



**The Summit**  
Green Campus of Canton Baptist Temple

# **Resources for Your Life**

The Book of Revelation

23 Sessions

[www.thesummitgreen.com](http://www.thesummitgreen.com)  
[tomhogsed@gmail.com](mailto:tomhogsed@gmail.com)

## Resource Guide

This resource was compiled from the personal Bible study and blog entries created by Tom Hogsed, pastor of the Summit in Green. You can find the original blog entries at [www.tomhogsed.com](http://www.tomhogsed.com).

The **introduction** to this book has been written so the reader has a better understanding of the Biblical author, his purpose in writing, and important points to understand before reading.

Following the introduction, each new page represents a **verse by verse overview** of the Scripture passage. The best way to study is to first read the Scripture verses from your Bible relying on the Holy Spirit to provide understanding and then to support your understanding with the commentary written below.

At the end of each Scripture commentary, there is a short **prayer** written so the reader can personally apply what has been discovered; however, it is suggested that you also pray from your heart in response to God's Word.

Feel free to make your own personal notes in your Bible, on this page, or even in a journal.

If this resource has helped you or you have further questions, please send an e-mail to [tomhogsed@gmail.com](mailto:tomhogsed@gmail.com).

## **Introduction to Revelation**

Written by the Apostle John on the Island of Patmos in AD 94-96, the book of Revelation is clouded in mystery as God opens up the curtains and exposes events which will transpire at the end of the world. The word revelation itself means an exposing or unveiling and, in this case, the ultimate revelation is Jesus Christ who finally defeats the evil forces of this world. Throughout Scripture, Christ's final victory has been foretold but the book of Revelation gives the reader a glimpse of these final days before eternity.

John the apostle was also the writer of the gospel which bears his name as well as 1-3 John. He was the last surviving apostle and had been sent to Patmos for preaching the gospel (1:9) - all the other apostles had been martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ and their unwavering passion for preaching the gospel. There is little argument about John's authorship of this book having mentioned his name four times throughout (1:1,4,9; 22:8). The early church fathers such as Irenaeus and Tertullian also confirmed the validity of this writing.

The book of Revelation surrounds several visions given to John by God which uncovered details about the last days of the earth and the future destiny of the human race. This writing is a record of these events which John saw in those visions. In the first few chapters of Revelation, John declares his writing to be addressed to the seven churches in Asia Minor (1:4) where he had spent the last several years ministering. His writing was meant to be a challenge for them to stay faithful and look forward to the hope which is guaranteed to those who believe in Jesus Christ. After all, many Christians were feeling the effects of persecution and had witnessed many people martyred for their faith. They needed to see the hope which awaited them. Although things seemed out of control for them at this time, God was ultimately in control and Jesus Christ would put an end to all evil.

As a guide for our study through Revelation, here are the main themes:

- John's Vision and Command to Write (Revelation 1)
- Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)
- Worship in Heaven (Revelation 4-5)
- The Seven Year Tribulation Period (Revelation 6-18)
- The Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Revelation 19)
- The 1,000 Year Reign of Christ - Millennium (Revelation 20:1-10)
- The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)
- The New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21-22)

*Dear God, provide understanding for the things which will happen in the future.*

## **Revelation 1:1-20**

In the introduction to this book, John writes that this is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show His servants - things which must shortly take place. And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John, who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, to all things that he saw" (1:1-2). John immediately states that his purpose for writing is to uncover Jesus Christ's future glory as a result of perfectly following the will of God. Jesus became the perfect sacrifice for sin therefore freeing all those who would believe in Him from the penalty of sin. God the Father wanted the servants of Jesus to have a glimpse into His future kingdom and also the eternal state which awaits believers. The visions given to John would assist all readers in understanding the end times. Revelation is a unique book because it is the only one which also comes with a blessing to all those "who read[s] and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it..." (1:3).

Moving from his introduction to his greeting, John identifies the recipients of Revelation as the seven churches of Asia Minor (1:4). Although these churches are historical, they also represent modern day churches. We'll explore this more in Revelation 2-3. John sends greeting to his readers from the Holy Spirit (1:4) and from Jesus Christ "who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood..." (1:5).

From the greeting, John immediately reveals the event which produced the things about which he was getting ready to write. John, on the island of Patmos, was taken from the present world and caught up into a vision of the things which would transpire in the future. This was not a dream, but a literal vision which John supernaturally experienced through the power of God. A voice said to John, "What you see, write it a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia" (1:11). John turned to see who was speaking to him and saw seven golden lampstands as well as One who was walking in the midst of the lampstands (1:12-20). As we read these verses, we discover that the seven lampstands are the seven churches and Jesus Christ is the One walking amongst them. This represents His personal involvement in the church body as well as His knowledge of what is happening in them. When John caught a glimpse of Jesus, he "fell at His feet as dead. But he laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore'" (1:17-18). Jesus Christ then speaks specifically to John about what He wants him to do with what he is about to experience: "Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this" (1:19). Using this outline given by Jesus, we will proceed as follows:

"The things which you have seen" represent what John is currently experiencing (Revelation 1)

"The things which are" represent the current state of the churches (Revelation 2-3)

"The things which will take place after this" represent those events at the end of history (Revelation 4-22)

*Dear God, thank You for giving these words to John so we can know the things which will take place in the future. Bless me for reading this book of Revelation.*

## **Revelation 2:1-7**

In Revelation 1, John writes about the things which were presently happening to him. He was seeing a vision of the things which were to come and being given a glimpse of Christ's future glory. Beginning in Revelation 4 John will begin exposing future events but in chapters 2-3 he is recording a message given by God to the seven churches in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). These churches were historical, but are also comparable to churches which exist in our day. It is important that we heed the warnings given to these churches so that we do not fall into the same condemnation.

Ephesus is the first church written to (2:1-7) and John is careful to write that the message he is delivering is not from him but God: "These things says He [Jesus Christ] who holds the seven stars [leaders of the seven churches] in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands [seven churches]..." (2:1). The church at Ephesus was commended for their good "works, labor, and patience." They had stood against those who were evil and had faithfully discerned the truth about those who claimed they were teachers of the truth but were not (2:2-3). John even mentions that they hated the "deeds of the Nicolaitans" (2:6). The Nicolaitans were led by a man named Nicolas who deceived some in the church into false teachings - mainly the mixing of immorality and loose living with the church. Ultimately, the Nicolaitans believed that the forgiveness of sin enabled them to live the way they wanted. So, it seems as if the church at Ephesus worked very hard to keep their doctrine pure and continue in the things which they knew they should do (2:3b).

Although their works were good, Jesus pointed out something which needed changed. John, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes, "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love" (2:4). The church at Ephesus was doing all the right things outwardly, but they had lost their passionate love for Christ inwardly. Every Christian needs to evaluate this concept in their life. We are very good at going through all the right motions but still lacking the proper love for God.

What was the solution to getting this passion back? "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent" (2:5). Work for God does not equate or lead to a love for God. Work for God must be driven by a love for God. We must continually examine our hearts to make sure that our love for God has not diminished. How can this love for God be sustained? I believe we must get back to "old school" basics of the faith - reading/meditating on God's Word, prayer, Christian fellowship, reverence for God, and thankfulness for His goodness. Without these simple elements, we cannot grow in our love for God. It is imperative that every follower of Christ develop a personal relationship with God and not allow their work for God to be the measurement of their love for Him. May we all be challenged to love God first and then be motivated to work for Him.

