged according to their works. This is their opportunity. The judgment is just, but since they failed to believe in Jesus Christ, no one is saved. They come from all classes and groups of humanity. The "books" contain a record of their "works" (see Daniel 7:10; Malachi 3:16; Matthew 12:37). But not one turned to Jesus for salvation (John 5:40).

If you are saved, you won't stand before this judgment. As a child of God, your works will have already been judged at the judgment seat of Christ, and then only for the purpose of rewards (see 2 Corinthians 5:10). At the judgment seat of Christ, everything that is wrong will have been corrected. All sin will be dealt with there. Rewards will be given out. The Lord will also cleanse the church with the Word, such a mighty cleansing agent (see Ephesians 5:27).

But now for the White Throne judgment, the graves on earth will give up their bodies and the sea give up its dead; and hades, the place where the spirits of the lost go, will disgorge for this judgment. All who stand at this judgment are lost and are cast into the lake of fire where Satan, the Beast, the False Prophet, and their minions were consigned. If people do not accept the life of God, they must accept the only alternative: Eternal association with Satan.

God never created man to be put in this place, but there is no other place for him. Hell was created for the devil and his angels. God never goes here. The "second death" means eternal and absolute separation from God. The Lord called it "outer darkness." This is literally worse than actual fire or darkness; it is an eternity without God.

“Death,” the great final enemy of man, is now finally removed from the scene. The apostle Paul writes: “The last enemy that will be destroyed is death O Death, where is your sting? O Hades [grave], where is your victory? ... But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:26, 55, 57).

NEXT: Your future home address.

LESSON 26

ETERNITY UNVEILED



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 21:1-8**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.TTB.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 20:14–21:2** and **Revelation 21:2-5**

We leave the earth now to explore our new home in heaven. Heaven is a very definite, actual place. You will have an address there.

As the long view of eternity is in front of us, we move from time to eternity and to a new existence. Revelation 21 is about new things. A new heaven, a new earth, a New Jerusalem, a new era, and the eternal life as the Lamb's bride where we will be new creations in Christ Jesus. A new universe suggests new methods and approaches to life. New laws will regulate the new universe. Our entire lifestyle will change. There will be a total absence of sin, temptation, and testing in this new creation—that alone will make a radical difference. It is impossible for our minds to comprehend the great transformations that will take place in a new creation.

All things will be made new. We can start over, and there will never be an end to our growth. Remember that of Christ, Isaiah 9:7 said there'll be no limits to the wholeness He brings—constant growth and development.

The universe will look different. There will be no sun to give light, for God Himself will supply it directly to the universe. The presence of Christ and God, together with the throne of God made visible, ushers in a new day for man—the new creation.

The Lord Jesus Himself clearly teaches this present creation will pass away in order to make room for a new heaven and a new earth (see Matthew 24:35). In his second letter, Peter plainly teaches that the present earth on which we live will be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7, 10-13). The old creation was made for the first Adam. Christ, the Last Adam, has a new creation for His new creatures (see Isaiah 65:17, 66:22). God promised Abraham a land forever and David a throne forever. Daniel prophesied of “a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (Daniel 2:44). The new earth will see the total fulfillment of these prophecies. Consider the faith of Old Testament saints who “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 11:16).

The chief characteristic of the new earth is the absence of the sea. This will automatically change the climate, the atmosphere, and the lighting conditions. However, by the disappearance of the sea, the population on the earth can be doubled again and again because of the increase of the land surface. Apparently people will be vegetarians during the Millennium and throughout eternity, as they were in the Garden of Eden. Fruit is the only diet of eternal man.

THE NEW JERUSALEM

Very little is said in Scripture about heaven—so let’s examine what is said here in Revelation 21. Here it is:

“I ... saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband” (v. 1).

The New Jerusalem is likely where we, the bride of Christ, will live. Not to be identified with the earthly Jerusalem, the New Jerusalem is a planet within itself. The Lord Jesus promised to “prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2-3). We couldn’t ask for a more lovely or appropriate picture of what this marriage relationship could be for believers than what our personal relationship with Jesus Christ will be like. No other creatures, including the angels of heaven, will know this kind of intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We will celebrate throughout eternity the fact we are *with* Him and that we have been joined to Him.

