

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

## NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE LESSONS REVELATION



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Daniel Webster has been serving as a missionary in Ghana, West Africa since 2004. Previously Daniel worked as a Certified Interconnect Designer (CID) listed with IPC (Association of Connecting Electronics Industries). His electronics career spanned fifteen years working in Canada for the Department of National Defense, as well as spending five years designing advanced electronic communication equipment for the Avionics industry. Daniel is from British Columbia, Canada, and came to know the Lord at the age of twenty-five. He is married to Priscilla, and has a daughter living in Canada. Since 1994 Daniel has been involved with bible teaching and preaching to Christian audiences in both Canada and the USA, and also through various ministries in Ghana. Daniel developed this series of New Testament lessons during a five-year study of the New Testament. The Lessons were prepared as part of an on-going radio ministry in Ghana, where the lessons were broadcast on a national FM radio station in Kumasi from 2010 to 2015.

Cover: Designed by Daniel Webster – Photo is magnification of Acts 17:11

### Bible Quotations:

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture references are from the New King James Version.

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## RADIO SERIES

DEVELOPED BY: DANIEL WEBSTER (2010)

Torah scroll - on sheepskin dating from 1155-1225



Courtesy of Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna

### KEY VERSE:

THESE WERE MORE NOBLE THAN THOSE IN THESSALONICA, IN THAT THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH ALL READINESS OF MIND, AND

### **SEARCHED THE SCRIPTURES**

DAILY, WHETHER THOSE THINGS WERE SO.

ACTS 17:11

### THEME:

AND YOU WILL SEEK ME AND FIND ME,  
WHEN YOU SEARCH FOR ME WITH ALL YOUR HEART.

JEREMIAH 29:13

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## **Preface**

The lessons from Matthew to Revelation have been prepared through personal study of the New Testament. As an on-going part of our radio ministry in Ghana, it was decided to broadcast a series of teachings that would provide one lesson for each of the two hundred and sixty chapters of the New Testament. This work was completed over a five-year period from 2010 to 2015. These lessons are not intended as a commentary, or as an in-depth exegesis of each chapter. The lessons were written to be a concise, and consecutive teaching of the chapters of the New Testament, while providing practical instructions in Christian living. There is a strong emphasis in these lessons on the gospel message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The author's intent is not simply to help people learn the teachings of the New Testament, but more importantly, he desires that all would come to know Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. Each lesson contains a section entitled "Today's Bible Question". This section is designed to address a relevant question, pertaining to the chapter lesson, or with a view to the present spiritual climate. The lessons will serve many purposes for those interested in the teachings of the New Testament. I envision this work helping various bible teachers, Sunday school teachers, or youth leaders who wish to use a consecutive approach to presenting the scriptures to those whom they teach. Each lesson has been kept to a standard of two typed pages, or between 1500 to 2000 words. This will allow the lessons to be easily adapted into a regular teaching schedule. Each lesson, including the bible question section, can be read in less than 15 minutes, leaving time for group discussions, or further commenting, during a 30 to 45 minute bible teaching class.

It is my hope that this work will serve many in the Christian community with a greater appreciation of the teachings of the New Testament, and also be used by God to bring people to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

This work is dedicated to the glory of God, and the expansion of His kingdom both now and forevermore.

Daniel Webster  
Oct. 2015







# LESSONS IN REVELATION

Photo Title: "Dawn of Eternity2"



Image courtesy of 'Waiting for the Word' - [flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/waitingfortheword/) (BY-SA 2.0)

“NOW I SAW A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH, FOR THE FIRST HEAVEN AND THE FIRST EARTH HAD PASSED AWAY. ALSO THERE WAS NO MORE SEA.”

REVELATION 21:1

## Revelation of Jesus Christ

### REVELATION I

We have now come to the final book of the New Testament in our studies. The book of Revelation is a prophetic book that tells us about events that will take place in the future, including the tribulation judgments upon the earth, which will be most severe, and then the reign of Christ for 1000 years, after which there will be a final judgment when sinners are cast into the lake of fire. We will also learn about the new heaven and the new earth, and the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will be joined by all of God's children in a place where righteousness dwells.

Revelation is certainly one of the most difficult books of the bible to understand, for there are many things that are not explained fully. Only when the events begin to take place, will we see and understand how God had foretold of these events. We are not given this information to satisfy our curiosity, or so we know every detail about the future. He provided us this prophecy as both a warning, and as an invitation. The warning is to all who refuse to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, for they are going to face a terrible disaster when God's judgment falls upon them. It also serves as an invitation for all to respond to Jesus Christ in obedience of faith.

The book of Revelation is penned by the apostle John. Including Revelation, John wrote the gospel by his name, and 3 letters, which we recently studied. Revelation is a series of visions that John had of the Lord Jesus, and His words to seven churches in Asia. He speaks of coming judgments upon the earth, the Antichrist, Satan, and all sinners. The book is a very serious warning to all who refuse to surrender to Jesus authority. The book also gives us Jesus words of instruction and correction for His own people. There is a blessing promised to those who read and obey the words of this prophecy. The words are given directly to John by the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, who describes himself, as He who is, was, and is to come, declaring His eternal nature and deity. He also mentions seven spirits before the throne of God, which might be a further description of Jesus divinity. He is Jesus, the Christ, the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, the prince of the kings of earth. This describes His ministry, His exalted resurrection, and right to rule over the earth in the future.

John praises the exalted Lord Jesus Christ, by saying, "unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God His Father, be glory, dominion forever and ever, Amen." This verse tells us our unique roles of service in Christ's eternal kingdom, which will involve both reigning with Him, and serving as God's representatives.

The prophecy begins by telling us that Jesus will come with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and those who pierced Him, and all people of the earth will mourn because of Him. The narrative often quotes the words of Jesus, as heard and recorded by John. In this first chapter we hear our Lord say, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, says the Lord, who is, was, and is to come, the Almighty." These words unmistakably are a declaration of Jesus being eternal, and the Almighty God. We wonder how anyone could mistaken Jesus as less than the eternal God, after reading this chapter of the bible.

John identifies himself as a brother, and partner with those who were facing persecutions because of their faith in Christ. John now tells us the circumstances he was in when Jesus appeared to him, and called him to write. He says he was in exile, banished to the island of Patmos, because of the word of God. This small island was about 100 miles west from the city of Ephesus, so John was not far away geographically from the seven churches that he writes this letter to. John said he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard a loud voice from behind him, like a trumpet. The voice told him to write to seven local assemblies including Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. When John turned to see the voice which spoke to Him, he had a remarkable vision of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. The image he saw was full of symbols, which are prominent throughout Revelation. In the vision of Christ, John saw seven golden lampstands, a glorious white robe with a golden sash around his chest. His hair was very white like wool or snow, and his eyes seemed like a flame of fire. His feet looked like well refined brass. His voice was very loud and powerful, like the sound of a thunderous waterfall, or roaring waves of the sea. In his right hand there were seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword. His face was shining like the brightest sunlight. When John saw this awesome sight, he was overwhelmed with the majesty and glory of the vision and fell down as a dead man. Jesus then placed his right hand on John, and said, "Don't be afraid I am the first and the last, the living one. I was dead, and behold I am alive forever more, Amen. I have the keys of Death and Hell. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will happen hereafter. This threefold division, is clearly seen in the construction of the book of Revelation, with chapter 1 forming the things John had seen in his initial vision. Chapters two and three tell us the things that are, namely the current conditions within each of the seven churches. From chapter 4 to the end of the book John will be writing about the things which will happen hereafter. The Lord Jesus begins to explain what some of the symbols mean which John saw in the vision. He says the seven stars which he saw in His right hand, as well as the seven golden lampstands, were meant to represent angels and the individual assemblies. This chapter reveals to us such a glorious image of our Lord Jesus Christ, and each detail is meant to teach us something about Him, and His relationship to His church. He is the Lord of every local church, and each church must answer directly to Him, as we shall learn in the next two chapters, where the Lord of glory speaks, instructs, corrects, and encourages each local church. I wonder if you have identified

yourself with a local church, for this is the only place Jesus will take notice of you when He is ready to judge His people. Today would be an excellent time for you to surrender to Jesus as the Lord of your life, and then ensure you join with His people in a local assembly of believers.

*"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written in it, for the time is at hand."* Revelation 1:3

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we began our journey through Revelation. It is one of the most difficult books to understand, and also most frightening to read. John describes the glorified Lord Jesus, and we hear Jesus proclaim, that He once was dead, but now lives forevermore. We are struck with awe, realizing that soon Jesus will return in fierce judgment upon this world. Someone might ask the question, "When is Jesus coming with clouds?"

While there are many magnificent things to learn from Revelation chapter one about our Lord Jesus Christ, truly the greatest is that He will soon come back to earth in judgment. John tells us in this first chapter that Jesus will come with clouds, and every eye shall see him. He also says that all tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. It is clear that His coming will be a solemn day of judgment upon this world. This truth is developed in the next several chapters of the book of Revelation, so that God's coming judgment is the theme of the entire book. Revelation, means an unveiling, or revealing of something. In this case the revealing is a person, namely the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be seen in His glory, and will not come as the humble carpenter's son from Nazareth. When Jesus comes again, it will terrify men, so that the great men, captains, commanders, kings, rich and slave alike will try to hide themselves in caves and dens, wanting the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the wrath of Jesus (Rev 6:15-16). While teaching His disciples, Jesus often spoke of His coming again. His return will be a great event, coming upon us suddenly, and all will see it. He will come like flashing lightning from the east to the west, and there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars, while the heavens are shaken. In Matthew 24 Jesus explained that His second coming will cause the earth to mourn, as they see Him come with power and great glory. From this we learn that Jesus' return will not be a small local event. It will be with awesome splendor and power, so that everyone quakes with fear.

But our question is 'when' will Jesus be coming in glory? One thing that has confused many people about the second coming of Jesus, is that Jesus has also promised to come for His church, and catch away the church to be with Himself. This catching away of the church, is commonly called "the rapture", and is not to be confused with the second coming of Jesus. The rapture is taught in 1Thessalonians chapter 4, with Jesus coming to the air (not to the earth), to catch away all living Christians, and also those who sleep in Jesus. The Christians are caught away with the Lord in the air, to be forever with the Lord. Following the rapture is when the "Day of the Lord" will commence. This "Day of the Lord" is spoken of often in the old testament, and is referred to in Matt 24, and other places in the gospels. The Day of the Lord is both a day of God's judgment upon the earth, as well as the day when Jesus will set up His earthly kingdom. Thus the "Day of the Lord", is actually a future period of time, and not just a single day. It will come upon the earth very suddenly and last for 1007 years. We can learn this by studying all that the bible has to say about the future 7 year tribulation period, as well as the 1000 year reign of Christ upon the earth. Careful studying of the prophetic calendar will reveal to us that the next major event in God's prophetic plan is the rapture of the church, followed by 7 years of tribulation, when the Jews are nearly destroyed by her enemies. After the 7 years of tribulation the Lord will suddenly appear in great glory at His second coming. It is at this time, following the 7 year tribulation, that every eye shall see him, and all the earth mourn because of His wrath and judgment. The book of revelation will speak at length about these judgments that will be coming upon the earth during the tribulation period. These judgments are severe in nature, with many people dying, and much of the earth's plant and animal life being destroyed. We cannot be exactly sure how this will appear to people living at that time, but it is not hard to imagine that this level of devastation could be the results of a nuclear holocaust, or wide-scale plagues.

The second coming of Christ is not something that Christians need to fear, for they will be raptured away, and not have to face the terrible judgments that will fall upon the earth. It is only those who have refused to believe the gospel, and commit themselves to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, that will have to face this awful time of God's wrath. The bible makes it clear that the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night. This means that it will come without warning, and when we are not expecting it. We must take this warning very serious, because the day of God's wrath might come upon us at any moment. If you are not a Christian, then take warning by this, and be sure to run quickly to God for mercy, accepting His free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. You certainly do not want to be among those who are left on earth after the rapture takes place, as that would mean facing God's fierce anger, and horrific suffering. We shall learn more about this in the weeks to come. May the Lord shake you with a sense of fear of His coming judgment, so you are quick to repent.

*"And to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2Thess 1:7-8*

LESSON 240  
**Letters to the churches (Part 1)**  
REVELATION 2

In our last lesson we began our study of the last book of the bible, the book of Revelation. In the first chapter we were given John's testimony of his vision of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ, with a prophecy of Jesus coming in judgment upon the earth. In the next two chapters John has recorded the words of our Lord Jesus Christ to the seven churches in Asia. This will comprise the second division of the book, explaining, "The things which are".

In each of the seven letters to the churches we will notice a similar format to the letter. There is an initial mention of the angel or messenger of the church, who conveys the words of the Lord Jesus to that particular church, with a description of some aspect of the vision which John saw of Jesus in the first chapter. He gives words of commendation to each church, if there is something to commend, followed by words of correction, instruction, and warnings. Then each letter ends with an exhortation to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, and a unique promise for each church, and to those who overcome.

It is certainly interesting to compare these seven letters to notice parallels, and important issues concerning the churches. We will only have enough time to consider a few spiritual lessons from these letters, but perhaps this will inspire further consideration and study.

The first letter is written to the church of Ephesus, to whom the Ephesian letter was written. These believers had the benefit of much training and teaching from Paul and Timothy, who both spent considerable time at Ephesus. Ephesus was a city of idolatry, worshipping the image of the goddess Diana. Christianity had made a large impact on the community, with many turning from idolatry to follow Jesus Christ. This letter, written many years later, was meant to rekindle their love for Christ. Jesus said to Ephesus, that He knew about their work, labor and patience. He observed that they had not put up with evil people, and tested men calling themselves apostles, and had found them liars. I wonder how many of the so-called apostles of today, if put to test, would also be found to be liars? It was clear, from Jesus' evaluation, that the Ephesians were diligently working, and had persevered with patience. However the Lord did chastise them for leaving their first love. He encourages them to do their first works. This likely means that when they first started their Christian lives, they were burning in love for Christ, as seen by their zeal to do good works. Perhaps they continued to do the work, but love for the Christ was no longer their motive. We cannot be exactly sure what is meant by their leaving their first love, but it is clear that they were not all that they should have been, or once were. Jesus tells them He would remove their lampstand, if they did not repent. This means the church would lose its testimony for Jesus. Jesus appreciated that these believers hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which were likely those who loved to rule over God's people, setting up some form of clergy. This we discern from the meaning of the word Nicolaitans, which means ruler over the people. Jesus hated this practice, and still hates those who seek power and authority that He never issued. Jesus says, in conclusion, that whoever has ears should hear what the Spirit says to the churches. This phrase is repeated in each letter sent to the seven churches. To the overcomer Jesus promises to allow him to eat from the tree of life, which is in the middle of the Paradise of God. The tree of life was mentioned way back in Genesis, and now we find it here again in the final book of the bible. The tree of life is that which man may eat of and live forevermore. Figuratively it speaks of eternal life granted to those who have believed in Jesus.

The second letter is to Smyrna, from He who is called the first and the last, who was dead and came to life. He knew their works, tribulation and poverty, though He said that they were actually rich. Jesus knew also of the blasphemy of some who called themselves Jews, but were of the synagogue of Satan. Jesus said that they need not fear those things they were about to suffer. The Devil was going to cast some of them into a prison to test them with tribulation for 10 days, but they must remain faithful even unto death, to receive the crown of life. Jesus does not have any words of correction for Smyrna, only comfort in the face of their trials. He says those who have ears should hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Overcomers are promised to be sheltered from the second death. The overcomers are true Christians, whose faith will endure trials and be found genuine. These therefore are not subject to the judgment of the great white throne, when all the wicked will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

The third letter is to Pergamos, from He that has the sharp two-edged sword. Again Jesus said he knew their works, and also where Satan's throne was. He said they had kept His name, not denying the faith, even when Antipas became a martyr for the faith. Antipas must have been known to the church at Pergamos, or attended there. His murder revealed that Satan dwelt among them. Jesus' correction for this church involved their tolerance of some who held onto the doctrine of Balaam, who stumbled Israel, causing them to eat food dedicated to idols, and commit sexual immorality. They also tolerated the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which Jesus hated. Jesus calls them to repentance, lest He come and fight with them by the sword of His mouth, meaning God's word. Again, all should hear what the Spirit says to the churches. This time the overcomer is promised hidden manna from Christ, and a white stone on which is a unique name only known to the one who receives it.

The fourth letter was written to Thyatira, from the Son of God whose eyes were like a flame of fire, and feet like fine brass. Jesus is aware again of their works, love, service, faith and patience, confessing that their works were more than at the first. Though they had been doing more work, Jesus had words of correction for them. They were allowing a wicked woman, like Jezebel of the OT, and calling herself a prophetess, to seduce God's people to commit

sexual immorality, and eat things offered to idols. Because she would not repent, she was to become sick, and suffer greatly. Those who belonged to her would die, and then all the churches will take notice that the Lord searches the minds and hearts of those in the church, rewarding everyone according to their works. Some in Thyatira did not follow this evil practice, or know Satan's depths, and so the Lord would not add more burden to them. These faithful ones should hold fast until the Lord comes, and overcomers were promised power over the nations, and the morning star. He finishes by calling all to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

*"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."* Revelation 2:29

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we considered the words of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ to four of the seven churches of Asia. We noticed that in each letter the Lord is introduced by some aspect of that great vision John had of Jesus in chapter one. The letters contain words of commendation, correction, comfort, and a promise to those who overcome. Someone might ask the question, "Who are the overcomers that Jesus mentions in these letters?"

For each of the seven letters sent to churches in Asia, there is a call for all believers to hear what the Spirit says to the churches, and then a promise to those who overcome. It is clear that these letters were written to address specific issues in each of these historical local assemblies. We can also discern from the wording at the end of each letter, that these letters were also intended for a broader Christian audience everywhere. This we would gather from the words 'let him who has ears hear what the Spirit says to the churches'. John mentioned overcomers in his 1<sup>st</sup> letter, and makes use of this same term here in Revelation, while quoting directly from the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we put together all these references, it would seem to indicate that our Lord Jesus, through the pen of John, is speaking of those who prove themselves to be true Christians. While each local assembly will be comprised of many individuals, most of whom would testify that they were Christians, this does not, in fact, prove that all who profess, were actually born again by the Spirit of God. Local assemblies can be a mixture of both the saved and unsaved. Often times people think they are believers, just like everyone else around them, but have deceived themselves, or been deceived. So many people that we meet would call themselves a Christian, and attend a church regularly, but when questioned about their salvation, they prove to be religious, but not saved by the blood of the Lamb. So with this in mind, it appears that our Lord is addressing assemblies which have a mixture of people who are saved, and unsaved. He calls on the people to repent of their wicked deeds, to hear what the Spirit is saying. Then he promises to the overcomer something that will be true for everyone who is a believer in Christ. The overcomers then are those who perhaps thought they were a Christian, but later discovered that they did not have a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. They then repented and trusted in Jesus as their Savior, and thus became an overcomer.

As we listen carefully to the Lord Jesus correct His people in these churches of Asia, we can see that overcomers will be those who respond in obedience and faith to Christ's instructions for the church. It is not in their works of obedience that will make them a Christian. Overcoming temptations and sins are proof that they were born by the Spirit of God. Overcoming is an evidence of salvation, and not salvation itself. If you belonged to the church of Ephesus, you would be an overcomer, and prove your salvation, by returning to your first works, and first love. If you belonged to the church at Smyrna, you would be an overcomer, and prove your faith, by enduring through the days of testing in prison, being faithful even to death. If you belonged to the church at Pergamos, you would be an overcomer, and prove you belonged to Jesus, by rejecting the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, and the evil practices of the woman Jezebel. If you belonged to the church at Thyatira, you would be an overcomer, and prove you are God's child, by holding fast to sound doctrine, and not giving way to the wicked teachings and practices that others were falling into. Also by being faithful and steadfast until the Lord comes. The overcomer, is someone who demonstrates their faith in any one of the following ways. They return to their first love and labors, or prove faithful under persecution, or reject false teachings, or judge immorality, or strengthen a dying church, or keep God's word while seeking spiritual riches through righteous living and spiritual insight. These are areas we need to pay attention to if we are to be overcomers, and prove to others that our faith in Christ is not simply talk, but also action. Let us remember that we are not saved by our good works, but works are required to authenticate our salvation. We can think of it this way, if I said I was a doctor, the words could prove rather meaningless, and even a doctorate degree hanging above my desk is not the sure proof of my being a doctor. However when I administer health care to the sick and diseased, and effectively help them, I have proven that I am indeed a doctor. The doctorate was granted by a university, but the proof was in my actions. The Holy Spirit gives us new birth, but our actions prove that we are God's child.

*"But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works."* James 2:18

LESSON 241  
**Letters to the churches (Part 2)**  
REVELATION 3

In our last lesson we were listening to Jesus, the Lord over His church, address the seven churches in Asia, bringing them words of commendation, comfort, correction, and a promise for overcomers. We have considered the first 4 of the 7 churches, namely Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, and Thyatira. Today we complete the Lord's instructions to the 7 churches, and will hear His messages for Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

We will recall from our previous discussion from chapter 2 that all 7 letters to the assemblies of Asia, are constructed in a similar fashion, with Jesus given a unique description as revealed in chapter one. Then Jesus speaks directly to the church first with words of commendation, for any good works they were doing. Following the commendation there is a word of comfort or correction depending on the particular circumstances. There are warnings given to those who need to repent, and then a promise to any who overcome. The letters are surprisingly short, but packed with important instruction for each particular church. Each letter, though written for an individual assembly, was also intended to be read by all seven churches, and then more broadly to all Christians. The lessons that others learn, are also for our learning, because we may face similar circumstances sometime in the future.

Chapter 3 begins with words to the church at Sardis, from Him who had the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars. Jesus said that he knew their works, that they had a name of being alive, but were in fact dead. It appears that while this assembly was known to others, it was spiritually dead. They lacked evidence of the life of Christ in them, and working through them. Someone might attend this church and see lifeless rituals, noticing that the people themselves were not alive with passion and purpose, but content with fruitless religious routine. Jesus warns them to strengthen what life remains, lest that die also. Jesus said their works were not perfect before God. Jesus said they needed to repent, remembering how they had initially received and heard the gospel. Jesus warns them that if they did not repent, he would come upon them as a thief, and they would not know the hour of his coming. He does admit that some in Sardis had not defiled their garments, and that they would walk with Jesus in robes of white, for they were worthy. In a weak and struggling assembly there may remain some faithful believers, who hold to sound doctrine, and serve the Lord with zeal. In spite of the poor conditions they find themselves in, they can be encouraged that the Lord sees their efforts, and will reward them. The overcomer in Sardis is promised to be clothed in white, and his name not blotted from the book of life. Jesus would also confess their name before His Father and before His angels. All are exhorted to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Philadelphia is the next church addressed, by He who is holy and true, and has the key of David, who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens. This expresses the sovereign right of Jesus to rule over His people, and give them power to preach the gospel to all nations. Again Jesus says that he knew their works. He had opened a door for them, and no one would be able to shut that door on them. He describes this church as having a little strength, and keeping His word, not denying His name. Jesus says he would judge those who belong to the synagogue of Satan, so they would bow before the faithful believers of this assembly. This would prove his love for these Christians. The synagogue of Satan, professed to be Jews, but Jesus denied this claim, saying that they were liars. Jesus makes a promise to this assembly, that he would keep them from the hour of trial which would come upon the whole world. Many bible commentators would see this as a reference to the tribulation period, when judgments will fall upon the earth. Therefore this historical assembly, was representative of the evangelistic church of the last days. The Christians of the Philadelphia assembly were encouraged by the Lord Jesus to hold tightly to what they possessed, so that no one would take away their crown, or heavenly reward. The overcomer of this assembly is promised to be made a permanent pillar in the temple of God. Jesus would write on him the name of God and the name of the city of God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down from heaven from God. He would also write His new name on the overcomer. This speaks of being established in God's family, so that others recognize the overcomers relationship to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ both in this age, and in heavenly glory. Again Jesus calls on everyone to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

The 7<sup>th</sup> and final church addressed is at Laodicea, and is from the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God. Here Jesus is called the beginning, or originator, of all creation. We must be careful not to think this means He was created, for He is the creator of all things, and is eternal. Jesus says that he knew their works, and that they were neither cold or hot, and He wishes that they were either hot or cold, but because they were lukewarm, He would vomit them out of His mouth. This vivid illustration of vomiting out warm water, speaks of Jesus displeasure with the conditions in this church. They should have been hot with passion and zeal in the gospel, or cold and refreshing through their love and kind acts towards one another. However they had lost spiritual zeal, and spiritual fruit, so that they were neither effective or a good witness for Christ's love and salvation. The problem with these believers was they thought they were doing well. They thought they were spiritually rich, and lacked nothing. Jesus corrects this prideful thinking by telling them they were actually wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. This is a terrible review for those who thought they were doing well. We are not always able to evaluate our own spiritual condition. While we might think we are doing well, the Lord might also tell us we are poor, blind and naked. He advises these believers to buy from Him gold, white garments, and eye salve, so that they would be rich, clothed and able to see. He rebukes those He loves, and calls on them to repent. He says that He was standing at the door

knocking, and if anyone would open the door, He would enter in and dine with them. The overcomer is promised a seat with Christ on His throne. Finally once again we are reminded that those with ears should hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

*"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent."* Revelation 3:19

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we listened to the Lord of the church, speak directly to his assemblies in Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. We learned that Sardis was a dead church, Philadelphia was give an open door, probably for gospel witness, and Laodicea was a lukewarm church. So many lessons could be gathered from the Lord's words to these seven churches, but time will not permit us to go into more details. However Someone might ask the question, "What did the Lord mean when He said he would come in and dine with those who opened the door He was knocking upon?"

