REVELATION

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



The Lamb on the throne, the promise of His return, and all things made new

ANDREW DOMINGUEZ

TRINFINITY
Enterprises

Revelation Bible Study

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Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

Revelation Bible Study: A Verse-by-Verse Study

Revised Edition

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A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the Book of Revelation and Biblical prophecy. My purpose in writing this Study Guide is to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

Revelation was my first study. I was young, and it intrigued me. I wanted to know what God said about the end, not what people guessed. That curiosity led me to study the whole Bible verse by verse.

There are many books available on the book of Revelation, and unfortunately, many of them teach false doctrine. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on Revelation. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and see what He has planned for my future and my eternity. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's Kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

When we don't understand the context of a verse, we can easily get it wrong. Many of us have heard a passage taken out of context and misused. It is up to each of us to gently correct those who quote God's Word out of context, doing so with love and understanding, since not everyone realizes how important context is. Often, a passage is pulled out of context to defend a position, and that only confuses the person hearing or reading it.

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to "make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are based on www.merriam-webster.com, with my own notes added.

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

Exegesis means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

Eisegesis means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of explaining a passage, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Peter 1:20-21 (SLB)

"20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from private interpretation; 21 for prophecy was never borne by ***the*** will of man, but being borne by ***the*** Holy Spirit, holy men of God spoke."

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

These passages tell us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came directly from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

There are two ways language is used in the Bible: figurative and literal.

Figurative language uses a word or phrase with a meaning different from its basic meaning, to make a point in an interesting way. It is not meant literally. An **allegory** or **metaphor** is a figure of speech where a term is used for something it doesn't literally mean, often with a hidden meaning inside the text.

Literal interpretation means taking words in their plain, ordinary sense, without treating them as metaphor or allegory, based on the context of the passage.

I read the Bible as it is written: literally. The Bible defines its own terms within the context of the book or passage where they appear. This study of Revelation will take a literal approach unless I say otherwise.

I want to point out that Revelation is the only book in the Bible that opens with a promised blessing for those who read it, hear it, and keep it (1:3).

Revelation 1:3 (SLB)

"3 Blessed ***is*** the one who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it; for the time ***is*** near."

I tried to approach this study without leaning on any one system of theology. My goal, then and now, was to find out what God's Word is telling me. If I leaned on other people's interpretations, my conclusions would be swayed by them. Before writing any part of this study, I prayed for the Holy Spirit to open my eyes, my heart, and my understanding of God's Word.

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Hebrew and Greek, I also used The Interlinear Bible (J.P. Green, ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

I used a face-value approach, seeking the plain, literal meaning of the text. I know that the meaning of some words has changed since Biblical times, so I leaned on The Interlinear Bible for help with those. Reformers like Martin Luther held to this principle, the *sensus literalis*, the plain or literal sense of the text.

Since Revelation is a book of prophecy, we need to understand that prophecy which isn't fulfilled literally isn't true prophecy at all. The Bible backs this up:

Deuteronomy 18:18-22 (SLB)

"18 A prophet I will raise up for them from the midst of their brothers, like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And it shall be ***that*** the man who does not listen to My words which he speaks in My name, I Myself will require ***it*** of him. 20 Only, the prophet who acts presumptuously to speak a word in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, and who speaks in the name of other gods, then that prophet shall die. 21 And if you say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' 22 when the prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, and the word does not happen and does not come, that ***is*** the word which the LORD has not spoken; with presumption the prophet has spoken it; you shall not be afraid of him."

In this passage, God told the Israelites how to tell a true prophet, one speaking for God, from a false one. We don't need to look for some hidden, spiritual meaning in God's Word. We can be glad knowing that these prophetic events have either already happened literally, or will happen that way in the future.

As history moves forward, so does our understanding of end-time prophecy. We see this in the Bible itself. Looking back at the Old Testament, we find prophetic words that weren't clearly understood at the time they were written. In Daniel 12:4 and 9, Daniel was told to "shut up the words and seal the scroll until the time of the end." John, on the other hand, was told not to seal up his prophecy (Revelation 22:10). I believe that tells us God means for these things to become clearer as the time draws near.

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern:

- **Scripture:** the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first.
- **Preview:** a short look at what the chapter covers.
- **Study:** the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- **Summary:** the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- **Study Questions:** questions for personal study or a small group, from simple fact questions to questions about how we live.
- Old and New Testament links: after many verses you will find a short line in small type that lists the places where the other Testament quotes, fulfills, pictures, or echoes that passage. "Quoted" means the New Testament quotes the Old Testament words. "Fulfilled" means the New Testament tells us a prophecy or promise came true. "Pictured" means the New Testament itself points to an Old Testament person, event, or object as a picture of Christ. "Alluded to" means a clear echo in shared words or pictures. Every link is listed again in a table at the back of the book.

Before Chapter 1 you will find a chart of the order of events as I understand them, and near the back a list of Key Symbols and Terms, so you can look up what a symbol means without hunting for it. Where Christians hold different views, I lay out the main ones and then tell you which one I hold.

If you are new to faith, or not sure where you stand with God, you may want to start by reading the Conclusion and the prayer at the end of this book. Revelation makes the most sense once you know the Lamb at the center of it.

I look forward to walking with you through the book of Revelation. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

Overview of Revelation

The book of Revelation is the 66th and final book in the Protestant Christian Bible. It is mainly about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. In this book, Jesus comes back to judge the living and the dead, those who accepted Him and those who rejected Him. Jesus first came to Earth to die for mankind and forgive our sins. For a person's sins to be forgiven, they must believe in Jesus and accept Him into their heart. After someone becomes a believer, they should live according to what is written in God's Word, the Holy Bible.

- When this study uses the word "man," it means all of mankind, men, women, and children, not just one gender, unless stated otherwise.

Revelation connects to many other books in the Bible, depending on a person's view of the end times. Some of these books are:

- Isaiah
- Daniel
- Ezekiel
- Matthew
- Acts
- 1 Thessalonians

Jesus also taught His disciples about the events that must happen before the end of the world and His Second Coming. This teaching is called the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:1-25:46). The history of the world has been building toward this very end. God is all-knowing, or omniscient (Hebrews 4:13), meaning He has complete awareness, understanding, and insight. He has always known how the fight between good and evil will end. The book of Revelation is the finishing chapter of God's plan for mankind.

Revelation was written to bring hope to believers in Christ, and a strong warning to those who do not believe. It was written for everyone. It is broken into many sections and themes. Throughout this study, I include several common interpretations, and I also share which one I believe.

I will cover the seven churches from John's time named in this book, along with each of the judgments listed. Many plagues and judgments will fall on the earth in the last days, and this book lists them. But there are also many blessings promised to those who believe in Jesus Christ, the Almighty Savior.

I often call Revelation a book of love. You might ask, "Why do you think that?" It's simple: God has laid out His plans for us. He has given us a glimpse of what is coming in the last days, so we can prepare and not become targets of His wrath. His love for us is so great that He shows us what the ending looks like if we choose to believe in Him. We get to see how much He loves us, and that He has a place for us to live with Him forever. He also shows us how good will overcome evil, and that evil will have no part in our future once Jesus returns.

Revelation has 22 chapters and 404 verses total. It is considered the hardest book in the Bible to understand. Here is its structure:

Chapter 1: Prologue

- The Blessing (1:1-3)
- The Greeting (1:4-6)
- The Announcement (1:7)
- The Vision (1:9-20)
- The Divisions of the Book (1:19)

Chapters 2 and 3: The Seven Churches

- Messages to the Seven Churches (2:1-3:22): Ephesus (2:1-7), Smyrna (2:8-11), Pergamum (2:12-17), Thyatira (2:18-29), Sardis (3:1-6), Philadelphia (3:7-13), Laodicea (3:14-22)

Chapter 4: Heaven

- The Heavenly Door (4:1)
- The Heavenly Throne (4:2-3)
- The 24 Elders (4:4)
- The Four Living Creatures

Chapter 5: The Scroll

- The Deed to the Earth

Chapter 6: The First Six Seals

- First through Sixth Seals

Chapter 7: Deliverance

- The pause between the Sixth and Seventh Seal
- The sealing of the 144,000 (7:1-8)
- The great multitude washed in the blood of the Lamb (7:9-17)

Chapter 8: Seventh Seal and Trumpet Judgments 1-4

- Seventh Seal and silence in heaven
- First through Fourth Trumpets

Chapter 9: Trumpet Judgments 5-6

- Fifth and Sixth Trumpets

Chapter 10: The Little Scroll

- The pause between the Sixth and Seventh Trumpet
- The Little Scroll

Chapter 11: Trumpet Judgment 7

- The Two Witnesses
- Seventh Trumpet

Chapter 12: The Beginning

- The Woman and the Dragon: the Sun-Clothed Woman, the Dragon, the Man-Child, the Archangel, the Jewish Remnant

Chapter 13: The Beginning of the End

- The Beast out of the Sea
- The Beast out of the Earth

Chapter 14: The End of the Beginning

- The Lamb and the 144,000
- The Three Angels
- The Harvest of the Earth

Chapter 15: Prelude to the Bowl Judgments

- Seven Angels with Seven Plagues
- The Sea of Glass (15:2-4)
- The Tabernacle of Testimony (15:5-8)

Chapter 16: Bowl Judgments 1-7

- First through Sixth Bowls, the pause before the Seventh, and the Seventh Bowl

Chapter 17: The Great Harlot

- The Woman on the Beast

Chapter 18: The Great City

- The Fall of Babylon

Chapter 19: The Great Army

- Hallelujah!
- The Rider on the White Horse

Chapter 20: The Millennium of Christ

- The Thousand Years
- Satan's Doom
- The Dead Are Judged

Chapter 21: New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem

- The New Jerusalem

Chapter 22: Epilogue

- The River of Life
- Jesus Is Coming

You will find this whole outline laid out on one page in "Revelation at a Glance" at the back of this book.

Background of the Book

Author: Tradition holds that the author is John, one of the twelve apostles, who also wrote the Gospel of John and the three letters of John. John wrote this book while he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos, most likely because of his Christian ministry. The Romans imprisoned people who spread the teachings of Christ, as they tried to stamp out the worship of anyone other than the emperor.

Where it was written: The island of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea off the coast of Asia Minor. Today the island belongs to Greece.

When it was written: Several dates have been proposed for when this book was written:

- Most interpreters date it around A.D. 95.
- "Early date": A.D. 64-68, during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero.
- "Late date": A.D. 95-96, during the reign of the emperor Domitian.

Purpose: To show "what things must take place quickly" (Revelation 1:1). The book tells of the return of Jesus Christ and His complete victory over evil. It lays out what the world can expect in the last days before Christ returns, and it shows us how to make sure we spend eternity with God.

Why Study Prophecy?

This section covers what prophecy is and why it matters. It also looks at God's view of prophecy, both true and false.

What is prophecy? Prophecy is history written in advance.

Here are six reasons why studying Bible prophecy matters:

1. **Prophecy shows us God's plan for mankind.** God has a plan for you and me, laid out in His Book, the Bible.

2. **Studying Bible prophecy confirms that God is real.** Only God can tell us the future. He is the all-powerful Creator; He knows and commands everything. Throughout the Bible, we can see prophecy that has come true exactly as He said.

3. **Since prophecy comes true literally, we should interpret it literally.** Prophecy from the past has come to pass exactly as God's Word said, and will continue to in the future. We should take God's Word at face value, not twist it to fit our own ideas.