The New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, won’t be another satellite for the earth, but rather the opposite—the earth and all the new creation with all of the galactic systems will revolve around the New

Jerusalem, because it's the dwelling place of God and of Jesus Christ. Likely the law of gravity will be radically revised. There will be traffic between the New Jerusalem and the earth.

NEW ERA

John's eyewitness reporting tells us next of a great voice from the throne announcing that God will live with us. He'll pitch His tent next to ours. He'll essentially move into the neighborhood, making His home with men and women! We're His people; He's our God. That flesh was crucified on the cross, and He was raised in a glorified body. We, too, with glorified bodies, will live with Him in the New Jerusalem.

And we won't experience certain things like sorrow, pain, and death anymore. *God promises to wipe away every tear from our eyes. Just think what it will be like to not experience death of any kind.* The undertaker will be out of business, so will doctors.

The Lord confirms this is true. He reminds us that He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

In our new bodies, we will thirst after God and the things of God, and they will be satisfied, just like Jesus said they would in His Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:6). He promises that those who overcome the world by faith will inherit these things (see Romans 8:16-17). John wrote about this same victory in his first letter (1 John 5:4). To the one who overcomes, Jesus also said He will be his God and he will be His son (see also John 1:12). This relationship is more than just being God's people; this is a unique and more glorious relationship (see 1 John 3:2).

This new and amazing creation of new heavens and a new earth did not affect the lake of fire and the destination of those who rejected Christ. They are eternally separated from God, and nothing is as fearful and frightful as that. Sin will never break over the barriers into the new heavens and the new earth. Sin and its potential are forever shut out of the new creation.

What will our new home look like? We will be amazed!

**NEXT: A look at the architectural blueprint
of the New Jerusalem.**

LESSON 27

THE NEW JERUSALEM



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 21:9-27**



Listen at [TTB.org/Revelation](https://www.ttb.org/Revelation) to **Revelation 21:6-18**, **Revelation 21:19-21**, and **Revelation 21:22–22:1**

The New Jerusalem is the eternal hometown of the church. We travel towards this new home as we pitch our tent each day closer on our journey home. Now that earth's sorrows are hushed and eternity has begun, the curtain can rise on the scene of this heavenly city and encourage every weary pilgrim on their journey here.

The appearance of the New Jerusalem is the epitome of beauty, refined loveliness, and uncontrolled joy. During the Millennium, righteousness reigned in Jerusalem, but in the New Jerusalem, it will dwell.

Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven final plagues invited John closer. "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife" (v. 9). And the angel carried John away in the Spirit to a high and huge mountain where they watched the holy city of Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, filled with His radiant light. What a scene!

Even from its entrance, we see something of the love and worth that the Bridegroom is giving His bride. Earthly cities are built from the ground up, but this city comes *down* out of heaven but doesn't touch the earth.

Scripture leaves the city hanging in midair, the center of all things. All activity and glory revolve now around this city. God will be there; it will be His headquarters. No wonder it will hold such a preeminent position for eternity.

The New Jerusalem will have the glory of God. Every blessing from God radiates from the city. Even though the saints will live there, it won't inhibit God's glory from shining. Sin formerly caused God to remove His glory from people's presence, but now that is past. It used to be that God's glory struck terror to the sinful heart, but we will then be clothed in Christ's righteousness. God's high purpose has always been to bring "many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10). The apostle Paul instructs believers to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:2). This hope will now be realized in the holy city.

This city is the source of light in the new heavens and earth. It doesn't reflect light like the moon, nor does it generate light by physical combustion like the sun, but it originates light. Jesus literally becomes "the light of the world" (John 9:5). First John 1:5 tells us God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. Light is His character. He's not a *kind* of light, but He's light itself.

The whole city is like a precious gem, transparent and gleaming like a diamond in a gold mounting. This city is the wedding ring of the bride, the symbol of the union of the church to Christ.