Nothing negative was said by the Lord to the church of Philadelphia, and Smyrna. Smyrna appears to have been going through some days of testing and persecution, and so the Lord only offers words of comfort to them. The church at Philadelphia also did not have words of correction, since the Lord was pleased with their faithful witness. The open door of which our Lord speaks, seems to be an open door for gospel preaching. We gather from the words spoke to Philadelphia that the seven churches of Asia are meant to represent different times within church history. Many have speculated about this, and nothing is very certain, but it seems reasonable to think that the last four churches the Lord spoke to, namely Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, were meant to represent the church conditions leading up to the Lord's return in the last days. Thyatira overcomers are promised the morning Star, which pictures Jesus coming for His church at the rapture. Sardis appears to represent the ritualistic worldly church which emerged following the reformation, and denominationalism. Philadelphia was promised not to suffer the hour of trial coming upon the whole earth, indicating a church in the final days before Christ return, which remains faithful to Him and to the gospel. The Laodicean assembly certainly must represent the false church of our modern era, with all it's apparent spiritual riches, but is, in fact, that which the Lord despises. It is to this lukewarm church, that has a phony appearance of spirituality, that Christ is found to be on the outside and knocking to get in. This church has a grand appearance of being rich, but they are missing the most important thing of all, and that is a relationship to Jesus Christ. So many attend churches today, and enjoy the music, and look for answers to prayers, healings or deliverance. Some come looking for God's blessing and favor, so their business will prosper, and their family problems will be overcome. Great crowds come and listen to the pastor preaching his sermons, and everyone is shouting "Hallelujah". While there is much noise and excitement in the air, let us not assume that Jesus is the one directing, for often He is left outside. He wants to come into our churches and into our lives, but we must open the door to let him in. This might seem like a gospel appeal to a sinner, since a sinner must recognize that He need Jesus to come into His life as his personal Savior. The immediate context though is about the Christian church allowing Jesus to come and be a part of their lives. How ironic that Christians can gather together, as followers of Christ, and yet leave Jesus outside. This happens when the church service turns into a spiritual show, or performance, where the celebrity is the preacher, and the audience is their in awe of their pastor, and his powerful preaching, or power to heal and deliver. Everything centers around the man of God, and what he is doing for those who have come for their miracle. We see this happening in many church congregations today. It is all about the preacher, and all about the needs and deliverance of those who have come to him for help. Jesus is mentioned, but only as some mantra, to invoke some kind of mystical power, when the pastor shouts over and over, "In Jesus Name, In Jesus Name". As the Lord looks at these congregations that have given the appearance of being on fire for the Lord, but are in fact lukewarm, He must warn them to recognize their awful condition and repent. These people are deluded into thinking they have Christ's power working in their midst, but it is all a big deception. This is seen by the Christian lifestyle of those who preach and attend such churches. The people are all going in for what they can get, and how rich they can become. They are proud, covetous, selfish, and think they are spiritual. They are poor and miserable, because they lack true spiritual power, which is seen in humble acts of obedience, service and kindness. They are naked and blind, because they compromise their Christian testimony with worldly and ungodly living. They cannot see the dreadful spiritual condition they are in. Their Christianity simply involves using the bible to preach a life of comfort and wealth in this world, and the message of salvation for sinners, and our hope in heaven with Christ, is not preached.

Perhaps you are one of those who gathers week by week in one of these churches, where there is lots of noise, and seeming power for healing and deliverance. But let me ask you if you have heard the simple plan of salvation being preached from the pulpit. The greatest need of all is to trust in Jesus as your Savior and Lord. Make sure that Jesus is the center of your life, and of your church, so He is not left on the outside knocking.

*"And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."* Col 1:18

LESSON 242  
A Vision of Heaven  
REVELATION 4

In our last two lessons we heard the Lord Jesus speak to 7 assemblies in Asia, commending their good deeds, and calling for repentance because of evil practices among them. The remainder of the book of Revelation is taken up with the third and final section, which deals with things which will be hereafter. Most of Revelation is a prophetic look at the end times, when the Lord shall come in judgment upon the earth, and thereafter setup His earthly kingdom. Beyond this the book also deals with the final judgment and eternal state. In today's lesson we will look at the initial vision of heaven that John was privileged to see while in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

We will recall that the book of Revelation begins with John in exile on the Island of Patmos, where He saw a vision of the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. He heard the Lord speak and give instructions for the seven churches in Asia, which we covered in our last two lesson. While John was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and had seen the Lord and heard His voice, he was carried away in Spirit to enter into heaven itself. John and Paul are the only two men, that we are aware of, that were taken to heaven in Spirit to see things that no other people have seen. As we take a look into heaven through the eyes of John, we will learn more about the place where Christians will spend their eternal future.

The first sight of heaven is that of a throne, with a glorious person sitting on the throne. His appearance is described as being like beautiful gem stones, and around the throne more beautiful colors like an emerald rainbow. When the prophet Ezekiel was given a vision of God's throne, he similarly saw great beauty in a colorful array of glory. These visions are clearly limited to the vocabulary and experience of these men, and leave us wondering at the glorious images that they saw. Around God's throne are 24 elders, clothed in white robes, and having gold crowns. The throne produced thundering sound, voices and flashes of lightning. There were seven lamps before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. Also seen near and around the throne were four living creatures, each unique in appearance. The first creature was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third was like a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle. Someone has suggested that these represent four aspects of Jesus as portrayed in the four gospels. The lion is the king of the beasts, and speaks of Jesus as King as presented in Matthew's gospel. The calf speaks of servitude, and speaks of Jesus as the servant of God as presented in Mark's gospel. The creature with a face like a man, speaks of the humanity of Jesus as presented in the gospel by Luke. Lastly the eagle speaks of a heavenly being, and speaks of Jesus as the Son of God from heaven, as displayed in John's gospel. These living creatures each had six wings, and eyes around and within. Both night and day these creatures continually say, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" When the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sat on the throne who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders also fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him, and cast their crowns before the throne. The elders also declare, "You are worthy, O Lord, to received glory, honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created."

There are some observations we can make after seeing these sights of heaven, and perhaps try to sort out what these visions are to represent to us living here on the earth. Firstly let us observe that everything described in heaven centers around the throne and the one sitting on the throne. We can discern that the one on sitting on the throne was none other then the Lord Jesus Christ, due to the words spoken of Him, which matches what we read in chapter one about Jesus, namely, that 'He is the one who was, and is, and is to come'. This teaches us that heaven is all about Jesus, and He is the central figure there, and all worship before Him. We also notice that all the glory and beauty of heaven are also centered in Jesus and His throne. The throne represents the king in His authority seated and ready to judge. The remainder of Revelation will unfold to us a series of judgments that Jesus will execute upon the earth. The elders and creatures have all their attention constantly towards the one on the throne, and speak of His holiness and worthiness for glory, honor and power. The creatures focus on His holiness and eternal being, while the elders are focused on his worthiness to be worshipped because all created beings owe their existence to Him. The 24 elders are not explained to us, but some have suggested that these represent the 12 tribes of Israel, combined also with the 12 apostles, who helped establish the church. Thus the 24 elders could possibly represent believers throughout both the Old and New Testament periods.

We shall notice some striking features about the creatures that are around the throne of God. The each have six wings, and eyes all around and within. These creatures are also described in similar fashion by Ezekiel who was also given a vision of the glory of God's throne. Their wings are not only used to fly, but also to cover their bodies. With eyes all around, these creatures were a fearsome sight to behold. They cry out , Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come." Perhaps their existence and purpose is to help all in heaven recognize the supreme authority and sovereignty of the Lord who sits upon the throne. This might seem unnecessary in heaven, but we should remember that when Satan rebelled, due to pride in His heart, many angels also fell with Satan. If rebellion can occur in the glories of heaven, then establishing authority and rule will keep all created beings in proper alignment with God's order.

While we consider the sovereign throne of our Lord Jesus Christ in heaven, and the need for all to acknowledge His supreme right to rule, we should question whether or not we have made Him the ruler over our lives, by submitting to Him in faith? Ultimately He will be your judge, unless you accept His salvation. If you trust in Him He has promised to



bring you safely to heaven where you can live in peace and joy forever. If you reject Him, and God's offer of salvation, then you will have to face His wrath, and judgment in the flames of Hell.

*"You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."* Revelation 4:11

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we were taken into heaven itself to consider the vision that John had of the glory and wonder of that place. In heaven 24 elders, and four living creatures, surround the throne of God, and spend their time worshipping the one sitting on the throne, as they declare His eternal, holy nature, and worthiness to receive glory, honor and power as the creator of all. Someone might ask the question, "What will we do when we reach heaven?"

Since today we had a glimpse of heaven, and we noted those redeemed beings, and exalted angelic beings who spend their time in worship, we might wonder if this will also be our sole occupation when we get to heaven. Have you ever wondered whether you will eat, sing, fly, work, or sleep in heaven? We could add a thousand more questions about our future experience in heaven, but unfortunately the bible gives us only small glimpses of what heaven shall be like for us. Heaven is described in reference to what it is not, when we are told that there is no night there, no sorrow, no pain, and no more crying, tears or death. This is done by God making everything new again. It would be hard to imagine no sorrow or crying as we remember those we loved, who did not enter heaven, but were cast into Hell because of their rebellion against God. However the bible says that God himself will wipe away their tears, so there is something God will do that shall make our experience in heaven filled with perfect joy and peace. Well this speaks of our general condition in heaven, but does not really help us to know what things we will do. There are certainly strong indicators in the book of Revelation, that we shall sing, praise and worship God. Since there is no night there, and we shall be given new bodies that never shall see corruption, it is reasonable to assume that we will not feel tired, and be given strength to fulfill every task given to us. We never have to sleep, for we shall not grow weary.

In a study of heaven I did sometime ago, I discovered that we will be active in heaven, and here is a list of those things we will be occupied with.

1. *Behold Jesus (John 17:24) – Jesus prays that we may behold His glory – speaking of Admiration*
2. *Study Jesus (Eph 2:7) – We shall eternally learn of the grace of God through Christ – speaks of Appreciation*
3. *Be like Jesus (1John 3:2) – We shall be changed to be like Jesus – speaks of Adaptation*
4. *Serve Jesus (Rev 14:3, Luke 9:17) – We shall also be serving in heaven – speaks of our Attention*
5. *Reign with Jesus (Rev 5:10, Ps 8:6)- We shall be involved with leading – speaks of Administration*
6. *Receive from Jesus (1Peter 1:4, Rom 8:17,18,32) – We shall be rewarded by Jesus – speaks of Accumulation*
7. *Love Jesus (Phil 1:23) – We shall also find much time in showing our love to Jesus – speaks of Affection*

So from this study we could conclude that heaven is all about Jesus, and our time with Him, and what we do with Him and for Him. If you don't love Jesus now, then heaven is probably not the place you will enjoy very much. Sometimes we think life is all about serving ourselves, and our own interest, but that is not why God created us. We are created to enjoy a relationship to God through Jesus Christ, and to serve Him, enjoying his rule, and admiring and worshipping Him.

We can also find some other hints in the bible about activity in heaven. In the Psalms it says that at God's right hand are pleasures forevermore. If you are ever inclined to think the heaven would be boring and dull, you just have to remember that the same one who made beautiful sunsets, and causes birds to fly and fish to swim, is the same one who invented pleasure, and delights in us, and will not withhold any good thing from us. In the book of James we are told that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and comes down from the Father of lights. This teaches us that God will only and always give us the very best gifts. He who makes a rainbow in the sky, showers the earth with life giving rain, and causes the earth to produce an abundance and variety of food for our nourishment and delight, is the same one who will shower us with great joy and blessing when we reach heaven.

In the New Testament Jesus spoke of sitting down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to dine with them. This thought of dining in heaven is repeated several times in the gospels and then also in the book of revelation. This speaks of the joys of fellowship, conversation, eternal friendship, and the joy of sharing the blessings of God together. Eating is something we now need for survival, but in heaven perhaps the only reason to eat is for the simple delight of it. Whatever we do, I know it will all be a thrill beyond what we can now imagine.

*"for I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."* Phil 1:21

## Worthy to open the scroll

### REVELATION 5

In our last lesson we were carried into heaven to view things that John had seen there in a vision given to him by the Lord. Today we continue with the same vision of heaven, and will learn about the scroll with seven seals. There is only one person in heaven found worthy to open the scroll, and that is the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

While John was carried away by a vision into heaven, he had seen the glorious throne of our Lord Jesus Christ, with four living creatures, and 24 elders surrounding the throne and worshipping the Lord. John also saw a scroll that was in the hand of the one sitting on the throne. The scroll had writing on both sides and was sealed with 7 seals. An angel was heard proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and loose its' seals?" Because no one could be found on earth or in heaven, it caused John to weep. Then one of the elders spoke to John and said he should not weep, for the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed to open the scroll and loose its' seven seals. The Lion of the tribe of Judah is a reference to Jesus, who came from the line of Judah, and was also in the kingly line, as symbolized by the figure of the Lion. He is also called the root of Jesse, showing that he was the physical descendent of king David. Now as John was looking towards the throne he also noticed a Lamb standing as though it had been freshly slain. The slaughtered Lamb is surely pointing again to Jesus as the Lamb led to the slaughter, when he gave His life upon the cross at Calvary. The Lamb is described as having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. While the imagery in Revelation is not always easy to sort out, we are given some level of explanation of these images. The horns and eyes, likely refer to the authority and knowledge of the Lamb, who has the right to send judgments into the world, for he was the innocent victim slaughtered to pay the price of man's sin. Seven, is frequently used in the book of Revelation, and is the perfect number and belongs to our Lord in all His perfections. As Jesus sends forth his angels in judgments upon the earth, they are sent in His power and authority, and also by the agency of the Holy Spirit, which answers to this image of the seven Spirits of God before the throne.

The scroll is taken by the Lamb from Him who sat on the throne. This might indicate that Jesus alone is worthy to judge the world since He bore our sins. As the Lamb takes the scroll the living creatures and 24 elders fall down and worship before the Lamb with harps, and golden bowls of incense. The incense represents the prayers of the saints, which are presented before the throne of God. As they worshipped they sang a new song, "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, tongue, people and nation." This statement points out that the gospel has reached into all nations and tribes of the earth. The gospel is a universal message for all people, and is not limited to any culture. The song also adds the words, "you have made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth." All the redeemed in heaven will be occupied with service to God, and ruling and administration in the earth.

John further sees the voice of many angels around the throne, along with the living creatures, and 24 elders. The number is described as 10,000 times 10,000, and thousands of thousands, which equates to millions. So we learn that heaven has not just a few angels, but millions of them. Together they sang with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing." Then all the voices of heaven and earth join in the chorus saying, "Blessing, honor, glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever, and ever!" At the end of the singing, the living creatures said, "Amen", and the 24 elders fall down and worship Him who lives forever and ever. The scene in this chapter is filled with a sense of awe and wonder at the Lamb that was slain, such that all in heaven are bowing in worship, and singing to Him to give Him glory. Once again we take notice of the fact that in heaven the Lord Jesus Christ is at the center of attention, and sits on God's throne of judgment. All the angelic beings, as well as all the redeemed are worshipping Him and singing to Him and about Him. This might teach us to make Jesus the center of attention in our church gatherings and not the pastor. It might also teach us to focus our songs or worship on Jesus, while singing to Him and about Him. Today many Christian songs are solely about us, and what we feel and think, or the blessings we desire. I am sure these songs are fine, but the better choice would be to change our focus to center on Jesus, since once we reach heaven all the attention, singing and worship will focus entirely on Him. There were seven things mentioned in the song of worship to the Lamb, "power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing." These things already belong to Jesus, so why are all the redeemed in heaven singing that He should have all these, when he already possesses all. I believe what is meant by the song, and those singing it, is that Jesus should be granted by all of those under His rule, the full authority over their lives, so that He has power over them. He should also be granted all of our wisdom, as we let Him rule over us and serve Him in this world. We would also desire that Jesus, who has all riches, to have all the richness of my love, loyalty and faithfulness. Also we would desire that He be granted the opportunity to display His strength through His people, so that others will know about His power. Then we would also desire Him to receive honor from men, who are not forced to follow and obey Him, but must voluntarily give themselves to His Lordship. He already has the highest glory in heaven, but we may also give Him glory by showing our allegiance to Him, and our love for Him. His love for us, which promotes our love for Him, becomes a further glory ascribed to Him. Then lastly, we desire blessings to be His, the blessing of our devotion, and sacrifice of our service, so that others can know and follow Him. Yes we can give to Jesus these things from our own hearts, and surrendered lives, which otherwise He

would not possess. He is worthy to gain all the glory, honor and power, but some refuse to yield to Him, and thus will have to face His judgment. Why not take this occasion to give Him glory, honor, and riches, by giving yourself to Him in faith, and asking Him to be your Lord and Savior. As believers we can bring glory and honor to Him when we obey and serve Him.

*"Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*  
Revelation 5:13b

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we were again shown scenes in heaven, as recorded by John, who saw the Lamb of God in heaven, who was worthy to open the scroll with seven seals. We heard all in heaven and earth worship the Lamb and ascribe to Him power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory and blessing. Someone might ask the question, "What is the scroll that only Jesus is worthy to open?"

We shall learn in the next chapters that as the seals of the scroll are broken that various judgments will be brought upon the earth. This teaches us that the scroll is that document which holds these judgments that will be executed against the ungodly and rebellious. No one was worthy to open the scroll, because no one was a worthy judge to execute these judgments. It is only Jesus who gave his life to redeem men to God, that has the moral authority to send these judgments upon the world. No man would be able to perfectly meet out justice, since he would condemn himself with all others, for he also is guilty of sin. Jesus was guiltless, but also the sin-bearer. He, having paid the price for sin, is now qualified to execute judgment against those who refuse God's offer of mercy. He is both the agent of mercy, but also the agent of judgment when men refuse His grace.

We will notice the scroll has seven seals, and when each of these seven are broken a subsequent judgment falls upon the earth. It is interesting to observe the repetition of the number 7 in the book of Revelation. We have already heard of the 7 churches, the 7 Spirits of God, the 7 stars, the 7 lampstands, and now the 7 seals. We shall find many more 7's before we finish our study of this book. But why 7 seals on the scroll? As we noted earlier 7 in the number of perfection, and is associated with the perfections of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even in judgment the Lord will execute a perfect justice upon all. He will punish those who have rejected God's offer of salvation, and visit them and the earth with the most severe series of judgments. He is perfect in His anger and His wrath, repaying evil with the appropriate judgment. Some of us are not as inclined to execute a perfect justice. Sometimes we fail to show the correct severity of judgment, due to our sense of sympathy, or our own sense of guilt and shame, for we too are just sinners. Perhaps at times we are much too severe, and do not exhibit enough patience and grace before making judgments on others. However, with the Lord Jesus Christ, His judgments are perfectly balanced and just. He shows a great measure of patience and grace to wayward sinners, but when ample opportunity for repentance has been given but refused, then His wrath falls down heavy upon the wicked. His judgment will be a perfect judgment, a complete and thorough judgment to crush His opponents, and establish a kingdom of righteousness and peace.

This scroll in heaven is written on both sides, inside and out, and thus speaks of the thoroughness or completeness of the document. God's judgment is sealed until the end time, but when it falls it will be a thorough judgment, as was the case with Noah's flood, and with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Some have linked this scroll with the scroll spoken of in Daniel 12. Daniel is given a prophetic view of the end times, and told to write it down in a scroll. Some of the prophecy which Daniel was given by an angel related to kingdoms which would be established from Daniel's time, until the Roman Empire that dominated the world when the Messiah would come into the world. But there were also future prophecies about the end times when the tribulation judgments would come upon the world. Daniel does not say much about this, and is told to seal up the prophecy until the end times. Some commentators link scroll of Daniel to this scroll in Rev 5, which John saw the Lamb take from Him who sat on the throne. There is good reason to link these two scrolls for they both deal with end time judgments, and are associated with angelic visions with both Daniel and John had. While we cannot tell this for sure, we can certainly understand that John is given this vision to warn us all that soon judgment is coming, and when the Lamb of God is ready to open that scroll, then judgments will begin to fall upon the earth. We understand these to be judgments of the tribulation period, which will follow immediately after the rapture of the church. We might also see John's translation to heaven, by way of this vision, as a foreshadowing of the rapture of the church, and the subsequent period of judgments on earth.

As we think about the scroll it is significant to notice the change in image from the Lion of the tribe of Judah, which portrays Jesus as the worthy king who is able to open the scroll, to the image of the Lamb freshly slain, which points us to Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb offered to pay for our sins. While Jesus is the mighty king and ruler over His people, He is also the one who in mercy gave up His own life in sacrifice for those He loves. This uniquely qualifies Him as both a righteous and merciful judge, with all authority to open and execute the judgments of God written in the scroll.

*"And he said, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." Daniel 12:9*

LESSON 244  
**Judgments from Heaven**  
REVELATION 6

In our last lesson we saw John's vision of heaven, with Jesus, the Lion of Judah and the Lamb, taking a scroll from he who sat on the throne. The scroll had 7 seals, and only Jesus was found worthy to open the scroll and loose the seals. In today's lesson we will see the resulting judgments that come upon the earth, as these seals are opened in heaven. The scene here is a futuristic look into God's wrath pouring out on sinful men, as Jesus, the righteous judge, sends His wave of destruction upon the earth.

As each seal is opened a new judgment falls. The first seal causes one of the living creatures to announce with a loud voice "come and see." This is repeated for the first four seals as they are opened. This tells us that the judgments are being revealed to John, and therefore to us, so that we shall have a preview of God's future wrath, and the devastation it will bring upon the earth. It is of God's mercy that we are given this view of the future, so that we will be in a hurry to repent and live godly lives, as we anticipate the soon coming judgment of our Lord. After the first seal is opened, John saw a white horse with someone sitting on it who had a bow, and went out to conquer. This speaks of imminent war and the white horse might indicate someone noble or righteous, or at least the appearance of it. When the second seal is opened another horse appears, this time the color is fiery red, and the one who sat on this horse was permitted to take away peace from earth, so that people kill one another. This speaks to us of all out war, and we shall learn more about the great battle at Armageddon where so many die that it will seem like rivers of blood are flowing. The third seal opens, and John sees another horse, this time black in color. The one riding on the black horse is holding scales in his hand, and a voice from the living creatures speaking of the high cost for food, and not to harm the oil and wine. This speaks about a famine where food is scarce, and thus must be handled with care. The fourth seal is opened and John sees a pale horse, and one sitting on this horse is called "Death", and Hell followed him. He had power to kill with the sword, hunger, with death and by wild beasts.