4. **Studying prophecy helps us watch for false prophets, both today and throughout history.** History has had many false teachers and prophets. Some well-known examples are Nostradamus in the 1500s and, more recently, Jim Jones and David Koresh. Studying prophecy helps us stay alert for people like this.

- "For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray." (Matthew 24:5)
- "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here ***is*** the Christ,' or 'Here,' do not believe ***it***." (Matthew 24:23)

5. **Studying prophecy builds God's Word into our lives and draws us closer to Him.** Through Bible study, our lives become woven together with our Lord's. We grow closer to God as we learn His Word and follow His commands. Prophecy runs throughout the whole Bible.

6. **Prophecy gives us hope in a hopeless age.** As we read prophecy, we are reminded that there is hope. We are encouraged by the promises inside the Bible and inside prophecy itself.

- "And you, O Daniel, shut up the words and seal the scroll until the time of ***the*** end; many will rove about, and knowledge will increase." (Daniel 12:4)
- "But concerning that day and the hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, except My Father alone." (Matthew 24:36)

Below is a list of people who have studied Scripture and are recognized as leaders in prophetic study throughout history. I do not necessarily agree with all of their views, but if you want more information on Revelation and prophecy, you can look up their written work and ask the Holy Spirit for discernment as you read:

Clarence Larkin, John Hagee, Cyrus Scofield, Grant Jeffrey, Matthew Henry, Jack Van Impe, John Nelson Darby, Thomas Ice, Martin Luther, Tim LaHaye, John Calvin, John Knox, John Wycliffe, George Eldon Ladd

A Word of Caution: Failed Date-Setting Predictions

One question every Christian should ask is, "When is Jesus Christ going to return?" The Bible tells us plainly: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:13), and "Therefore keep watch, for you do not know in what hour your Lord comes" (Matthew 24:42). To me, that means: we won't know until He comes for us.

Throughout history, though, many people have read those same words of Jesus and come up with their own predictions for exactly when He will return, despite the clear warning against setting a date. Time and again, this has caused real confusion and harm. Below is a summary of many failed predictions of Christ's return, going back nearly 2,000 years, drawn from a historical list compiled by Raptureready.com. Remember this warning from Deuteronomy 18:22: "when the prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, and the word does not happen and does not come, that is the word which the LORD has not spoken; with presumption the prophet has spoken it; you shall not be afraid of him."

Even before all the books of the New Testament were finished, some believers panicked, thinking they had missed Christ's return. Over the centuries, predicted dates piled up: a Roman priest predicted the year 500; some expected the end around the year 1000, though historians now believe the panic was smaller than later legends say; other predicted dates included 1033, 1186, 1420, and the 1500s. In the 1500s and 1600s, several movements in Germany, the Netherlands, and England took up arms believing Christ's return was near, with tragic results each time. The Great Fire and plague of London in 1666 (a year ending in the number of the Beast, 666) convinced many Londoners the end had come.

The 1800s and 1900s saw many more failed predictions, some from sincere but mistaken believers, and some from outright frauds, including a woman who claimed a chicken laid eggs with prophetic messages, and another who claimed she would give birth to the second Christ. William Miller's movement in 1843-1844 gathered a large following before its predicted dates passed without incident. The Jehovah's Witnesses organization alone has pointed to many dates across its history, including 1914, 1925, and 1975.

Failed predictions continued into recent decades: Edgar Whisenant's 1988 bestseller, *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988*, convinced entire churches, only for the date to pass quietly. Groups in Australia, Korea, and Texas set dates in the early 1990s that also passed without event. Preacher John Hinkle predicted an apocalyptic event for June 9, 1994, that did not occur. Y2K fears led many to expect Christ's return at the start of the year 2000. None of these predictions came true.

Anyone trying to calculate an exact date runs into a basic problem: human calendars have never kept a perfectly unbroken record of time. For example, the year 46 B.C. was 445 days long, there was no year "0," and the switch from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar began in 1582 but took

centuries (Britain switched in 1752, Russia in 1918). Even careful scholars disagree by a few years about when Jesus was born and when He died, so any date-setter's math starts on shaky ground.

I believe we will never know the exact day of Christ's return for His Church. It is God's nature to act independently of man's guesses. If He returned on a date someone had calculated, that person would take away from God's own triumph. When it comes to His glory, God does not share the spotlight with anyone.

The return of Jesus Christ for His Church will be the most important event in history. Comparing our lives on earth to the glory of heaven is like comparing running a hot dog stand to serving as President of the United States.

Still, when it comes to knowing the general season of Christ's return, God's Word is more generous. Jesus warned us of several events that must happen first. When we see those events lining up, we can know that time is short. Most of these prophecies will be fulfilled during the Tribulation, after the church has been taken up. But we can already see the stage being set for them, and that tells us the time is short.

Views on the Millennium

The word millennium comes from Latin and means "a thousand years." In Revelation 20:1-6, the Bible describes Christ's 1,000-year reign, the Millennium. There are three main views on the Millennium: Premillennialism, Amillennialism, and Postmillennialism.

Premillennialism

Premillennialism teaches that the 1,000 years is a literal period of time. Christ's Second Coming begins the Millennium, before Satan is finally removed. (The pre-, mid-, and post-Tribulation views are all "premillennial" because they all agree that Christ will return around the time of the Tribulation, but before this 1,000-year reign.)

Within this view are two positions:

Dispensational premillennialists believe that at the end of the Tribulation comes the battle of Armageddon, Satan's imprisonment, and Jesus' reign over Israel (Revelation 19:19-20:6). During that 1,000-year reign, the Old Testament promises to Israel will be fulfilled (such as Isaiah 2:4; 9:6-7; 11:6-9; 35:5-6; 42:1). They believe the Millennium ends with Satan leading a brief rebellion against Christ before being thrown into the lake of fire, after which God recreates the heavens and the earth. They also believe the church is caught up to be with Christ before the Tribulation begins. Dispensationalism reads the Bible as unfolding in stages, or "dispensations," and keeps God's promises to Israel distinct from His promises to the church. *(This is my own view and belief.)*

Historic premillennialists believe that Christ's Second Coming happens after the Tribulation, bringing believers into His millennial kingdom. He defeats the Antichrist's forces at Armageddon and kills the Antichrist, ending the first stage of Christ's defeat of evil. Believers accompany Christ as He establishes His millennial kingdom on earth, while Satan is bound during this time. This view holds that Christ's reign on earth will lead Israel to turn to Jesus, fulfilling many Old Testament promises. Only believers are raised from the dead to reign with Christ during the Millennium; the rest of the dead are raised when the Millennium ends, for judgment. At that point, God brings the new heaven and new earth into being.

Amillennialism

Amillennialism holds that the 1,000-year period is symbolic of the time between Christ's ascension and His Second Coming. In this view, the Millennium is Christ's reign in the hearts of believers and in His church, another way of describing the church age, which ends with Christ's Second Coming. Amillennialists don't believe in a literal period of Tribulation, since they see the Tribulation as describing events throughout church history. To them, the events in Revelation 20:1-6, where an angel binds Satan for a thousand years and believers reign with Christ, are happening right now.

Amillennialists believe that as the last days approach, the forces of evil will reach a climax with the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation described in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. They believe the

wicked will keep gathering strength and persecuting believers more and more, until Christ returns and stops evil once and for all, establishing His everlasting reign of peace after judging the living and the dead.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism looks for a period of peace on earth brought about by the church. At the end of that time, Satan is released, but Christ returns to defeat him and reign forever. Postmillennialists believe Jesus will return to a world that the church has already "Christianized." So the Millennium is established by the church, and Christ returns only after it. They believe the church is gradually transforming society, much like the mustard seed or the leaven described in Matthew 13:31-33.

Postmillennialists believe the Tribulation symbolizes the ongoing conflict between good and evil throughout history, and that it will end when Satan is released from the bottomless pit. Then Christ will return to judge everyone and establish a new heaven and new earth. They believe the church is responsible for spreading the Good News to the whole world.

The Rapture

(1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 19:11-12)

When Christ returns as the rider on the white horse, is that the moment He "raptures" the church, or has that already happened? There is a lot of discussion about the Rapture of the church (a term never used in Revelation itself) and how it relates to the Second Coming of Christ. What people call the "Rapture" is described in other places in Scripture:

- "But concerning that day and the hour no one knows, not even the angels of the heavens, except My Father alone. And just as the days of Noah ***were***, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. . . . Then two will be in the field; the one is taken and the one is left. Two ***women will be*** grinding at the millhouse; one is taken and one is left. Therefore keep watch, for you do not know in what hour your Lord comes" (Matthew 24:36-37, 40-42).
- "Look, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in an instant, in ***the*** blink of an eye, at the last trumpet; for ***the*** trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we will be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).
- "because the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with ***the*** voice of an archangel and with ***the*** trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them in ***the*** clouds to meet the Lord in ***the*** air; and so we will always be with ***the*** Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

At the Rapture, Christ brings His people to be with Him. Some Christians think the Rapture is a separate event from the Second Coming; others believe they are two names for the same event.

Pre-tribulationists (dispensational premillennialists) believe the Rapture and the Second Coming are two separate events. The church is raptured before the Tribulation begins, and Christ returns at the end of the Tribulation, seven years later, for the Second Coming.

Mid-tribulationists also believe the Rapture and Second Coming are two separate events. They believe believers are raptured halfway through the Tribulation, after three and a half years, so they don't experience the bowl judgments. Believers then return with Christ at His Second Coming, at the end of the Tribulation.

Post-tribulationists (most historic premillennialists) believe the Rapture and Second Coming are the same event. Believers go through the entire Tribulation, then meet the Lord in the air and immediately return with Him to earth as He rides the white horse. Amillennialists also see the Rapture and Second Coming as one event at the end of this age, but they do not expect a separate, future seven-year Tribulation.

Postmillennialists also see the Rapture and Second Coming as the same event, but place it at the end of the Millennium, after Satan is released to deceive the nations one final time (Revelation 20:7-10). Christ then calls His people to Him, and they accompany Him as He descends to earth, defeats His enemies, and establishes the new heaven and new earth.

Whenever the Rapture happens, one thing is certain: the rider on the white horse will come in victory, and believers will be with Him in heaven. While these different views can be hard to sort out, it matters far more that every believer knows which side of the battle they are on. Those who remain faithful to Christ, no matter what, will receive everything God has promised.

I hold the Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture, the taking up of God's people. I have read many books, listened to many commentaries, and watched many documentaries about the end times, always using Scripture as my guide. I believe Christ will take His church to be with Him before the Tribulation begins.

I recommend you do your own research and come to your own conclusion. It won't affect your salvation either way. Remember, people have argued over Scripture for thousands of years. Whether or not you agree with me will never stop my love for God, or my love for you.

The Great Tribulation

(Revelation 7:14)

Most Christians agree that there will be a time of tribulation, as described in the book of Revelation. But there's a lot of debate about when it will happen and who will experience it. Here are the different views of the Great Tribulation.

Three Views on the Timing of the Tribulation

(Revelation 3:10)

In the premillennial view, the Tribulation is a seven-year period right before Christ's return, when the Antichrist rules. This view holds to a literal 1,000-year reign of Christ, who returns to judge the enemies of God and His people.