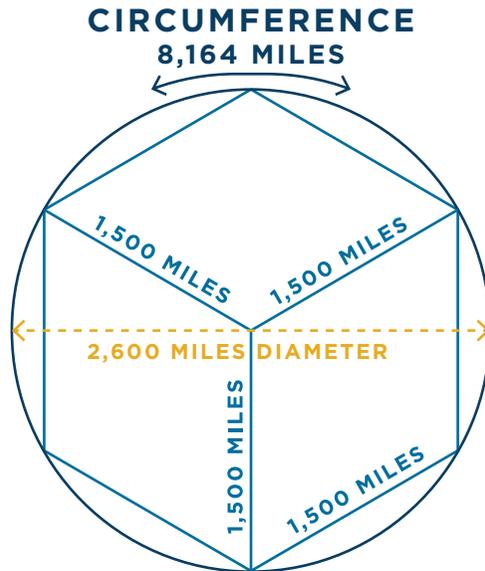
The New Jerusalem has 12 gates to the city, three gates on each side. On each gate is the name of one of the tribes of Israel, listed in the order the children of Israel camped about the tabernacle in the wilderness wanderings. Everything in eternity will face in toward this city, for God is there. The children of Israel on earth will enjoy the same relationship to the city that they did toward the wilderness tabernacle and later the city temple. This city will be a tabernacle to Israel. The children of Israel will be among the multitudes who come from earth into this city to worship in eternity. The 12 tribes of Israel will come up to the celestial city to worship, three tribes coming up on each of the four sides. They will then return back to the earth after they worship, but the bride will dwell in the New Jerusalem.

The walls of the New Jerusalem have 12 foundations, and on them are inscribed the names of the 12 apostles (just like Ephesians 2:20 tells us the church today is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus

Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone”). When Jesus Christ returned to heaven the first time, He committed the keys into the keeping of the apostles. In place of Judas, likely the apostle Paul became the twelfth apostle.

To these 12 apostles were committed all the writings of the church. They preached the first sermons, they organized the first churches, and they were among the first martyrs. In a real sense they were the church’s foundation with Christ as “the chief cornerstone.”

The size and shape of this city is difficult to describe, as we try but come short of translating our concepts from our time to an eternal dimension. We’re told the city is a cube, with 12,000 furlongs, about 1,500 miles on each side. Architectural difficulties resolve when we consider the city as a cube within a crystal-clear sphere. What we are given are the *inside* measurements. To enclose a cube measuring 1,500 miles on each side, the circumference of the sphere would be about 8,164 miles. The diameter of the moon is about 2,160 miles, and that of the New Jerusalem sphere is about 2,600 miles. Thus, the New Jerusalem will be somewhat larger than the moon, and it will be a sphere like the other heavenly bodies. We would likely live *inside* this sphere, not on the outside like we live here on earth. This city bears the creative and generous trademark of its Maker. The Lord Jesus, the Carpenter of Nazareth, is the One who built this city.



New Jerusalem will also be surrounded by a wall made of jasper—built for beauty, not protection. A walled city is a safe city, but the heavenly city will enjoy the fullness of safety because of who lives there. The walls are a sign that this city has achieved the full meaning of her name: Peace.

The magnificence of the city is further expressed through the 12 foundation stones constructed of 12 different gemstones, the most precious known to man. It will be an exquisite, multi-colored galaxy of color—jasper (diamond-like, reflecting light and color), blue sapphire, greenish chalcedony, emerald green, red sardonyx and sardius, yellow chrysolite, green beryl, yellow topaz, golden green chrysoprase, violet jacinth, purple amethyst.

God's light on the inside, shining through these colors, will flood the universe like a prism with every color of the rainbow reflecting out. It'll be the most breathtaking sight you've ever seen. The rainbow that appears today after a summer shower gives only a faint impression of the beauty of the coming city of light. This will be a glorious place!

The angel tells John that New Jerusalem's 12 gates are each made of a pearl, and they never will be shut because there will be no danger. The street (singular) was made of pure gold, as transparent glass. This city will be on display inside a crystal sphere, showcasing the church on display throughout eternity to the myriads of God's created intelligences (see Ephesians 2:7). God will show off His grace toward the church as the fairest jewel of all (see Malachi 3:17-18).