The fifth seal is opened, and the vision changes back to heaven where John sees the souls of those who were killed because they faithfulness to God and His word. These souls cry out, "How long, Lord until you judge those on earth who shed our blood". These souls were given white robes, and told to rest until a certain number of their fellow servants and brethren would also be killed. This fifth seal reveals a persecution against the godly living during the tribulation period. There is no specific judgment mentioned due to opening of the fifth seal. This judgment is waiting until the wicked have completed their murderous rampage.

The sixth seal is opened and the scene changes back to earth, where there is a great earthquake, the sun is darkened, the moon becomes red like blood. And the stars of heaven are said to fall to earth, like figs fallen from a tree shaken in a mighty wind. We know that stars cannot literally fall to the earth, so perhaps this refers to rockets and missiles flying during a world wide war. Or perhaps it refers to a meteor shower. At certain times in history a meteor, or several, will hit the earth's atmosphere, and if large enough, will break into smaller fiery balls shooting to the earth. What John is speaking of here in Revelation is something like we have ever seen before, when the heavens are shaken, and great convulsions and upheavals are happening on the earth, so that men quake with fear, and hide in the caves, and call for the rocks to fall upon them. They want to be hidden from the face of the wrath of the Lamb. It seems that all men will recognize that these cataclysmic signs say that the great day of God's wrath has come. It that day no one will be able to withstand the wrath of God. The scene described by John is one of such enormous scale that all mountains and islands are moved from their place. The sixth seal seems to mark the second coming of Christ in judgment. This will be a terrifying time for those on the earth, as both the heavens and earth are shaken violently. While men may war with each other, and death and famine have struck the earth to make men desperate and fearful, it will not compare to the terrifying movements when heaven and earth are shaken. The sky is described as being rolled up like a scroll. Perhaps this is the scene of a nuclear holocaust or volcanic eruptions that blanket the earth with dark and ominous clouds.

The day of the Lord begins with the rapture of the church, and the start of the tribulation period. During the tribulation period there will be a peace treaty made with Israel, but half way through the tribulation the peace treaty will be broken, and a great war will break out. The seal judgments appear to be associated with this final 3.5 year period at the end of the tribulation. It is during this short time that these horrific judgments will fall upon the earth. Perhaps many on the earth will not understand that these terrible wars, death and famine are a result of heaven's judgment. However, there will be no mistaking the coming of Christ, when heaven and the earth will heave violently, and all will know that Jesus has arrived in fierce wrath and judgment. Sometimes we think of the second coming of Jesus as a time of hope and blessing. However, when we study our bible carefully, we shall see that the second coming of Jesus is a time that most will dread and fear, because He is not coming to rescue sinners, but to execute judgment. Many people will die horrible deaths, and many will suffer intensely. As Christians we are not looking forward to the second coming as much as we look for the rapture when Christ will catch away the church to heaven. Perhaps hearing of these fearful days, soon to fall upon us, has given you some anxious thoughts about whether you are ready for the great day of God's wrath. The thing you must do is to receive Jesus now as your Lord and Savior to be sure you are safe, and will not have to face that awful day of judgment and wrath. Do not wait, or put off this decision, because the rapture may happen at any moment, and you will not want to face the judgment that follows.

*"For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"* Revelation 6:17

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we were given a view into the future judgments of our Lord during the tribulation period, when the seals of the scroll in heaven are opened and great judgments fall upon the earth. The climax of these judgments will be the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ, who shall judge the earth in righteousness. Someone might ask the question, "Who are the four horsemen that John saw?"

We learned that there are four horses with riders as seen by John with each of the first four seals that are opened. Each of these horses represents a new wave of judgment that comes to the earth. Not much information is provided to tell us exactly who these riders are, so we are left to use some careful analysis, and comparative study, to try to sort out who these could possibly be. There are differing views, but perhaps the best explanation given is that the first rider on the white horse is the antichrist. There are several reasons to suggest that the antichrist is the one whom the scriptures are referring to. The man on this horse is wearing white and a crown, but we should not assume that it is the Lord Jesus Christ. In Revelation 19 we see the Lord riding a white horse carrying a sword, and wearing many crowns. Though the image is similar, it also different. The rider in this chapter carries a bow, not a sword, and he is given a crown, whereas the later image of the Lord in Rev 19 is of Him wearing many crowns. In Revelation 19 the rider is clearly identified as the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. Here in Revelation 6 the identity of the rider is not given, and that is because the antichrist, as a deceiver, will come in the appearance of Christ, promising to bring peace and economic hope to the world. He will look very much like a Savior, and so the white horse and white robes make him seem like some great person. However, it is all a deception, for the peace that is promised is quickly taken away when the next seal is opened. If we understand that the first horseman is representative of the antichrist, then the one riding the red horse likely represents the war that will ensue after peace has been removed from the earth. The first judgment then by the Lord gives Satan permission to establish his rule in the earth, through the agency of the antichrist. At first it will seem like all is going well, and peace and economic stability have been achieved. Then suddenly this will be removed once the antichrist has established his rule, and declares himself to be God. War will break out among the nations, be devastating, as men turn on each other and kill one another. The third horse is black, and the one sitting on this horse is holding scales in his hand. Most commentators have taken this rider to represent a time of famine that will fall upon the earth. After wide scale war, it would not be surprising that food will be scarce and the world will suffer from famine. With the world so dependent on the movement of goods from one place to another, it is not hard to imagine that when war destroys the major infrastructure for moving products, that millions will be left starving, with no access to food. Stores will run out of their supplies quickly with nothing to restock the shelves. Famine exists in some areas today, but nothing will compare to the judgment of God, when famine will affect most people living on the earth. The final rider is on a pale horse, and many have thought this represents wide-scale disease, which will take away many from the earth. Not only will the sword of war destroy human life, but also hunger and death, maybe by infectious diseases like Ebola, which can move quickly and kill many. Also the beasts of the earth will become savage killers, perhaps they also lack a source of food, and thus turn to killing people for food. As we read of these horrific scenes of war, famine and death, we would expect those living through these experiences to hold onto some hope that soon the fighting will stop, and things will return to normal. However the book of Revelation tells us that this horrible time of judgment has only just begun, for as the next seals are opened, further judgments will come, one after the other, relentlessly hitting the earth with ever increasing terrifying scenes of destruction and death. We are living in a day when wars and famine exist, but these are only small foretastes of the full scale trouble that will fall upon this ungodly world during the days of tribulation. As we read about these four horses, and this prophetic view into God's wrath and judgment, it should strike fear into our hearts, and make us run to Jesus Christ for mercy and salvation. Revelation was written not to entertain our curiosity, or excite our thirst for the sensational. Revelation was written as both a warning and invitation. Be warned that God's day of wrath will soon come, and when it does arrive, no one will be able to endure the pain and sorrow. Today is our opportunity to hear Christ calling us to find shelter in His mercy. At the cross Jesus was declaring His love for us, and showing us that God has prepared an escape from God's wrath against our sin. Don't stand with the ungodly, and think somehow you will be missed when judgment falls. The words are real and they are true, and soon the world will know that God's patience has reached its' limit. The invitation is now open for you to trust in Jesus, and ask Him to forgive you for all your sin. Sometimes we might be a bit imbalanced in how we think about God's salvation. It is not simply a free gift to go to heaven to live forever, which is certainly true, but more importantly God's salvation means being spared from the wrath that is coming upon this earth very soon. That is why the bible says we MUST be born again. Make today the day you ask Jesus to save your soul.

*"Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it."* Isaiah 13:9

LESSON 245  
**Tribulation Saints**  
REVELATION 7

In our last lesson we considered the judgments of the Lamb of God upon the earth, through the opening of six of the seven seals on the scroll in heaven. We also considered the four horsemen of the apocalypse who symbolized the antichrist, war, famine and disease that was coming on the earth during the great tribulation. Before John will introduce the judgments associated with the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, he will first take us again to scenes in heaven, where we learn of the tribulation saints who are assembled before the throne, and worshipping the Lamb.

This chapter begins with John seeing four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, who hold the winds of earth, so that no wind blows anywhere on the earth, sea, or moves any tree. The four corners of earth likely means the entire earth is in view, so that the four angels leave no place on earth unaffected by this judgment. Wind is important for the movement of clouds and weather patterns, so this might indicate a nuclear winter where thick radioactive clouds surround the entire face of the earth, with no place to hide. Of course, we can not say for sure exactly what is meant, but we know it will be a horrible experience for those living on the earth.

Another angel appears and calls on the four angels to wait before doing any harm to the earth, sea, and vegetation, until 144,000 of God's servants are sealed on their foreheads. These 144,000 are Jewish believers from the tribulation period, with 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. The tribe of Dan is not mentioned, but Joseph's son Manasseh appears instead. This might be a judgment upon that ancient tribe of Dan because of their idolatry, but of this we cannot be certain, for the text does not explain why Dan is omitted. We learn of these 144,000 later in chapter 14, where we discover that they were faithful to the Lord during the tribulation period.

After this John sees a great multitude in heaven before the throne. Just as before when John saw a great crowd, they are from every tribe, nation, people and tongue, and they are wearing white robes, with palm branches in their hands. They were crying out in a loud voice, "salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" At this the angels, elders, and four living creatures fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God. They said, "Amen! Blessing, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen."

One of the elders spoke with John and asked who these in white robes were, and John replied, "Sir, you know." The angel replied these are the ones who have come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes, making them white in the blood of the Lamb." The angel was indicating that these are those who accepted Christ's sacrifice upon the cross by faith, as the payment for their sin. This is why they are said to have been washed, and wearing white robes. The white robes indicating that they had been justified by their faith through the blood of Jesus Christ. These tribulation saints are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne dwells among them. Some believe the tribulation saints that are referred to here are living with Christ on earth during His Millennial reign, while others see these saints as being in heaven. Perhaps the confusion is because of the reference to the temple, which will be rebuilt on earth during the tribulation period. This might indicate these saints are on the earth, but then earlier in this book we read of the promise given to the overcomers from the assembly at Philadelphia who would be made pillars in the temple of God, which seems to be a reference to their eternal place of God's dwelling in heaven. Then we are also told that these tribulation saints serve day and night. However we read that in heaven there is no night (Rev 22:5). Perhaps the expression day and night simply means the activity never ceases, and is put into words which we as earth can understand and appreciate.

The tribulation saints are promised that they shall not hunger, thirst, or suffer from the sun or heat. This seems to reinforce the argument that these saints are living on earth during the millennium, since the words refer to conditions of people on earth, and not conditions in heaven. These saints will know the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne as their shepherd, and he will lead them to the living fountains of waters. This imagery certainly draws our minds to the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm of David, who said the Lord was His shepherd, and would lead him by still waters. The beautiful pastoral scene expresses the care and provision of the Lord for His own, and here in Revelation the saints are also receiving divine care of their great Shepherd. This time they are lead to the fountains of living water, and not to still waters. This likely refers to their sense of security to live with Christ eternally, having been given eternal life through faith in Christ. While David's pastoral scene began with an earthly care and blessing He knew from the Lord, it also ends with the victorious thought that He would dwell in the house of the Lord forever. How wonderful when the children of God have this assurance of being with their Lord and Shepherd for the eternal ages to come.

Perhaps one of the most comforting verses to be found in the entire bible, has to do with the promise given to these tribulation saints, who enter into the Millennium and enjoy the eternal care of the Lord their Shepherd. The words say that **God will wipe away every tear from their eyes**. We enter this world crying, and the tears continue to flow throughout our journey of life here in this world of pain and sorrow. The loss of loved ones, the trials and hardships which we all face bring us many days of sorrow, interspersed with some days of joy and laughter. We all long for a better day, when our sorrows shall be erased, and our days filled with joy. This cannot happen while we still live in a sinful world. Every life ends in death, sickness comes to us all, conflict and misunderstandings arise frequently, and we can never escape the tears, since we live in a broken and cursed creation. But once we are with Christ, and we see His perfect plan unfolding, we shall forget all of our sorrows and troubles, and live in a state of joy with Him

forever. Every human heart is longing for a day when all tears are removed. Only Christ can provide that to you, and it is not until we are with Him, and made into His image. If you want to claim this promise for yourself, then you need receive Jesus by faith, believing that God has raised Him from the dead, and that He is both Lord and Christ. Trust in Him today, and be assured that one day in the future he shall wipe away all your tears!

*"for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes"* Revelation 7:17

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we considered the tribulation saints who gather around God's throne and worship Him. We also were introduced to 144,000 Jewish believers who are faithful servants of God during the tribulation period. Someone might ask the question, "What is the seal that the 144,000 receive on their foreheads?"

When the four angels standing on the four corners the earth are ready to execute judgment on the earth, doing damage to the sea and vegetation, they are restrained by another angel who calls on them to wait until the servants of God receive a seal on their foreheads. This was a merciful act in the midst of judgment, but what were these seals that were given to the 144,000 in their foreheads? The seal marks them as belonging to God and given special protection to be kept alive during the seven year tribulation. The seal then is a mark of ownership similar to how livestock are branded to identify them as belonging to their owner. Whether these are literally sealed with some mark, or it means that they have been sealed with the Holy Spirit is not clear. God knows who are His, and will protect them from their enemies. The sealing then of these 144,000 reveals these people as God's children, through faith in the Lamb of God. Their allegiance to Christ undoubtedly brought persecution upon them, for claiming Christ as their Savior, but would rather choose to suffer and belong to Jesus, then to identify themselves with the false system of the antichrist.

Paul also mentions how God seals us as his property, when he said in 2Corinthians 1:22, God has sealed us. He also mentions in the same place that He has given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee. In Ephesians 4:30 Paul wrote that Christians should not grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom they were sealed for the day of redemption. These references confirm to us that the seal of God is associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit. During the tribulation period their will be many judgments falling upon men. One judgment mentioned later in chapter 9 is locusts that arise from the smoke of the bottomless pit. These locusts are given power to torment men, but not the vegetation of the earth. When men were stung by these locusts, the sting was like that of a scorpion. The torment of the sting is so bad that men will seek for death, but they cannot find death, only suffering. Perhaps they become paralyzed so that they have no power to take their own life, and must suffer excruciating pain for several months. This judgment will only affect those who do not have this seal that protects them these attacks. Somehow God will allow the judgment of the locusts to only fall upon men who are not sealed on their foreheads by God.

In the book of revelation we will learn of another mark made on the foreheads or hands of those who follow the antichrist. This mark, by contrast, is not a mark that protects those who have it, but rather seals their doom, as joining with antichrist, and will have to face God's certain judgment. In chapter 13 of Revelation we will learn about the beast who demands worship from the men on earth, and a mark on their right hand or their foreheads. This mark will allow them to buy and sell, but if anyone refuses the mark they will not be able to buy or sell. Also if someone refuses the mark of the beast they will persecuted and killed by the beast.

So we have learned that during the tribulation period there are two kinds of seals. The first seal is God's seal upon those who believe in Christ, and have been given the Holy Spirit. These will be protected from the attacks of Satan, who sends poisonous stinging locusts to torment men. The second seal belongs to all those who have followed the antichrist, and perhaps under strong persuasion, or fear of death, have accepted his mark on their hand or forehead, so that they can buy and sell. Recognizing that any who refuse the mark will be killed, they choose to receive the mark, and spare their lives for the moment. We say this because, while they are spared from the antichrist, they are not protected from God's judgments, and will soon be destroyed, and find themselves suffering eternally in the flames of Hell. It would have been better for them to cast their hope in the Lamb of God, who could protect them from judgment and torment. Though they might have to suffer persecution and/or even martyrdom, that would be a small price to pay to escape the eternal suffering in hellfire. As we consider this age of judgments, and how men will be divided into either followers of Satan, or followers of Christ, we should be so grateful we live in this day of grace, where confessing Christ as our Lord and Savior will not likely cause us to suffer. Use this as a warning, to flee from the wrath that is coming upon the earth, and find refuge in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. Trust in Jesus today!

*"For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."* 2Corinthians 6:2

LESSON 246  
**The Seventh Seal**  
REVELATION 8

In our last lesson we learned about 144,000 Jewish believers who are faithful servants to God during the tribulation period, and how they were protected from harm because God's seal was on them. In today's chapter John will resume the vision of God's judgment during the great tribulation with the opening of the 7<sup>th</sup> and final seal of the scroll.

As the final seal is opened in heaven, there is a silence in heaven for about half an hour. Perhaps this represents a hesitation before executing the next judgments, a merciful space in which men can pause to consider what has been happening, and to repent. The seventh seal will actually begin another series of 7 judgments, which are each accompanied by seven angels, each sounding a trumpet. We will also learn that the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet initiates another series of 7 bowl judgments, which we will learn about in chapter 16. So we have three sets of 7 judgments, with the seventh seal opening and initiating 7 trumpet judgments, and the seventh trumpet opening and initiating 7 bowl judgments. The triple seven may represent God's perfection in judgment, by a complete and thorough execution of God's wrath.

With the opening of the seventh seal, we see seven angels, each given a trumpet. Another angel with a golden censer, stood by the alter, and offered incense, with the prayers of the saints, on the alter before God's throne. The smoke of the incense ascended before God. The angel then took the censer, and put some coals of fire from the alter in it, and threw it towards the earth. This created noise, thunder, lightning, and an earthquake. The imagery of the incense in heaven offered before God, and associated with the prayers of the saints, equates to the judgments that will come from God's throne upon the earth, and directly answer to the prayers of God's people. This reminds us that God values our prayers, and will answer them, and He will execute righteous judgment on those who do evil.

Now the seven angels will each sound their trumpets one by one with subsequent judgments coming upon the earth. The first angel sounded his trumpet, and hail, fire, mingled with blood fell upon the earth. One third of the trees burned up, and all grass was also burned up. The judgments during the tribulation affect man, and result from man's sin, but all of creation will suffer from God's wrath, and not just man alone. When the second angel sounded his trumpet a burning mountain with fire was cast into the sea, and one third of the sea turned to blood. This might indicate nuclear naval war which causes much of the world's marine life to die. The third angel sounded his trumpet bringing a star from heaven, like a burning torch, falling on one third of the rivers and springs of water. The star was called "wormwood". This caused one third of the fresh water supply upon the earth to become contaminated and bitter. Many men drank this water died, since man depends on drinking water to survive, and perhaps this was the only water available to some people. The fourth angel sounded his trumpet, causing both the sun and moon to be darkened by one third. This made the day one third shorter, since the sunlight was reduced by one third. This also meant less moonlight at night. With less sunlight coming to the earth, it will undoubtedly turn into winter conditions, unless the radiation from the sun is uninhibited by a damaged atmosphere. It is difficult to fathom the extent of these judgments, and why it only affects one third of each thing it touches. Perhaps the meaning is that the damages of a nuclear war are centralized in certain areas, such as North America, Europe, Middle East, Russia and China. This would make sense to us today, since we know that it is these areas which have nuclear weapons, and together they might equate to one third of the earth. Perhaps areas such as Africa, South America, and Australia, and Northern Canada will be less affected, but we can only be guessing, as the text does not elaborate about this.

Now in heaven John heard an angel flying in heaven, and saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the three angels who are about to sound. With all the wide-scale devastation already upon the earth, we wonder how things could grow any worse. However, we shall see that the onslaught of God's wrath will continue until the judgment is complete. We might be thinking deeply and seriously about this future time of God's wrath and wonder how a merciful and loving God could so relentlessly bombard the world with horrific judgments. It is important that we take time to consider this, and the reason these things have been written down and given to us, prior to them happening. God is waiting for men to repent, and He wants us all to know that when judgment does fall, there will be no place to hide, and judgments will equate to the crime. Why is God so angry? Why such fury hurled upon the men of this world. The bible will help us to appreciate why God is justified in His anger over sin. Men have rebelled against God's authority from the beginning of time, and God has patiently waited for men to repent, and provided again and again means for men to be reconciled to God. When Jesus came to die on the cross, God was giving His ultimate gift to all of mankind. The precious gift of God's Son, was intended to once and for all give men a remedy for their sin. The price paid was infinitely more than we could have ever paid, and God willingly paid for our redemption with the blood of His own Son. With such a great price paid, and with such an open door to forgiveness and peace with God, it is not surprising that God should be angry with those who refuse His grace, love and sacrifice for them. Yes, God has every right to be angry, and to give men what they deserve, and that is the fury of His wrath, for their refusal to honor the Son of God who died to offer them free salvation.

These are some of the most frightening scenes in the entire bible, and meant to stir in our hearts with a sense of holy fear before God, and the awesomeness of His power and fury unleashed on a godless and Christ-rejection people.



Today, once more the opportunity has been given to you, to repent before God, and call upon Jesus to save your soul. Admit to Him that you are a guilty sinner, and plead with Him to have mercy upon you, and to forgive you.

*"So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound."* Revelation 8:6

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we saw the results of the first four of seven judgments associated with angels blowing trumpets in heaven, during the future tribulation period. There will be wide-spread destruction to the trees, grass, sea, sea creatures, and fresh water supply so that one third of the earth is destroyed. Some one might ask the question, "Why do God's judgments only affect one third of what they are sent to destroy?"

When men go to war, there is often not much in the way of compromise, compassion, or controlled aggression. The point of war at its core is to destroy the enemy and have them subdued. This could be motivated by greed, desire for power, or defense of lands, rights or honor. It is possible, and sometimes the case that men will engage in a battle with a sense of respect towards their enemies, such that they engage in a fair war practice, without needlessly killing civilians, or plundering what belongs to others. In most cases however, the point is to destroy and/or subjugate one's enemies. In the book of Revelation we have the unfolding, or unveiling of the Jesus as the righteous judge of the earth. In this we see His wrath being poured out upon sinful men. The sheer scale of destruction, and relentless barrage of fury, might lead us to conclude that no mercy is left, and the intent is to obliterate all enemies. While the judgments are global and extensive, they are not without some opportunities for repentance. Ultimately God is not interested in simply destroying His enemies, after all Jesus came to die for His enemies. Even when it comes to His judgments and wrath, God designs them in such a way as to open a further opportunity for people to turn away from sin, and accept Jesus as their Lord and king. While we cannot be sure why only one third of earth was affected by these series of judgments, it would seem that God is giving space for those living upon the earth to repent and seek God's mercy and forgiveness. During these awful judgments when men are terrorized with horrific sufferings, we will read four times that they refused to repent. The words about repentance clearly tells us that God's judgments were meant to bring about repentance in men because of the judgments they have had to face. You see God is not interested in simply destroying men who refuse His grace. He is filled with compassion, and longs to see all men repent, believe, and be rescued from judgment. However men stubbornly refuse to humble themselves, and would rather defy God, and suffer His wrath. It is hard to imagine how men can become so hardened by their sin, or why they would rebel against God's loving offer of salvation. But then if we consider that Satan also had a place in heaven as the exalted cherub, before his prideful desires caused him to be cast out, and to suffer God's judgment. Now that same spirit of pride and self-seeking will govern men's hearts during the tribulation period, because Satan is their master, and it is to him they give their allegiance. God will not tolerate rebellion against His authority, and will establish Jesus as the Lord of Lords and King of kings in a coming day. Before that day comes God will suppress evil, judge it, and plead with the souls of men to repent. Even in the midst of His wrath and judgment God is leaving room for men to turn from their wickedness, and to receive His salvation. Men do not behave this way when they engage in war. In fact some men use war as an opportunity to display the wickedness within their hearts, by rape and pillaging innocent victims. It is as though they feel justified when battling their enemies to take advantage of innocent lives, to plunder, rape and kill without mercy. If man's heart is not governed by the love of God, then his heart will be filled with the hatred, selfishness and pride of Satan.