Pre-Tribulation: Christ comes for His church before the seven-year Tribulation begins and takes it to be with Him, then returns at the end to defeat His enemies. (Revelation 3:10 says this is to keep the Church from "the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole inhabited world, to test those who dwell on the earth.") This view is widely held among evangelical Christians, especially in America.

Mid-Tribulation: Christians are raptured halfway through the Tribulation, after three and a half years, when the Antichrist defiles the temple. Christ returns to take the church, then returns again three and a half years later to defeat His enemies.

Post-Tribulation: Christians endure the entire Tribulation period. Then Christ returns at the end to take all believers to heaven and immediately fight the forces of evil.

Views on When the Great Tribulation Will Occur

Dispensational Premillennialism: This view holds that Jesus' prophecy of a future Tribulation affects Israel, not the church. Before the Tribulation, the church is raptured out of the world when Christ suddenly descends from the clouds. Daniel's prophecy about the Antichrist deals only with God's plans for Israel (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15-22). The Antichrist's rise begins a seven-year period meant to bring Israel back to God. Many Jews will recognize Christ as the Messiah after these seven years of horror. Christ returns after the seven years to defeat His enemies at Armageddon and begin His thousand-year reign of peace (Matthew 24:29-31). This view centers on the "secret" return of Christ to gather His church.

Historic Premillennialism: This view sees the Tribulation as the final outburst of evil at the end of history. The Antichrist will claim to be God and launch a worldwide persecution of Christians (Matthew 24:15-22; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12). Historic premillennialists believe Christians will experience this Tribulation and suffer for Christ's cause, but that Christ will sustain His people and protect them from God's judgments against the Antichrist and his

followers. At the height of this persecution, Christ returns (the Second Coming) to defeat His enemies at Armageddon and establish His thousand-year reign.

Amillennialism: This view holds that the battle between good and evil will climax in a period of intense persecution of Christians right before Christ's Second Coming. Amillennialists don't see the Tribulation as a specific future time, but as something that may describe this present age as well, happening wherever the Good News is opposed and Christians are persecuted. They point out that Scripture doesn't limit the Tribulation to Israel (Revelation 7:13-14), and believe all of God's people will be persecuted. When Christ returns to bring judgment on evil, He will gather believers to Himself (Matthew 24:31).

Postmillennialism: This view holds that the church itself will usher in the Millennium, and Christ will return after a thousand years of peace on earth. The Tribulation, in this view, happens wherever the Good News is opposed and Christians are persecuted. Postmillennialists believe Jesus' prophecy about the abomination in the temple was already fulfilled when Titus destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple in A.D. 70 (Matthew 24:15-22), and they don't believe Jesus was prophesying about a future antichrist.

I hold the dispensational premillennialist view of when the Great Tribulation will occur. Scripture backs this view in many passages. I believe a careful, word-by-word study of Scripture supports it. Again, I encourage you to take the time to read Scripture in full context, comparing individual passages to the whole Bible rather than relying on just a few verses. Your eyes could be opened in a powerful way.

Where Does Seven Years Come From?

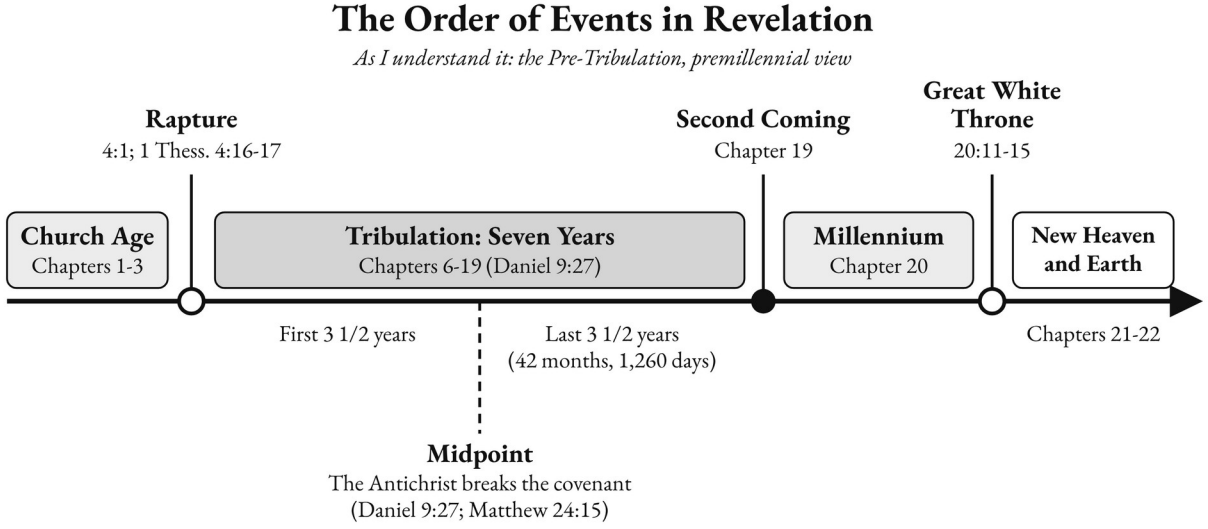
Revelation never uses the phrase "seven years." The number comes from Daniel 9:24-27. The angel Gabriel tells Daniel that "seventy sevens have been decreed on your people and on your holy city." Each "seven" is a group of seven years. Sixty-nine of those sevens run from the command to rebuild Jerusalem until "an anointed one, a prince," and then "an anointed one will be cut off" (Daniel 9:25-26), which points to the death of Jesus.

That leaves one seven, the seventieth. In the view I hold, it is still in the future. A coming ruler "will make a covenant strong for the many for one seven; and in the middle of the seven he will cause sacrifice and grain offering to cease" (Daniel 9:27). Jesus pointed to that same midpoint when He spoke of "the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (Matthew 24:15).

Revelation then measures the halves for us: 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6), 42 months (11:2; 13:5), and "a time and times and half a time" (12:14). Each one is three and a half years. Two halves make seven years. That final seven is what this study calls the Tribulation, and its second half is the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14).

The Order of Events at a Glance

The chart below shows the order of events as I understand it. The judgments in the middle of the book come in three series of seven, and each series grows out of the one before it.



While the Tribulation unfolds on earth, the church is with Christ in heaven (Chapters 4-5).

Other views are explained in "Views on the Millennium," "The Rapture," and "The Great Tribulation."

Seven Seals: 1 white horse (6:1-2); 2 red horse, war (6:3-4); 3 black horse, famine (6:5-6); 4 pale horse, death (6:7-8); 5 the martyrs cry out (6:9-11); 6 the great earthquake (6:12-17); 7 silence in heaven, and the seven trumpets are given (8:1-2).

Seven Trumpets: 1 hail and fire (8:7); 2 a burning mountain into the sea (8:8-9); 3 the star Wormwood (8:10-11); 4 sun, moon, and stars darkened (8:12); 5 locusts from the abyss (9:1-11); 6 the army of 200 million (9:13-21); 7 "The kingdoms of the world have become those of our Lord and of His Christ" (11:15).

Seven Bowls: 1 sores (16:2); 2 the sea turns to blood (16:3); 3 rivers and springs turn to blood (16:4-7); 4 scorching sun (16:8-9); 5 darkness on the beast's kingdom (16:10-11); 6 the Euphrates dried up, and the gathering at Armageddon (16:12-16); 7 "It is done!" and the great earthquake (16:17-21).

Between the series, Revelation pauses to show God's people: the 144,000 and the great multitude (Chapter 7), the little scroll and the two witnesses (Chapters 10-11), and the woman, the dragon, and the two beasts (Chapters 12-14).

Chapter 1: Prologue

Scripture: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

1:1-3 ***The*** revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show to His slaves what things must take place quickly; and He signified ***it*** by sending through His angel to His slave John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all things that he saw. Blessed ***is*** the one who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it; for the time ***is*** near.

1:4-6 John, to the seven churches that ***are*** in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him ***be*** the glory and the dominion to the ages of the ages. Amen.

1:7-8 Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will wail because of Him. Yes, amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, ***the*** beginning and ***the*** end," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty."

1:9-20 I, John, who ***am*** also your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and in the kingdom and endurance of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos because of the word of God and because of the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in ***the*** Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like that of a trumpet, saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last"; and, "What you see, write in a book and send ***it*** to the seven churches that ***are*** in Asia: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea." And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands, and in ***the*** midst of the seven lampstands ***One*** like a son of man, clothed ***in a robe*** reaching to the feet, and girded around at the breasts with a golden sash. And His head and hair ***were*** white, like white wool, like snow; and His eyes ***were*** like a flame of fire; and His feet ***were*** like fine bronze, as refined in a furnace; and His voice ***was*** like ***the*** sound of many waters; and having in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword going forth; and His face ***was*** like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not fear; I am the First and the Last, and the Living ***One***; and I was dead, and look, I am living to the ages of the ages. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw on My right ***hand***, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are ***the*** angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are seven churches."

Chapter 1 Preview

The book of Revelation opens by telling us plainly why it was written: to reveal what is coming for mankind. The reader is promised a special blessing, given only to those who read it and take its words to heart.

Then we are shown John's vision of our wonderful Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus assures John that He is in control of everything. John's description of Jesus in His heavenly glory is unlike anything else in Scripture.

Chapter 1 Study

1:1 ***The*** *revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to Him to show to His slaves what things must take place quickly; and He signified* ***it*** *by sending through His angel to His slave John,*

This verse introduces the book of Revelation. It tells us this book unveils Jesus Christ. It is the finishing chapter of God's plan from the beginning of time. Jesus' angel delivers it to John. Throughout the Bible, angels have delivered many messages to mankind. It is the last recorded message God sent to give us hope.

"What things must take place quickly." This phrase gives the book urgency. It tells the reader to take what is written seriously. Even though over 1,900 years have passed since this was written, we still need to stay alert and ready, because God's timing is not the same as ours.

1:2 *who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all things that he saw.*

John was given the responsibility and the privilege of witnessing the events of the end times. It was his job to write down what he saw, so followers of Christ would know what to look for in the last days.

1:3 *Blessed* ***is*** *the one who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things written in it; for the time* ***is*** *near.*

A special blessing is promised to anyone who reads, hears, and obeys this book's teaching. The blessing isn't ours just for reading or hearing the words; we have to take them to heart. The message is that Jesus is coming again, and we should live every day expecting Him. "Blessed" is the first of seven blessings found in Revelation (1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14).

1:4 *John, to the seven churches that* ***are*** *in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is coming, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,*

The first part of Revelation is made up of messages to seven churches. Each church was chosen because it represented a particular situation or problem (more on this in Chapters 2 and 3). The number seven represents divine perfection, and it appears again and again throughout Revelation, 54 times in total. In Scripture, the number seven generally stands for completion, fulfillment, perfection, and abundance.

1:5-6 *and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him* ***be*** *the glory and the dominion to the ages of the ages. Amen.*

This verse calls Jesus the firstborn from the dead. It reminds us that He is King over all, ruling over death and the whole earth. It also reminds us of His great sacrifice; He shed His blood to wash away our sins. This puts the whole book of Revelation into context: it's about redemption for mankind. The blessing of eternal life comes only to those who accept Christ as their Lord and Savior and truly turn from their sins.

Those who are with Jesus in heaven will be kings and priests. As kings, we have overcome the world and conquered Satan. As priests, we have access to God and can enter His holiest place.