In the new creation, God's presence is the physical as well as the spiritual light. After the entrance of sin into the old creation, God withdrew His presence, and "darkness was on the face of the deep" (Genesis 1:2). Then God made use of the physical lights in His universe. He put them up like we turn on lamps in our homes. In the new creation, sin is removed, and He again becomes the source of light.

The One who is light will be there, and the radiance of His glory will be on display. In the Old Testament tabernacle there was the golden lampstand, one of the finest pictures of Christ. In the New Jerusalem, Jesus *is* the golden lampstand. The Old Testament temple that replaced the tabernacle was an earthly enclosure for God's shekinah glory. Because of sin, a relationship with God could only be approached by ritual of sacrifice. In the New Jerusalem sin is no longer a reality (just a hideous nightmare). God's actual presence with the redeemed eliminates the need for a temple. In fact, the whole city could be thought of as a temple. It's the same shape as the

Holy of Holies in the tabernacle and temple where God dwelt: A perfect cube. (No coincidence.) Now God lives there in person. It's probably the first place where God will make a personal appearance before man. What a glorious thought!

Jesus Christ dwells in the New Jerusalem with His bride, but Israel and the nations will commute back and forth from the earth to worship. Redeemed Gentile nations, who like Israel don't belong to the church because they were saved in the Old Testament or after the church is raptured from the earth, also come and go in worship. Hebrews 12:22-23 tells us of an infinite company of angels who serve the Lord in the city. All nationalities meet here, and the created intelligences of God walk the street of the New Jerusalem.

God has accomplished His goal: Fellowship with mankind. He now has a creature who is a free moral agent who chooses to worship and serve Him eternally. And the greatest joy of the redeemed heart will be abiding in our Lord Jesus' presence for eternity (see John 14:3). This is heaven—to be with Him. Revelation is all about Jesus Christ—He is the centerpiece of God's universe.

What is your passport to live in this magnificent city? Your name in the Lamb's Book of Life contains the record of the redeemed of all ages. No one who is not redeemed by the blood of Christ will be permitted to enter the portals of the New Jerusalem. A great fixed gulf separates the saved and the lost. This is not the Garden of Eden where Satan's lie created an entrance for sin. No lie or liar will ever enter the gate of the heavenly Jerusalem. All those who live there and all tourists who visit are not only redeemed from sin but they have also lost their taste for sin.

Nothing will compare to the privilege of being with the Lord Jesus there throughout eternity.

NEXT: So what will we *do* in heaven?



GOD PROMISES TO
WIPE EVERY TEAR
FROM OUR EYES.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 28

BEAUTIFUL, FINAL THINGS



Begin with prayer



Read **Revelation 22**



Listen at TTB.org/Revelation to **Revelation 22:2-21**

We come to the last chapter of the Bible and to the final scenes of the greatest heavenly wonder. This also brings us to the end of the Word of God. God gives us His final words here, and because they are last words, they have a great significance. We are brought to the end of man's journey. The path has been rugged. Many questions remain unanswered, many problems remain unsolved, but we enter into eternity in fellowship again with God and there all will be answered.

The Bible opens with God on the scene: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). It concludes with Him on the scene and in full control of His own. Jesus Christ, God Himself, suffered; He paid a price, and He died—but the victory and the glory are His, and He is satisfied (see Isaiah 53:11).

This New Jerusalem will be God the Father and God the Son's headquarters. What about the Holy Spirit? In the first creation, the Holy Spirit renovated and renewed the blighted earth (see Genesis 1:2). Today, the Holy Spirit is God's instrument of regeneration in the hearts and lives of sinners. In the same way, there will be no need for His work in the new creation; therefore, the silence of God is eloquent here.

Up to now, our view of the New Jerusalem only looked dazzling; we haven't seen any soft grass to sit on, green trees to sit under, or water or food to enjoy. Now we see a soft richness to this city of elaborate beauty.

The angel escorting John through this vision of heaven then shows him “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (v. 1).

In the first Eden, a river branched into four rivers. In the New Jerusalem, a river called “Water of Life” flows from the fountain, which is God's throne. On either side of the river is “the tree of life,” bearing 12 kinds of fruits each month—a continuous supply in abundance and variety. Like in the Garden of Eden, we will eat and drink in eternity (see Genesis 1:29-30). However, unlike the Garden, there's no possibility of sin entering there.