*Dear God, forgive me for losing my passion for You. Although I do a lot of things for You, I know I fail in moving my heart closer to You. Please remind me often of Your love for me and may I respond by giving all my love to You.*

## **Revelation 2:8-17**

John has just written a vivid reminder to the church at Ephesus to restore their passionate love for God or else they would be judged (2:1-7). John then turns his attention to Smyrna which is the second church to whom he writes and they are often referred to as the persecuted church. From John's words we can surmise that this body of believers was facing opposition from the religious system called Judaism. Judaism was the Jewish religion which elevated the Old Testament law while rejecting Jesus Christ as the Messiah (the One promised by God). John describes these Judaizers as "those who say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan" (2:9). It appears that there was ongoing persecution of the early church following the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and this continual persecution often resulted from the so-called religious people of that day. John wanted the church at Smyrna to be prepared for what would soon take place. He writes, "Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days" (2:10a). Then with a challenge to endure this hardship John records what God has said, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (2:10b). Although their persecution would be brief (10 days), God wanted them to be faithful to Him and look forward to the hope of eternal life. Those who would die in this persecution should remember that they would not "be hurt by the second death" (2:11). Their body would die, but their soul would go on to live forever in the presence of God. Even though believers in the United States do not suffer extreme forms of persecution, we must remember that people all over the world are experiencing what the early church experienced. It is said that more people are being persecuted for their faith today than at any other time in history. Pray for the persecuted church - for their strength to stand, for their families, and for God's comforting hand upon them.

The church at Pergamos was the next to receive a letter from John, who was writing on behalf of God. This church is commended for their faithfulness to God in the midst of a very wicked city. Pergamos was the center of many Gentile false religions and where many false gods were worshiped (Zeus, Athena, and Asklepios just to name a few). It seems that the pastor of Pergamos, Antipas, had been killed for preaching the gospel but the congregation stood firm during that time (2:13). Although there was some praise given to them, John also writes "I have a few things against you because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrifices to idols, and to commit sexual immorality" (2:14). John goes on to say that the church at Pergamos was also harboring people who believed the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. In his study Bible John MacArthur writes about the story of Balaam, "Balaam tried unsuccessfully to prostitute his prophetic gift and curse Israel for money offered him by Balak, king of Moab. So he devised a plot to have Moabite women seduce Israelite men into intermarriage. The result was a blasphemous union of Israel with fornication and idolatrous feasts" (MacArthur Study Bible, p.1995). John calls them to repentance and warns of God's judgment if they continue to abuse the grace which was provided through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Christians are called to a holy lifestyle following their faith in Jesus Christ and to abstain from the sin which caused Jesus to have to die in our place. The modern day church must also heed this warning to the church at Pergamos. Holiness and sin cannot co-exist. The church must cleanse itself from sin and live in purity before God and others.

*Dear God, hear my cries for those who are being persecuted for their faith - give them strength. Purify Your church to make it holy and once again become a witness for Your grace.*

## **Revelation 2:18-3:6**

The apostle John next writes a few words to the church at Thyatira, "I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first" (2:19). From all initial appearances, this church received positive news about their increase of good works as their faith in Jesus Christ grew. However, everything was not as it appeared on the surface. Sending a message through John, God condemns the church at Thyatira for allowing a woman to "teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (2:20). This church had permitted sexual immorality as well as idol worship to take place in their church without removing the woman who was propagating it. God promised that she would be held accountable for her deception and any who chose to follow her would also experience divine judgment (2:21-23). It is a serious thing to deceive God's people and John warns those who have kept themselves pure from these sinful practices to "hold fast" until Jesus Christ returns (2:25). The church must be careful to guard against those who would enter in to deceive the people and strive to be faithful to His commands. When a church is corrupt, such as Thyatira, it loses all effectiveness and ultimately becomes useless.

Sardis is the fifth church to whom John writes and they are often known as the dead church. Like the church at Thyatira, Sardis appeared healthy on the outside, but was actually dead on the inside. Their reputation in the community was that they were "alive" but God exposes that they were really dead (3:1). John gives them some advice, "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die....Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent" (3:2-3). Repentance seems to be a consistent message to many of the churches mostly because it indicates a change in direction. They were to abandon their sinful works and begin doing what was right. If the church at Sardis failed to repent, God promised to "come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you" (3:3). Swift judgment awaited Sardis if they would not repent; however, there were a few people whom God commends for their faithfulness to Him (3:4-5). No matter what people are doing around you, be faithful. If you are living in disobedience to God, repent and do the right thing. It's that simple.

*Dear God, help me not to tolerate sin in my life or in the life of my church. May we quickly repent of any known sin so that we can be faithful witnesses of Your message.*

## **Revelation 3:7-22**

In this passage of scripture, the final two churches receive their letters written by the apostle John. In each of these letters the apostle John is communicating those things which God has told him to write. Most churches received some praise along with very stern warnings about those areas where they needed to repent. Very few of the letters contained only positive words, but the church at Philadelphia only receives praise from God about their faithfulness. John writes, "I know your works...for you have a little strength, have kept my word, and have not denied my name" (3:8). Because of their unwavering commitment to truth, God promised that one day He would set the record straight and cause their enemies to submit to them. John also wrote that God would "keep them from the hour of trial which should come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (3:10). This "hour of trial" referred to the future judgment of all those who reject Jesus Christ, which is known as the seven-year tribulation period (Revelation 6-19). This period would follow the removal of all Christians from the earth (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) and precede the millennial reign of Jesus Christ on earth (Revelation 20:1-6). These words would have been strengthening for the church at Philadelphia since they were presently being persecuted by the religious leaders and many in their community (3:9). This promise provided hope. We all need hope in the midst of our struggles. Instead of quitting when your faith is tested, look forward to the hope of the future kingdom and eternal life in the presence of God.

The final church which received a letter was Laodicea (3:14-22). John writes, "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (3:16). These words must have been pretty stinging to the Laodiceans. John described them as people who say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked..." (3:17). God was condemning them for neither being passionate for God or openly rebellious against Him. My guess is that this church was full of false converts who professed Christ, but did not really have a relationship with Him. They were a church in name only. There was no passion or zeal for worshipping or serving God. Laodicea just existed without having an effect on anything or anyone around them. God commanded them to repent and turn to Him for salvation (3:18-19). If there is one church that reflects many of our modern day places of worship, it is the church at Laodicea. In my opinion, many churches are refuges for the unconverted and those who attend church to relieve a guilty conscience. Since many churches have also forsaken their mandate to call people to repentance, it is left with individuals who are failing to deal with the true root of every problem - sin. Our churches must not tolerate sin and call people to turn to Jesus Christ who alone can bring forgiveness and healing to the broken. May God help us listen to all the letters written to the seven churches of Asia Minor. May we avoid the same sins so that we may become a church who is carrying out God's commands (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

*Dear God, call all churches to true repentance that we may be a bright light for the entire world to see (Matthew 5:16).*