God first called Israel to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). Some teachers read verse 6 to mean the church has taken Israel's place, but I take it plainly: everyone washed in Christ's blood serves God as a priest, and God's calling and promises to Israel still stand for Israel.

Old Testament links: Psalm 89:27 (alluded to); Exodus 19:6 (alluded to); Psalm 89:37 (alluded to)

1:7 *Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, and those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will wail because of Him. Yes, amen.*

Here we see Jesus' actual Second Coming. Every eye will see Him. Coming "with the clouds" means He will come down from above. We don't know whether this means we'll all see Him with our current technology, or whether He'll appear to everyone by His own power. All the people of the earth will mourn because of Him, because at that point everyone will realize He is holy and that we have sinned against Him.

"Coming with the clouds" is connected to Jesus' return in Matthew 24:30, Acts 1:9-11, and 1 Thessalonians 4:17. We'll explore this further in later chapters. "And those who pierced Him" points back to Zechariah 12:10, where the people of Jerusalem "will look to Me, to Him whom they have pierced; and they will mourn over Him." Every knee will one day bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11; Romans 14:11), and those who rejected Him will face Him at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15), a thousand years after His return.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 12:10 (alluded to); Daniel 7:13 (alluded to)

1:8 *"I am the Alpha and the Omega,* ***the*** *beginning and* ***the*** *end," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is coming, the Almighty."*

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and the Lord Himself adds, "the beginning and the end." Christ is declaring His true majesty. He is reminding us that He and the Father are one. He existed before time began, and He will still exist after time has stopped. He also reminds us that He came down to earth to live among us. What a blessing it is to have a God who loves us so much that He would live among us and want us with Him forever in heaven.

1:9 *I, John, who **am** also your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and in the kingdom and endurance of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos because of the word of God and because of the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

John tells us here that he has gone through the same trials and struggles we go through. It's another reminder to keep our focus on God; with faithfulness, we are rewarded with eternal life. He calls himself "your brother," a member of the church like us. The "tribulation" he mentions here is not the Tribulation described later in Revelation; it's the everyday struggles that all believers face. John was imprisoned on the island of Patmos. He doesn't say who imprisoned him, but this is where he wrote the book of Revelation, believed to be sometime between A.D. 93 and 96. (A.D. stands for *Anno Domini*, "in the year of the Lord." We still mark time by the birth of Jesus today, a reminder of just how large His presence in the world has been.)

1:10 *I was in **the** Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like that of a trumpet,*

"The Lord's Day" has historically meant the first day of the week, Sunday, believed to be the day Jesus rose from the dead. "In the Spirit" refers to the spiritual state John was in when he received this vision. A voice sounding like a trumpet represents the Lord's authority, both in body and in voice.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 3:12 (alluded to)

1:11 *saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last"; and, "What you see, write in a book and send **it** to the seven churches that **are** in Asia: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."*

Christ is again identifying Himself as the Alpha and Omega. There is no one before or after Him who can save mankind. He instructs John to write to the seven churches of Asia, naming each one. We'll go into more detail on these in Chapters 2 and 3.

These seven churches are sometimes said to represent seven stages of church history. I don't necessarily agree with that view. I believe the seven churches represent different phases a Christian can go through. For example, I wouldn't say the whole world is currently in the "lukewarm" phase of the church of Laodicea; Christians are being persecuted all over the world in Jesus' name, and that's far from lukewarm.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 44:6 (alluded to)

1:12 *And I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned, I saw seven golden lampstands,*

John turned to see where the voice was coming from and saw seven golden lampstands, which are explained in verse 20 as the seven churches of Asia. The churches are compared to lampstands because they carry the light of the Gospel.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 4:2 (alluded to)

1:13 *and in **the** midst of the seven lampstands **One** like a son of man, clothed **in a robe** reaching to the feet, and girded around at the breasts with a golden sash.*

Among the lampstands, John saw a representation of Jesus, who had promised to always be with the churches (Matthew 28:20). The robe reaching to His feet represents a priestly robe. The golden sash He wore represents readiness to do His work, something His followers also wore.

The phrase "One like a son of man" also appears in Daniel 7:13 and 10:16, and this description is similar to Daniel 10:5-6. In most of the Old Testament, "son of man" simply means a human being (God calls Ezekiel "son of man" more than 90 times). Daniel 7:13 is different: there it is a heavenly figure who receives an everlasting kingdom. In the New Testament, "the Son of Man" is Jesus' favorite name for Himself, used more than 80 times.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:13 (alluded to); Daniel 10:5 (alluded to)

1:14 *And His head and hair **were** white, like white wool, like snow; and His eyes **were** like a flame of fire;*

The white hair represents a crown of glory. His blazing eyes reveal the conscience of mankind; it's hard to look at purity when our lives are full of sin. (This description is similar to Daniel 10:5-6.)

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:9 (alluded to); Daniel 10:6 (alluded to)

1:15 *and His feet **were** like fine bronze, as refined in a furnace; and His voice **was** like **the** sound of many waters;*

Feet like bronze show Him standing firm, unwavering, in the midst of His enemies. His voice like rushing waters can be heard by everyone. He will make His presence and His will known at the appointed time.

Old Testament links: Daniel 10:6 (alluded to); Ezekiel 43:2 (alluded to)

1:16 *and having in His right hand seven stars, and out of His mouth a sharp two-edged sword going forth; and His face **was** like the sun shining in its strength.*

The seven stars in His right hand are the angels, or messengers, of the seven churches (as verse 20 explains), held under Christ's direction and drawing their wisdom from Him. The sharp two-edged sword from His mouth represents His Word, which both destroys and gives life. His shining face was too bright for mortal man to look at directly.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 49:2 (alluded to); Judges 5:31 (alluded to)

1:17 *And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not fear; I am the First and the Last,*

John fell at Jesus' feet as if dead, awestruck and deeply humbled to be in His presence. Jesus reassured John by laying His hand on him and speaking to him. This is similar to Daniel's encounter in Daniel 10:9.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 44:6 (alluded to); Isaiah 48:12 (alluded to); Daniel 10:9-12 (alluded to); Isaiah 41:4 (alluded to)

1:18 *and the Living **One**; and I was dead, and look, I am living to the ages of the ages. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.*

Jesus removes all fear from John here, reaffirming who He is: the first and the last, the living One who was once dead but now lives forever. He has total power over life and death. The keys represent His ultimate authority; only He can open doors no one else can open, and shut doors no one else can shut. His power has no limit.

1:19 *Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these.*

John is told to write down everything, to be used to convict, encourage, and give hope. This verse also gives the outline of the whole book: what John has seen (Chapter 1), the things that are (the letters to the churches, Chapters 2-3), and the things that will take place after these (Chapters 4-22). We get to see all of God's promises come true.

1:20 *The mystery of the seven stars which you saw on My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven stars are **the** angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are seven churches."*

Jesus explains the meaning of the seven stars: they are His angels, or messengers, sent to protect His churches. The seven lampstands are the seven churches themselves, whose purpose is to spread the Gospel and carry Christ's light.

Chapter 1 Summary

John was in exile on the island of Patmos when he received one of the most spectacular series of visions ever recorded. He was told to write down everything he saw and send it to the seven churches. His first vision was of Christ, in all His glory, standing among the seven lampstands.

The Seven Churches of Revelation

Asia Minor, where these churches stood, covers most of the Asian part of modern-day Turkey. The name meanings below are the traditional ones given in many study Bibles; a few are debated.

Ephesus (2:1-7): Meaning: "Desirable." Positives: rejects evil, perseveres, has patience, holds to doctrinal truth. Negatives: has abandoned its first love for Christ. Command: remember, repent, and return to the good works you did at first. Promise: eating from the Tree of Life.

Smyrna (2:8-11): Meaning: "Myrrh," or bitterness. Positives: gracefully bears suffering and persecution, spiritually rich despite poverty. Negatives: none. Command: be faithful to the point of death. Promise: the crown of life; will not be hurt by the second death.

Pergamum (2:12-17): Meaning: "Citadel" or "Height." Positives: holds fast to Jesus' name, has not denied the faith. Negatives: some have accepted false teaching. Command: repent. Promise: hidden manna and a white stone with a new name.

Thyatira (2:18-29): Meaning: "Continual Sacrifice." Positives: love, faith, service, and faithful endurance; growing works. Negatives: tolerates false teaching, idolatry, and sexual immorality. Command: reject false teaching and hold fast to Jesus. Promise: authority over the nations and the morning star.

Sardis (3:1-6): Meaning: "Escaping Ones." Positives: none apparent. Negatives: spiritually dead and incomplete in its works, has false teachers and doctrinal corruption. Command: wake up, strengthen what remains, and repent. Promise: those who remain faithful will walk with Jesus, clothed in white, their names kept in the Book of Life.

Philadelphia (3:7-13): Meaning: "Brotherly Love." Positives: has kept Jesus' word, not denied His name, patiently endured. Negatives: none. Command: hold fast. Promise: kept from the hour of trial, made a pillar in God's temple, given a new name.

Laodicea (3:14-22): Meaning: "People's Rights." Positives: none apparent. Negatives: spiritually lukewarm, wretched, poor, and blind; needs true spiritual riches. Command: be zealous, repent, and listen to Jesus' voice. Promise: those who overcome will sit with Christ on His throne.

Patmos (1:9): An Aegean island south of Samos, where Roman authorities exiled prisoners. John was sent here "because of the word of God and because of the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:9), and it was here that he received this prophetic revelation.

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. What is the most spectacular thing you have ever seen?

2. What was the purpose of God's revelation to John? (1:1)

3. What do all believers share with Christ? (1:9)

4. What phrase does John use to identify the person standing among the lampstands? (1:13)

5. What caused John to fall down like a dead man? (1:17)

6. Based on John's description in this passage, how do you picture Christ in His heavenly glory?

7. How do you think you would have responded if you had seen the vision of Christ that John saw?

8. What does it mean that Jesus is the First and the Last?

9. What does it mean that Jesus holds the keys to death and to the place of the dead?

10. How will John's description of Christ in all of His heavenly glory affect how you pray to Jesus?

Chapter 2: The Seven Churches

Scripture: Messages to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, and Thyatira

2:1-7 "To the angel of the Ephesian church write: These things says the ***One*** who holds the seven stars in His right ***hand***, who walks in ***the*** midst of the seven golden lampstands: I know your works and your labor and your endurance, and that you are not able to bear evil ***men***; and you have tested those who claim to be apostles and are not, and you have found them false; and you have borne up, and you have endurance, and for the sake of My name you have labored and have not grown weary. But I have ***this*** against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I am coming to you quickly and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent. But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give to him to eat of the tree of life, which is in ***the*** midst of the paradise of God."

2:8-11 "And to the angel of the church of ***the*** Smyrnaeans write: These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and came to life: I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of those who say that they themselves are Jews and are not, but ***are*** a synagogue of Satan. Fear nothing of what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to cast ***some*** of you into prison, so that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful to death, and I will give you the crown of life. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will by no means be harmed by the second death."

2:12-17 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things says the ***One*** who has the sharp two-edged sword: I know your works, and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan ***is***; and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas ***was*** My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there ***some*** who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality. So you also have ***some*** who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans, which I hate. Repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give to him to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knew except the one who receives ***it***."