When we think of the consequences of one third of the trees, grass, sea life, and fresh water being destroyed, it is a rather scary scenario. For men will be desperate to find food and water, and will likely turn to killing one another to find access to the limited supplies available. Those who can afford, or have the means for travel, will likely have to travel great distances to find water to drink and food to eat. The decaying environment will make the world a very sad place. Hopelessness, will likely lead to desperation, and there will be no joy left in the world, as men realize that their world of pleasure and comfort has come to an end. No one will be able to escape the suffering, since the whole world will share in this dark day of judgment. Today some men enjoy living in luxury, living each day for pleasure and pomp. They can ignore that many people in the world live in poverty, hunger, or are victims of persecution and war. They might be able to ignore the sufferings going on all around them, while feasting and enjoying life. However, the day will come when no one will be able to hide in their luxury home, and ignore what is happening in the world, since the judgments will be large enough to effect every person on the earth, while still leaving room for men to find a pathway to God and to His forgiveness.

Sometimes we imagine that peace will come to this world, but peace cannot come until God judges men, and Christ is setup as the righteous king. Why not submit to His rule today, by trusting in Jesus as your Savior.

*"For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness, And the peoples with His truth."* Psalm 96:13

LESSON 247  
**The Fifth and Sixth Trumpet**  
REVELATION 9

In our last lesson we heard the first four of seven trumpets that were sounded by angels in heaven. These trumpets are associated with a subsequent judgment on the earth. In the first four judgments we saw how one third of the marine life, plant life, and fresh water supplies were destroyed. The fifth and sixth trumpets are associated with judgments that will bring horrible afflictions by stinging locusts, and death of one third of the world's population.

When the fifth angel sounded his trumpet in heaven, John saw another star fall from heaven to the earth. This star is an unidentified individual, perhaps Satan himself, who is given the key to the bottomless pit. The bottomless pit is then opened and smoke begins to come from the pit, like the smoke from a giant furnace. The smoke was enough to cause the air to become dark, and the sunlight of the earth to be restricted. Then from this rising smoke came locusts over the earth. The locusts are described in much detail, but it still difficult to determine if these might be some kind of demonic creatures, or advanced military weapon. We can only speculate at this point, but it will be a horrible curse upon the men who have to face these locusts. They had power like that of scorpions, and we know that a scorpion's sting is very painful, and in some cases could even be lethal. The locusts were commanded not to harm the green vegetation of the earth, but only men who were not sealed by God on their foreheads. This makes reference to the 144,000 Jewish servants mentioned in a previous lesson.

The locusts were not told to kill the men they attacked, but rather sting them like a scorpion would strike it's victim. The torment of this sting would last for up to five months with excruciating pain. While the victims will seek after death, they will not find it, perhaps the sting has left them paralyzed so that they are not able to take their own life, even if they wanted to. Some commentators think that perhaps these locusts are demons who take possession of men, and thus torment them. We cannot be sure of this, but we read about demon possession in the gospels, and learn that demons do torment their victims, often leading them to hurt themselves, but not kill themselves. Such was the case with a demon called Legion found in Mark 5. We might think that death is the answer when suffering becomes more than we can bear. However, to die without Christ will mean an endless eternity of suffering. It is far better if the Lord would use a short season of suffering here on earth to cause men to repent and believe in Christ, then to let them seek escape in death, and wind up suffering eternally in the flames of Hell.

The attacking locusts are described as having formations like horses going into battle. This gives us the image of military formation, and could indicate some great army assembled, whether demonic, or otherwise. On their heads were crowns that seemed to John something like gold. They also had faces like men, which could refer to a literal human army under Satan's control. They also had hair like a woman's, and teeth like lion's teeth. The details of this description make it difficult to determine exactly what John saw, and perhaps it was something unlike anything we have ever seen. John must use familiar imagery to describe these beasts as best he can with the vocabulary and knowledge available to him during his historical period. If what John saw was some advanced weapons of the future, then he could only describe it in terms of things familiar to him. Some have thought these locusts might be advanced military helicopters. It seems everyone has some ideas about what the images of these locusts could possibly represent, but we must realize that with the limited amount of information we have we just cannot be certain of what is meant. Only to note that men will suffer intensely over a period of time because of these attacking locust like beasts. John says they had breastplates like iron, and the wings created a great sound like that of many horses and chariots running into battle. Their sting was in their tails, and affected men for five months. The leader over this army of beasts is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name is Abaddon, or Apollyon in Greek. These we know are names for Satan. The fifth trumpet and judgment ends the first "Woe", remembering that two more "Woes" are coming.

The sixth angel now sounds his trumpet, and a voice comes from the horns of the golden altar before God. The voice said to the sixth angel with the trumpet, to release four angels who are bound at the Euphrates river. These angels had been prepared for this specific date and time, to be released and kill one third of mankind. John then sees an army of 200 million horsemen, with bright red breastplates, with blue and yellow. The horses heads looked like the heads of lions, and from their mouth came fire, smoke and brimstone. We know that horse do not breath fire, or have lions head, so again the imagery is not easy to understand. Perhaps it is a demonic army, or the images represent their fierceness and destructive power of this vast army. The fire, smoke and brimstone are said to be plagues that kill one third of mankind. This could be nuclear destruction which might appear to John as fire, smoke and brimstone, as explosions from bombs destroy large populated areas. Both the mouth and the tail of these creatures bring destruction. The tails are like the heads of serpents, by which they inflict their injuries.

While one third of the population is destroyed by these judgments, there are still many men left alive on the earth, and yet with all that they have seen, they still refuse to repent from their evil works. They worship demons, and idols made of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood. These idols are lifeless objects that do not see, hear or move. Men continued in their murders, sorceries, sexual immorality and thievery. We certainly wonder how these people, in the face of such horrific judgments from God, would not repent and turn to God for mercy. However, we will recall that these people have been marked by Satan, and have joined forces with the antichrist. The bible tells us that Satan has blinded the minds of them that believe not. Satan might convince his followers that the judgments are not from God,

or that their salvation is found in following the antichrist, who will perform signs and wonders. We have learned that while some are saved during the tribulation judgments, many of the human population will die, and the rest will remain unrepentant. We are warned again today to place our trust in Jesus as Savior to escape God's judgment.

*"One woe is past. Behold, still two more woes are coming after these things."* Revelation 9:12

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we were given another look at the future judgments by God upon the world during the tribulation period. Today we were looking at the fifth and sixth trumpets sounding in heaven which resulted in the judgment of stinging locusts which tormented men with pain for several months, after which a vast army was given power to kill one third of the world's population. Someone might ask the question, "What will conditions in the world be like when one third of the world's population are killed?"

When these judgments fall upon the earth, it is important for us to consider the global scale and implications to those living at that time. Today there is about 7.3 billion people living on the earth, with the population increasing rapidly each year. If we use this figure to calculate a loss of one third of the world's population, that means the loss of life will be somewhere close to 2.4 billion lives. This we know will take place rapidly, within a few months, during the 3.5 years of the great tribulation. It would be hard to imagine the remaining survivors having the time or resources to bury so many bodies. This means that the earth will be filled with dead bodies, which will bring with it more potential disease and death. After the large Tsumani in southeast Asia in 2004 which killed nearly 230,000 lives, and then another off the coast of Japan in 2011, we have learned that the devastation of these local events takes years to clean up, and leaves thousands of dead bodies in their wake. The bodies become a concern for spreading disease. Military, and other emergency response teams, must act quickly to gather the bodies, try to identify the body, before digging mass graves to bury the decaying corpses. It is an immense task to complete, and finding the bodies can also be challenging. Now try to imagine 2.4 billion bodies collecting within a few months period. No country will have the resources or time to bury the massive amount of the dead. The stench and disease this will cause will result in an horrifying scene. Decaying corpses which are not buried will bring about the spread of disease to those who come in contact with them. With so many people dead, it will affect the production and availability of food, as many industries will likely come to a grinding halt. As food grows scarce, people will become desperate, and turn on each other. Some modern films have tried to imagine these apocalyptic scenes, where people struggle to survive. We have already learned from our last study that the sun and moon will be darkened, perhaps by the dark smoke and dust clouds caused from bombs. This will likely mean that the environment will grow cold, and vegetation will begin to die. Likely there will be very few places on the earth that will be safe, or have food and water available. We simply cannot imagine what the world is going to be like, and the fear that will fill men's hearts. The saddest thing we read though, is that even in these awful scenes of destruction, men will still refuse to humble their hearts and look for the mercy of the Lord. It is not pleasant for us to have to think about the times of God's judgment, and the many lives that will be lost, and all those who will suffer. But Revelation was written not to make us feel happy or comfortable, it was written as a serious warning about God's judgment on the wickedness of men. This should cause us all to fear God, and look for his mercy and salvation.

There are a number of movies which have envisioned the world after the rapture and during the tribulation period. However, most of these films have not really captured the scope and terror that we see here in the book of Revelation. If watching one of these movies helps you to think about your need for trusting Christ as your Savior, then I suppose they have done a good service. I would challenge you to read through the book of Revelation, and try to imagine how things will be when God pours out His wrath upon the earth. This, above all else, should awaken us to our great need to come to Christ today. The judgment of God is fast approaching us, and we need to be ready. We might live in comfort and ease now, but don't take that for granted, and don't put off the importance of seeking the Lord while He may be found. I am glad that I have found salvation through Jesus Christ, and that I will not have to be around when God's judgment falls upon the earth. Yet, I still find myself fearful when reading about these times of judgment, since the judgments are so far reaching, and affect so many lives. Perhaps these lessons in Revelation are speaking to your heart also. I invite you to trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. Remember your salvation rests entirely on what Jesus has accomplished for you, when He died on the cross. It has nothing to do with how good or bad you are, or how many good things you may have done, or how many bad things you may have done. Salvation is God's free gift to those who will put their trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Just pray and ask Him to forgive you for your sins, and to come into your life as your Lord and Savior, and He will hear and answer your prayer of faith.

*"Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near."* Isaiah 55:6

LESSON 248  
**The Sweet and Bitter Book**  
REVELATION 10

In our last lesson we saw the devastation that followed the fifth and sixth trumpets blown in heaven signifying God's judgment on mankind. We learned of some ferocious locust type creatures, or demons, who had power to inflict great suffering on their victims. We also heard of one third of the human race being wiped out. In our next lesson we shall hear the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and learn of the subsequent judgments on earth. Before that, John will first speak to us in this chapter about a mighty angel with a little book.

We have an intermission in the judgments on earth, so that we can view what John saw in heaven. There was a mighty angel, who came down from heaven, surrounded with a cloud, and rainbow on his head. His face was bright like the sun, and his feet were like pillars of fire. The imagery of this mighty angel, with his face shining like the sun, reminds us of the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, seen by John in chapter 1. We are not specifically told that this mighty angel was actually Jesus, so we cannot be certain. It may have simply been an exalted angel.

The mighty angel had a little book in his hand. He stood with his right foot on the sea and left foot on the land. By standing this way on both land and sea, it pictures the Lord's dominion over the whole earth. The angel cried with a loud voice, similar to that of a roaring lion. The cry brought forth seven thunderous voices. These seven thunders were something John thought he should write down, but as he was preparing to write, a voice came to John from heaven saying that he should seal up the things spoken by the seven thundering utterances, and not write them down. John saw the angel who was standing both on land and sea, raise up his hand to heaven. The angel swore by Him who lives forever and ever, and who created all things in heaven, earth and the sea, that there should be no further delay. The delay he is speaking about is a delay before the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, when the mystery of God would be completed, which formerly had been told to His prophets. The mystery of God, refers to the judgments of God being completed against the ungodly people of this world, and the establishment of Christ's kingdom at His second coming.

John now hears the same voice which came from heaven earlier, and the voice tells him to take the little book which he had seen in the hand of the mighty angel. So John asked the angel to give him the little book. The angel then told John to eat the book, and that it would be bitter in his stomach, but sweet like honey in his mouth. John did as the angel told him, and ate the book, and it was as he said, sweet in his mouth but bitter in his stomach. John is then told to go and prophesy again about many people, nations, tongues and kings. We are probably wondering why the book was sweet and then bitter, and what this could possibly mean. There are several possible ideas about what this illustration could point to. One idea is that the words of the prophecy of this book, that is the words John was to write here in Revelation, were sweet at first taste, for they speak of Christ in glory, and the church redeemed, and Christ coming to reward His servants, and establish His kingdom. We can find all of this very sweet, because we long for God's rule, when righteousness shall reign, and all evil will be judged. We all long for a better world, where we are free from thieves, murderers and liars. But with judgment comes bitterness also, for this means the judgment and torment of those who refuse to repent. As we read about God's wrath coming upon the earth, destroying much of the plant, fish, and human life on the planet, certainly it can produce a bitterness in our bellies, as we think of all those who will suffer from God's judgment. Another idea is that taking in God's word is easy, for it seems relatively painless to hear God's word, but when the word brings its' judgments upon us, then it becomes bitterness within. If we think of it this way, then we can be warned to handle God's prophecy about coming judgment with much interest and care. We can respond appropriately, repenting, trusting in Jesus as our Savior, and then by sharing the gospel with others, so that they can be spared from God's judgment. In the end we know that many will refuse God's salvation, and because of their stubborn pride, shall end up in the eternal torments of Hell. Thus the message, which at first seems so sweet, as it offers salvation to sinners, becomes bitter when we realize that unrepentant sinners will have to suffer God's coming wrath.

From today's lesson we should once again be warned that God is not interested in condemning us to eternal judgment. God would rather have all men saved, and come to a knowledge of the truth. So while we see angels in heaven calling for this delay before the seventh and final trumpet judgment, you too have been given this opportunity today to repent and believe the gospel. Jesus is waiting for you to come to Him in faith, and trust Him as your personal Savior. Once you have received of His mercy, you will be spared from these terrible judgments that shall soon fall upon this world. As Christians hearing this message, we should be encouraged to live a holy life, and to be a faithful witness for Christ and for the gospel, so others too can be saved. Are you actively sharing the gospel with your family, friends and acquaintances? Perhaps you can respond to what you have heard today, by praying for some unsaved person you know, and then seeking to tell them how Jesus loved them and died for them on the cross. It would be a wonderful experience if we could help others to trust in Jesus, and know that we have helped to spare them from the coming judgments of God upon the earth.

*"And he said to me, "You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, tongues, and king." Revelation 10:11*

### Today's Bible Question:

In today's lesson we learned of a pause in God's judgments, between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet judgments, and the little book which John found sweet to the taste, but then became bitter in his stomach. Even in the midst of judgment God is extending mercy to those who will repent and believe the gospel. Someone might ask the question, "What is the mystery of God, which John mentions in this chapter?"

The New Testament uses the word mystery several times, and it is important that we understand how this word is being used in the New Testament, to get a proper understanding of the text here in Revelation. When we think of the English word for mystery, we would generally think of something hidden, obscure, or something that we cannot understand or is difficult to resolve. The dictionary defines mystery as, "*the condition or quality of being secret, strange, or difficult to explain*". However when we find this word in our English New Testament, it has the meaning of something that was not previously revealed to us, but now has been made known. In Vine's dictionary of NT words he explains the difference in understanding between our modern use, and the Greek word as used in our New Testament. "*mysterion (μυστήριον, 3466), primarily that which is known to the initiated, "the initiated" (from mueo, "to initiate into the mysteries"; cf. Phil. 4:12, mueomai, "I have learned the secret," rv). In the NT it denotes, not the mysterious (as with the Eng. word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense - a "mystery" implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed.*"<sup>3</sup> So the mysteries of the New Testament are God telling us something that we did not, or could not have known previously. There are at least 10 mysteries of the New Testament which include:

1. Mystery of the kingdom of heaven. (Mark 4:11)
2. Mystery of Israel's present blindness. (Rom 11:25)
3. Mystery of the rapture. (1 Cor. 15:51)
4. Mystery of the church (Rom 16:25, Eph. 3:4-5)
5. Mystery of Iniquity. (2 Thess. 2:7)
6. Mystery of the faith. (1 Timothy 3:9)
7. Mystery of Godliness. (1 Tim. 3:16)
8. Mystery of the 7 stars. (Rev. 1:20)
9. Mystery of God. (Rev. 10:7).
10. Mystery of Babylon. (Rev. 17:5)

One Bible commentator has helped us by explaining what the mystery of God is, when he states:

*"When the seventh trumpet of Revelation 10 sounds, the mystery of God will be fulfilled. The sounding of the seventh trumpet is accompanied by loud voices in heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever" (Rev 11:15). From this we know that the seventh trumpet sounds at the close of the Great Tribulation, when Christ returns to earth to reign (Rev 11:17). At that time the Lord's faithful Tribulation saints will be rewarded and His enemies will be destroyed (v. 18).*

*The mystery of God will then be fulfilled. The evil which has been so persistent and apparently triumphant will be put down. God's seeming indifference to man's wickedness and His apparent inaction will have ended. As W.A. Criswell says, "The long delay of our Lord in taking the kingdom unto Himself and in establishing righteousness on the earth will be over." F.W. Grant put it this way: "The mystery of God is forever finished: the glory of God shines like the sun, faith is completely justified, the murmur of doubt forever silenced."*<sup>4</sup>

Thus we have learned that the mystery of God is that revelation of God's justice and righteousness that will be seen, and understood, with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to set up His rule and kingdom in this world. Today not everyone can see or appreciate that Jesus is Lord, and that He has the right to judge the world in righteousness. Men continue to live in rebellion against God, and deny the Lord as the rightful king of this world. God waits in patience, but eventually the mystery will be revealed, when Christ comes in His glory, and all the world sees the man who alone is fit to judge this world. Then men will know God's word is true, His commandments are to be obeyed, and all who refuse to submit to Christ, will suffer His judgment. Those who enter the into the Millennial kingdom of Christ, will be believers, and know that Christ as their King, with none to challenge His authority. This coming kingdom is something that all believers should be looking forward to, for it is when our Lord Jesus will finally be acknowledged for who He truly is, the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings. And that is why we pray, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". We long to see our king take His rightful place, and put down all His enemies, and those who blaspheme. That will be a great day when the mystery of God is revealed for all to see, and Christ shall reign as King.

*"by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets."*

Ephesians 3:4-5

LESSON 249  
**The Two Witnesses**  
REVELATION II

In our last lesson we learned of a little book which John ate, and found sweet to the taste but bitter in his belly, reminding us that God's judgment can be both sweet and bitter, depending on how you look at it. We are still waiting to hear the 7<sup>th</sup> and final trumpet with its' associated judgment. Today's lesson will bring us to this 7<sup>th</sup> judgment, but not before we learn about two witnesses God uses to prophesy during the tribulation period.

The scene in this chapter is still in heaven, where John is given a vision of the temple that will be built in Jerusalem during this seven year tribulation. An angel gives John a measuring stick, and tells him to measure the temple, the altar and the worshippers. He is not to measure the courtyard, as that will be given to the gentiles for the final 3.5 years, or 42 months, of the tribulation.

John is now introduced to the two witnesses, who will also prophesy for the 42 months, which likely equates to the final 3.5 years of the tribulation. The two witnesses are dressed in sackcloth, being roughly dressed similar to John the Baptist of a previous era, and with a similar ministry. No one was permitted to harm these two witnesses. Fire proceeded from their mouths to devour their enemies. Those who sought to harm them would be killed similarly. The witnesses are given some divine power to perform miracles, like calling for drought, turning water to blood, and striking the earth with plagues. Whether these witnesses are two men, we cannot be sure, and whether the fire from their mouth is real, or a figure of speech, we are not told. Some believe these two witnesses might be Elijah and Moses, since they both appeared together with Jesus when He was transfigured, as recorded in Matthew 17, and had similar prophetic ministries. There is not enough evidence to be certain of their identity, we just know that they will be hated, and yet protected from their enemies, until the 42 months of their witnessing ends, and they are killed. They are killed by a beast that comes from the bottomless pit, and who made war with them. This beast could possibly be the resurrected Roman Empire we learn about in Revelation chapter 13.

After the witnesses are killed by the beast, their bodies are left in the street of Jerusalem for 3.5 days, with no one permitted to bury the bodies. Jerusalem, the city where Jesus was crucified, is here called Sodom and Egypt. These names are associated with sinful rebellion against God that brought His judgment upon them. It is clear that most everyone will be very pleased with the death of these two witnesses. The people will exchange gifts with each other, as they rejoice and celebrate the murder of these witnesses. They are happy, because these two witnesses had been tormenting the people of the earth. Their torment is likely from preaching certain judgment that is soon to fall upon the earth. Their message would cut into their hearts, as they are convicted God's wrath against their sin.

Miraculously the two witnesses come back to life after the 3.5 days, and stand up on their feet. This struck fear into all who saw them. A voice from heaven called to them saying, 'come up here'. Then they were seen ascending in a cloud to heaven. At the same time as their resurrection and ascension there is a great earthquake that strikes Jerusalem, destroying large sections of the city, killing 7000 people. Everyone else in the city is frightened by these events, and gave glory to God. This brings the second woe to an end, with the third and final woe ready to come upon the earth.

After this the seventh angel sounded with loud voices from heaven saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever." This caused the 24 elders sitting on thrones in heaven to fall on their faces and worship God. They said, "We give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The one who is, and was, and who is to come; because you have taken your great power and reigned. The nations were angry, and your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that you should reward your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth." These words of worship from the 24 elders demonstrate their knowledge of God's future plans for judgment and rewards, and also their agreement and praise to God, for His righteous judgments against those who dwell on the earth. Today some people might question God's justice and judgments, as they perceive them from this world's perspective, but for those who join Christ in heaven someday, it will be abundantly clear that God's righteousness and judgments are perfect, and are harmonize with His mercy, grace and love shown to mankind. At the sounding of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, John saw the temple in heaven opened, with the ark inside, and there were flashing of lightning, sounds of thunder, an earthquake and hail, indicating the global and powerful appearance of Christ who comes to earth to establish His kingdom and reign.

It will become clear as we continue our study of Revelation that the seventh trumpet, the third woe, and the great earthquake are all synonymous with the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ to reign upon the earth, at the end of the tribulation period. Revelation makes the timing of events in the tribulation and 2<sup>nd</sup> coming quite clear, and yet Jesus had said that no one knows the day or hour which the Son of man will come. When we compare these scriptures and various prophecies, then we may have to conclude that Jesus referred to the day when the tribulation begins, when the church is raptured, and which is here referred to as the 'coming of the Son of Man', though His actual arrival upon the earth will not take place until the seven year tribulation has run its' course. This new stage of history which commences with the rapture, and begins the tribulation, and later the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming and millennial reign, is called in scripture "the Day of the Lord", and it is this day that is said to come suddenly upon us, like a thief in the night.

Since we know that Jesus might arrive at any moment, then it is imperative that we ensure our trust is in Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, and the gift of eternal life. If you have never asked Jesus to save your soul, or you are unsure about your salvation, then take time today to pray to Him, and seek His wonderful salvation. Keep listening to end of this message to hear more about how to become a true born again Christian.

*"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!'"* Revelation 11:15

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we learned about two witnesses who will preach to the world during the tribulation period, and will be hated by the people of the world, because they preach about God's coming judgment. We also heard about the coming of Christ at His second coming, associated with the 7<sup>th</sup> and final trumpet judgment. "Someone might ask the question, "Why are the kingdoms of this world, the kingdoms of Jesus?"

When the angel sounded the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet, voices from heaven were heard saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and He shall reign forever and ever." It would seem clear to most readers that this refers to Jesus establishing His kingdom on earth, when He comes to subdue His enemies at the beginning of the future millennial period. Why, though, are the kingdoms of the world, Christ's kingdoms? Does this teach us that all nations and kingdoms will belong to Jesus, with all leaders in the world submitting to Him as their king? The prophecies of Christ's future reign are clear in some ways, but also obscure in other ways. We know that He shall reign for 1000 years. We know that it will be a time of peace, and the plant and animal life will flourish in His presence. Children shall die at 100 years, meaning that men will live long lives as they did at the beginning before the flood. Revelation gives Jesus the title 'the king of kings, and Lord of Lords'. These titles certainly indicate his universal leadership. The nations will not necessarily be dissolved, with only one government, since we read prophecies that tell us that Israel will be the head of the nations, and not the tail. This implies that nations will exist, and likely each nation will have their own leaders. The world will have changed in extraordinary ways, since so much destruction and death occurred during the great tribulation. Those who enter the millennial period with Christ, will be the saints of the tribulation, and perhaps old testament saints will be raised at this time to co-reign with Christ, and the church will also be with her Lord. Thus the millennium begins with believers living in this world, and glorified saints reigning with Jesus. The enemies of the Lord have all been made His footstool, which means that all will submit to His sovereign leadership. During that 1000 year reign, many children will be born, and somehow there is yet another rebellion against God's rule at the end of the 1000 years. That rebellion will be quickly judged by Christ, and all enemies will be cast forever into the lake of fire.