## **Revelation 4:1-11**

Revelation 4 is the final section in this book of future events written by the apostle John. According to our outline given to us by the writer (1:19) he has already written about "the things which you have seen" which represent what John was currently experiencing (Revelation 1). "The things which are" which were representative of the current state of the seven churches of Asia Minor (Revelation 2-3). Now John will receive "the things which will take place after this" which represent those events at the end of history following the church age (Revelation 4-22). John begins this section by writing, "After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, 'Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this'" (4:1). At this point John writes "immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne" (4:2). Simply put, John was transported to heaven. As John revealed in Revelation 1:10, this transport was literal and not some dream. John was taken from this life to personally observe what was happening in heaven. Upon his arrival John he finds himself in the throne room of heaven where God is seated (4:2-3) and there are 24 (number which means representation) elders seated on the thrones surrounding God's throne. Since the elders are clothed in white robes and have gold crowns on their heads we can assume that they probably represent the church (4:4). As this time, the church is the only group who has been fully redeemed and rewarded. John also reveals that from the throne proceeds "lightnings, thunderings, and voices" which indicates a future judgment, which will be the seven year tribulation period on the earth (4:5). This judgment will be righteous and warranted since all those on the earth at this time have rejected the salvation offered through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Also in this scene are seven lamps of fire which represent the Holy Spirit (4:5b). Present also in this throne room are four living creatures who are angels -they are the ones who deliver the judgment poured out on the earth (4:6-8). These angels "do not rest day or night" but they continuously say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" This declaration represents God's holiness and eternity. "Whenever the living creatures [angels] give honor and glory and thanks to Him who sits on the throne...the twenty-four elders fall down and worship Him...and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 'You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created'" (4:9-11). The redeemed recognize God as the One who has freely offered salvation to them and that He is worthy of all their praise. As an act of worship they cast their crowns (rewards) before Him signifying His authority and redemption over His creation.

Although John describes this scene as a future event, we should worship God as a part of our daily lives; after all, He alone deserves all of our honor and praise. God is the Creator of all things and has chosen to redeem sinful mankind by sending His only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay the penalty for sin. For all those who believe by faith in the work of Jesus Christ and receive His forgiveness of sins will be at the place John witnessed two-thousand years ago.

*Dear God, You are worthy to receive glory and honor and power for You created all things and by Your will they exist and were created.*

## **Revelation 5:1-14**

John had been transported to heaven and personally witnessed the throne room where God made His dwelling place (Revelation 4). The redeemed of the church (represented by the 24 elders) were present with four creatures (angels) who worshipped God day and night. Believers also joined the angels in worship of God who was the Creator of all things and proclaimed His worthiness to receive glory, honor, and power (4:11). The scene continues when God takes a "scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals" (5:1). Some have concluded that the scroll represents the title deed of the earth. An angel cries out, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" Revelation 5:3 reveals that there was no one found in heaven or earth worthy to loosen the seals of the scroll. John begins to weep, but one of the 24 elders tells him not to weep because "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals" (5:4-5). These names were in reference to the Messiah whom God promised would defeat sin and death and set up a kingdom ruled in righteousness (Genesis 49:8-12; Isaiah 11). John looks up and standing before him is a "Lamb as though it had been slain...then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne" (5:7). This Lamb is Jesus Christ who had been slain in order to pay the penalty for sin. Hundreds of years earlier the prophet Isaiah described the future Messiah as the one who would take "our griefs and carried our sorrows...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...by His stripes we are healed...the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6). When Jesus Christ takes the scroll, the four creatures and elders fall down and sing "You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals; for you were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth" (5:8-10). Jesus' death on the behalf of sinners makes Him worthy to take the scroll! In reaction to Jesus taking the scroll, an innumerable group begins proclaiming the worthiness of Jesus to take the scroll (5:11-14). Jesus Christ is the Messiah and came to earth to take our sin upon Himself. Paul writes to the church at Corinth, " For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). God the Father demanded righteousness from man but through Adam sin and death entered the world passing over all men (Romans 5:12). The penalty of sin is death (Romans 6:23) and ultimately is necessary to satisfy the wrath of God upon sin. Sin cannot be forgiven unless the punishment for it is carried out. God loved man so much that He sent His only Son, born of a virgin, to earth in order to take the punishment every man deserved because of their sin. Paul says that Jesus took our sin and gave us His righteousness, which is what God demands. Paul writes in Romans 5:8-9 "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."

*Dear God, thank You for Jesus who paid for my sin on the cross. He is worthy to be praised!*

## **Revelation 6:1-17**

John has been transported to heaven in order to write the things which God supernaturally allows him to see regarding future events. Revelation 4 details John's first glimpse of the throne room of heaven where he witnesses believers as well as angels worshipping God for His worth. The words of Revelation 5 reveal a scroll sealed with seven seals, but no one is found worthy to open it. This scroll can only be opened by One who has been given authority over the entire universe because it is the title deed of earth. A Lamb, Jesus Christ, appears and takes the scroll. He is the only One found worthy to open it because He was slain and redeemed mankind from sin (4:8-10). These events bring us to Revelation 6 where Jesus begins to open each of the seven seals which secure the contents of the scroll. Each seal unleashes a judgment upon the earth during what is termed the "seven year tribulation period" which follows the removal of the church from earth (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). In fact, there are a series of judgments unleashed on those who have rejected Jesus Christ as the only way to God. From Revelation 6:1-16:21, here is the layout: seven seal judgments (6:1-8:6), seven trumpet judgments (8:7-14:20), and the seven bowl judgments (16:1-21). Without going into a ton of detail about each of these judgments, here is what will transpire on the earth beginning with six seal judgments.

First Seal (white horse) - Antichrist is revealed

Second Seal (red horse) - worldwide war with much death

Third Seal (black horse) - worldwide famine

Fourth Seal (pale horse) - 25% of population will die

Fifth Seal - martyrs will cry to God for vengeance

Sixth Seal - great earthquake, sun turns black, moon turns red, meteor shower, sky is removed, continents shift

People on earth will then begin to recognize that these judgments have been sent by God to reign down His wrath upon sin (6:16-17).

*Dear God, deliver many from this wrath to come that they might acknowledge Jesus as their Savior from sin.*

## **Revelation 7:1-17**

So far there have been six judgments upon the people of the earth because of their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah (Revelation 6). The first four judgments will take place during the first three and a half years of the seven year tribulation period (6:1-8). The tribulation period immediately follows the removal of the church from earth which is detailed by the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. No time frame is given as to when all this would happen, but the apostle John, at the end of the first century, received a personal glimpse of future events on earth and God wanted all generations to know the things which awaited those who reject the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as payment for their sin.

The fifth and sixth judgment (6:9-17) ushers in the second half of the tribulation period. At the conclusion of the sixth seal judgment, all those on the earth are hiding in caves and rocks of the mountains wishing they could die (6:15-16). The sixth judgment has produced a great earthquake, the sun turning black (maybe from the ash of volcanic eruptions), moon turning red (maybe also from the ash), meteor showers, the sky disappearing, and the continents shifting (6:12-14). These horrendous events cause men to fear for their lives and at this point, they will recognize that these judgments have been sent from God (6:16-17). Following the sixth seal being opened by Jesus, John sees four angels at the four corners of the earth who will send a temporary respite upon the earth (7:1). Another angel descends from the east "having the seal of living God" and demanding that the earth not be harmed until God has "sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads" (7:2-3). John hears that the number of those who will be sealed will be 144,000 Jews. This group is obviously people who have received Jesus Christ as the true Messiah during the tribulation period. In other words, they missed the removal of believers from the earth because they did not believe in Jesus Christ; however, during the time of judgment on the earth, they accepted Jesus Christ as the Savior from sin. This 144,000 (12,000 from each of the tribes of Israel) will become witnesses of Jesus Christ during the second half of the tribulation period and will receive special protection from the judgments. These Israelites will spread the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and many will be saved from eternal hell during this time of tribulation.