2:18-29 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet ***are*** like fine bronze: I know your works and love and service and faith and your endurance, and your works, and the last ***are*** more than the first. But I have a few things against you, that you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to lead astray My slaves to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time that she might repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Look, I am casting her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their works. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches will

know that I am the ***One*** who searches minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your works. But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say: I will not put on you any other burden. Nevertheless, what you have, hold fast until I come. And the one who overcomes and keeps My works until ***the*** end, I will give him authority over the nations; and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received from My Father. And I will give him the morning star. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Chapter 2 Preview

Chapter 2 contains four of the seven letters to the seven churches. These are personal messages from Jesus to real churches in Asia Minor. Imagine Jesus writing a personal letter to your own church. In these letters, we get to see exactly what Christ thought of each one.

Chapter 2 Study

2:1 *"To the angel of the Ephesian church write: These things says the **One** who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in **the** midst of the seven golden lampstands:*

This letter is written to the angel of the church in Ephesus. Jesus is described as the one who holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands. Again, the stars are His angels or messengers, and the lampstands are His churches. The church in Ephesus was founded by Paul (Acts 19).

2:2 *I know your works and your labor and your endurance, and that you are not able to bear evil **men**; and you have tested those who claim to be apostles and are not, and you have found them false;*

Christ says here that He knows both their good and bad, so they need to listen to what He says. He commends them for their hard work, patience, and their hatred of sin. He also notes that they tested false teachers and proved them to be liars.

2:3 *and you have borne up, and you have endurance, and for the sake of My name you have labored and have not grown weary.*

Christ recognizes that they have persevered and endured hardship in His name, and that they haven't grown tired of His Word.

2:4 *But I have **this** against you, that you have left your first love.*

Christ is now correcting the church for leaving their "first love." This doesn't mean they've abandoned Christ; it means they've lost their passionate desire for Him. Their faith has grown cold and stale.

2:5 *Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I am coming to you quickly and will remove your lampstand out of its place, unless you repent.*

Christ tells the Ephesian church to remember how far they've fallen, comparing their current desire for Him to their desire when they first fell in love with Him. They must repent and fall back in love with Him. If they don't, He will remove His blessing from them.

2:6 *But this you have, that you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.*

Even though their zeal for Christ has faded, they still hate evil and sin. We don't know much about the Nicolaitans. Early church writers describe them as a group inside the church who taught that Christians could take part in pagan feasts and sexual sin. Christ hated what they did, and so did the Ephesians. ("Nicolaitans" comes from the Greek words for "he conquers" and "people.")

2:7 *The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give to him to eat of the tree of life, which is in* ***the*** *midst of the paradise of God."*

We're told here to pay close attention to what's written to all the churches. This letter and the six that follow have something valuable for every church. There's also a promise of mercy to whoever overcomes. The Christian life is a fight against sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh, and we must fight to win. Jesus promises a reward to those who remain faithful: the chance to eat from the Tree of Life, which was lost to mankind after Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge.

Old Testament links: Genesis 2:9 (alluded to); Genesis 3:22 (alluded to)

2:8 *"And to the angel of the church of* ***the*** *Smyrnaeans write: These things says the First and the Last, who became dead and came to life:*

This letter was written to the church of Smyrna, now the city of Izmir in Turkey. Again, Christ is described as the first and the last, who was dead and is now alive.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 44:6 (alluded to); Isaiah 48:12 (alluded to)

2:9 *I know your works and tribulation and poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy of those who say that they themselves are Jews and are not, but* ***are*** *a synagogue of Satan.*

Christ recognizes the church's work, along with their suffering and poverty. This was a persecuted church that endured much and remained faithful. "But you are rich" means they may not have had material wealth, but they were rich in spiritual blessing. He also knows of those who blaspheme, claiming to be Jews but who are not; they claimed the name but did not share the faith of Abraham (see Romans 2:28-29). This describes specific opponents of the church in Smyrna, and it must never be used against Jewish people as a whole. The "synagogue of Satan" refers to people opposed to God and the good news of Jesus, who only want worldly power and riches.

2:10 *Fear nothing of what you are about to suffer. Look, the devil is about to cast* ***some*** *of you into prison, so that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful to death, and I will give you the crown of life.*

Christ tells the church not to fear what's ahead. They may face persecution and imprisonment meant to test their faith and loyalty, but they must stay committed to Christ. Not everyone will go through this, and their suffering will last only a short time, ten days. It won't be forever if they remain faithful. If their faithfulness leads to death, they're promised the Crown of Life, which the Bible promises to those who stay faithful under trial (James 1:12).

Old Testament links: Daniel 1:12-14 (alluded to)

2:11 *The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who overcomes will by no means be harmed by the second death."*

The church is told to listen closely to this letter. There is a "second death" mentioned here, not the death of our bodies, but eternal death, complete separation from God. This second death has no power over those who take part in the first resurrection.

2:12 *"And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: These things says the **One** who has the sharp two-edged sword:*

This letter is written to the church of Pergamum, located about 60 miles north of Smyrna. It was the Roman capital of Asia and a center of pagan worship, so much so that it's described as the place "where the throne of Satan is." Many pagan practices crept into the church during this period of history. Once again, Christ is described using the sharp two-edged sword, His Word.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 49:2 (alluded to)

2:13 *I know your works, and where you dwell, where the throne of Satan **is**; and you hold fast My name and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas **was** My faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.*

Christ tells the church He knows of their faithfulness despite living in Pergamum, a hotbed for Satan and worldly sin. The church stayed true to God's Word despite pressure and persecution. Antipas, one of Christ's faithful followers, died for his love of Christ. We don't know much else about him; his name is a short form of Antipater, meaning "like the father."

2:14 *But I have a few things against you, because you have there **some** who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality.*

Christ isn't happy with some practices in the church. Some members followed the teaching of Balaam, eating food sacrificed to idols and engaging in sexual immorality.

Old Testament links: Numbers 31:16 (alluded to); Numbers 25:1-2 (alluded to)

2:15 *So you also have **some** who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans, which I hate.*

Christ takes doctrine seriously. He hates any compromise with immorality. Doctrinal purity should never be traded away for political or social acceptance, as was happening in Pergamum.

2:16 *Repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.*

Christ calls them to repent and return to the doctrinal truth that comes from His Word, not from the world. He will fight against these impurities with His Word.

2:17 *The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who overcomes, I will give to him to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written, which no one knew except the one who receives* ***it****."*

Believers who overcome sin and repent are rewarded. The hidden manna represents communion with Christ's spirit. The white stone with a new name represents being cleared of the guilt of sin (historically, a white stone was given to those acquitted at trial, a black stone to those found guilty). The new name represents our adopted identity in Christ's Kingdom.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 62:2 (alluded to)

2:18 *"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: These things says the Son of God, who has His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet* ***are*** *like fine bronze:*

Here Christ is called the Son of God. His eyes are like blazing fire, showing His piercing, perfect knowledge. His feet like fine bronze represent His steadfastness, purity, and holiness.

2:19 *I know your works and love and service and faith and your endurance, and your works, and the last* ***are*** *more than the first.*

Christ knows everything they've done, and that they're doing even more now than when they first began. This is an inspiration for many Christians, showing how our love for Christ should grow and become more visible in our lives.

2:20 *But I have a few things against you, that you allow the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to lead astray My slaves to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols.*

The church of Thyatira had also allowed sin. They were tolerating Jezebel's teaching, letting her seduce them into sexual immorality and eating meat sacrificed to idols, the same issue Christ raised with the church in Pergamum in 2:14.

Old Testament links: 1 Kings 16:31 (alluded to); 2 Kings 9:22 (alluded to)

2:21 *And I gave her time that she might repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.*

God had given her time to repent from her sins, but she refused.

2:22 *Look, I am casting her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their works.*

Christ will bring tribulation and pain, unless they repent and turn back to God.

2:23 *And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches will know that I am the **One** who searches minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your works.*

Christ will strike down their children if they don't repent, referring again to the second death, being cut off from God for eternity. Christ declares here that He knows the condition of our hearts and will judge us accordingly.

Old Testament links: Psalm 7:9 (alluded to); Jeremiah 17:10 (alluded to); Psalm 62:12 (alluded to)

2:24 *But to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this teaching, and who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say: I will not put on you any other burden.*

Christ won't punish those who haven't followed the pagan ways. He will judge them by the condition of their hearts, and they have the chance to follow Him.

2:25 *Nevertheless, what you have, hold fast until I come.*

Remain steadfast and hold true to the Lord Jesus Christ's teaching.

2:26 *And the one who overcomes and keeps My works until **the** end, I will give him authority over the nations;*

Christ tells those who overcome and stay true to His Word that He will reward them with a place in His eternal Kingdom. Overcomers are those who rise above the problems in their local church to live a life pleasing to Jesus.

Old Testament links: Psalm 2:8 (alluded to)

2:27-28 *and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received from My Father. And I will give him the morning star.*

Those who persevere and remain true to Christ will rule with Him, joining Him in judging the nations. Christ Himself is the morning star (Revelation 22:16); He will give them knowledge and wisdom.

Here Jesus quotes Psalm 2:9, where God tells His King, "You will break them with a rod of iron; like a vessel of a potter You will smash them." The Father gave that rule to the Son, and the Son promises to share it with those who overcome when He comes back to reign.

Old Testament links: Psalm 2:9 (quoted)

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

Those who hear and live according to His Word will overcome this world and live with Him forever. Christ wants us to listen and take heed.

Chapter 2 Summary

Christ gave John specific messages for four of the seven churches that would receive this scroll of visions. The church in Ephesus was commended for persevering, but was corrected for abandoning their first love for Christ. The church in Smyrna was praised for enduring poverty and persecution, and warned of more persecution to come. The church in Pergamum was commended for holding fast to Christ's name in a city that was a center of pagan worship, but corrected for tolerating false teaching. The church in Thyatira was praised for its growing love, faith, and service, but corrected for tolerating the false prophetess Jezebel and the immorality she encouraged.

If God told me I would soon face persecution, my first question would be: have I lived, and am I living, a life that pleases Him? Have I done all I can for His kingdom? The churches in Revelation 2 were asked the same thing.

Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. What message do you think Christ would have for the church today?

2. What was the main problem with the church in Ephesus? (2:4)

3. What did the future hold for the church in Smyrna? (2:10)

4. How did the church in Pergamum show its faithfulness? (2:13)

5. What did the prophetess Jezebel lead members of the church in Thyatira to do? (2:20)

6. What does Christ encourage the faithful members of the church in Thyatira to do? (2:24-25)

7. What might cause a believer to leave his or her first love for Christ and for other Christians?

8. How do you think you would respond if God told you that you would soon face persecution?

9. What situations might cause a believer to shy away from telling others about Christ?

10. What can you do this week to support or encourage someone who is facing hard times because of his or her faith?

Chapter 3: The Seven Churches (continued)

Scripture: Messages to Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea

3:1-6 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have the name that you are alive, and you are dead. Be watching, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die; for I have not found your works completed before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep ***it***, and repent. If therefore you do not watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will by no means know at what hour I will come upon you. You have a few names even in Sardis who did not defile their garments, and they will walk with Me in white, because they are worthy. The one who overcomes, this one will be clothed in white garments, and I will by no means blot out his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

3:7-13 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the True One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens: I know your works. Look, I have set before you an opened door, and no one is able to shut it; because you have little power, and you kept My word and did not deny My name. Look, I am giving ***some*** of the synagogue of Satan, of those who say they themselves are Jews and are not, but lie; look, I will make them come and worship before your feet, and know that I loved you. Because you kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole inhabited world, to test those who dwell on the earth. Look, I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one may take your crown. The one who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will by no means go out anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

3:14-22 "And to the angel of the church of ***the*** Laodiceans write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, and I have become rich, and I have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are the wretched ***one*** and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, so that you may become rich, and white garments, so that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness may not be made manifest; and anoint your eyes ***with*** eye salve, so that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Look, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. The one who overcomes, I will give to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

Chapter 3 Preview

Jesus finishes His letters to the seven churches in this chapter. As Lord of the Church, He addresses each one personally, laying out their strengths and weaknesses. The last church He addresses is Laodicea, the church that troubles our Lord the most. He tells them exactly why, and exactly what they need to do about it.