When Jesus comes to the earth, there will be no mistaking who He is, and His right to reign over the earth. It is hard for us to imagine anyone who would question His leadership, or attempt to disobey Him. The earth will certainly enjoy a time of great peace, and prosperity, similar to what God had intended for Adam and Even in the original creation, with their home in the garden of Eden. But even in this scene of peace and blessing, unredeemed hearts will turn in rebellion against the reigning Lord, but only after 1000 years has transpired. When Jesus takes His earthly throne in Jerusalem, and reigns over His people Israel, as foretold in many old testament prophecies, He will have the rule over the entire earth. All men will look to Him as their sovereign leader, and righteous judge. There will be no wars during this 1000 years, as foretold in Isaiah 2:4. We also learn that predatory animals will no longer be carnivorous, but will only eat plants. Snakes, which were once venous, will no longer bring harm to any. All the affects of the curse upon creation, will be lifted, and the earth will enjoy life and joy as God has always intended for us. It will be wonderful to know that you do not have to lock your doors, or worry about violence and crime. Under the reign of Christ, there will be an abundance of food, and all will be supplied by His benevolent care. He will establish judges to govern the nations, and He will rule with a rod of iron. This means He will deal severely with any who do not act righteously. He will execute justice with righteousness, and all will admire His wisdom and power to rule. When Solomon became ruler over Israel, he asked God for wisdom, and God granted him not only wisdom, but a rich kingdom of peace and prosperity. Other rulers were so impressed by the grandeur of his reign, and all of His wealth, that they came from afar to witness His mighty achievements. Their breath was taken away when they saw the glory of His kingdom. Perhaps the story of Solomon's reign is given to us as a prototype of the Lord's millennial kingdom, when everyone on earth will look with awe and wonder at the King, and admire His kingdom. Everyone living at that time will benefit from His rule, just as with any society, everyone is affected by the qualities of their leaders. If a nation has good, honest, and benevolent leaders, then the whole nation will be blessed. However if a nation has evil, corrupt leaders, then that nation will suffer from the tyranny of its' leaders. We can only imagine how the world will be when the perfect leader, the righteous one, takes His place as King!

*"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."* Isaiah 11:6

LESSON 250  
The Persecuted Woman  
REVELATION 12

In our last lesson we learned about two witnesses that will emerge during the future tribulation period, and will be hated because of their message of God's judgments. We also learned about the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet which announces the inauguration of Jesus kingdom on the earth. In today's lesson John will share with us a vision he had of a woman who is persecuted by the devil during the tribulation years.

John's vision in heaven includes seeing a woman clothed in sunlight, with the moon under her feet, and twelve stars crowning her head. It is clear that the woman represents the nation of Israel, with the sunlight and stars revealing something of Israel's glory. Her feet being over the moon speaks of Israel's dominion, which in the future will place her as head over all nations. The woman is seen to be crying in labor pains and about to give birth. This picture of a mother in pain waiting for her child to be born, likely represents the nation of Israel struggling through their history, while awaiting their coming Messiah.

John also sees a fiery red dragon with seven heads, ten horns and 7 crowns on his heads. The dragon is a reference to Satan, who empowers the future revived Roman Empire, possibly a European Union of nations as we see today. The dragon's tail is used to cast a one third of the stars to the earth. This appears to refer to angels that will join forces with Satan and are cast out of heaven. The dragon is also seen to be waiting for the woman to give birth so that he may devour the child. Some think this is played out in history by king Herod who sought the death of the Christ child, when he ordered all children in Bethlehem under two years of age to be slaughtered. When the male child is born, it is said that he will rule all nations with a rod of iron, making it abundantly clear that the child is Jesus the Christ. The child is caught up to God and His throne, likely referring to the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

During the tribulation Israel will be heavily persecuted, and many will seek refuge in the wilderness, where God will protect them for the final 3.5 years of the tribulation. Also while Israel is under attack on the earth, there is a war that breaks out in heaven between the archangel Michael and Satan, along with his angels (or demons). Satan could not win the battle, and so he was cast out from heaven. Satan here is called that serpent of old, reminding us of his appearance to Eve in the garden of Eden. He is also called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world. When Satan was cast to the earth, he also took many fallen angels with him, and today these fallen angels are the agents of Satan, whom we call demons, which are spirit beings that influence and oppress people. This reminds us that Satan, who has been cast down to this world, has great control and influence, and so we must be on our guard against him. The bible teaches us to resist the Devil and he will flee from us. His great strength lies in his ability to deceive people. Today we see so many people that have been led away by Satan into a life of sin, being convinced that they will not have to face judgment from God. The Devil is clever, and has convinced the masses that God will not punish us, so long as we do what is right, and tell God we are sorry about our sin. Forgiveness is available through Christ dying on the cross as a free gift to those who believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. We cannot earn favor with God, or merit eternal life through our own efforts. Salvation is a free gift offered to us through the grace of God, when we believe in Jesus. Don't let the Devil deceive you into a false sense of security because you happen to go to church on Sunday, and read your bible regularly.

John hears a voice from heaven saying, "Now salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before God day and night, has been cast down." The Devil is called '*the accuser of the brethren*'. He is tireless in his efforts to destroy all who follow Jesus, by pointing out their sinful behavior. However, in Christ, we have been given a full pardon from all of our sins. We should remember this before we go about accusing others of wrong doing. We might just be acting more like Satan than like our Lord Jesus. Don't be quick to accuse or judge believers, especially since you are just as guilty of sin. Christians are said to overcome the devil through the blood of Lamb and by the word of their testimony. It is His blood that has justified us, and gives us victory over Satan, sin and death. When Satan is cast out of heaven there is cause for heaven to rejoice, because his evil presence is no longer permitted to disturb the peace of heaven. However the angels warn "Woe to the men of the earth", since Satan has come to earth and is very angry, because he knows that his time is short, and soon he will be cast into the lake of fire. Because Satan is cast out of heaven to the earth he persecutes the woman, that is Israel, who gave birth to the Messiah. Satan will seek the destruction of Israel during the tribulation period, but the nation will find a place of refuge in the wilderness, having escaped like a flying eagle. When Satan saw the woman trying to escape, he sent a flood upon her to carry her away. This might refer to vast armies coming against Israel to destroy her. However the earth lends help to the woman, by opening up and swallowing the flood. Perhaps Israel's allies join in the war to protect and shelter Israel from those attacking and seeking her destruction. The devil is very angry with Israel, and marches against the Jews to destroy them in war. Christians who are considered offspring of Israel are also persecuted by Satan. Christians are offspring of Israel, in the sense that Christianity arose from Jesus, who was a Jew.

Today we see the devil is working diligently to destroy Israel through the tensions and threats of war in the middle east. The situation will only grow worse as we move closer and closer to the tribulation period. Christians today are also under attack from Satan, through the proliferation of evil in this world, false religion, and anti-Christian



movements that are growing in strength and numbers. Today is another opportunity for you to trust in Jesus as your Savior, and take refuge in the shelter of God's protection, both from the punishment for sin, and from this evil world.

*"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death!"* Revelation 12:11

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we learned about a glorious heavenly woman who represents the nation of Israel, who will be persecuted by the devil. Satan will be cast out of heaven during the tribulation along with the angels who have rebelled with him. Someone might ask the question, "Why is Satan permitted a place in heaven at all?"

If John is writing about a future day when Satan, and his followers, are cast out of heaven, then it is fair to ask why Satan is permitted to stay in heaven at all. We first meet Satan in the garden of Eden, when he tempts the woman to sin, and is then cursed by God. In Isaiah 14 we read about the pride of the king of Babylon, which prophetically speaks of the fall of Lucifer, another name for Satan. Satan desired to exalt himself so that he would be like God. For this God promises to cast him down to hell. We also read about Satan's fall in Ezekiel 28. This passage teaches us several things about Satan. We learn that he was the highest ranking of the angels as a cherub, and that he was adorned with great beauty and precious stones. He is also associated with music, and likely was given some role of providing music in heaven. It is interesting to note that Satan is still using music today as a tool to lead people into sin and rebellion. If you doubt this, you only need to examine some of the music today which gives direct credit to Satan, and is clearly marked by the sinister character of the devil to deceive and destroy. Satan was filled with pride because of his beauty. He abandoned wisdom for the sake of looking good. It is not easy to discern exactly the details of when Satan was cast down, but here is a history of Satan's rebellion and judgment.

1. Satan is cast out of heaven, sometime before the fall of man, when his heart fills with pride (Ez 28:16).
2. In the garden of Eden Satan is cursed for deceiving the woman (Gen 3:14-15).
3. Satan has some limited access to God in heaven during the days of Job's trials (Job 1:6).
4. Satan is sentenced and judged when Jesus dies upon the cross (John 12:31).
5. Satan is permanently cast out of heaven during the tribulation resulting from a war in heaven (Rev 12:13).
6. Satan is bound in chains in a bottomless pit during the 1000 years of Christ's reign on the earth (Rev 20:2).
7. Satan is cast into the lake of fire at the end of the millennium (Rev 20:10).

We will notice that during the life of Job, who lived either before (or at the same time) as Abraham, that Satan has some limited access to the presence of God. Satan was found among the sons of God (or angels) who presented themselves in the presence of God, and God asked him if he had considered his servant Job. Though Satan had already been cast out of heaven, that did not mean that he was not permitted some access to speak to God, or appear before God. This continues to this day. Satan's realm is in this world, where he rules over nations and the hearts of men, and leading men to destruction. So while Satan has freedom to move in this world, he is presently limited in his access to heaven, and has certainly lost his exalted role as cherub. We may wonder why God will give so much room for Satan to be loose and active in this world. This may cause us to even question God's kindness and justice. However, when we see that God has used Satan to fulfill God's eternal purposes, then we can appreciate the wisdom of God. God used Satan to fill Judas' heart, and lead him to betray Jesus to his enemies. This led to the execution of Jesus on a cross, however that was exactly as prophesied by God, and His intended purpose for the salvation of men. While Satan opposes God, he is actually a pawn in the hand of God to accomplish God's purpose. Satan opposes the church, and by this our faith is tested and proved. We know that eventually the judgment pronounced on Satan will be carried out when he is thrown into the eternal flames of the lake of fire. Meanwhile we can expect Satan to trouble us, for God has a purpose, through Satan, to perfect us into the image of Christ. Satan was even permitted to tempt our Lord to sin, and God used this to demonstrate that Jesus is sinless. Satan meant it for evil, but God meant it for God. No matter what the devil tries to do against God, he can never win, and his sentence is sure. Satan realizes this, and is therefore angry and fighting furiously to destroy as many as possible before his time is up.

While Satan is very powerful, and can do great harm, he is still just a created being. God is eternal, and Satan is no match for God's power and knowledge. As Christians we can take comfort in this, knowing that greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world. We are protected from Satan by the Holy Spirit living within us. We can still fall prey to his temptations, since our sin nature can be enticed towards sin. Therefore we must flee from the devil's temptations, and recognize the spiritual dangers that the devil puts before us. If you want protection from the snares of the devil, then make sure Christ is the Lord of your life. Do not give more credit to Satan than he deserves. He is an angry but defeated foe, and in Christ you already have the victory over him.

*"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."* 1Peter 5:8

## The worship of the Beast

REVELATION 13

In our last lesson we learned about the persecution of Israel, pictured as a glorious woman about to give birth. The Devil was seeking her destruction and of her male child also. Today we move will learn about the revived Roman Empire, and the beast who was given power by Satan to perform signs, and receive worship from men.

John has another vision, this time of a beast rising out of the sea. The beast had seven heads, ten horns, and crowns on his horns, and a blasphemous name on his head. John describes the beast as looking like a leopard, with feet like a bear, and a mouth like a lion. The dragon, who is Satan, gave him power, a throne and great authority. The description of the beast if taken literally would be a rather strange and horrible looking creature. However, it is more likely that the description is meant to be taken figuratively, and represents the nature of the revived Roman Empire. The leopard, bear and lion likely refer to the fierce and violent nature of the kingdom. One of the heads of the beast receives a mortal wound, and then made a remarkable recovery, which causes the world to marvel and follow the beast. This seems to suggest that one of the ten kings who rule the empire comes to ruin, with no apparent hope of recovery, but then quite miraculously he overcomes his death sentence, causing people to marvel and accept his leadership. People will worship both the beast and the dragon, saying, "Who is like the beast, or who is able to make war with him?"

This kingdom of the revived Roman empire will be given a voice to speak with power and blasphemy. The kingdom will have rule over the earth for the 3.5 years of the great tribulation. The beast speaks blasphemies against God, against His name, His tabernacle, and those in heaven. God permits the beast to continue with this rebellion, even granting him to make war against God's people and overcome them. This will be a wide scale persecution of all believers during the tribulation period. The beast's dominion extends to every tribe, tongue and nation. All the earth worshipped him, those whose names are not recorded in the Book of Life. The book of life speaks directly about the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world. He was not slain at the foundation of the world, but because it was in God's plan of redemption from the beginning of creation, it could be stated as a positive fact, even though it would not take place for many thousands of years until Jesus enter the world, and was later crucified for us. Jesus again warns all who have ears to hear this prophecy.

A statement is made by John, given to Him by the Lord, that reflects the sowing and reaping principle, or cause and effect. Those who capture slaves, will be made into slaves themselves. Those who kill with the sword, will also die by the sword. He adds that "Here is the patience and faith of the saints". Perhaps he means that those who suffer persecution during the tribulation, as followers of Jesus, should not resort to violence to protect their lives. Those who do so will only bring violence upon themselves. As difficult as it may be, Christians are expected to turn the other cheek, and not resort to violent retaliation when their enemies seek to harm them.

Another beast is seen rising from the earth. This beast had two horns like a lamb, and spoke like a dragon. The second beast might be a Jew coming out of the land of Israel. He might also claim to be a Savior like Jesus, for he is portrayed as a lamb. With two horns, it appears that while looking like a gentle lamb, he is actually a conquering deceiver. He speaks like a dragon, which shows us that he is empowered by Satan. We will learn that this second beast is also called the false prophet later in chapter 16. This second beast has power just like the first beast had, so he may be a leading political or military leader for the Roman Empire. This beast also causes the earth to worship the first beast, who had his deadly wound healed. This second beast also displays great signs, even calling down fire upon the earth in the sight of men. His powers must impress the people, leading them to worship him. He deceives the people through his signs. This beast tells the people of earth to make an image of the first beast who had been healed of his deadly wound. This is clearly the work of Satan, and we see him seeking for men to worship at his feet. When the image was made of the first beast, the second beast gave breath to the image, so that the image could speak. He also ordered that everyone be killed who would not worship this image. He then caused all people to receive a mark on the hand or foreheads. The mark was necessary to buy or sell. It will be a terrifying time for believers who refuse the mark, as they will be killed, and if they manage to escape they will likely stave to death, because they will not be able to buy or sell in any marketplace.

John finishes this chapter by speaking about the number of the beast 666, which is also the number of man. Readers of this prophecy are challenged to understand and calculate this number. This invites us to try to understand the significance of this number. Some refer to this as the trinity of evil, the name and mark of Satan, and representing the beast, antichrist and False Prophet, which are all agents used by Satan to fight against God's people.

This chapter has shown us that God's judgments upon the earth during the tribulation period will include Satan being allowed to cause wide scale persecution against Israel and all gentiles believers. Satan will use the agency of human government, namely the revived Roman Empire. He will also use popular leader, who is the antichrist, and the false prophet or Messiah, who poses to be a Savior, but is really a conquering and cruel deceiver. We can be thankful that we will not have to live under this evil regime, which hates God, and persecutes those who belong to God. How fortunate that we live in a time where we are free to worship God without persecution. We should appreciate our privilege today as Christians, and live with gratitude and joy. We also need to help others recognize God's anger over

their sin, and His coming judgment upon sinful men. We need to preach the gospel to as many as we can, with the hope that many will turn to the Lord for salvation while time is still available. If you have never entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord of your life by putting your faith in Him, why not do that right now. Just pray to God, and ask him to forgive you of your sins, and to grant you the free gift of eternal life. He waits for you to call upon Him, and find peace for your soul. *"If anyone has an ear, let him hear."* Revelation 13:9

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we learned about the dominant empire during the tribulation period, which was ruled by the power of Satan. We also heard about the beast who recovers from a mortal wound; and a second beast who caused people to worship the first beast. Someone might ask the question, "Why would people worship the beast?"

Today's lesson described for us, what appears to be the revival of the Roman Empire, which will be a savage dictatorship, directed by Satan. There will be a leader over this empire, who is the beast, and is controlled by Satan. Though the beast is severely injured, he makes a remarkable recovery, which causes all people to be amazed and worship him. The reason they worship seems to be out of fear, and not from love. We read that the people said, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" They saw the beast as undefeatable, and therefore choose to submit to his leadership, out of fear of death. Any who did not worship, or receive the mark of the beast were to be killed, and so it understandable why people will choose to follow the beast and worship him.

We will also notice that the second beast, or false prophet, appears like a lamb. This may mean that this leader will have a gentle appearance, and thus be appealing to the masses. These leaders, whether political, military or religious, will likely appear quite favorably in the eyes of the world. They will be seen as great leaders offering hope and prosperity to the people. They will appear as a Messiah and savior to the people, and the people will be deceived into following their leadership.

We might think it strange that people would worship anything other than God alone, but we should remember that the antichrist will actually make claims of being God, and show signs to deceive people. Today there are those who openly worship Satan. While this is unthinkable for most people, yet Satan has captured some poor souls and deluded them into thinking that he is their great master, and that following him will bring them all that they want. Satan does give people fame, riches, and pleasure, but only for a season. People who want to have things immediately so they can live a indulgent life here on earth. They are quick to give themselves to Satan, if they can satisfy their lusts. Satan is very clever at deceiving, using sex, money, and power to draw people to himself. Once people experience the pleasures of sin, they are sold out to Satan, and will sink deeper and deeper into a life of sin. Satan's power over people comes from his knowledge of our sin nature, and desires for all the pleasures of this world. It all looks so tempting, and many fall prey to Satan's tricks. But we must be wise and recognize that the pleasures of this world are quickly passing by, and sin is rebellion against God. Satan may whisper in your ear that, "it is really not so bad, others are doing it too, God is merciful and will forgive you". As Satan deceived Eve into eating the forbidden fruit, he is also deceiving many souls today to follow a path of rebellion against God's authority. But following Satan's lies has devastating consequences, for it makes the sinner more hardened by sin, so that he conditions himself to be more and more comfortable with sin, until what was once an unthinkable act, is now accepted as normal. A good example of how this has happened in our modern world, is how people think about homosexuality. In some countries it is now acceptable, and laws support homosexuals, given them rights as if their chosen lifestyle is morally acceptable. However God has not changed and hates sin, and will most certainly judge sin. As men practice sin their conscience becomes dull, until it is seared, and they feel comfortable and happy doing things that are an abomination in the sight of God. Some people are not going to openly acknowledge Satan as their ruler, or worship him, and yet in their conduct they are demonstrating that they are children of the devil. They worship him, without even being aware that they are doing so. Every time they give place to sin and accept it as normal, then they are in rebellion against God, and showing that they are under Satan. Men generally should have a repulsion of what is evil, but Satan has changed this by using the sin nature within us, to draw us towards sin, and convince us that sin is okay. Satan does not come to us as a horrible and frightening monster, but through attractive leaders, like the beast in Revelation, to win over our hearts, thinking they are good, but underneath they are corrupt. Often times we look up with respect to famous people, such as movie stars, or professional athletes, but we must be careful not to worship these individuals, for they might look like great heroes to us, but often their fame and money have made them agents of Satan, as demonstrated by the sinful lives they lead. Worship belongs to God alone! While many people have willfully chosen a lifestyle of sin, and Satan to rule over their lives, we need to be warned by the words of Revelation to take our place with God in judgment on the wickedness of this world.

*"Then Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"* Matthew 4:10

LESSON 252  
**God's Harvest**  
REVELATION 14

In our last lesson we learned about the Empire that dominates the world during the tribulation period, and its leader, whom Revelation refers to as the beast. He is a ferocious dictator that will demand worship of his image with the threat of death to those who will not comply. Today's chapter provides a summary of sorts of the great tribulation. The redeemed from the tribulation are now singing before God's throne. The angels announce that the evil system of religion and commerce has fallen, and the time of harvest has come.

This chapter begins with John once again seeing 144,000 believers of the tribulation period. They are with the Lamb on Mount Zion, with the name of the God the Father on their foreheads. These believers form a great choir in heaven making a thunderous new song accompanied by harpists. No one could learn the song except the 144,000. This song of praise is unique to them, because of their unique suffering and perseverance during the tribulation. These 144,000 believers were undefiled virgins. This might refer to their refusal to bow to the image of the beast, or participate in any idolatry or sexual immorality. They are called the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, since they are those who are the first to enter the millennial kingdom of Christ after the tribulation, being part of God's great harvest of souls. These believers are notable because of their honesty and spiritual integrity before God. Such should be the testimony of every true Christian.

John also saw an angel flying in heaven, who had the everlasting gospel message to preach to all people on the earth, from every nation, tribe and tongue. Their message was that men should "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven, earth, sea, and fresh water springs." The gospel of the tribulation will not only involve telling people about the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and how salvation comes through faith in Jesus, but also it will be a message of warning to those who worship the beast. They are to fear and worship God alone.

Then John sees one more angel, and this one is announcing that Babylon has fallen, that great city, because she made nations drink the wine of the wrath of her fornication. This again is very figurative language, and most commentators agree that Babylon is a religious and political power that arises during the tribulation. The city is also likened to a harlot because of her immorality and commercialism. Babylon is thought by many to represent apostate Christianity. This immoral system will eventually fall, but not before corrupting the nations with her fornications. Fornications might refer to her illegal trafficking of products, such as drugs and weapons, or her leading souls into the practices of idolatry.

A third angel is also seen by John, who warns any who should worship the beast or receive his mark on their forehead or hands, will have to drink of the wine of the wrath of God. The imagery of crushing grapes underfoot is intended to help us understand the severity of God's coming judgment on sinners. They will be crushed and destroyed, as grapes under foot in the winepress. Those who take the mark of the beast and worship him, make themselves God's enemy, and will therefore pay the most severe punishment for their rebellion. They will find themselves in hell tormented by fire and brimstone, witnessed by angels and the Lamb. The smoke of their torment will ascend forever and ever. They will never find rest or relief from their pain because they chose to worship the beast and his image, wearing his mark.

Those believers who endure patiently through the persecutions of the tribulation, keeping God's commandments, and showing their faith in Jesus, will appear with Christ in His kingdom in contrast to those who are judged in Hell. John is told by a voice from heaven to write, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on; that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." Dying does not seem to be a blessing, but for the Christian who has served Christ well, it will only bring him to heaven to be with His Lord, and all the blessedness of that place. Sometimes we cling to this life too tightly, as though this were the only life we shall ever enjoy. These who die for Christ during the tribulation were laboring and working, which is probably a reference to their evangelism and preaching the word of God. It is said that their works follow them, meaning that all that they did for the Lord on earth will be met again in heaven by the rewards they will receive. Every glass of water given in His name shall not lose its' reward.