In fact, the next group of people John sees are all those who have been martyred during the tribulation period for their faith in Jesus Christ. John writes, "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes...and crying out with a loud voice saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" One of the twenty four elders tells John that "these are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14).

Although this time will be one of judgment and wrath, it will also be a time of great salvation and redemption. There will be many during the tribulation period who will respond to the judgments on earth and finally turn their hearts to God and be saved through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Thank God that His mercy continues in the midst of judgment. He is truly not desiring anyone to face the wrath of God but desires all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9).

*Dear God, thank You for Your continual patience and mercy toward us. Although we are undeserving of Your forgiveness, You freely offer it to all.*

## **Revelation 8:1-13**

Revelation 6:12-17 described the sixth seal judgment upon the earth during the yet future seven year tribulation period. This judgment was filled with universal catastrophe affecting the environment. Revelation 7 yielded a break in the happenings on earth to provide a personal glimpse for John to see two groups of people: the 144,000 Jewish witnesses who would spread the gospel across the earth (7:1-8) and those who have been saved during the tribulation period, but martyred for their faith (7:9-17). After this brief respite, the vision John has been supernaturally receiving continues with the final seal judgment upon the earth, which is the seventh. When Jesus opens the seventh seal on the scroll, which only He could open, it unleashes another series of judgments which are referred to as the seven trumpet judgments. Prior to each trumpet being sounded, "noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake" take place which finally give way to seven angels appearing with seven trumpets prepared to sound (8:6).

We must take the time to remember that these judgments are being poured out on all those people on earth who have rejected Jesus Christ as the One sent to save mankind from sin. Although some tend to think of any type of punishment as unfair, most of us would agree that there must be some system of accountability. Without consequences for doing wrong, our world would be chaotic. In the same manner, God must hold sinners accountable for their wrongdoing; however, instead of punishing the sinner God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to take the punishment (death) of the sinner upon Himself (2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, God is not unfair because He has offered the free gift of salvation to all those who will repent of sin and believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). God has been patient and even delayed His coming because He is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

The following summarizes four of the seven trumpet judgments unleashed on the rebellious inhabitants of the earth:

**First Trumpet** - one-third of trees/grass Burned (8:7)

**Second Trumpet** - one-third of sea turned to blood resulting in one-third of its inhabitants dying as well as one-third of ships destroyed (8:8-9)

**Third Trumpet** - one-third of all freshwater polluted (8:10-11)

**Fourth Trumpet** - one-third part of the sun, moon, stars darkened (8:12-13)

After this trumpet judgment, John sees an angel fly through heaven saying, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!" This warning is a precursor to the devastation which was about to take place. The next two trumpet judgments are addressed in Revelation 9.

*Dear God, I understand that You must judge those who have rejected Jesus Christ, but please use me to spread the message of hope through Jesus Christ to as many people as I can.*

## **Revelation 9:1-21**

The seventh seal on the scroll (Revelation 8:1-6) has just been opened by Jesus Christ and it unveiled a series of seven more judgments referred to as the seven trumpet judgments. We have already discussed the first four trumpet judgments. Revelation 9 reveals the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments. Since these two judgments are discussed in greater detail than the other ones, we will take some more time to describe the elements which take place.

The fifth angel sounds the trumpet and John writes that he sees "a star fallen from heaven to the earth" and that "to him was given the key to the bottomless pit" (9:1). Most scholars agree that this fallen star is none other than Satan himself. Satan opens the bottomless pit, probably a holding place for demonic forces, and locusts swarm onto the earth and "are given power as the scorpions of the earth have power" (9:2-3). Of course we recognize scorpions as a creature which is able to inflict great pain upon its victim through using a venomous stinger. It seems as if John is saying that this locust-like creature is capable of causing great pain. John goes on to write that these creatures were commanded not to harm any green things (trees, plants, etc.), "but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads" (9:4). These creatures were sent for the specific purpose of inflicting pain on those who have rejected Jesus Christ; furthermore, John writes that these locust-like beings "were not given authority to kill them [men], but to torment them five months" (9:5). John also indicates that the pain of their sting will be so bad that men will wish to die, but will not be able to find it (9:6). This is a pretty serious judgment. The next few verses, Revelation 9:7-11, give further description of what these creatures look like and even the fact that they have a leader over them, which seems to be one of Satan's most powerful demons. Certainly it was hard for John to put into words what he was seeing; however, we do know that this judgment will be very agonizing for the inhabitants of the earth who have rebelled against Jesus Christ.

The sixth trumpet yields yet another devastating judgment upon the rebellious. Four bound angels, which I believe are fallen angels, are released and they kill one-third of the population on earth. Here is John's description of how they will kill men, "out of their mouths came fire, smoke, and brimstone. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed - by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths. For their power is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents, having heads; and with them they do harm" (9:17-19). You would think that by this time people would get the message that God is angry with those who have rejected His Son, Jesus Christ. However, it appears that most people are still defiant against God and hate Him. Although these are sad verses, they speak of the outright hatred and evil which will exist on the earth during this seven-year tribulation period. John writes, "But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols...which can neither see nor hear nor walk" (9:20). This future reaction by mankind is unimaginable. If these judgments do not get their attention than probably nothing will. With this in mind John documents man's open rebellion against God, "and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts" (9:21). The fact remains that people in our present day as well as this future time love sin. They would rather embrace a wicked, sinful lifestyle than humble themselves in repentance before God for their wrongdoing.

Maybe even right now you are embracing an evil lifestyle. God is calling you to repentance and to receive His forgiveness through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. Salvation from this future judgment is offered to all, but only those who confess and forsake sin are promised mercy (Proverbs 28:13). The apostle John wrote in another one of his books, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

*Dear God, help me to admit my sin before You knowing that You will provide cleansing and forgiveness through Your Son, Jesus Christ.*

## **Revelation 10:1-11:14**

Revelation 10:1-11:14 offers a brief break in God's judgments upon the earth. In Revelation 9 we saw the fifth and sixth trumpet judgments poured out and one-third of all mankind was put to death by the works of the four fallen angels as well as their 200 million evil horsemen (9:13-19). Instead of repenting in response to God's wrath, mankind continued in blatant sin and evidenced their disregard for God's law (9:20-21). At the beginning of Revelation 10 John writes about an angel who descends from heaven with the scroll (title deed of the earth) which was revealed in Revelation 5:1. The angel cries with a loud voice and "seven thunders uttered their voices" (10:3). As John was about to write concerning the seven thunders, a voice tells him to "seal up the things which the seven thunders uttered" (10:4). God obviously wanted this event to be concealed until His time.