Chapter 3 Study

3:1 *"And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: These things says the One who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have the name that you are alive, and you are dead.*

The fifth letter goes to the church of Sardis. Many scholars believe the "seven Spirits of God" represent the Holy Spirit, not seven separate spirits, but the infinite, perfect Spirit of God. The seven stars represent the angels of the churches. Five of the seven letters open with Jesus praising something good, then listing what's wrong. Sardis and Laodicea are different: Sardis is called a hypocrite right from the start. In effect, Christ tells them they have a reputation for being alive, but they are dead.

3:2 *Be watching, and strengthen the things that remain, which are about to die; for I have not found your works completed before God.*

Christ tells them to be watchful. When He speaks of strengthening what remains, He's talking about the few people in that church who still have faith, but are in danger of losing it. Something was missing in the deeds they were doing.

3:3 *Remember therefore how you have received and heard, and keep **it**, and repent. If therefore you do not watch, I will come upon you like a thief, and you will by no means know at what hour I will come upon you.*

They needed to remember what they'd received and heard from God, how they first received His mercy. To hold onto that, they had to repent. If they didn't wake up, Christ warns, He'll come like a thief, and they won't know when.

3:4 *You have a few names even in Sardis who did not defile their garments, and they will walk with Me in white, because they are worthy.*

Christ is describing the few in this church who have stayed true to Him, who haven't given in to temptation. They are pure in His eyes and will be clothed in white when He comes for them. White represents purity. No one gets into heaven by being good enough; we are made pure by Christ's blood (1:5; 7:14), and that is what lets us stand in His presence.

3:5 *The one who overcomes, this one will be clothed in white garments, and I will by no means blot out his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.*

This is similar to verse 4, but here it includes those who sinned and then overcame; they'll be clothed in white too. They saw the error of their ways before it was too late, accepted Christ, and are promised their names will stay in the Book of Life. Jesus will also announce their names before God and His angels.

Old Testament links: Psalm 69:28 (alluded to)

3:6 *The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

Again, Christ says that those who hear and live by His Word will overcome the world and live with Him forever. Christ repeats the call. Sardis had a reputation for being alive, so this church above all needed to stop and actually listen.

3:7 *"And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These things says the Holy One, the True One, the One who has the key of David, the One who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens:*

The sixth letter goes to the church of Philadelphia, "brotherly love." Christ describes Himself here as holy and true, and as the one holding "the key of David," the key to governing and authority over the church. He controls who can enter His Kingdom; only those made righteous through faith in Him can come in.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 22:22 (alluded to)

3:8 *I know your works. Look, I have set before you an opened door, and no one is able to shut it; because you have little power, and you kept My word and did not deny My name.*

Christ knows what this church has done and is pleased with it. There's a gentle correction here too: "you have little power." Even though their power doesn't compare to the wide-open door before them, their faith is genuine and pleasing to the Lord, and they have not denied His name. As Christians, we shouldn't settle for a little strength; we should want our faith to keep growing, staying true and pure through studying God's Word and fellowship with other believers.

3:9 *Look, I am giving **some** of the synagogue of Satan, of those who say they themselves are Jews and are not, but lie; look, I will make them come and worship before your feet, and know that I loved you.*

Again we see "the synagogue of Satan," those who call themselves Jews but distort God's Word for their own profit. They were blind to who Jesus really is. Some scholars believe Christ will show His favor to His people so clearly that their enemies will be forced to acknowledge it, and some of those enemies will have softened hearts and accept Christ before it's too late.

The words echo Isaiah 60:14, where those who despised Zion "will bow down at the soles of your feet." Some teachers say the church now takes over that promise, but I read Isaiah 60 as a promise to Israel still waiting for the kingdom, and here Jesus borrows its picture to encourage a faithful church.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 60:14 (alluded to)

3:10 *Because you kept the word of My endurance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing which is about to come upon the whole inhabited world, to test those who dwell on the earth.*

This verse is where Pre-Tribulation believers find support for the idea that believers will be spared the seven-year Tribulation described in Revelation 6-19. Others believe this is specifically about the church of Philadelphia, which went through its own period of persecution after these letters were written. This is one of the main verses behind the Pre-Tribulation view I hold.

3:11 *Look, I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one may take your crown.*

Christ tells this church to hold onto what they have: faith, truth, zeal, and love, because He is coming soon. Don't let anyone take away your faith in Christ.

3:12 *The one who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will by no means go out anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.*

These eternal promises go to those who have faith in Jesus. Being made a "pillar" speaks of permanence and stability in God's Kingdom. Writing His name on them signifies their acceptance and belonging in His family.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 48:35 (alluded to)

3:13 *The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

The same call closes this letter. Philadelphia was already faithful; for them, listening meant holding on. We must stay alert and put into practice what God calls good here.

3:14 *"And to the angel of the church of* ***the*** *Laodiceans write: These things says the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God:*

The seventh and final letter opens with a greeting to the church of Laodicea. Christ is called "the Amen" here, meaning firm and faithful; He is the faithful and true witness from the beginning of creation.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 65:16 (alluded to)

3:15 *I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were cold or hot.*

Christ describes their works as neither hot nor cold. He wishes they were either fully on fire for the Gospel, or not at all.

3:16 *So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of My mouth.*

Christ detests lukewarmness. It isn't fruitful, and it damages others who are seeking a real relationship with Him. Lukewarm Christians tend to make others around them lukewarm too.

3:17 *Because you say, 'I am rich, and I have become rich, and I have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are the wretched* ***one*** *and miserable and poor and blind and naked,*

Laodicea was a prosperous church, sitting at the center of a wealthy city, and its people wouldn't admit to themselves that they were actually lost, wretched, poor, blind, and naked. They lived by the world's standards instead of God's.

Old Testament links: Hosea 12:8 (alluded to)

3:18 *I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, so that you may become rich, and white garments, so that you may be clothed and the shame of your nakedness may not be made manifest; and anoint your eyes* ***with*** *eye salve, so that you may see.*

Christ tells them where they can find true riches. Gold refined by fire keeps its purity and shine even after passing through flames. White garments represent the righteousness Christ gives us, so we're not naked and alone; we're clothed in Christ's purity, with Him walking beside us always. The eye salve represents opening our eyes to tell right from wrong, coming out of the darkness of closed eyes.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 55:1 (alluded to)

3:19 *As many as I love, I rebuke and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.*

Christ is telling them: these hard words and severe correction come from love. So repent of your sins, so you don't have to face His wrath.

Old Testament links: Proverbs 3:12 (alluded to)

3:20 *Look, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.*

Christ is standing at the door of our hearts, knocking. By nature, our hearts are shut against Him through ignorance, unbelief, and sin. He wants in, and He's waiting patiently for us to open the door. He will share fellowship with us once we let Him in; eating together is a symbol of being welcomed into His family.

3:21 *The one who overcomes, I will give to him to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

Christ lets us know here that He too faced temptation, and was victorious. He will let us dwell with Him if we remain faithful and committed to Him.

3:22 *The one who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."*

Christ closes this last of the seven letters with the same reminder: listen, and apply what you hear, so you can live with Him in His Kingdom for eternity.

Chapter 3 Summary

Christ finished His personal messages to the seven churches in this passage. He criticized the church in Sardis for being spiritually dead and told it to wake up. The church in Philadelphia was commended for its faithfulness and encouraged to keep persevering. In His last letter, Christ severely corrected the church in Laodicea for being spiritually lukewarm.

Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. What are some examples of indifference in our society today?

2. What were the members of the church in Sardis told to do to change their spiritual condition? (3:2-3)

3. What teaching of Christ did the church in Philadelphia obey? (3:10)

4. What was the difference between how the church in Laodicea saw itself and how Christ saw it? (3:17)

5. What comfort could the church in Laodicea take from Christ's rebuke? (3:19)

6. How can you tell whether a church is spiritually alive or dead?

7. What does it mean that Christ holds the key of David?

8. How can pride hurt a believer's spiritual growth?

9. Spiritually speaking, what does it mean to be lukewarm?

10. What can you do this week to eliminate "lukewarmness" or indifference in your own spiritual life?

Chapter 4: Heaven

Scripture: A Vision of Heaven

4:1-4 After these things I saw, and look, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things." And immediately I was in ***the*** Spirit; and look, a throne was set in heaven, and ***One*** sitting on the throne. And the One sitting was in appearance like a jasper stone and a sardius; and ***there was*** a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like emeralds. And around the throne ***were*** twenty-four thrones; and on the thrones I saw the twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments; and they had golden crowns on their heads.

4:5-8 And out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunders and voices; and seven lamps of fire ***were*** burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. And before the throne ***was*** a sea of glass, like crystal; and in ***the*** midst of the throne and around the throne ***were*** four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind. And the first living creature ***was*** like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature having the face as a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one by itself, had six wings apiece; around and within ***they are*** full of eyes; and they have no rest day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is coming."

4:9-11 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanksgiving to the One sitting on the throne, who lives to the ages of the ages, the twenty-four elders will fall down before the One sitting on the throne, and they worship the One who lives to the ages of the ages, and they cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Worthy are You, Lord, to receive the glory and the honor and the power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they are and were created."

Chapter 4 Preview

John's vision now shifts from earth to heaven. This happens right in verse 1, moving our focus into the future. John has just finished seeing Christ walking among the golden lampstands, the churches. Now his attention turns to heavenly things. John is taken up to heaven to see the rest of what will happen to mankind.

Many scholars believe a new section of Revelation begins here, at 4:1. A door opens for John into heaven, and once inside, he sees what's happening there and what will happen on earth. This gives us a heavenly view of future events, and it reassures us that God is in control. He already knows what will happen in the last days, event by event. This vision of heaven is the turning point of the whole book, shifting our attention from earth to heaven, and from time to eternity.

Because John is taken up to heaven before he's shown what the world will go through, many scholars think this parallels the church in the end times. John is "taken up" before he's shown the Tribulation period described in Revelation 6-19. Some Pre-Tribulation believers see this as pointing to a pre-Tribulation Rapture, referencing 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "because the Lord

Himself will descend from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are living, who remain, will be caught away together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will always be with the Lord."

However you read it, this is clearly where John receives his vision of the end times. He witnesses firsthand what happens on earth in the last days. It's a good reminder that we want to be on God's side, whether we hold to a Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, or Post-Tribulation view of the Rapture.

Chapter 4 Study

4:1 *After these things I saw, and look, a door opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard, like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."*

This chapter opens with John seeing an open door in heaven, and hearing a trumpet-like voice, the same voice he heard in Revelation 1:10, the voice of Jesus Christ. Jesus invites John up to show him what will happen in the future.