John now sees someone that looks like the Son of Man sitting on a white cloud, with a golden crown, and sharp sickle in his hand. A sickle is a farming tool used to cut down wheat when it is ready to harvest, and so the picture is of the Lord Jesus preparing to collect all of his saints from the tribulation. His enemies will be like the chaff that is taken away. Another angel comes from the temple with the message that the one sitting on the cloud should thrust in his sickle and reap, for the time has come for you to reap, for the harvest of earth is ripe." Jesus had said during his earthly ministry, that no one knows the day or the hour in which the Son of Man shall return, but only my Father. Now the moment has come, and the Father gives word to the Son to gather his people together, and judge all others. There is another angel coming from the altar who says, to the one with the sickle, to gather the ripe grapes from earth, and these were thrown in the winepress of God's wrath. The first harvest was the gathering together of believers to be with Christ in His kingdom, and the second harvest immediately following are the sinners who are gathered to be crushed like grapes under God's wrath. The death toll was so high that a river of blood was created that reached the horses' bridles for a great many miles. The harvest includes gathering the good wheat into the barn and burning the chaff, and this is what happens when Christ arrives as the King. All those who belong to Him by faith

will be found entering into the blessings of His kingdom, and those who rebelled against Him will be sent to eternal fire. Which side are you on? Make sure to believe in Jesus as the ruler over your life.

*"Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."*

Revelation 14:12

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we were given a short summary of the tribulation when the redeemed are brought with Christ into his earthly kingdom, and the rebellious are crushed under the wrath of God. The end of the tribulation is likened to harvesting, since some will be gathered unto the Lord, and others separated and sent to the fire. Someone might ask the question, "What is the mark of the beast?"

In our last two lessons we have heard about a mark that will be given to people living during the tribulation period. This mark will be placed into their hands, or into their foreheads. Without this mark no one would be able to buy or sell. They would also be persecuted unto death. Revelation speaks about a one world government, and a one world economic system. The details are not clear at this point, but it is not difficult to imagine how this will take place. Centuries ago these prophecies may have been rather confusing to those who read them, for they could not imagine a global economic system, where everyone is tied together through a universal currency, and controlled by some special mark on the hand or head of people. Would the mark be some kind of tattoo, or insignia of the antichrist? Today we have more technology available which helps us to understand how this economic system could be put into place. In fact we are seeing the advances in technology that would allow the implementation of an universal economic system with little effort. We are already using security numbers to make purchases through credit cards. How simple it would be to implant your security information, and banking information into an electronic device that could easily be implanted into every individual. Experimental implants have already been tested, and if society accepts this new technology it will not be far in the future when all people will be expected to adopt the new system of commerce. However the mark of the beast must have much broader implications than the use of technology to control commerce. The mark of the beast has to do with allegiance and worship of the beast. This appears to be a surrendering to a new technology by a governing authority, that is both political and religious, which demands an acknowledgement of the beast, and worship of the beast. With ever increasing apostate Christianity, and persecution of evangelical Christians, it is not difficult to image a time in the near future, when the masses will be convinced that Christianity is what has brought about the evil and intolerance in our world, and the only solution will be to swear allegiance to a system that is committed to the destruction of Christianity. This system will be a great universal religious power, and headed by a leader who is able to sway the people of the world to join in this universal approach to religion and commerce. This system will be driven and empowered by Satan, and those who join with this system, and identify themselves with it, will align themselves with Satan, and thus come under God's judgment. It seems that taking the mark of the beast is a clear step of rejecting the gospel, and Jesus Christ as Lord. It will mean accepting the false religion and its leader as their god, and offering worship to this leader. By doing this a person will be condemning themselves to God's judgment. We know that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ, and when men reject the Son of God, and His salvation, they sentence themselves to condemnation. We should see this mark of the beast as more than the outward physical mark, whether by chip implant, or otherwise, and see it as a sign of one's surrender to Satan as their ruler, through their joining the false religious and economic system which will then govern the earth.

Many have written about the mark of the beast, and so much speculation surrounds the subject. Great scholars and bible teachers have varying views about this future mark, and the significance of His number 666. We must therefore tread carefully with these things which have not been fully disclosed to us. We can take away from our study some important lessons that will help us today. We know that a day is coming when following Christ will be a very difficult choice to make, for they will be persecuted unto death, and not permitted the rights of commerce, simply because they want to remain true to Jesus Christ. We know also that the world is fast approaching a time when technology and world events are aligning themselves to match perfectly with the bible prophecies concerning Israel, the church, apostasy, a one world government, a one world economic system, and even an ecumenical religious system that promises peace. These facts should cause us to consider whose side we belong to. Are we certain that when Christ returns we will be taken to heaven to be with Him? The most important decision of our life is your decision to believe and follow Jesus as Lord and Savior. I invite you today to trust in Him for the salvation of your soul, and forgiveness of sin. Those who belong to Jesus by faith, will not have to be concerned about the tribulation, and the mark of the beast, for they will be rescued from God's wrath coming upon the world. Today is the day of salvation, so trust in Jesus now.

*"and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."* 1Thessalonians 1:10

LESSON 253  
Preparing for Final Wrath  
REVELATION 15

In our last lesson we heard a summary of the great tribulation, where tribulation saints sing in heaven, and the evil system called Babylon comes to an end. Now in today's lesson we are taken again by John to scenes in heaven just prior to God's final outpouring of wrath, pictured as bowls or vials pouring upon the earth.

The sign in heaven which John saw was called great and marvelous, perhaps due to the splendor of the seven angels he saw, who were prepared to pour out the final seven judgments. This marks the end of the tribulation period, and these bowl, or vial judgments are all associated with the seventh and final trumpet judgment we learned about in a previous lesson. These final seven judgments are said to complete the wrath of God. In other words these will fulfill all that God intends to do during the tribulation to execute His judgment upon the earth. The justice of God will be satisfied, for the time, and it will open the way for the coming of the Son of God in power to rule upon the earth. We must remember that during the last half of the tribulation period, such devastating judgments will fall, that the earth will shake, the heavens will be moved, and much of mankind, and the earth's life will be destroyed. The chaotic scenes, and horrific destruction will make it seem to some, as though the earth has seen its final days, and all hope is lost. However when Jesus comes again, the earth will once again flourish with life and hope, and despair shall flee away from those who are worthy to enter into His kingdom.

In heaven John saw a sea of glass that had the image of fire mingled into it. Upon this beautiful sea of glass were those from the tribulation who had refused to receive the mark of the beast. They had been successful to resist the brutal opposition from the beast, and had remained faithful unto death. Now in heaven they are glorified, and singing praises to God. Their song of praise is recorded for us, and highlights the justice and holiness of God. Taken from various old testament quotations these exalted saints say:

"Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the nations! 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."

Though our occupation in heaven is not clear at this time, we know that we shall certainly be singing praises to our God. When we finally reach our glorious home, and realize the great blessing that is ours in Christ, and remember the trials we faced on earth, the sorrow, persecutions, and suffering, then we shall have more reason to sing and rejoice in the presence of our Lord. Singing is not simply for entertainment, as seen in the world today. Spiritual singing is when redeemed hearts cannot contain the joy they have, and it bursts forth from within them.

We should take notice of the fact that God is praised for his wrath and justice. We love God because of His mercy, grace and wonderful salvation, but we are to remember that He hates sin and will execute His justice against all ungodliness. This should be something we can rejoice in, not because of the sinners who are judged, for it is sad that they must face God's wrath. We rejoice because God will not allow sin to go unpunished, since He is holy. Heaven would not be heaven if God permitted sin. No, He must judge all wickedness, so that righteousness will prevail.

In heaven John sees a temple. The temple (or holy place) was within the earthly model of the tabernacle in the wilderness, which God asked Moses and the children of Israel to build. The temple refers to the inner holy of holies within the tabernacle, where God's presence was. In heaven, it is not the earthly model, that is in view, but the very throne room of God, and from which He executes His righteous judgment. From the temple there were seven angels, and each carried with them the judgment of God as plagues to send upon the earth. These glorious angels are clothed in white and girded with a golden sash around their chests. The beauty and purity of their appearance reminds us of the holiness of God, and His righteous judgment against man's sin.

One of the living creatures surrounding God's throne hands over seven bowls full of God's wrath to these seven angels. They are delivered the judgments of God, so that they can pour out God's wrath upon the earth. As John studies this scene of ominous judgment, he observes that the temple in heaven was filled with smoke. This smoke is a cloud of glory that represents the presence of God. This is what Isaiah had seen many centuries ago, when he came to the temple, and a cloud of glory filled the place. He was so awestruck by the cloud of glory, that he said "woe is me, for I am man of unclean lips". Other times in history God's glory has appeared in the temple, and has caused men to know their own unworthiness to enter that place. Something of the mere sight of the glory makes sinful men shrink back in fear. Even this scene in heaven, where God is about to send forth His final wrath upon the earth during the tribulation, the temple fills up with a glory cloud of smoke, and no one was able to enter until all the judgments were completed. This speaks to us of the supreme holiness of God. When it comes to His righteous judgment, and pure holiness, there is no one who can compare. He stands alone as the Holy One, and so no one is able to approach God as He unleashes His fury and wrath. Only when the judgment is complete and God is satisfied that all has been dealt with, can the righteous find access to God. This is what happened at the cross when Jesus died. He satisfied the justice of God against sin, and those who know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, are able to stand righteous before God, because all judgment has been delivered upon Jesus for our sins. So as we close off this chapter we need to ask ourselves if we have applied the judgment of God upon Christ to our own account. The great transaction happens

when we trust in Jesus as our Savior. At the moment we cast our trust in Him, God takes all the judgment that is due to us, and puts it upon Jesus' account. Since Jesus already was judged, and God is satisfied with the completeness of His judgment, He can offer us free pardon from all of our sins. Why not make that great transaction today, and trust in Jesus as your Savior, so that God can take away your judgment.

*"Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."* Revelation 15:4

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we were shown scenes in heaven which John saw just before the seven bowl judgments were sent by God through His angels. In this scene we learn of the holiness of God, the praise of the saints, and God's righteous wrath against sinners. Someone might ask the question, "Why is there a temple in heaven?"

We know that God commanded Moses to make a tabernacle in the wilderness, which was only a pattern of God's dwelling place in heaven. The tabernacle was a place of worship and approach towards God's presence. However the way into the Holiest place was not yet opened, so the tabernacle of the old testament was a picture to all mankind, that their sin separated them from God. It also showed the way into God's presence would require a blood sacrifice. Washings and special garments were also required before entering God's presence. These all would teach us about the need for Jesus to die for our sins, and through His blood we find cleansing, and access to God, being clothed with His righteousness. The later temples built by Solomon, and then again later in the days of Zerubbabel, were also pictures of the same truth, that sacrifice was required to open a way into God's presence. So then it is fair to ask the question, why is there any need in heaven for a temple, for certainly the way to God's presence has been opened up for all the redeemed to enter in. This is true because Jesus bore the wrath of God against all of our sin. The truth remains, however, that while the price has been paid, not all have availed themselves of the payment that was given for their souls. Men still continue to live in rebellion against God. Thus God's judgment while executed against His Son, is only effectual to those who ask Jesus to save them, and place their trust in Him. For all others who refuse God's Son, and live in wickedness, God is storing up His wrath to execute a righteous judgment against them. Thus during the tribulation, the judgment is largely because of the sinful rejection of God's salvation through Jesus. Those who hear the gospel, and yet stubbornly refuse to bow the knee to His authority, and receive of His mercy, will face God's wrath. This will be a double wrath in the sense that God's anger will be not only due to the sins men have committed against God, but also because of their refusal to repent and accept God's free offer of pardon.

So again we must ask, why a temple in heaven. The temple in heaven is not just the dwelling place of God, it is the place of sacrifice, where blood must be shed for sin to satisfy God's justice. Therefore in heaven, until the final judgment against sin has been executed, God is seen in His temple, with the glory cloud filling that Holy place. This is God's throne, and the place where he executes His judgments against all evil. No one can approach God, or have access without blood to pay for their sins. Christ gave His blood to pay for our sins, and that will give us full and free access in the presence of the righteous judge. We shall be there one day and see His glory. Here in this chapter we learn, that even in heaven, as God sends forth His judgments, that no one is able to come near, until all the judgment has passed. This speaks to us of Christ's death upon the cross. Until He died the way to God's presence was forbidden to sinful men. Now in Christ, those who have been cleansed by His blood, may freely have access into the presence of God.

When judgment comes upon sinful men during the tribulation period, there is no one besides God Himself, who could issue the righteous judgment. Redeemed men, though washed, are still not in the position of judge against the wicked, for they themselves are also guilty apart from God's grace. Judgment must be God's work, and His alone, and so we see Him separated in the Holiest place where no one else can enter, making His righteous judgment. How thankful we can be, that the judgment will finally one day be completed, and when all sin has been put away, then the sound of praise will fill all corners of heaven as God's children shout with joy, and praise Him, who has conquered sin, and subdued all enemies of righteousness.

In heaven there will be no need for further sacrifice, for Christ has finished all the judgment that satisfies God's heart about sin. However the temple in heaven will be a constant reminder that once a sacrifice was made upon God's altar, and blood was shed for our sins. This eternal reminder will help us to worship and praise God forever and ever, for the gift of His Son, and what He has accomplished for us. The temple will have a fuller and richer meaning for us some day, when we learn all the details of God's house, His righteous ways, and His Holiness. Some day the church will realize her lofty role as the habitation of God through the Spirit, and the temple of the living God. God dwelling not in a building made with human hands, but a spiritual building built by God, through the gospel and faith in Jesus Christ. We shall all make up that holy dwelling place, where God will dwell with, and in, His people.

*"in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."* Ephesians 2:22

LESSON 254  
**Bowl Judgments**  
REVELATION 16

In our last lesson heavenly scenes reminded us of the holiness of God, the joy and praise of the redeemed in heaven, and God's righteous wrath. The former preparations for God's wrath, now comes to pass in several judgments which are described as bowls pouring out God's wrath upon the earth.

A loud voice calls from the temple in heaven to 7 angels. We learned about these angels in our last lesson, who are now called to pour out the bowls of God's wrath. This caused the first angel to pour out his bowl on the earth, which resulted in terrible sores to come upon all men that had the mark of the beast, and on those who worshipped his image. We wonder if these sores could be resulting from exposure to nuclear radiation that would follow after nuclear war? The second angel poured out his bowl and this caused the sea to turn to blood, like the blood of a dead man, killing all the marine life. The sea turning to blood could also be the result of a nuclear catastrophe, since nuclear contamination of the sea could certainly kill marine life. The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and fresh water and they also became blood. This prompted the angel to praise God by saying, "You are righteous, O Lord, The one who is and who was and who is to be, Because you judged these things. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." As horrible as the judgments are, they are perfectly righteous, and what men deserve who fight against God and his people. This would be helpful to remember whenever someone wants to hurt or persecute one of God's children. God will make special note of those who do harm to His beloved children, and ensure they are justly punished for their wickedness and hatred. We hear another angel also from the alter saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

When the fourth angel poured out his bowl it caused the sun to scorch men with fire. The great heat was unbearable to these men, and they blasphemed the name of God, who had power over these plagues. Yet they did not repent and give Him glory. It is so ironic that people ignore, or even rebel against God, then get angry with God when something happens to them that they don't like. They curse God, the very one who holds their life in His hands, and could remove all the sorrow and suffering, if they would just repent, and give Him the glory that is due to Him.

The fifth angel poured our his bowl upon the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was cast into darkness. Great pain came upon those who belonged to the beast's kingdom so that they gnawed their tongues. These also blasphemed God in heaven because of their great pain and their sores. Yet they still did not repent of their deeds.

The sixth angel poured our his bowl upon the river Euphrates and this caused the water to dry up. This opened a pathway for the east for kings. This seems to indicate that an army or several will be gathering from east, likely a reference to the battle of Armageddon, just prior to the Lord's return. Three unclean spirits appear from the mouth of the dragon, from the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. These demonic spirits perform signs before all the kings of the earth. These signs cause everyone to gather for a battle on the great day of God Almighty. In the midst of all these scenes of judgment on earth we hear the voice of the Lord warn men, "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." The meaning of this statement is not likely to be taken literally, but refers to the saints of the tribulation who are to keep themselves away from the shameful conduct associated with idol worship.

A great gathering is now forming at the location of Armageddon. Now the 7<sup>th</sup> and final angel pours out his bowl into the air. This brings forth a loud voice from the temple in heaven, which says, "it is done". There was noises, thundering and lightning, with a mighty earthquake, greater then any other earthquake in man's history. The earthquake divided the great city Babylon into three sections. Other cities all around the globe fell. Babylon is especially targeted by the wrath of God. Islands and mountains were moved, and great hailstones fell from the sky some weighing as much as 100 pounds. This caused men to blaspheme God, for the hailstorm was so devastating.

As we consider the terrible judgments that will soon come upon this earth, it should humble us, and put fear in our hearts, as we think of God's anger against sin. Men who rebel against God cannot win, and they will have to face His wrath one day. That day might come sooner then we think, and so we must not delay our repentance. We cannot even imagine a storm with 100 pound hailstones. This would crush everything in it's path. There would be no place to hide from the destruction. With all the water sources turned to blood, there will be very limited supplies of water. The sun burning men's flesh, probably due to a destruction of the atmosphere's ozone layer will add to their agony. We live today in a world that is relatively peaceful and pleasant, but the day is coming when the earth, and those that dwell in it, will be struck with relentless pain and sorrow. We can escape all of this, but we need to ask Jesus for salvation. We need to understand that we have offended God by our sin. We need to see our sin as the reason God is so angry, and why His wrath will destroys men and the earth. God never wanted to destroy men. God made man to enjoy fellowship with Himself, but men have chosen the pathway of rebellion, and God must judge according to His righteousness. He cannot let any sin go unpunished. Don't delay, today is your opportunity to turn to Christ for salvation. Just tell God you are guilty of sin, and that you are sorry, and want Him to forgive you. Realize that when Jesus died no the cross He was paying the penalty for all your sin. Receive Him, and His sacrifice, as the remedy for paying your sins debt. God can and will forgive you, but only when you accept Jesus as your Savior, and make Him



Lord of your life. The alternative is very frightening, so be sure not to put off your decision until tomorrow. May God help you to receive Christ as your Savior and Lord today.

*"Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."* Revelation 16:15

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we witnessed the final completion of God's wrath upon the earth during the future tribulation period. These final seven judgments are pictured as bowls of God's wrath pouring out. Someone might ask the question, "Can demons perform signs?"

I think the answer to this question should be obvious to most of us, but it is still an important question to consider, because of how Satan is working today among us. In this passage from Revelation 16 we read about some demons that came forth from the mouth of the dragon, beast and false prophet. Satan and his agents will rule the hearts of many during the tribulation period. The beast and false prophet will appear as Saviors, offering the world peace and prosperity, but under their false façade is an evil desire for power and selfish gain. Satan uses demons to carry out his evil work. Demons we know can affect people in significant ways, oppressing and hurting their victims, often leaving them unable to function and live properly in society. Demons appear to take up residence inside of some people, and need to be cast out, but this is a rather rare condition, not as some pastors would have us believe, that almost everyone with any problem is in need of casting out some demon within. Often our problems are not due to demons, but rather our own decisions to follow the path of selfishness, greed and sin. We must not blame the devil for our own ungodly behavior, but take responsibility for our choices and actions. There certainly are spiritual forces all around us that we cannot see. For those in Christ, we are protected from the enemy, because greater is the Spirit of God who lives in us, then the Devil who is at work in the world today. All those who do not have Christ as their Savior, are led captive of the devil to do his will. This does not imply they are possessed by demons, but that Satan uses our sin nature to lead us towards evil and away from God, and we happily follow his lead. Satan might have plenty of influence upon us, without our even realizing it. We might be convinced that God wants us to be rich and successful, and therefore apply ourselves to greedy ambition, by placing our business ahead of our family and church fellowship. We can convince ourselves that is all necessary in order to supply the needs of our family, but the truth of the matter might just be that we are trying desperately to make ourselves rich and prosperous, to satisfy a lust for exalting ourselves, and our own needs, over others. This is certainly not from God, but we know the devil would lead us down a selfish path of ungodly greed. So we know that Satan is a clever deceiver, who holds many in his pocket, while he convinces them they are pleasing God, all the while they are living for the devil and pleasure.

Our question today though is about the demons, and whether they can perform signs. It is clear from our study that demons can perform signs. As spirit beings, they have certain capabilities and strengths that are beyond our own abilities. We know that when someone is possessed of demons, they can have supernatural strength, and speak in unfamiliar languages. This in itself could appear as a sign. It is important to realize that in the spiritual realm, we must listen to the word of God and the Spirit of God. To discern whether something is from God or not, will require careful attention to God's word, so that we are not deceived by Satan, his demons, and their miraculous manifestation. Remember that Satan can masquerade as an angel of light, and thus deceive many into thinking they are following God, when they are being lead away captive by the devil. Take for instance what is happening in many churches today. We see people shaking and falling to the ground writhing, and talking uncontrollably, often screaming and shouting. We should ask the question is this characteristic of how the Holy Spirit controls someone, or does it appear more like the actions of Satan. Carefully examining scriptures will teach us that such behavior appears much closer to demonic behavior than what the Spirit of God would do. The Spirit of God is not associated with a lack of control of our bodies or senses. He gives us self-control, peace, and gentleness. When the Spirit of God is working, we will observe that a persons behavior is excellent, and honors the Lord. They will walk properly, they will talk properly, and they will think properly. The power that pastors and prophets appear to wield, causes people to react in bizarre manifestations of demonic behavior. When Jesus released someone from demonic oppression, he did not have to shout over and over again, and knock them on the head, making a dramatic show of it. He simply told the demon to leave, and the demons retreated at His presence and authority. Today it appears the demons come to life when the pastor begins to challenge them. Yes demons are powerful, and can produce signs to convince people. The signs however are to convince that God is directing and not Satan, as it is deception they are after. No one normally would willingly follow Satan, but many will follow him when deceived into thinking they are actually following God. The strange behavior we see exhibited in many churches, when demons seem to put on quite a show, seems to be either contrived by the expectant atmosphere, or Satan deceiving the masses that what they are seeing is God's work. A good test for these apparent signs, is whether people are being delivered from Hell, by receiving Jesus as Savior, for this ultimately is the healing that God wants to provide to us.

*"And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light."* 2 Corinthians 11:14

LESSON 255  
**Babylon the Harlot**  
REVELATION 17

In our last lesson we saw the seven bowl judgments which completed God's outpouring of wrath upon the earth during the tribulation period. In today's lesson we read of the city of Babylon, which is described as a harlot seated on a beast. We shall learn that this city represents a corrupt religious and commercial system, which God will judge during the tribulation days. It seems evident that this corrupt system is an apostate church, that turns Christianity into a big money making business. The next chapter will show us the commercial corruptions of Babylon.

In today's chapter we see a vivid description of Babylon. One of the angels, who had poured out the bowl judgments on the earth, talked with John and asked him to come and look at the judgment of the great harlot that sits upon many waters. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and all that dwell on earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication. The angel carried John in the Spirit into a wilderness. There John saw a woman sitting on a beast full of blasphemous names, and with seven heads and ten horns. All this is very symbolic language which John will help us understand after he finishes describing this harlot. He also says she is clothed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls. In her hand was a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornications. On her forehead was written "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth". John also saw the woman drunk from the blood of the saints and the martyrs of Jesus. When John saw this sight he marveled with great amazement.

Many books have been written about this harlot woman, and people have different views on who and what she represents, but all have a similar thread of understanding. The description provided here and what follows will be enough for us to conclude that this Babylon is a city in the sense of it being a center of religious domination, and commercial enterprise. It may have a particular city in view, and many have pointed out the similarities in description to the city of Rome which is situated on 7 hills, and the vast wealth of the Roman Catholic church. There is no doubting that The Roman church has a vast amount of wealth, and influence in almost every nation upon the earth. It is also clear that the Roman church has shed the blood of many martyrs of the Christian faith. Perhaps what is in view however is not the spiritual corruption that exists in the largest denomination in the world, but spiritual corruption spreads across all denominations, for we know that Christendom is full of false prophets and money-grabbing pastors. The combined total of all apostate Christianity is likely what is view, and what is here called Babylon the great harlot. She is a harlot in the sense that she uses seduction to draw people to herself, only to take their riches from them. So much of religion today does precisely this, they draw many people in, and they take their money, often pleading endlessly for more offerings. This has built up some churches, and pastors to great wealth and power.