The same angel who brought the scroll from heaven raises up his hand (10:5) and swears by God "that there should be delay no longer" (10:6). The event the angel is referring to had long been referred to as the mystery of God spoken of by the prophets (10:7). This mystery is the destruction of sinners and the establishment of Jesus' kingdom on earth. The angel was simply announcing that this time was almost here. The same voice which had told John not to write about the seven thunders (10:4) speaks to him again instructing him to take the book (scroll) from the angel and eat it (10:8-9). When John ate it he wrote that the scroll "was as sweet as honey in my mouth...but when I had eaten it, my stomach became bitter" (10:10). This signifies that God's final victory would be glorious (sweet), but His judgment upon the rebellious would be bitter. The voice then commands John to "prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and kings" (10:11). In short, John was instructed to preach these judgments to men as a warning to all those who would reject Jesus Christ as Savior.

John is then "given a reed like a measuring rod" and commanded to measure the "temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there" (11:1). This action is said to illustrate God's ownership of the temple; however, John is told not to include in his measurements the court of the Gentiles. The exclusion of this court symbolizes God's judgment upon the unbelieving Gentiles who will oppress God's people for three and a half years, which is the last half of the seven year tribulation period (11:2). Specifically, this oppression will come from the forces of the Antichrist. During this time, God will give power to His two witnesses who will prophesy and preach repentance and salvation to those on the earth. They will be given special protection from anyone who would try to harm them (11:5) and also special power to control nature to bring judgment on mankind (11:6). When their ministry is completed, "the beast [Antichrist] that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city [Jerusalem]" (11:7-8). When this happens, all the people of the earth will rejoice and leave their bodies in the streets for three and a half days to show their hatred for these two witnesses (11:9-10). After three and a half days, God will miraculously resurrect these two witnesses and great fear will fall on all inhabitants of the earth (11:11). A loud voice from heaven will call these witnesses to ascend into heaven (11:12) and a great earthquake accompanies this event. A tenth of Jerusalem will fall as a result of this earthquake and 7,000 people will be killed (11:13). In response to this miracle, many people "gave glory to the God of heaven" (11:13).

*Dear God, continue to call people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. May You spare many of the judgments to come.*

## **Revelation 11:15-12:17**

The seventh angel sounded a trumpet ushering in the last trumpet judgment, which brought voices from heaven giving thanks to God for the establishment of His kingdom on earth (11:15). The twenty-four elders (Revelation 4:4), who represent the church, also fall down on their faces and worship God for His righteous rule (11:16-18). After this, John writes that "the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail" (11:19). The ark of the covenant was a piece of furniture in the Old Testament tabernacle/temple and ultimately symbolized the presence of God as well as the atonement for sin and God's covenant with His people. The earthly ark represented this one that John now saw in heaven which spoke of God's redemption of sinners.

A great sign then appears in heaven and a woman with child cries "out in labor and in pain to give birth" (12:1-2). Without going into a ton of detail, this woman (not a literal woman) represents Israel who oftentimes in the Old Testament was pictured as being married to God (Isaiah 54:5-6). A second sign appears in heaven which is a "great, fiery red dragon" (12:3). John describes this dragon as "having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads" (12:3). This dragon is Satan and John even records the fact that the dragon (Satan), with his tail, "drew a third of the stars [angels] of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child [the Messiah] as soon as it was born [Herod demanding the death of all male children]" (12:4). The picture is clear. God promised a deliverer from sin (Genesis 3:15) and Satan made it his priority to make sure that this deliverer would not survive. John continues to write that the woman (Israel) "bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her child was caught up [Jesus' ascension] to God and His throne" (12:5). Jesus did survive Satan's attacks and rose victoriously from the dead to sit at the right hand of God. Now, John sees the woman (Israel) fleeing into the wilderness "where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (12:6). The time spoken of here is the last three and a half years of the great tribulation period when Satan will do his best to terrorize Israel; however, God promises to protect them. The prophet Daniel gives some insight on what will happen during this time. For the first three and a half years, the Antichrist will make a peace covenant with Israel, but at the midpoint of the seven year tribulation he will break that covenant, discontinue temple worship, and defile temple worship (Daniel 9:27). This is called the abomination of desolation and as a result of it, many Jews will flee (Matthew 24:15-22).

Mimicking the chaos which is happening on earth, war will break out in heaven when Michael and his angels fight Satan and his angels (12:7). Satan and his angels will lose this battle and be cast to earth for the last time where he will become very angry and take his wrath out on the inhabitants of the earth (12:12). He will first go after Israel, but they will be given God's special protection (12:13-16). In frustration, Satan will then take out his wrath on anyone who names the name of Christ (12:17).

Although we read this and are saddened by the devastation which Satan will pour out in the last days, we must remember that he is already destroying the inhabitants of the earth. He seeks to destroy their lives through temptation, sin, and discouragement. Those who claim to be followers of Christ must offer hope through Jesus Christ so we can help win the battle for souls right now. We must not wait until these judgments come upon the earth.

*Dear God, make me a person who spreads the message of hope to those on earth. Use me at my job, in my neighborhood, and in my dealings with people every day to offer salvation to those without Jesus Christ.*

## **Revelation 13:1-18**

Revelation 11:15-12:17 offered up a description of some of the people who will be involved during the tribulation period, which are the seven years following the rapture of the church. This time of tribulation will bring extreme judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth for their rejection of Jesus Christ as Savior. Already we have seen a series of two judgments (7 seal judgments and 7 trumpet judgments) which have left many dead and great amounts of destruction upon the earth. Currently, we are in the midst of the seventh trumpet judgment (11:15) and John has written about the woman (Israel), the Child (Jesus Christ), and the dragon (Satan). Satan has been thrown out of heaven for the final time and in anger he turns his wrath upon Jews, but God sends special protection upon them (12:7-16). In frustration, Satan begins to wreck havoc for all those who believe in Jesus Christ (12:17).

We pick up the storyline in Revelation 13 when the dragon (Satan) gives power and authority to the beast (Antichrist). It appears that Satan stages the death of the Antichrist and then claims that he has been brought back from the dead (13:3). John writes that the people of the earth respond to this so-called miracle through marveling and following the beast. John also records that the people "worshipped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshipped the beast, saying, 'Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?'" (13:4) The Antichrist will be given great speaking power bringing deception upon mankind and he will speak blasphemies against God for three and a half years (13:5-6). He will also "make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue, and nation. All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (13:7-8). Even though the Antichrist will murder the saints, they will still be granted eternal life because they have been saved by faith in Jesus Christ. However, those who have rejected Christ will be tormented on earth by the Antichrist whose purpose is to turn people away from God.

Another person arrives on the scene whose goal is to cause people to worship the Antichrist as God. He is often referred to as the false prophet (16:13; 19:20; 20:10). He will deceive many through "great signs" and will cause them to set up an image of the Antichrist which will appear to be given life (13:11-15). Those who refuse to worship this image as God will be killed, but those who are deceived will receive a mark (666) "on their right hand or on their foreheads" (13:16, 18). Many have referred to this mark as the "mark of the beast" because taking this mark will allow a person to engage in daily activities needed for survival such as buying and selling (13:17). Without this mark, an individual will not be able to survive. This will obviously cause many to take the mark of the beast and mean certain death for those who refuse it. John paints a bleak picture for those who dwell on the earth during this future time. May God have mercy on many and may believers be motivated to see the fate of those who reject Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation.