Contrary to the cartoons, heaven isn't a place where we'll hang out on clouds, strumming harps. It's a place of fruitful activity. We'll work in heaven! And we won't need to rest. Perhaps the Lord will give to each saint a world or a solar system or a galactic system to operate like Adam was given dominion over the old creation on this earth. Redeemed mankind will at last fulfill our destiny and satisfy the desires of our heart. We will each bear the name of Christ and each will be like Him, yet within our own personalities.

JESUS PROMISES TO RETURN

We're coming to the end now. As we do, Jesus promises that once the events begin to take place, He will come quickly. He then puts His own seal on this book, calling these words “faithful and true” (v. 6). Our Lord is talking about reality. At the beginning of this book, He gave a blessing on those who read and hear and keep these words. Now in conclusion, the Lord Jesus repeats the blessing on those who keep these words. We aren't to spiritualize them or reduce them to empty stories. This book isn't meant to satisfy people's curiosity, but to live and apply.

The Lord reveals that just as the condemned lost person in hell will increasingly become more sinful, so the servant of God will continue to grow in righteousness and holiness. Heaven is not static. The child of God will have all eternity to grow in wisdom and knowledge.

Then John, our faithful reporter, sums up his thoughts. He said he is so overwhelmed by what he heard and saw that he fell down to worship the angel who showed all this to him. But the angel's simplicity and meekness is

impressive. Though the angels were created above man, this angel identifies himself as a fellow servant with John and the other prophets. *“I’m just the messenger told to communicate God’s Word to man,”* he said, and directs all worship to God. Christ is the centerpiece of the Revelation—don’t lose sight of Him.

Our Lord promises He is coming again, and He will personally reward each believer individually—those in the church at the Rapture as well as those of Israel and the Gentiles at His return to set up His Kingdom at the Millennium.

As the Revelation ends, the Lord Jesus asserts His place as God: “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last” (v. 13). He said this at the beginning of the book, and now He concludes with it. He gives the angel His very personal message. “I, Jesus” (v. 16)—taking the name of His saviorhood, the name He received when He took on humanity, and the name that no man knows but He Himself. We will spend eternity centering on Him. He’s all we’re going to talk about.

He also refers to Himself as “the Root and the Offspring of David,” which connects Him with the Old Testament. But He is “the Bright and Morning Star” to the church (v. 16). Have you noticed the bright and morning star always appears at the darkest time of the night? Its appearance indicates that the sun will be coming up shortly. The Old Testament ended with the promise that “the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings”—that is the Old Testament hope (Malachi 4:2). But to us, He is the Bright and Morning Star who will come at a very dark moment.

Jesus continues His appeal through John to the reader. “Let him who hears” are those who hear this book read in the churches, as was common in John’s day. This includes us, too, and everyone who prays for the Lord’s return (see Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2). The Holy Spirit joins in the prayer of the church which says, *“Lord Jesus, come, come.”* He works through the Word and through the church that proclaims His Word.

Jesus then turns the invitation around and invites the thirsty to come to Him and freely take the water of life (see Isaiah 55:1; John 6:35, 7:37). Those who do not yet believe obviously need to come in order to take their first drink of this living water, in Christ our eternal life. But believers too need to keep coming to Him again and again. “Him who thirsts” (v. 17) is the person who senses their spiritual need, broad enough to include absolutely everyone

(see Matthew 5:6; John 4:10). This water of life costs us nothing, but it cost Jesus Christ everything to give Himself for us. He gives us that invitation today. If you're tired of drinking at the cesspools of this world, He invites you to come.

Don't wait.

When these things begin to come to pass, Jesus will already then be at the door.

"Come, Lord Jesus" is the heart-cry of every true believer (v. 20). The Old Testament ends with a curse; the New Testament ends with a benediction of grace on the believers. Grace is offered to all, but if anyone refuses the offer Jesus Christ extends, they must bear the judgment pronounced in this book.

Grace is offered to you—it's the only way you can be saved. Believe Him and receive it.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are both gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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P.O. Box 25325, London, Ontario, Canada N6C 6B1



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