The angel asked John why he marveled? We might suppose that John, as most of us, would be surprised to see the corruptions within the church, when they give the appearance of being humble and faithful servants of Christ. The image of this harlot seated on the blasphemous beast was far removed from what John would expect as coming from the Christian church. Now the angel proceeds to describe and explain the vision of the harlot on the beast. He says that the beast was, and is not, and will come out of the bottomless pit, and then to perdition, or eternal judgment in the flames of the lake of fire. The unbelievers who are not written in the book of life, will marvel when they see this beast. The angel says the mind of wisdom will understand that the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits. This will teach us that the language is symbolic, and that we need to try and sort out what each aspect of the vision could represent. The saying that "here is the mind which has wisdom", followed by giving clarity on the seven heads actually representing seven mountains invites us to apply our minds to understand this image and what it represents. In understanding the symbolism there is wisdom. The wisdom is not simply being smart enough to figure out what the symbol represents, but living in the light of that revelation. Since we understand that Rome is situated on seven hills, we might gather from the this text that the harlot city is the city of Rome, or the Religious system that is centered in Rome. The angel further explains that there are seven kings, and five of them have fallen, one is, and the other has not yet come. This final king will only reign a short time, and the beast is said to be the eighth, belonging to the same as the previous kings, and is destined for perdition. If the corrupt Roman church is in view, it means that they will have 7 dynasties prior to the beast reigning over their church. This could mean that the beast is actually the head of the church, and that is something that is hard to imagine, but seems to be possibly implied in this context. Ten horns of the beast represent 10 kings who will be given authority for a short time along with the beast. These kings agree to give authority to the beast, and they make war with the Lamb, that is Jesus. However the Lamb shall defeat them, since he reigns as King of kings, and Lord of lords, and those who follow Him are called chosen and faithful. The angel explains that the waters upon which the harlot sits represent all the peoples and nations. This reveals her domination as a world power. The ten horns are said to hate the harlot, and will make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh and burn her with fire. She was useful in attaining power for the beast to rule over men, but once the power has been established He will destroy the evil religious system. This is so clearly the deceptive work of Satan. We see this practice frequently in politics, where men will pose to be some kind of great leader and hero, only to prove to be completely opposite to what they said and promised. The destruction of the great harlot is according to God's purpose, for he put it into their hearts to destroy her. Thus they are united in giving over power and authority to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. Finally the angel explains that the woman,

or harlot, is the great city which reigns over the kings of the earth. This again points us to that very powerful and influential church of Rome, which affects governments and leaders around the globe, through their power and money. Reading of this apostate church, should cause us to question our allegiances, and whether the church we belong to is actually part of this evil system which God will judge. Be sure to follow what God says in His word, and not the practices of the church which are not found in the bible. The most important thing is to be sure you are trusting in Jesus for the salvation of your soul, then the Holy Spirit can guide you to a faithful church, and help you grow.

*"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."* Revelation 17:14

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we learned about the great harlot Babylon, which appears to be a corrupt and apostate Christian church that will be judged and destroyed during the tribulation. Someone might ask the question, "Why does Revelation make so much use of symbols?"

In our lesson today John described his vision of a woman riding a beast, which had seven heads and ten horns. It is even hard to picture such a beast. As we read through this chapter, the angel speaking with John provides him some explanations of what various aspect of this vision symbolize. For instance he will reveal that:

1. The woman (harlot) – is that great city called Babylon which reigns over the kings of the earth. Likely, this points to the corrupt Christian church of the tribulation period that is centered in Rome, having great riches and power.
2. The beast – is from the bottomless pit, takes rule over Babylon along with ten kings, only to destroy the very system that gave him his authority and power. The beast is clearly empowered by Satan, and will be a prominent world leader, controlling both religion and commerce during the tribulation period.
3. The seven heads – represent seven mountains. This seems to point to the city of Rome, or the religious system which is centered in Rome.
4. The ten horns – represent ten kings, and these have authority with the beast, and also give him his power and authority. This shows us that the system is a self-appointed, man-made, system of rule, to govern the people of the earth, and command power, while extracting their riches.
5. The waters upon which the woman sits – represent the people and nations of the world.
6. The golden cup full of abominations – represents the blood of Christian martyrs which the harlot drinks. In other words she is persecuting God's true church, indulging her Satanic power by oppressing them.
7. The gold, precious stones, and pearls – represent the great material wealth of Babylon.

As we try to sort through the many symbols of the book of Revelation, it is only fair to ask why the writer was lead to employ so much symbolism. We had a hint at the answer in today's lesson when the angel told John that the mind of wisdom, will understand that the seven heads represented seven mountains. We learned that this was designed to help us investigate the symbols so that we can prove to be wise. But is God simply trying to hide important information through symbols and insinuations. The answer may not be easy for us to discern, but let us think about some facts that might help us. Jesus taught in parables so that those who earnestly sought truth could find it, but those who were self-righteous would stumble through their pride, by not humbling themselves to learn. Even Nicodemus a teacher in Israel was confused by Jesus' teaching on the new birth. Jesus thereby judged the proud hearted Pharisees by teaching in parables. The teaching did accomplish God's purpose in helping the simple and sincere find spiritual truth, and spiritual riches, but condemned those who thought they knew better. This could be the same reason why Revelation leans heavily on symbolism. Another possibility, is that the prophecy is to be sealed up to the end time. This is what happened with Daniel's prophecy when God said he should seal it up until the end time. The prophecy was not intended for Daniel to understand, but for a later generation. Perhaps, while Revelation has some relevance to our lives today, it will prove much more significant and relevant during the tribulation, when all these things begin to take place. When Jesus appeared 2000 years ago, many of the prophecies about Him were not immediately understood, but later, after the Spirit of God came upon the church, those scriptures began to all come together to testify to the truth of Christ's life, death, burial and resurrection. Remember Paul, who was well schooled in the Old Testament, was fighting against the Christian church. Later, when He was arrested by the Lord on the road to Damascus, and was converted, and then filled with the Spirit, began to preach the resurrection of Jesus from those same scriptures he knew so well. Symbolism is not intended to frustrate us, or cause the truth to allude us, it is an invitation to think, study, consider, and search for truth as a gold miner looks for gold, digging, and digging. Truth is much more appreciated when it is revealed to the diligent and Spirit-guided believer. When we struggle to find the truth we will value it, and live by that truth all the more, then if we had it given to us with no effort to attain it.

*"If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures."* Proverbs 2:4

LESSON 256  
**The Fall of Babylon**  
REVELATION 18

In our last lesson we were introduced to Babylon, which was called that great harlot. The description of woman on a beast provided us with symbols that teach the corrupt character of a city, or apostate Christian church, which finds its center in Rome, and is responsible for killing many of God's servants. Today's lesson will teach us about the fall of Babylon, and her wealth and commercial trade.

John sees an angel descend from heaven to earth, and by his glory shining upon the earth, gives light to the earth. This angel cried out in a loud voice, announcing that, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling of demons, and every foul spirit, a cage for unclean and hated birds." The angel explains the reason for her judgment saying, "For all nations have become drunk from the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The kings of the earth committing fornication with her, merchants of the earth made rich through all of her luxuries." Another angel is heard calling to God's people, who are found in Babylon, to come out of her, lest they should share in her sins, and lest they receive her judgment of plagues. This helps us to understand that Babylon is a religious system, to which some of God's faithful children have joined themselves, perhaps thinking it is God's system. However God calls his people out of her, before His judgment falls. We should therefore ask ourselves if the religious system to which we belong is characterized by corruption and commerce, for it just might be that we are part of that system which God hates and will judge. The fornication that kings and nations have committed with her, seems to indicate that the system is both religious and commercial, perhaps controlling much of the world's trade during the tribulation period. The angel is calling for her judgment, saying that God has remembered her iniquities, and asks for justice to be paid out in double, for she has lived in luxury and glorified herself. In her heart she says, I sit as a queen, not a widow, and have no sorrow. Because of her pride and corruptions, her plagues will fall upon her suddenly and in one day death, mourning and famine will come upon her. She will be burned with fire, for the Lord in His great strength will judge her.

John will further speak of her riches and fornication with the kings of the earth. He mentions the weeping and sorrow that will come from those who were made rich by her, when they saw her laid waste, and the smoke of her burning. They will stand at a distance for fear of her judgment, saying, "Alas, alas that great city Babylon, that mighty city, for in one hour your judgment has come." Merchants will weep and mourn for they can't sell anymore. The merchandise is listed in detail, consisting of gold, silver, precious stones, pearls, fine linen, purple, silk, scarlet, wood, ivory, bronze, iron, marble, spices, oils, wine, flour and wheat, livestock, chariots, as well as the bodies and souls of men. All the wealth they sought after has now been taken away, and they cannot find it at all anymore. The merchants stay at a distance out of fear of the torments of Babylon, and say "Alas, alas that great city clothed in fine linen, purple, scarlet, gold, precious stones and pearls, for in one hour such great riches have come to nothing. Shipmasters and seaman are also seen standing at a distance, seeing the smoke of her burning, as asking, "What is like this great city?" They too are sorrowful, and cast dust upon their heads, weeping and wailing, and also saying, "Alas, alas that great city, by which ships became rich with her wealth, for in one hour she is made desolate." The scene of devastation and destruction is not a small event, but has world-wide implications to all commercial trade. It might be that the mark of the beast required to buy and sell, is closely linked with Babylon, and through the destruction of Babylon, the whole commercial system collapses. We know that in our modern world of trade depends upon the stock markets, large banks, and an inflated economic system. This system is based on printed money, and this paper money has no specific value behind it. It is not hard to imagine how these words from Revelation could be closely linked to an interdependent economic system. This is not far removed from our present economic systems, which could easily collapse completely, making all money worthless, causing all trade to a sudden halt. We seem on the verge of such a collapse in the economy, for the world is largely dependent on two or three very powerful countries, who are responsible for most of the trading going on in the world. We know these economies are very fragile, due to overspending, and huge deficits. Their collapse seems inevitable. Since Revelation speaks of a global economic system, it is not difficult to envision a collapse in the current economic systems, which leads to a one world system, with one currency, and a global inter-dependency. The world will need a stable economy for maintaining global trade.

The system will be a corrupt system both commercially and religiously. The fall of Babylon will bring with it a shout of victory from heaven, and from God's faithful servants who were martyred by this evil system. God has avenged their blood by destroying Babylon. A mighty angel is seen throwing a great millstone into the sea, and saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and not be found anymore. All music will cease from her, all her craftsman will not be found, and the millstone will not be heard from within her. Her lamps have all gone out, the voices of the bride and bridegroom have ceased. Merchants were made rich by her. Her sorcery was used to deceive all the nations. This shows us the religious façade used to hide the true nature of her power, which is from Satan and his demons. She is responsible for the blood of prophets and saints. Her religion was from Satan, and so she opposed and persecuted God's true servants. She is responsible for so much death, and sorrow, and yet was the joy and delight of those upon the earth. They found in her a religion that suited their lusts for money and power. Such is the growing tendency today in the apostate church, which focuses on how to become rich and prosper in this world. Let us be warned to flee from such corruptions, and live for treasure in heaven. Religion must never be used as a cloak

for covetous and selfish indulgence. God will come and judge the earth in righteousness, and so it is high time we forsake the corruptions of greed and lust, and sell all to follow Christ's path of sorrow and suffering. May the Lord help us to be true to the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and free from religious corruption.

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

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we learned about the fall of Babylon, that religious and commercial system that controls world commerce during the future tribulation period. We recognize that such a world-wide system is not far fetched, and it would not take much to change the current economic system into a global system, under the control of a unified political and religious power. Someone might ask the question, "How can Christians be sure they are not part of the Babylon system spoken of here in Revelation?"

As we read about Babylon, and its future destruction, we can discern that it is both a religious and commercial system. This system shall govern the world's trade and economy, but we hear the instruction from God, to be separated and come out from her. This indicates to us that some of God's people will be joined into this system. Undoubtedly, these Christians were those who thought the system was good and from God, since it is religious. Likely the system will not only appeal to the masses, but also to the Christian community, for it seems to be a God-fearing super power. The Christians may think that they are true and faithful, by joining with Babylon, and following her religious and economic program. However the Lord must instruct his people to come out from among her. This could mean that Christians will need to sever their relations with the universal church, which is tied to the global ruling power, so that they do not find themselves judged along with Babylon when it falls. Today the Babylon system has not yet taken form, but certainly the world is fast approaching a time, when a one world religion, and a one world economy are not difficult to image or implement. Even in Christendom, there has been a strong ecumenical movement at work in recent years. This movement seeks to tie together all Christian denominations into one agreeable form of collective Christian testimony. Certainly the economic situation in the world is desperately volatile, and on the brink of catastrophic collapse. Following an economic meltdown, the solution of a one world government, and one world economy will be the natural and accepted outcome.

Today we are not in the Babylon system, but the character of that system is certainly with us. The Babylon system, is corrupt spiritually, politically and economically. This all deals with the problem that men face as sinners, for they are alienated from God by their rebellion in all these areas. Men want to form their own religious program, that suits them, and build a kingdom for themselves, rather than entering and obeying the kingdom of God. Men also seek to exalt themselves, and thirst for power, fame, and control of the people. Then money is also at the heart of man's desires, from which he gains power, and can live as he pleases. If we belong to a religious system, that focuses on ourselves, and building a better life for ourselves here and now, then it is characterized by the Babylonian system that God hates and will judge. Further if the church or religion which we attend, exalts men to lofty positions of fame, giving them power and prestige, then we also need to be careful, for this is the very thing the Devil sought to do, and why God cast him down to the earth. Unfortunately we see an increasing trend in churches today to exalt the pastor, prophet, or man of God to the loftiest place, so that we are worshipping a man, and not God. This is the character of Babylon. Finally, are we in a religious system, where money is the goal, and vast wealth is being accumulated to build bigger church buildings, hire expensive sound systems, and pay large salaries to the pastor and his staff? This is also the character of Babylon. Today the churches are increasing in size and economic success. Some ministries are racking in millions of dollars, and Pastors are living very luxuriously from gifts of God's people. This fits with the character of Babylon, and why the Lord's wrath will fall upon this corrupt and evil system. In the name of religion men are doing those things that God hates by focusing on prosperity in this world, exalting men to great spiritual status, and by making big business from the charity of God's people. If this sounds at all like the church you attend, then you may very well belong to the system, which will become known as Babylon, that great harlot. Be careful that you belong to a group of believers, that exalts Christ, preaches salvation through faith in Christ, teaches God's word faithfully and accurately, and does not focus on men and money, but on salvation for sinners, and treasure in heaven, not in this world.

There is today a great deal of corruption in Christian churches. We can discern this by simply reading our bibles and comparing with the practices of today's churches. God never asked his people to build great cathedrals, or exalt men to lofty spiritual status above the rest of God's people. God did not send forth His servants to beg for money, but to preach the gospel, and serve the poor. God never said we should lay up treasures on earth, which corrupts, but to lay up treasures in heaven. Be careful and wise, and be separated from that which is evil. Hear the voice of the Spirit of God calling the faithful to come out from among her, and be separate.

*"Therefore, 'Come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.'" 2Corinthians 6:17*

## Marriage Supper of the Lamb

### REVELATION 19

In our last lesson we learned about the destruction of Babylon, that corrupt system of religious and economic power during the tribulation. In today's lesson we come to the end of the tribulation period, when God's enemies are judged, Jesus is ready to establish His earthly kingdom, and invites all believers to enjoy the marriage supper of the Lamb.

We have now come to the final section of the book of Revelation. Chapters 4 to 18 were concerned with the seven year tribulation, and the judgments of God upon the ungodly of this world. We said at the beginning of our study in Revelation that the book divides itself into three sections, "the things which you have seen; the things which are, and the things which will take place after this." This prophetic view of the future is mostly concerned with tribulation judgments, in order to warn readers to flee from God's coming wrath. However we are also given the final stages of history, where Christ is established as king over the earth, then a final rebellion which sends all of God's enemies into the lake of fire. Following this great white throne judgment, we are provided a description of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, with a new heaven and new earth, where God dwells among men. The book then ends with an invitation for all to drink of the water of life freely, and warning that Jesus is coming soon.

The scene changes back to heaven in chapter 19 and a great multitude are heard saying, "Alleluia, salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God." This praise to God is due to his judgments on the harlot of Babylon who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and for His avenging the blood of His servants. They also praise God that the judgment upon her is eternal while they witness her smoke of destruction ascending forever. In heaven the 24 elders and four living creatures fall and worship God who sits upon the throne, saying, "Amen, Alleluia." A voice is heard from the throne, calling for praise to God from His servants, and all who fear Him small and great. Then a great thunderous voice from the multitudes shouted, "Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns." They rejoice because the marriage supper of the Lamb has come, and the wife of the Lamb has prepared herself. The marriage supper of the Lamb is a future event that involves the Lord Jesus and His beloved bride the church. After the judgment seat of Christ, where believers are rewarded, and just prior to Christ coming in glory to reign over the earth, is the time when all believers will gather for the official union of Christ with His glorious bride. This special event is the culmination of Christ's eternal plan from eternity past, purchased through His sacrifice at Calvary, and the gathering together for Himself from all nations a beloved bride, consisting of all believers from the church age. The supper appears to be a feast in heaven celebrating this great and triumphant moment when Christ finally has His bride united with Him in heaven. The Bride is arrayed in great beauty, with fine clean bright linen, which is representative of the righteous deeds of the saints. An angel that spoke with John, said that he should write about the blessing of those who attend the marriage supper. John wanted to worship this glorious angel, but the angel stopped John, and said that he was a fellow servant, and only God should be worshipped.

Following this heaven is opened and Jesus is seen coming as the conquering King, riding a white horse. He is called faithful and true, and the Word of God. His eyes were like fire, and he wore many crowns. His robes were dipped in blood, symbolizing His victorious battles in war against His enemies. All His armies from heaven are following him on white horses also, and wearing fine white linen. From the mouth of Jesus comes a sharp sword, by which he judges the nations. He is coming to reign with a rod of iron, and will execute God's fierce wrath upon all of God's enemies. His name is written on His thigh, King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

An angel is seen standing in the sun, and crying to all the birds of heaven to come and gather for the supper of the great God, so that they can eat the flesh of kings, captains and mighty men. This is another supper of sorts, where the enemies of God lay dead on the battle field, having been slain by the wrath of the Lamb, and are now food for the fowls of the air. This scene follows the great battle of Armageddon that precedes the coming of Christ in glory, where all the armies are gathered to destroy the nation of Israel. While the battle is taking place in the valley of Jezreel on earth, Christ is seen in heaven on a white horse fighting this battle for the defense of His earthly people. At the close of the battle, and the commencement of Christ's reign the false prophet and beast are captured, and cast alive in the lake of fire. All God's enemies are destroyed with the sword that came from Jesus mouth, and the birds ate the flesh of those who died on the battle field.

These future events foretold in Revelation should teach us both fear and hope. We fear the wrath that shall soon fall upon the earth, and destroy all who are not in Christ. We may have friends or family that have not yet been saved from God's coming judgment, through placing their trust in Christ, and so we fear for their souls. We fear the dreadful scenes of judgment, with dead bodies piling up in vast numbers. However we, as believers, also have this great hope of soon being with our beloved Lord, and enjoying the marriage of the Lamb. We shall see Him in His glory, and be arrayed with His beauty. There is much we do not know about this future day, when all believers will be united with their Lord and Master, but we know we shall be made like Him, with new glorious bodies that shall never see corruption. We shall be granted a place with Christ forever in the glories of heaven, where no sin dwells, and God's glory illuminates the entire place. Sorrow, pain, death and tears shall all be taken away. The scenes of heaven include a river, trees with abundant fruit, gold, precious stones, and plenty of radiant color, and thunderous praise to God. I

hope this is also your hope. If you want to be a part of this great wedding feast someday, then be sure to trust in Jesus as your Lord and Savior today.

*"Then a voice came from the throne, saying, 'Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!'"* Rev 19:5

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson learned about the marriage supper of the Lamb, and the victory of the king of kings at the battle of Armageddon. While we anticipate great joy on the day Christians are joined forever with their Lord, we also ought to fear the coming judgment on this ungodly world. Someone might ask the question, "What is meant by the wife making herself ready for the marriage of the Lamb?"

Jewish customs for marriage, involved the bridegroom offering the family of the bride a gift or dowry, once the agreement had been made for the giving of their daughter in marriage. This began the betrothal period, similar to an engagement today. The bridegroom then spent a year preparing a place for he and his bride to dwell in. Often His father would provide him some land, and he would build a suitable dwelling for he and his new bride. When the time came for the bridegroom to collect his bride, he would come with his friends carrying torches at midnight, and as he passed the home of his bride, she and her maids would gather their own lamps or torches, and accompany the entourage to the bridegrooms home. Finally a wedding feast was conducted at the bridegrooms new home, with all the friends and relatives present. The feast would often last for several days. This picture fits well with the imagery of Revelation and the King coming for His bride. He has already gone back to heaven to prepare a place for His bride, and upon returning he will catch her away to His eternal home. The marriage supper of the Lamb will be that special heavenly occasion when the bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ, and His bride, the church, will be united, and all heaven will rejoice together. The bride needs to make herself ready for this special day. Her preparations will certainly include her first coming in faith and obedience to the gospel message. As believers first trust in the Lord Jesus for the salvation of their soul, they are not simply escaping the condemnation of Hell, but also preparing themselves to be forever joined with the Lord in heaven for their mutual and eternal joy. The preparations do not however stop the moment a person is saved. Next the believer must live their Christian life, devoting themselves to righteousness, and serving Christ faithfully. This will include joining a fellowship of believers, where Christians can find their place of service for their Lord and Master. It will also include being a faithful witness for Christ by sharing the gospel with others. It will certainly include acts of worship, where we give to the Lord glory, by devoting ourselves and our resources to Him and His kingdom. Preparing to meet our king, is a life long process of devoted service for Christ. All our good works done for Christ, will never merit a place in heaven, but done in the spirit of love and service, will certainly merit rewards in heaven. The beauty of our dress on that day will be all the faithful service and sacrifices done by believers while living here on the earth. With this in mind, we should pause to consider how well dressed we will be for this important occasion. If we do little for Christ, and focus on our gains in this world, then our treasure in heaven will be small. Our dress at the marriage will not be as glorious as it could have been. What are you living for? Are you wanting to have a big house, and lots of money stored in a bank here on earth? Or would you rather present to Christ all of your Christian service, and the souls you won for Him? When in the glory we must remember that not all believers will look the same, or be rewarded the same. We shall be grateful for His salvation, and we shall bear His glorious image in some measure, but there will be those whose faithfulness and service will provide them with beautiful garments in which to present themselves before their king. He is worthy of our best, and He ought to have from us something that shows our appreciation for the sacrifice He made.

Here are a few ideas about what we can do to prepare ourselves for meeting our King at the Marriage Supper.

1. Learn about the King by reading our bibles each day. The better we know Him the better we shall recognize and appreciate all of His glories when we meet Him in heaven.
2. Serve Him by sharing the gospel. Perhaps the best thing we can present to Him in that day will be those people whom we have assisted in finding God's salvation.
3. Serve Him in the church, by loving God's people and helping them grow in their faith. Jesus died for the church, and the greatest work He gives us is to love and serve His people.
4. Do not waste time foolishly. The days on earth are short, and we cannot afford to waste our time in vain pursuits.
5. Give to the poor. The Lord's heart is always towards the needy, and we reflect His love and bring much delight to His heart, when we share with the needs of others.
6. Walk in Holiness. The world will try to pull us down to its' level, and pollute us with the corruptions of sin, but we must work hard to separate ourselves from all that is displeasing to our righteous Lord.
7. Show gentleness and love to others. This is the character of Christ, and will reflect his goodness to others.

*"And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness."* Ephesians 4:24

LESSON 258  
Great White Throne  
REVELATION 20

In our last lesson we learned about the marriage supper of the Lamb, where the church is united in festal joy with her beloved Lord. Today we skip right through the 1000 year Millennium to the Great White Throne judgment when the Devil and all his followers will be cast into the eternal lake of fire.