*Dear God, place within me a vision of the things to come so that I might warn those who have rejected Jesus Christ. Through Your Holy Spirit, I pray that You would send conviction so that they might turn to You for mercy and grace.*

## Revelation 14:1-20

Continuing his supernatural vision given to him by God, John sees a Lamb (Jesus) on Mount Zion (Jerusalem) with the 144,000 Jewish witnesses (see Revelation 7:3-8) who had been given special protection while they spread the good news about Jesus Christ throughout the earth. John says that these 144,000 can be identified because "they have the Father's name written on their foreheads" (14:1). In contrast to the mark of the beast (13:16-18), these servants will have some evident mark to show God's ownership over them. The apostle John also goes on to describe these witnesses as singing a new song of redemption to God as those who had been kept pure through God's power (14:3-4a). The most identifiable characteristic was that they followed the Lamb wherever He went and were found righteous before God. This righteousness was not through their own works, but a right standing before God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

After seeing the 144,000 witnesses, John mentions three angels who appear in the midst of heaven. The first angel has the "everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth - to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people - saying with a loud voice 'Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.'" Through this angel, the whole world will hear of the everlasting salvation available to all who will repent and believe in Jesus Christ (14:6-7). This angel was urging people to turn their loyalty from the Antichrist to the One, Jesus, who had the ability to save them. Many must ignore the declaration of the first angel because John sees another angel declaring that "Babylon is fallen...because she has made all nations to drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication" (14:8). Babylon is the center of the Antichrist's kingdom on earth and will eventually be destroyed (see Revelation 16:17-19). A third angel appears proclaiming judgment on any who worship the Antichrist (14:9-11). The final punishment of those who give their loyalty to him will spend eternity in hell where they will be tormented forever and ever having "no rest day or night" (14:11).

John then looks seeing a white cloud where the Son of Man sat with a sharp sickle in His hand (14:14). An angel cries out to Him saying "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of earth is ripe" (14:15). In reaction to the angel's words, Jesus thrusts His sickle into the earth signifying severe judgment. Another angel comes out of the temple in heaven with a sickle and another angel comes from the altar in heaven telling the other angel to also "thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the wine of the earth, for the grapes are fully ripe (14:17-18). So, the angel thrusts his sickle into the earth and he "gathered the wine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God" (14:19). This angel's actions caused great judgment to come upon the earth. John describes the results of this judgment: "And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles [about 4 feet], for one thousand six hundred furlongs [184 miles]" (14:20). In these judgments, God's wrath will be unleashed on all who are His enemies and have rejected salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. This passage is another sobering look at the swift destruction which is to come upon the inhabitants of the earth.

*Dear God, I cannot imagine the devastation here on earth when You pour out Your wrath upon those who hate You. I know You love people and do not want them to suffer eternal punishment, so I pray You would send a fresh anointing upon Your people. Give us a passion to share the good news of Jesus Christ and the hope He offers to all who will repent and believe.*

## Revelation 15:1-16:21

Although there has been a lengthy interlude since the last official judgment (sixth trumpet in Revelation 9:13-21), John's vision has given the reader several descriptions of people who will play a part in this future period of time. For sake of review, John has detailed the two witnesses who will preach repentance (11:1-14), the kingdom of God which will be proclaimed as the seventh trumpet (11:15-19), Satan persecuting Israel (12:1-17), the Antichrist persecuting believers on earth (13:1-10), the false prophet forcing worship of the Antichrist (13:11-18), the 144,000 Jewish witnesses for Christ (14:1-5), and the three angels who bring judgment to the earth (14:6-20).

Now, in Revelation 15 there is a prelude to the next series of judgments. You will remember that God has already unleashed two sets of judgments upon the earth: 7 seal judgments (6:1-8:6) and 7 trumpet judgments (8:7-9:21; 11:15-19). This final set of judgments is referred to as the bowl or vial judgments. John writes, "I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the last seven plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete" (15:1). These seven bowls of wrath would be poured out upon those who have taken the mark of the beast, worshiped the image of the Antichrist, and ultimately rejected Jesus Christ. Each judgment is greater than the one before and John says that "the temple [in heaven] was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed" (15:8). John then hears a voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth" (16:1). Here are the judgments which follow:

**First Bowl** - people covered in painful sores (16:2)

**Second Bowl** - sea turns to blood/all creatures in it die (16:3)

**Third Bowl** - fresh water turns to blood (16:4-7)

**Fourth Bowl** - extreme heat from the sun (16:8-9)

**Fifth Bowl** - darkness on earth/continued pain from sores (16:10-11)

**Sixth Bowl** - Euphrates River dries up (16:12-16)

**Seventh Bowl** - Earthquake like no other/Hail from heaven (16:17-21)

As a result of this earthquake, John writes that "the great city [Jerusalem] was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell" (16:19). This division is a positive thing because it will become the city where God establishes His millennial reign following the tribulation period (Revelation 20:4-6). John goes on to describe the impact of this earthquake on the rest of the world: "And great Babylon [Antichrist's central empire] was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found" (16:19-20). It appears that Jerusalem is the only city on earth left standing after God gets through with all the judgments. His final judgment will come at the conclusion of the 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth (20:7-10).

After the earthquake, God sends hail from heaven. This was not your typical hailstone because John describes the weight as being "a talent" which is about 75 pounds (16:21). This massive-sized hail will result in incredible destruction and loss of life. So how do men respond to God's judgment upon them? John writes that they "blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since the plague was exceedingly great" (16:21). This reaction is really sad because they were blaspheming the very God who gave them life. It is hard for me to understand how men will still be able to express their hatred for God especially since He has offered them salvation through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All of this could have been avoided if they had only repented of their sin and expressed belief in Jesus. I guess men ultimately love sin more than they love God.

*Dear God, each time I read about the future of those who reject Jesus, I am saddened by their fate. I pray that You would use people all over the world to warn of God's pending judgment upon those who hate You and also offer hope through Jesus Christ. Make us see the urgency in this.*

## Revelation 17:1-18

The final series of judgments have been poured out upon the earth and John had documented what he had been shown in Revelation 15-16. The seventh bowl (or vial) judgment included the destruction of Babylon, which was the capital city of the Antichrist. John is given a little more detail about the demise of Babylon before its destruction in Revelation 18-19. Revelation 17 is best seen outside of the chronological order which has been followed so far. This demise probably took place around the mid-point of the tribulation period while Babylon's destruction would not take place until right before the millennial reign of Christ.

John begins this section by writing, "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me [John], saying to me, 'Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot [Babylon] who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.'" (17:1-2) The fornication being referred to here is not sexual sin, but spiritual apostasy. Instead of worshiping God, the kings as well as the inhabitants of the earth worshipped false gods. The ultimate plan of the Antichrist was to bring all kings and nations under one religion which meant the exclusive worship of himself.