The Bible mentions three distinct "heavens": the first is Earth's atmosphere (Deuteronomy 11:11, 28:12; Judges 5:4; Acts 14:17); the second is outer space, the universe (Psalm 19:6; Jeremiah 8:2; Isaiah 13:10); and the third is where God Himself dwells (Matthew 5:16; 1 Kings 8:27; Deuteronomy 10:14). This "third heaven" is mentioned by name in 2 Corinthians 12:2.

4:2 *And immediately I was in **the** Spirit; and look, a throne was set in heaven, and **One** sitting on the throne.*

John was instantly taken to heaven in the Spirit. Many believe John was "raptured" for this vision. Whether he was in the body or out of it, we don't know; what we do know is that he was in the Lord's presence and his vision was divinely inspired. John sees a throne, and "One" sitting on it: this throne represents honor, judgment, and authority, and the "One" on it is God.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 6:1 (alluded to)

4:3 *And the One sitting was in appearance like a jasper stone and a sardius; and **there was** a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like emeralds.*

God's description here isn't a picture of physical features; it's a picture of likeness and splendor. He's described as being like jasper, a clear stone that shines with color (God is light, with no darkness in Him at all), and carnelian (sardius), a red stone that signifies His justice. John also sees a rainbow, green like an emerald, around the throne. The rainbow recalls God's covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:16, and the green represents the new covenant and eternity.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 1:28 (alluded to); Ezekiel 1:26 (alluded to)

4:4 *And around the throne **were** twenty-four thrones; and on the thrones I saw the twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments; and they had golden crowns on their heads.*

Twenty-four more thrones surround God's, filled with twenty-four elders. These could represent figures from both the Old and New Testaments; some scholars suggest the 12 tribal leaders and 12 apostles, or the 24 divisions of priests appointed by King David. Their sitting shows their honor and closeness with God; they've been welcomed to sit with Him. Their white robes show they are pure and sinless in His sight, and their gold crowns show the honor and authority He's given them. This signals that the church has triumphed, and mankind has been welcomed into heaven.

4:5 *And out of the throne proceed lightnings and thunders and voices; and seven lamps of fire **were** burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.*

The lightning, sounds, and thunder represent God's declarations to His church about His will and purpose. The seven lamps of fire represent the seven Spirits of God, the Holy Spirit, mentioned earlier in Revelation 1:4. Isaiah 11:2 gives us the sevenfold nature of the Holy Spirit: the Spirit of the Lord, of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, of power, of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord. These qualities are eternal parts of the Holy Spirit, present at all times, not just during the end times or in heaven.

Old Testament links: Exodus 19:16 (alluded to); Ezekiel 1:13 (alluded to); Zechariah 4:2 (alluded to)

4:6 *And before the throne **was** a sea of glass, like crystal; and in **the** midst of the throne and around the throne **were** four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind.*

The sea of glass before the throne has been said to represent the calm and peace of heaven, in contrast to the turmoil on earth. Some also say it represents God's Word, the foundation of heaven. Many believe the four living creatures around the throne are seraphim, like those Isaiah describes in Isaiah 6:1-3, since they also have six wings and cry "Holy, holy, holy." Others believe they are cherubim, as described in Ezekiel 1:5-14. Their eyes in front and back represent wisdom and constant alertness.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 1:18 (alluded to); Ezekiel 10:12 (alluded to); Ezekiel 1:22 (alluded to); Ezekiel 1:5 (alluded to)

4:7-8 *And the first living creature **was** like a lion, and the second living creature like a calf, and the third living creature having the face as a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one by itself, had six wings apiece; around and within **they are** full of eyes; and they have no rest day and night, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and who is and who is coming."*

These four creatures have been interpreted in different ways. Early church writers connected them to the four Gospels in different ways. The pairing most often used, from Jerome, is Matthew the man, showing Christ's humanity; Mark the lion, showing His power and royalty; Luke the ox, showing His sacrifice and service; and John the eagle, showing His soaring majesty as the Divine Word. The lion is the noblest and most courageous animal; the ox is strong and tireless; the eagle is swift and sharp-sighted; and man is the wisest of all God's creation. Each creature had six wings and was covered in eyes, and they never stopped praising God, day or night, saying "Holy, holy, holy." Some believe each "holy" is directed at one member of the Trinity. This endless praise also reminds us that Christ's return is guaranteed, as promised in Acts 1:9-11.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 1:10 (alluded to); Ezekiel 10:14 (alluded to); Isaiah 6:2-3 (alluded to)

4:9-10 *And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanksgiving to the One sitting on the throne, who lives to the ages of the ages, the twenty-four elders will fall down before the One sitting on the throne, and they worship the One who lives to the ages of the ages, and they cast their crowns before the throne, saying,*

The four creatures praise, give glory, honor, and thanks to God, and the twenty-four elders fall down before Him, throwing down their own crowns as a sign of reverence and humility, showing that His crown is far more glorious than theirs. He alone is worthy of worship and exaltation.

4:11 *"Worthy are You, Lord, to receive the glory and the honor and the power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they are and were created."*

The elders declare that God is worthy of glory, honor, and power, and they recognize that everything was created for His pleasure. By praising Him, they acknowledge His sovereignty over our lives.

Chapter 4 Summary

John's vision of the throne room of heaven is stunning. God sits on His throne, surrounded by twenty-four elders dressed in white. Seven lamps burn before the throne over a sea of glass, and four all-seeing creatures guard it. Both the elders and the creatures offer nonstop praise and worship to God.

Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. What are some popular images people associate with heaven?

2. What three statements do the creatures around God's throne use to describe His eternal nature? (4:8)

3. According to the twenty-four elders, what is God worthy to receive? (4:11)

4. Why does all creation exist? (4:11)

5. Why do you think John's description of God on the throne is so vague and full of imagery?

6. What is your impression of this brief glimpse of heaven?

7. Why do you think it's necessary for the four creatures around God's throne to offer nonstop worship and praise?

8. What does it mean to be holy?

9. What is God worthy to receive from you?

10. What will you do this week to offer special praise to God for His holiness?

Chapter 5: The Scroll

Scripture: The Scroll and the Lamb

5:1-5 And I saw on the right hand of the One sitting on the throne a scroll written inside and on ***the*** back, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?" And no one in heaven nor on the earth nor under the earth was able to open the scroll nor to look at it. And I was weeping much, because no one was found worthy to open and to read the scroll, nor to look at it. And one of the elders says to me, "Do not weep; look, the Lion who is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome, to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

5:6-10 And I saw, and look, in ***the*** midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in ***the*** midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as having been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God which have been sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of the One sitting on the throne. And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You were slain, and You purchased us for God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and You have made us kings and priests to our God, and we will reign on the earth."

5:11-14 And I saw, and I heard ***the*** voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and those which are on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, "To the One sitting on the throne and to the Lamb ***be*** the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might to the ages of the ages!" And the four living creatures were saying, "Amen." And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped ***the One*** who lives to the ages of the ages.

Chapter 5 Preview

The scroll with seven seals is still unopened. Jesus Christ appears, and all of heaven sings, "Worthy is the Lamb!" This praise, directed at Jesus, shows His full deity. Once Jesus opens the scroll, everything that follows has been set in motion.

Chapter 5 Study

5:1 *And I saw on the right hand of the One sitting on the throne a scroll written inside and on* ***the*** *back, sealed with seven seals.*

Verse 1 opens with God on His throne, holding a scroll in His right hand, written on both the front and back, meaning it is full and complete, needing nothing added to it. It's sealed with seven seals, showing how important it is, since seven signifies completeness. The seals mean someone with real authority must be the one to open it. This "book" is a rolled papyrus scroll, not a modern bound book.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 2:9-10 (alluded to); Daniel 12:4 (alluded to)

5:2 *And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?"*

A mighty angel calls out with authority, asking who is worthy to open the scroll. This isn't a suggestion that some angels are weak; it's a call to all of creation to find someone worthy, someone sinless, given authority by God to open it.

5:3 *And no one in heaven nor on the earth nor under the earth was able to open the scroll nor to look at it.*

No one in all of creation, in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, could open the scroll or even look inside it. This includes God's angels, His prophets, the living and the dead, and even the fallen angels.

5:4 *And I was weeping much, because no one was found worthy to open and to read the scroll, nor to look at it.*

John was deeply saddened and wept because no one stepped forward. He knew this scroll was the title deed to the earth, and as long as it stayed sealed, Satan would remain in control.

5:5 *And one of the elders says to me, "Do not weep; look, the Lion who is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome, to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."*

One of the elders tells John not to weep, because the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, is found worthy. "The Lion who is of the tribe of Judah" points to Jesus' human ancestry, from Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49:9, and the lion was long the symbol of Israel's messianic tribe. "The Root of David" reminds us that Jesus is both David's descendant and the source of his royal line (Isaiah 11:1-10). Only Jesus Christ is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 11:10 (alluded to); Genesis 49:9 (alluded to)

5:6 *And I saw, and look, in **the** midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in **the** midst of the elders, a Lamb standing as having been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God which have been sent out into all the earth.*

Standing in the midst of God's throne is Jesus. John expected to see a lion, but instead saw the Lamb of God, standing as if slain, meaning He was killed, but is now alive forever. He still bears the marks of His suffering, showing that He intercedes in heaven because of His death. Isaiah 53:7 pictures the Messiah as a lamb led to the slaughter, John the Baptist calls Jesus "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36), and He is called the Lamb 28 times in Revelation alone, His signature title in this book. The seven horns represent perfect power and strength (a horn in Scripture signals strength: Zechariah 1:18; Daniel 7:8, 20, 24), and the seven eyes represent the Holy Spirit, God's complete and perfect Spirit sent out over the whole earth.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 4:10 (alluded to); Isaiah 53:7 (alluded to)

5:7 *And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of the One sitting on the throne.*

Jesus comes to the Father and takes the scroll from Him. God has now handed the authority over the earth and mankind to His Son, the only one worthy of it.

5:8 *And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having harps and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.*

As soon as Jesus takes the scroll, the four living creatures and twenty-four elders fall down before Him, each holding a harp and golden bowls of incense, which represent the prayers of God's people. All of them worship Him, recognizing His royalty and power. The harps are instruments of praise, and the incense is prayer; praise and prayer belong together.

Old Testament links: Psalm 141:2 (alluded to)

5:9 *And they sing a new song, saying, "Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals; for You were slain, and You purchased us for God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation,*

They sing a new song, declaring Jesus infinitely worthy, because He was slain and purchased people from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation with His blood, all the people of the earth.

5:10 *and You have made us kings and priests to our God, and we will reign on the earth."*

This kingdom is God's spiritual kingdom, which we're born into when we believe in Jesus Christ. As priests, we're given access to God and His kingdom, and on the great day, we'll judge the world alongside Christ and reign with Him for a thousand years.

This echoes God's call to Israel in Exodus 19:6. Some teachers read it to mean the church has replaced Israel and is already reigning in its place, but I read it plainly: the redeemed will reign with Christ on the earth in the thousand-year kingdom still to come, and God's promises to Israel are not moved to the church.

Old Testament links: Exodus 19:6 (alluded to)

5:11 *And I saw, and I heard **the** voice of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands,*

John sees a staggering, uncountable number of angels singing praises to Jesus, more than he had ever seen or heard before. These angels are the attendants of God's throne and the guardians of His church.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:10 (alluded to)

5:12 *saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"*

All the angels cry out together that the Lamb who was slain is worthy of power, riches, wisdom, might, honor, glory, and blessing. He is worthy of the highest power and wisdom, sufficient for His office and faithful in it. Declaring "worthy is the Lamb" puts worship of Christ equal to worship of God the Father: God is worshiped as Creator in Chapter 4, and Jesus is worshiped as Redeemer in Chapter 5.