John sees an angel who has the key for the bottomless pit, and a great chain in hand. He binds Satan, who is also called the Devil, dragon, or serpent of old. Satan is bound for 1000 years and cast into the bottomless pit, where he cannot escape, and where he can no longer deceive the nations. After the 1000 years Satan will be released for a brief period, only to be judged and cast into the lake of fire, along with all those who joined in his rebellion. John also sees thrones on which judges sit, and the souls of those who were beheaded because of their witness to Jesus and the word of God. These were those who refused to worship the beast, or receive his mark on their foreheads or hands. These tribulation martyrs for Christ, are living with Christ during His 1000 year Millennial reign. They are distinct from other others who have died, in that they have participated in the first resurrection to life, whereas the others who died without Christ as their Savior, are raised after the 1000 years only to face judgment, and be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Those who take part in the first resurrection, will never have to taste the second death, since they have been made secure with eternal life, by their faith in Jesus Christ. The tribulation saints will be priests for God and of Christ, reigning with him for the 1000 year Millennium.

When Satan is released at the end of the 1000 years, he will go forth and deceive as many as he can from all over the earth, and form an army from Gog and Magog. This army will be great in number, like the sand of the sea. However the rebellion is immediately stopped, when they surround Jerusalem, here called the beloved city, when fire descends from heaven and devours them. Here there is no battle fought at all, just instant justice as the vast army is destroyed by God's fiery judgment. The judgment includes their being cast into the lake of fire. The Devil, the beast, and the false prophet are all cast into the lake of fire where they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. These receive no hearing, or trial, only instant judgment.

Now John speaks to us about the great white throne he saw. The one sitting on this throne, was so majestic and fearsome, that he says the earth and heaven fled from the sight of his face, and no place was found for them. Then John saw all the dead both great and small standing before God. The books were opened and another book which is called the book of Life. The dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. This teaches us the awesome and dreadful truth that all of our deeds whether good or bad are recorded by God, no detail left out. No one will get away with anything, but judgment will fall against all evil. At this great white throne all the dead are raised up. Those who died at sea, those who are in the grave, and all the souls in Hades are delivered to stand before this awesome judgment throne. All were judged according to their works, and death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire, This is called the second death. Those not found written in the Book of Life were cast into the lake of fire.

This terrifying scene of judgment is a revelation that you and I cannot afford to ignore. God is telling us that we will most certainly face judgment, and only if our names are written in the book of life, can we escape the second death. The eternal torments of the lake of fire will be our portion, if we do not repent, and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Remember that God is recording every detail of your life. Every lie, every theft, every insult, every lustful act, every selfish act, every time you broke His commandments, it has been recorded. The degree of your judgment will be perfectly matched to the crimes you have committed against God's Holy standards. The only way to have your sins washed away, is by looking to Jesus dying on the cross for you, and realizing that His blood is the means by which God can make you clean, new, forgiven, and be granted eternal life.

As we read about this Great White Throne it is so important to take a serious look into our lives, and ask the sober question, "Is my name written down in heaven, in the book of Life?" Another important question will be, how do I get my name written in this book. Well it certainly will not be the same as having your name written on the church register, or on a baptism certificate. This book is in heaven, and recorded by God Himself. Only He can determine if you are worthy to have your name written in the book of Life. Jesus even told the disciples not to rejoice that they could do miracles in His name, or that demons listened to them, but rather they should rejoice that their names were written in heaven. This tells us that miracles and even casting out demons is not what qualifies us to be written in the Lamb's book of Life. The only way to have your name recorded in God's book of Life is to find the life that comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ. There are some who believe the book of life contains the name of every human being who has ever lived on earth, and it is only those who trust in Jesus as their Savior, who will not have their names blotted out. This seems to be supported by Exodus 32:33, Psalm 69:28, Rev 3:5. However the very name of book of Life, seems to imply that it is a book that contains the names of those who have found life through faith in Christ. This agrees with the various uses and context in which we find the phrase "the book of life". Because some scriptures refer to names being blotted out, does not have to mean that the names were ever actually blotted out, or that those who names are blotted out were ever written down in the first place. To be blotted out might simply mean that they have lost their chance for being recorded in the book of life by their rejection of God's grace. To imply that a believer



can be once entered into the book, only to be later blotted out, is to go against the clear doctrine of scripture that we are saved by grace through faith, and not by our works. Our works certainly can testify to the reality of our faith, but can never merit our salvation, nor our sins cause us to lose salvation. Is your name written in the book of Life? If not, then today would be a good day to register your name in heaven by trusting in the Lord Jesus as your savior.

*"And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire!" Rev 20:15*

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we learned about God's final judgment at the end of the Millennium, called the Great White Throne judgment. The Devil, Beast and False Prophet are cast into the lake of fire, and those who are not written in the Lamb's book of Life are also cast into the lake of fire. Someone might ask the question, "What is the Lake of Fire?"

We know from our reading today, that the lake of fire judgment is referred to as the second death. This is because those who appear before God at the Great White Throne judgment, are the dead small and great. These are all those who died in their sins, having not trusted in Christ as their Savior. They are now raised to stand in the presence of the Lord they rejected, and who will now be their judge. These souls were already condemned to eternal destruction when they died the first time, but now they are raised only to face the degree of judgment that they will have to face. All those who were not written in the Lamb's book of life were cast into the lake of fire. Remember that all believers have already been raised at the first resurrection, and are already living and reigning with Christ, so these that stand before the Great White Throne are only those who would not have their names written down in the book of Life. Thus the judgment is the same for all those who rejected Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. They are all cast together into the lake of fire. There is some degree of judgment however even in this awful place of torment. For the bible says they were judged according to their works. Some think this refers to the good works, which will not be sufficient to justify them before God, and thus they are cast into the burning lake. Others would see this as judgments for their evil deeds, and the degree of suffering they will face in the lake of fire. This view is supported by something Jesus said when speaking against the towns of Galilee who had not believed in Him, even though he had done so many miracles in their midst. To these towns He said that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, or Tyre and Sidon, then for them in the day of judgment. He is comparing some of the Old Testament towns that came under the judgment of God, because of their rebellion. So Jesus speaks of the future judgment and how it will be more tolerable for some than others, because they were given less evidence upon which to believe. For those who have heard the gospel, read the bible, and been preached at, they will certainly have to face a more severe judgment in the lake of fire, than those who did not have the benefit of so much gospel witness.

Now that we have established that the Lake of Fire has degrees of judgment according to ones works, we can also learn that the Lake of Fire is a place of eternal torment, and separation from God. The fact that it is called a second death, does not mean that the souls cast into this eternal fire, cease to exist, but rather that they have been forever severed from the salvation of God, by their willful choice to reject Christ. God has sealed them in their choice, as a judgment against them. The Lake of Fire is a vivid picture of a place of constant torment. We can hardly imagine anything more painful than being burned with fire, and so this is the language employed to help us appreciate the extent of the suffering these souls will endure. The fact that it is a lake also provides the image of not a small fire, but a very large fire which fully engulfs those cast into it. In other places the bible describes the torments of Hell, as included weeping and gnashing of teeth, and as the blackness of darkness. These are likely closely related, and could also describe what the lake of fire will be like. The reason for this is because, God is the source of all light, and when one is cast away from God's presence forever, this will mean they will be in darkness, cast away from God's light. Also the weeping and gnashing of teeth are also agreeable to the scenes that can be imagined in the lake of fire, for those under God's eternal judgment know that they have no opportunity for escape, and the torments are so intense, that they will both weep and gnash their teeth in anger. The bible does not provide us with a great deal of detail about the lake of fire, but it certainly tells us enough for us to know that is not a comfortable or welcoming place. It is a place we must all avoid by taking Christ as our Savior. Just think of the sheer terror of those who find themselves in such a place knowing that they can never escape, and their torments will continue day and night forever and ever. We must remember that the language of Revelation is highly symbolic, and the phrase, "The Lake of Fire" should not be forced into some literal idea of a lake constantly burning with fire. If symbolically understood, we could well imagine a place or condition in which suffering souls are in such perpetual torture, that it could be compared to somebody who found themselves cast into a large burning lake of perpetually burning fuels, without any escape. The imagery is meant to help us appreciate the severity of the judgment, and is explanative of what it means to experience the second death, where the soul is forever banished from God, and His salvation. Since the revelation of the Lake of Fire is limited, we can only surmise the full meaning, but we can certainly take warning to avoid such a destination by taking Christ as our personal Savior.

*"But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you." Luke 10:14*

LESSON 259  
The New Jerusalem  
REVELATION 21

In our previous lesson we learned about the Great White Throne judgment where all unrepentant sinners are raised from their graves, and judged according to their works, and then cast into the lake of fire. Today we come to the end of the Millennium, and to the eternal state, where God will create a new heaven and new earth.

When God makes a new heaven and new earth, the old creation is taken away. In the new creation there is no sea. In describing the new creation, John now sees a holy city, the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. The holy city is said to be like a bride adorned for her husband. This hints to us that the New Jerusalem is the dwelling of the church, who is the bride of Christ, or perhaps not the dwelling, but the church itself comprised of all believers of the church age. This agrees with other scriptures found in Ephesians 2 where the church is called the dwelling of God through the Spirit. A voice is heard from heaven as the city descends, saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." The heavenly voice continues to speak of the character and condition of that place saying, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." These are certainly among the most comforting words we can find in the entire bible, and will encourage our hearts, when the troubles and trials of life have weighed us down with sorrow, pain and tears. It is fitting that this chapter should follow the terrifying judgments we read about in the previous chapter, reminding us that our God intends the very best for us, if only we shall heed His warning, and turn to Christ while time permits us.

He that sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." He then instructs John to, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." He further says, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts." Early in our study of Revelation I mentioned that it provides us with both a warning and an invitation. The Great White Throne certainly emphasizes the warning of God to all sinners to repent and turn to Jesus for salvation. And in this chapter we hear the voice of the eternal Christ, He who is without beginning or end, inviting all to come and drink of the water of life freely. The beautiful metaphor of drinking water to refresh and sustain us when thirsty, is used to illustrate what it means to receive the life that comes from God through Christ. It revives our spirit, puts hope into our hearts, and joy into our experience. This bears evidence to those who have been born from above, for you can see it in their countenance, hear it in their conversation, and discern it from the company they keep. Jesus also says, "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be My son. This once again affirms the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and reminds us of chapter 2 and 3 where there is references to those who overcome. We discovered that the overcomer, is one who has placed their trust in Jesus as Savior, and has proven their faith through a life of obedience to Christ.

The new heaven and new earth is not a place for cowards, unbelieving, abominable people, murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars. These shall find their place in the lake of fire, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> death. This verse could be quite unsettling to us, if we know that our lives have been characterized by such sins at one point or another. However, let us remember that in Christ, all of our sins have been washed away, and God sees us clothed with His righteousness. This is because we have obeyed the gospel and trusted in Jesus Christ to save us. Those who do not know God's salvation will be left wearing their sins on the day of judgment, and are characterized by them.

One of the angels John had seen pouring out the bowl judgments, now takes John to show him the bride, the Lamb's wife. John is carried away in the Spirit to a high mountain, and there he saw the great and holy city, the new Jerusalem descending from heaven from God, and having the glory of God. She shone with the light of jasper and clear crystal. Her walls had twelve gates each engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel, three gates on each side, east, north, south, and west. The city also had 12 foundations, with the names of the 12 apostles written on them. The angel then measured the city with a gold reed, both its gates and wall. John tells us the city is square, with the same width, length and height, which is 12 thousand furlongs, or around 1500 miles. A very large city indeed! The wall measured 44 cubits, or 66 feet, and was made of jasper. The city itself was made from pure gold that was clear like crystal. The foundations were adorned with precious stones, each foundation with a unique type of gemstone, including jasper, sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, amethyst, and all in this order from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> foundation. The twelve gates of the city were made from twelve pearls, with each gate being one pearl. The street was pure gold and transparent like glass. The city had no temple for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple. There was no need for light, since the glory of God illuminated it, that is the light of the Lamb. The nations each brought their glory and honor to the city, and walk in its light. The gates never shut, since there is no night. Nothing that defiles will enter, or anything that causes an abomination or a lie, only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

This beautiful city filled with gold, precious stones, and pearls might be literal, or could also be figurative, helping us appreciate the glories that Christ has bestowed on His bride the church, which is His dwelling place. Whatever the case, we cannot yet fully grasp the glory of the New Jerusalem, but certainly this has been written to contrast the awful place of torment reserved for those who reject Christ. It serves as an invitation to us to look for a better city,

whose builder and maker is God. Remember Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for us, a place for His bride to enjoy with Him forever. I hope you will make your choice to join the bride, by trusting Jesus as your Savior.

*"The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light!"* Rev 21:23

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we learned about God creating a new heaven and new earth, and about the holy city coming down from heaven, the new Jerusalem. The glories of this city, the bride of the Lamb, are described in detail, and provide us with a glorious invitation to join the redeemed in that place. Someone might ask the question, "Why does the New Jerusalem have walls?"

In describing the New Jerusalem John tells us about the high walls, and 12 gates. We know that ancient cities like Jerusalem and Jericho, had walls surrounding them to keep out their enemies. They closed their gates at night to keep the city safe. But surely there is no need to protect God's holy city from intruders, when all enemies have been forever cast into the lake of fire. So why is there a need for walls? When reading the text, we shall notice that the gates are continually left open, and there is no night. The nations are also said to bring in their honor and tribute to the holy city, so there is likely a flow of people coming and going from this city. We know that after the Great White Throne judgment, only the redeemed will live in the new heaven and new earth, so there is certainly no rebellious sinner, or demon that could approach the city or seek to enter it. The scriptures are emphatic here, saying that nothing that defiles, or is abominable shall ever enter this place. It seems the walls symbolize a truth we all need to understand, which is that the holy city is untainted by anyone who could potentially defile it. The message is clear, that only those who have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb shall have access to this glorious city. As we look into the future, and see what God has prepared for us, then we should be so careful to ensure that we are God's children as represented by our holy conduct. As we hear the words, that nothing that defiles, no sexually immoral, and no liar shall enter that place, it reminds us that God is holy, and His dwelling place can never be contaminated with sin. This teaches us today to practice righteousness, and to honor his holy name.

The description of the New Jerusalem is likely quite symbolic, for no words would be adequate to describe God's eternal dwelling place. John continually uses the word "like", pointing out that he could only define what he saw in terms of other things more familiar to him. As we consider the figurative or symbolic language employed to describe the holy city, we should also remember that the city is compared to the bride, the Lamb's wife. It appears from the language John uses, that the city is actually a description of the redeemed church in heaven. If this is the case, then we must understand all the description as symbolic of the character and glories of the bride of Christ. Thus the foundations with the apostles names, could represent the gospel message which she heard and embraced by faith, and her basis for being forever joined to Christ as His bride. The walls then might help us to understand that the redeemed church is a called out people, unique and separated from all others, with a definite number of those who have been saved by the Lamb. There is no one that is half saved, living on the borders of the holy city. You are either in Christ, or cast forever from His presence into the lake of fire, and this truth may well be represented in the walls of that holy city. The gates of pearl are open both day and night and are inscribed with names of the tribes of Israel. It is not hard to imagine that this represents the inclusion of all Old Testaments saints, such as Abraham, Moses, David, and Daniel in the holy city, as they are redeemed by faith, just as the New Testament saints, and will have free and open access to this city. All the faithful of Israel may enter into and enjoy His glory, and fellowship with their Lord. Undoubtedly the description of the city with streets of pure gold, walls of jasper, and built upon precious stones, reminds us of the beauty and glory with which Christ has adorned His bride, and thus her reflection of His greatness, sinless perfection, the treasures of His grace, and wonders of His love.

It is interesting to notice that in chapter 5 of Revelation John saw a Lamb on the throne, as though freshly slain. This, I believe, is to remind us that even in heaven we shall have a constant remembrance of Calvary, when Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain for sinners. We will always have this truth before our eyes, and in our remembrance, so that we know and learn the grace of God for the eternal ages to come. With each new day, we tend to forget the trials and victories of yesterday, since our eyes are always looking forward. But God would have us look backwards to see the path from which we have come, reminding us of all His grace and care. Otherwise we would likely forget, and our worship may diminish. So as we look at those walls around the new city, we shall be constantly reminded that once we lived in a sinful world, and God has removed us and redeemed us from a wicked world of rebellion, so that we could live forever protected by His eternal grace and forgiveness. It will remind us that we are among the very privileged few whom God has gathered to Himself, while others were cast out forever. It will also remind us of the glory, riches, and dominion of our Lord.

*"Glorious things are spoken of you, O city of God!"* Psalm 87:3

LESSON 260  
**The Final Invitation**  
REVELATION 22

In our previous lesson we learned about the glories of the New Jerusalem, that holy city where Christ will dwell with His bride forever. Today we finish off our study in the book of Revelation, and the final chapter of the entire bible. This final chapter pictures Jesus Christ the Lord extending His final invitation to come and drink of the water of life freely. The bible is a wondrous story of God's love, from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22; from the fall of man, to God's answer at Calvary's cross, to the glorious city of the redeemed at the end of the ages. I hope this study of the New Testament has caused you to come to Christ in faith, to love and appreciate who God is, and all that He has done for our salvation and eternal joy.

The scenes of the New Jerusalem that we were introduced to in our last lesson continue into this final chapter of the bible. John is shown a pure and clear river, with the water of life, which proceeded from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. These words are likely figurative in nature, and describe things in terms we can comprehend. Thus in heaven, we understand the river coming from the throne of God as teaching that God is the source of life. The tree of life which bears fruit, might be an allusion to the tree of Calvary, which was the means by which souls from every nation on the earth were saved through the blood of the Lamb. Perhaps literally in heaven beautiful trees bearing fruits line a river that flows out from God's throne, to remind us of God's power to give and sustain life, and heal us through the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that God has completed His judgments against all evil, the curse upon man and creation has ended forever. The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be established forever, and His servants will serve Him. This tells us that among other things, we shall be active in heaven by doing service for our Lord. I hope this does not trouble you, as though work and service are an undesirable bondage. Those who love the Lord, will be so thrilled to be given the opportunity and the power to serve Him with a full heart of joy and gratitude. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. In this great eternal and holy city there will be no night, nor lamp, or light from the sun, for the Lord God is the light. They shall reign forever and ever.

Finally John is told that, "These words are faithful and true". John explains that the Lord God of the prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must take place shortly. This tells us that Revelation is primarily addressed to the church, and for her encouragement and strength in difficult times, helping to prepare for the end.

Jesus promises in these final words of our bible, that He is coming quickly, and blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

John testifies that it was he that saw and heard these things, and when he had heard and seen he fell down to worship the angel who had showed these things to him. The angel forbid him though, saying, "See that you do not do that, since I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God." This shows us the importance of worshipping God alone and not any other created thing, for He alone is worthy of our worship.

John is told not to seal the words of this prophecy, since the time is at hand. Words of condemnation seal men in their rebellion. He who is unjust, let him be unjust still, he who is filthy, let him be filthy still. Their fate is sealed by their refusal to repent. However, to the righteous, they are to remain righteous, and the holy to remain holy. Also they are sealed through the evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in them, as seen in their holiness.

Again the Lord warns us that He is coming quickly, and has His reward with Him, to give to every one according to his work. He declares that He is the Alpha and Omega, Beginning and End, the First and the Last. Those who perform His commands are blessed, and shall have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. Outside are dogs, sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

Jesus states that it was He, Himself, who had sent His angel to testify about these things in the churches. He declares Himself as the Root and Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star.

We are given this final invitation from our Lord by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit and bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears, say "Come!". And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely. There can be no greater invitation than this one, from the lips of our Lord, and from the Holy Spirit, and from His church, to come and receive the gift of life freely. Won't you hear and take of this free gift?

A final warning is issued against anyone who would add or take away from the words of this prophecy, that the curses of this book will fall upon them. If someone tampers with God's word, they will be taken out of the Book of Life, and will never enter God's holy city, or enjoy the promises of this book. Finally, John says that the Lord testifies that "Surely I am coming quickly". The prayer that ends the word of God is "Amen, Even so come Lord Jesus!"

So we now end our study of Revelation and the New Testament. After 260 lessons, it is my prayer that all hearing this ministry will know Christ as their Savior. Trust in Him, and not in your own righteousness. Receive the free gift of

eternal life. Then one day we shall meet together in God's holy city made of pure gold, and together we shall sing the praises of the one who loved us, and brought us into His glory.

*"And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely!" Rev 22:17*

### **Today's Bible Question:**

In today's lesson we heard the gracious invitation to come and take of the water of life freely. We learned that God alone is to be worshipped, and that Jesus is coming quickly to execute God's judgment on this world, and take His beloved bride home to heaven. Someone might ask the question, "Are we in danger, when teaching or translating the bible, of adding and taking away, and thus bringing God's judgment upon us?"

We read at the end of our lesson today, a final warning to those who read the prophecy of Revelation, that we are not to tamper with it, by adding or taking away from it, or else the curses and plagues of this book will fall upon us. This makes handling the word of God a very serious matter. What if a teacher, seeking to teach God's word, should say something inaccurate; or what if a translator chooses the wrong words to convey God's truth from one language to another? Of course there are countless thousands of people involved in translating and teaching God's word. Every Sunday thousands of pastors, teachers, and elders stand before congregations of God's people to share the word of God with them. Translators are constantly working on providing the bible to new groups of people that have never had the bible written in their own language. All this comes with the risk of altering the meaning of the text in some way. It seems however that what is in view here in Revelation, is not those who are making an honest attempt at handling the word of God in truth and accuracy. The warning is to those who deliberately sabotage God's word to make it mean something entirely different than God's intended meaning. There are plenty of people working for the devil, who are glad to change God's word for their own purposes. Today we have prosperity preachers, who use the word of God to deceive the masses into thinking God wants them to be rich and successful in this world, and so that is the tenor of their preaching. They do this so they can justify their rich lifestyle, and ask people to give to their ministry generously. They peddle the word of God, for earthly gain. This is definitely a distortion of God's word, and will most certainly bring God's displeasure and ultimate judgment. There are many other examples of how men manipulate the truth to suit their own agenda. Those who remain true to the gospel, and preach God's word faithfully, will be duly rewarded, even if their message was not received well, or crowds did not follow them and their preaching. All men must be careful however when teaching the word of God. James warns us in his epistle that not many should presume themselves to be teachers, knowing that teachers will receive a stricter judgment. What this teaches us is that those who teach God's word are more accountable, since they wield great power for good, or for evil. Men will look to the preachers and teachers to help them understand the message of the bible, and to follow it. If a teacher goes astray with his doctrine, he can lead many others into false teaching and false practices. Take for example the practice of men giving themselves titles, like reverend, apostle, doctor, or prophet. Jesus said clearly that men should not take titles to themselves when serving God (Matt 23:7-12). Those who do not heed the words of Christ, will surely have to answer for their violations of His word, for they should have known better, when they claimed to represent him and teach His word. The worst judgment shall fall upon those who intentionally change God's word. I can imagine that many men who are called pastor, do not in the slightest degree, intend by their title, to violate God's word. They adopt to what the popular cultural trends have taught them, and have not seen anything in scripture that has convinced them that their practice is not in accord with God's word. I believe God will show grace to all who teach His word in sincerity, even when their were inconsistencies that they simply were blind to. It is serious though, when we know what the bible says, and choose to live in contradiction to it. That is sin, and will never be pleasing to God. I recall one preacher, when challenged about the unscriptural practice of begging for money to support his ministry, agreed that it was not supported in scripture, but he recognized that it worked. He saw what many preachers have come to realize, which is the fact that religion pays well, especially when soliciting for funds regularly and forcefully. However all such scammers will have to face God's chastening hand sooner or later, for God does not need men to beg for support, as though he were poor and needy. These false teachers malign the character of God, when they misrepresent Him, with their greedy and selfish appeals. Let us be careful that in all of our conduct we are careful to live in the light of what the scriptures teach us. If we know that God wants us to forgive others, because He has freely forgiven us, then we have no choice but to obey the voice of God. To do otherwise is folly, and will only bring harm and judgment upon us. Let's be sure that we all handle God's word with the extreme care and reverence that it deserves, so that we do not lose God's blessing, or suffer God's judgment.

*"Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him with the whole heart!" Psalm 119:2*