John is then "carried away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I [John] saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast [Antichrist] which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns...I saw the woman [Babylon], drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (17:3,6). We must remember that the Antichrist desires to bring all people into a one world religion causing millions to reject Jesus Christ and worship him. God then allows John to see the extent of the Antichrist's influence upon the entire world and how he leads them into spiritual apostasy. When John sees all this, he says that he "marveled with great amazement" (17:6b). The angel immediately says, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman [Babylon] and of the beast [Antichrist] that carries her..." (17:7). The angel goes on to reveal to John concerning the "seven heads and ten horns" which were used to describe this beast, the Antichrist. Many scholars believe that this description illustrates the alliance of the Antichrist with other kings and rulers. Here is how John describes it based on the words of the angel, "The seven heads are seven mountains [seven kingdoms] on which the woman sits. There are also seven kings. Five have fallen [Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece], one is [Rome], and the other has not yet come [Antichrist's kingdom]. And when he comes, he must continue a short time" (17:9-10). John also adds that "the beast that was, and is not, is himself also the eighth, and is of the seven, and is going into perdition" (17:11). The Antichrist is seventh and eighth because he was the seventh ruler and then after his fake resurrection (13:1-5) he will also be the eighth.

The beast is also described as having ten horns. Again, scholars tell us that the ten horns are representative of ten kings who will be placed under the authority of the Antichrist. These rulers will "give their power and authority to the beast" and they "will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them..." (17:13-14). This war was referenced in Revelation 16:14-16 and their eventual defeat is recorded in Revelation 19:17-21. There is so much symbolism in this chapter so I have decided to summarize it with an overall commentary from the John MacArthur Study Bible (p.2017): "After using the false religious system to unify the world kingdoms and gain control of all, the Antichrist - with the help of ten sub-rulers - will turn against the system, plunder and destroy it, and seize all power and worship for himself."

*Dear God, please continue to give me wisdom to see those things which are written about the future.*

## **Revelation 18:1-19:5**

Revelation 17 detailed the demise of Babylon which will be where the Antichrist sets up his headquarters during the last days. He deceives the world leaders as well as the people into a unified kingdom and ultimately takes control over everything; of course, the Antichrist's ultimate goal will be to bring all people under one religious system in worship of him. He will bring world peace and offer false hope, but at the mid-point of the seven year tribulation period the Antichrist will reveal his true colors and engage in attacks against God's people. When the Antichrist breaks the peace alliance he has made with Israel, according to Daniel 9:27 "he will bring an end to sacrifice and offering." Whatever he does will be an abomination to the Jews and their religion and will strip them of their system of worship.

Revelation 17 also reveals that the Antichrist and his evil system has thrown the entire world into chaos bringing judgment from God (see Revelation 16:1-16); however, we previously learned that God allowed this to happen in order to accomplish His judgment upon the world (Revelation 17:17). The Antichrist has finally succeeded in deceiving many and causing them to reject Jesus Christ as their Savior. So, while Revelation 17 describes the leading up to the destruction and judgment of Babylon, Revelation 18 pictures its final destruction prior to the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. Babylon is destroyed and Jerusalem will become the place where Jesus sets up His earthly kingdom.

John writes that an angel comes down from heaven and cries with a loud voice, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons...for all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication..." (18:1-3). Then God speaks from heaven and calls out those who are His to abandon Babylon unless they want to be a part of the judgment (18:4-8). After God speaks, John writes about the sadness of those who loved Babylon and mourned its destruction (18:9-20). The kings of the earth, who made Babylon powerful will mourn her being burned by fire (18:9-10). The merchants of the earth will also express their sadness for Babylon because they are no longer able to buy and sell (18:11-19). Finally, the angel (18:1) calls the apostles and prophets to rejoice because of Babylon's destruction (18:20) and another angel announces the final judgment upon Babylon (18:21-24).

Those in heaven react to this capital city of the Antichrist being destroyed by declaring, "true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot [Babylon] who corrupted the earth with her fornication..." (19:2). Again, this destruction of Babylon will usher in the millennial reign of Christ where He will set up His righteous rule for 1,000 years.

*Dear God, it is comforting to know that one day You will bring proper judgment upon all those who hate You and Your work. May the future destruction of Babylon serve as a reminder that You hate sin and will bring consequences on all those who follow after evil. Keep Your people from sin that they may be a testimony of Your grace.*

## **Revelation 19:6-21**

The seventh bowl (vial) judgment has just finished (Revelation 16:17-21) detailing the demise (Revelation 17) and final destruction (Revelation 18) of the evil city of Babylon. For seven years the city of Babylon has been the capital city of the Antichrist and from it all kinds of evil and deception have corrupted the inhabitants of the earth. Heaven has reacted favorably that Babylon has been finally judged for her sins and spiritual apostasy (19:1-5).

Now John hears the voice of many people saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready" (19:6-7). Many have referred to this proclamation as the marriage supper of the Lamb when the church is once and for all united with Christ, never to be separated from Him again. Of course this marriage also includes the redeemed from all ages. This marriage supper follows the seven year tribulation period and is prior to the 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ on earth. The celebration of believers being united with Jesus Christ will continue throughout the millennial reign.

Next John sees heaven opened and Jesus Christ riding down on a white horse. John describes Him as "Faithful and True [kept His word to return], and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire [He sees all], and on His head were many crowns..." (19:11-12). Jesus Christ will finally return to earth (His second coming) as He had promised in Matthew 24:27-31 and John writes that He will "rule them with a rod of iron [righteous judgment]. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of the Almighty God" (19:15). Distinct from all other rulers the world has ever seen, Jesus' reign will be guided by holiness and justice. As Jesus returns, "the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses" (19:14) which indicates that a battle is getting ready to take place. This is known as the Battle of Armageddon. Jesus is leading believers from all ages to battle against the remaining forces of evil on the earth. An angel calls for the birds to gather so they can feed on the flesh which is about to be killed (19:17-18). The Antichrist will also gather his armies together to fight against Jesus and His people (19:19); however, this does not seem like much of a battle. The Antichrist is immediately captured as well as the false prophet and those who worshipped the image (19:20). The false prophet and those who worshipped the image of the Antichrist are thrown into the lake of fire being the first of millions who will spend eternity there for their rejection of Jesus Christ (19:20b). Revelation 19 ends with John writing, "And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh" (19:21). The only people left surviving will be those who have believed in Jesus Christ. This day will be a victorious day for Jesus because evil has been wiped from the earth at this moment; however, this day will be the last of all those who have hated God and rejected His Son, Jesus, as the only way for salvation.

*Dear God, I rejoice in knowing that You will have the victory over sin. I look forward to Your soon return and Your righteous rule over all the earth!*

## **Revelation 20:1-10**

Because I approach the book of Revelation with a premillennial view, I believe that Jesus Christ will return to earth immediately following the seven year tribulation period and prior to His literal 1,000 year reign on earth. God has completed His judgments (for now) upon the evil inhabitants of the earth who have rejected salvation through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. There were three series of judgments (seal, trumpet, and bowl) which contained seven judgments each. The final bowl judgment was the destruction of Babylon, the Antichrist's headquarters on earth (16:17-21) where God sent brought swift judgment upon evildoers (19:17-21). Since at this time the Antichrist, false prophet, and all unbelievers will be eliminated from the face of the earth Jesus will begin to set up His earthly kingdom. His first order of business is to get rid of Satan, who is known as the "dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil..." (20:2).

An angel descends from heaven and bounds Satan in what is called the "bottomless pit" for 1,000 years "so that he cannot deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished" (20:3-4). The removal of Satan as well as his demons will drastically affect the happenings on earth during this time. Without their tempting forces, people will only be left to deal with temptations through the world and the flesh.

Although the book of Revelation does not give us a ton of details about the 1,000 year millennial reign of Christ, John does provide a little taste of the things which will govern this kingdom. He writes, "I saw thrones, and they sat on them and judgment was committed to them...and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years...they shall be priests of God and of Christ" (20:4-6). These few words may seem too few, but notice what believers will not experience as opposed to the destiny of those who hate God, "But the rest of the dead [unbelievers] did not live again until the thousand years were finished" (20:5). The first resurrection, which happened at the time of the rapture, is known as the resurrection of the just; however, the second resurrection at the conclusion of the millennial period will result in the judgment of all unbelievers and ultimately lead to eternity in hell (20:11-15).

Following this 1,000 year reign of Christ, Satan will be released from the bottomless pit for one last time in order to deceive the nations (20:7-8). Who will he deceive since all those who entered the millennial period are believers? Satan will seek to blind those children who have been born to believers during the 1,000 years. It appears that Satan will gather many people and these rebellious will be referred to as "Gog and Magog." Satan and his new followers will develop an army thinking they can bring down Jesus' kingdom, but their rebellion will be short lived. John writes that they surround "the camp of the saints and the beloved city [Jerusalem]" but "fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them" (20:9).

At this point, God turns His full attention to Satan, who deceived these people, and he is "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (20:10). They are deserving of this punishment as they have led so many to hate God and reject salvation through Him.

*Dear God, it is a comfort to read about the final resting place of Satan and the evil leaders he has put in place to deceive people. May You be glorified in this!*

## **Revelation 20:11-15**

As we begin to see what John writes in this passage, we must remember that Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet have been cast into the lake of fire (hell) forever and ever. Satan has been deceiving people since the beginning of the human race causing many to develop a false sense of what is good. His one purpose in all he does is to oppose the work of God and draw many into his web of deception. Instead of trusting Jesus Christ for salvation, Satan has tempted mankind into believing that they do not need the forgiveness of God or to trust Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. The Bible very clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to a relationship with God and eternal life in heaven (John 14:7). Without Jesus' shedding of His blood on the cross, His burial, and His resurrection from the dead for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), there is no forgiveness of sin (Hebrews 9:22).

In these verses we realize the fruit of all Satan's labor as millions of people will stand before God in final judgment for the sins they have committed. Instead of believing that Jesus paid for their sins on the cross, they tried to make their own way in life ignoring the free gift of salvation through Jesus (Romans 6:23). The writer of Hebrews reminds us, "And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many" (Hebrews 9:27-28). The judgment spoken of here is referred to as the Great White Throne judgment. John writes, "I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them" (20:11). Peter tells us that at this time in future history, the entire universe as we know it will be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10-13). John then sees the "dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (20:12). These books document every sin committed by every person who appear at this judgment while the Book of Life is a record of all who have been forgiven through their faith in Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. All who stand before God at this judgment have rejected Jesus' payment for their sin and therefore the penalty must be paid by them. John reveals their punishment and writes, "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. The Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (20:13-15). Lest we just flippantly read over these verses, all these people without the forgiveness of Jesus are cast into eternal punishment. There is no return. There is no escape. There is no end to their suffering. So what is this lake of fire? I believe the Bible teaches that it is a literal place of torment and Jesus often calls it a place where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 22:13; 24:15).

Many think God is unfair to punish sinners for all eternity in hell; however, we must remember that hell was only created for the devil and his angels (Matthew 25:41) and God did not desire for any person to go there. God loved mankind so much that He made a way for every one to be forgiven through the death of His only Son, Jesus (John 3:16). Peter also reminds us that God "is longsuffering [patient] toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Even Jesus' intention in coming to earth was not "to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). God does not want anyone to spend eternity in hell, but since sin cannot go unpunished because that would make God unjust. So that we did not have to be punished for sin, God "made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The unwillingness to recognize our sin and ask for God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ will ultimately lead to eternal separation from God in hell. John gives it to us straight, "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36).

*Dear God, may many see the reality of coming judgment and turn to You in faith and repentance through Jesus Christ.*

## Revelation 21:1-22:21

Although we have just examined one of the saddest passages in Scripture, the sentencing of unbelievers to the lake of fire, our spirits turn as John begins to describe the things which await those who have believed in Jesus Christ. John writes, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away [2 Peter 3:10-13]. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God..." (21:1-2). Jesus had promised His disciples thousands of years before that He would return for them and that He was going to prepare a place for them to dwell with him forever (John 14:1-3). This place, the New Jerusalem (heaven), is the fulfillment of that promise and it will not only be a place for the disciples, but also for the redeemed of all ages.

By this time in future history, the entire earth as we know it will have been destroyed and no evil will remain. Satan, the Antichrist, the false prophet, and all evil men will have been cast into the lake of fire (20:7-15) in eternal punishment for their sin. In contrast to this sad reality, the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven becoming the dwelling place of all believers where God will eternally live with them. John describes this by writing, "And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them and be their God'" (21:3). The next thing John writes is probably one of the most incomprehensible things surrounding this abode of the saints, "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things [sin and the curse] have passed away" (21:4). It is very hard for the human mind to imagine a world without disappointment and pain, but God has promised us an eternity without concern for sin and its effects. John describes it as God making "all things new" (21:5). "The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars" will not be a part of this new kingdom because they will "have their part in the lake of fire which burns with fire and brimstone..." (21:8).

What will this city look like? John is given a personal tour and in turn he provides a brief description of some of its characteristics. Here is an overview:

- God's glory will give light to the city (21:11,23; 22:5)
- A great wall with twelve gates will surround it (21:12-14,17-18a,19-21a)
- A cube shape city with 1,400 miles on each side - 2 million square miles (21:15-16)
- City is made of pure gold, like clear glass (21:18b)
- Streets are pure gold (21:21b)
- No temple because God is the temple (21:22)
- People of all types will roam freely in the city (21:24-26)
- Nothing can enter which would defile it (21:27; 22:3)
- A river of eternal life will flow from the throne of God (22:1)
- A tree of life will provide twelve fruits of eternal life (22:2-3)
- There will be no night (22:5)
- John also reveals that the people who inhabit the city will serve God (22:3b) and His name will be written on their foreheads (22:4) and they will "reign forever and ever" (22:5).

The angel speaks to John and informs him that the words he has heard are "faithful and true" (22:6). Then the angel tells John that he has been chosen to write these true things in order "to show His servants [seven churches and all believers] the things which must shortly take place" (22:6). John is also reminded that Jesus is coming quickly and those who read and "keep the words of the prophecy of this book" will be blessed (22:7, 12-14).

The reading of the book of Revelation should lead to a life of obedience and worship of God (22:9-11, 14). As we closely consider the things which will soon take place on this earth, may we be surrendered to obey God's will in our daily lives and warn others of the future judgment upon all those who hate God. May God help our study of Revelation to be written in our hearts so that we would often be reminded of its truth.

*Dear God, thank You for this book of future things and may it result in an obedient life.*