5:13 *And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and those which are on the sea, and all the things in them, I heard saying, "To the One sitting on the throne and to the Lamb **be** the blessing and the honor and the glory and the might to the ages of the ages!"*

All of creation, everywhere, cries out that blessing, honor, glory, and dominion belong to God and the Lamb forever. Every created thing will recognize Christ as the Son of God, even those who denied Him while alive, the fallen angels, and Satan himself. No one will be able to deny His majesty.

5:14 *And the four living creatures were saying, "Amen." And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped **the One** who lives to the ages of the ages.*

Just before Christ begins breaking the scroll's seals in the next chapter, the four living creatures and the elders fall down in worship, one final confirmation that Jesus alone is worthy of this praise.

Chapter 5 Summary

In the midst of his vision of heaven's throne room, John notices a scroll with seven seals in God's right hand. No one in heaven or on earth is found worthy to open it, except the Lamb of God. When the Lamb takes the scroll, countless angels begin offering Him praise and honor for how worthy He is.

Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. What is the most attention and praise you have ever seen given to one person?
2. How does John describe the scroll in God's hand? (5:1)
3. Why did John start crying? (5:4)

4. Who is finally able to take the scroll from God's hand? (5:7)

5. Why is the Lamb worthy to take the scroll and open its seals? (5:9-10)

6. According to the multitude of angels, what is the Lamb worthy to receive? (5:12)

7. Why is Christ described as both a Lion and a Lamb?

8. What does it mean that Christ made believers to be priests?

9. How often do you offer praise and glory to Christ?

10. What steps will you take this week to set aside special time for praise with your Christian friends?

Chapter 6: The First Six Seals

Scripture: The First Six Seals

6:1-2 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as ***with*** a sound of thunder, "Come and see." And I saw, and look, a white horse, and the one sitting on it having a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out overcoming and so that he might overcome.

6:3-4 And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see." And another horse went out, fiery red; and to the one sitting on it, it was given to him to take the peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.

6:5-6 And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come and see." And I saw, and look, a black horse, and the one sitting on it having a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in ***the*** midst of the four living creatures saying, "Approximately a quart (a choenix) of wheat for a denarius, and approximately three quarts (three choenixes) of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

6:7-8 And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see." And I saw, and look, a pale horse, and the one sitting on it, his name ***was*** Death, and Hades follows with him. And authority was given to them over the fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with death and by the beasts of the earth.

6:9-11 And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they held. And they were crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Until when, O Master, the Holy and the True, do You not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And white robes were given to each; and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little time, until both their fellow slaves and their brothers, who are about to be killed even as they ***were***, shall be completed.

6:12-17 And I saw when He opened the sixth seal, and look, a great earthquake occurred; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood; and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree, being shaken by a great wind, casts its unripe figs. And heaven departed like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth and the great ones and the rich and the commanders and the mighty and every slave and every free ***man*** hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from ***the*** face of the One sitting on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Chapter 6 Preview

The first six seals are opened on the scroll. Each seal releases a terrible, world-changing disaster on the earth. This chapter includes the famous "four horsemen of the Apocalypse."

Chapter 6 Study

6:1 *And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying, as **with** a sound of thunder, "Come and see."*

Jesus opens the first of the seven seals on the scroll He received from God, beginning the great work of carrying out God's purpose for the church and the world. One of the four living creatures, with a voice like thunder, calls John to come and watch what happens. John is looking down at the earth from heaven, witnessing God's work and promises unfold.

6:2 *And I saw, and look, a white horse, and the one sitting on it having a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out overcoming and so that he might overcome.*

There are three main views on who this rider is. Some believe he represents the Antichrist: this rider carries a bow, a weapon of war, while Jesus fights only with the "sharp sword" that proceeds "out of His mouth" (19:15); this rider's crown is a *stephanos*, a victor's wreath, while Jesus wears the *diadem*, a royal crown (19:12). Since there's nothing else similar between Christ and this rider besides the color of the horse, many believe this is an impostor, the Antichrist, later called "the beast" (Revelation 13:1-18; 16:10-13; 17:3-14; 19:19-21; 20:10). *(This is my own view.)* Others believe this rider is Jesus Christ Himself, since Christ does return on a white horse at His Second Coming (19:11); the bow represents strength, and the crown shows that all who receive the Gospel must accept Christ as King. A third view holds that this rider represents mankind's own last attempt to bring order and peace to the world while still rejecting Christ.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 6:2-3 (alluded to)

6:3 *And when He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come and see."*

Christ opens the second seal, and the second living creature calls John to come and see what's happening on earth.

6:4 *And another horse went out, fiery red; and to the one sitting on it, it was given to him to take the peace from the earth, and that they should slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.*

The second horse of the Apocalypse is red, the symbol of war and bloodshed. This rider is given power to end peace on earth and cause people to kill one another. His great sword unleashes conflict, civil war, and death.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 6:2-3 (alluded to); Zechariah 1:8 (alluded to)

6:5 *And when He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come and see." And I saw, and look, a black horse, and the one sitting on it having a pair of scales in his hand.*

The third horse, black, represents famine (Jeremiah 4:28; Lamentations 4:8-9). It's fitting that famine follows war, since the black horse follows the red one. This famine will be worldwide, not limited to one region. The scales show that food will have to be carefully measured out, a sign of how severe the shortage will be.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 6:2-3 (alluded to)

6:6 *And I heard a voice in **the** midst of the four living creatures saying, "Approximately a quart (a choenix) of wheat for a denarius, and approximately three quarts (three choenixes) of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."*

A voice from among the four living creatures announces prices: a day's wages (a denarius) for just enough wheat for one meal. The poor will struggle badly with food prices, while the oil and wine, luxuries of the wealthy, remain untouched; the rich won't go without, but ordinary people will suffer.

6:7 *And when He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come and see."*

The fourth seal is broken, and the last of the four horsemen rides into view.

6:8 *And I saw, and look, a pale horse, and the one sitting on it, his name **was** Death, and Hades follows with him. And authority was given to them over the fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with death and by the beasts of the earth.*

The fourth and final horse is pale green, the color of death. Of all four riders, only this one is named: Death. He carries no weapon, because he needs none; his name speaks for itself. Hades follows right behind him, gathering what Death leaves behind. This seal gives Death and Hades power over a fourth of the earth's people, killing through the same means named in the earlier seals: sword, famine, and plague, showing that all four seals are connected.

Summary of the four horsemen:

- **White Horse** (interpreted as the Antichrist, Jesus Christ, or mankind's own effort at conquest): First Seal
- **Red Horse** (war and bloodshed): Second Seal
- **Black Horse** (worldwide famine): Third Seal
- **Pale Horse** (death, claiming a fourth of the earth's population): Fourth Seal

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 14:21 (alluded to)

6:9 *And when He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and because of the testimony which they held.*

Jesus opens the fifth seal, and John immediately sees the souls of those killed for their devotion to God and His Son. There are two views on who these people are: some believe they're Jewish

believers who came to faith after the Rapture and were killed for it; others believe they're a mix of Jews and Gentiles who turned to Jesus after the Rapture.

6:10 *And they were crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Until when, O Master, the Holy and the True, do You not judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"*

Those who were killed cry out, asking when their deaths will be avenged. This judgment will come from Jesus Himself, who will give perfect justice to those who denied Him and killed His followers.

Old Testament links: Psalm 79:10 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 32:43 (alluded to)

6:11 *And white robes were given to each; and it was said to them that they should rest yet a little time, until both their fellow slaves and their brothers, who are about to be killed even as they **were**, shall be completed.*

Jesus gives the martyrs white robes, showing their acceptance into His kingdom, made possible only by their faith in Christ, who died for their sins. They're told to be patient and wait until a number known only to God is complete, the number of believers still to be killed.

6:12 *And I saw when He opened the sixth seal, and look, a great earthquake occurred; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood;*

John watches Jesus break the sixth seal. Its sign is a great earthquake, the sun turning pitch black, and the moon glowing blood red. There are two views here: some take this literally, a worldwide earthquake and dramatic changes in the sun and moon, showing God's wrath and displeasure over what's happening on earth. Others see it as describing a massive breakdown of society and a collapse of earthly authority.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 50:3 (alluded to); Joel 2:31 (alluded to); Isaiah 13:10 (alluded to); Joel 2:10 (alluded to)

6:13 *and the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree, being shaken by a great wind, casts its unripe figs.*

Again, two views: some take this literally, as a shower of meteors striking the earth; others see it as describing the downfall of religious leaders, drawing on Daniel 8:10.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 34:4 (alluded to)

6:14 *And heaven departed like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.*

The sky splits apart like a rolled-up scroll, and every mountain and island shifts. Again, some read this literally, as physical changes from the earthquake. Others connect it to the world's religions becoming obsolete, paving the way for a one-world religion led by the false prophet (13:13; 16:13; 19:20).

Old Testament links: Isaiah 34:4 (alluded to)

6:15 *And the kings of the earth and the great ones and the rich and the commanders and the mighty and every slave and every free* ***man*** *hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;*

Because of this destruction, everyone tries to hide, regardless of wealth or power. Even then, those who've hardened their hearts against God still refuse to call out to Him for mercy and accept the salvation His Son made possible at Calvary.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 2:19 (alluded to)

6:16 *and they say to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from* ***the*** *face of the One sitting on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb;*

Those in hiding beg the mountains and rocks to hide them from God and the Lamb's wrath. Even though the people of earth recognize this as God's judgment, their hearts remain hard and cold.

Old Testament links: Hosea 10:8 (alluded to)

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

One day, everyone will recognize Jesus as the Son of God with full authority over the earth. But still, many will remain hard and prideful, choosing their own way instead of calling out to the One who gave His life to give them a chance at eternal life.

Old Testament links: Joel 2:11 (alluded to); Malachi 3:2 (alluded to)

Chapter 6 Summary

Jesus opens the first six of the seven seals on the scroll, unleashing the four horsemen, conquest, war, famine, and death, followed by the cry of martyred souls and a great cosmic upheaval. Everyone on earth, from kings to slaves, recognizes God's judgment has begun, yet many still refuse to turn to Him.

Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. What is your reaction to the imagery of the four horsemen?
2. What do the white, red, black, and pale horses each represent? (6:1-8)
3. What do the souls under the altar ask God? (6:10)
4. What are they told to do while they wait? (6:11)
5. How do the people of earth react to the sixth seal's upheaval? (6:15-16)
6. Why do you think people hide from God's judgment instead of turning to Him?
7. What does this chapter teach us about God's justice for those who suffer for their faith?
8. How does it change your perspective to know that God's timing, not ours, decides when judgment falls?

9. What would it take for someone's heart to soften instead of harden in the face of judgment?

10. How does this chapter shape the way you want to live today?

Chapter 7: Deliverance

Scripture: The 144,000 and the Great Multitude

7:1-8 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, so that no wind might blow on the earth nor on the sea nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from ***the*** rising of ***the*** sun, having ***the*** seal of ***the*** living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth nor the sea nor the trees until we seal the slaves of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred forty-four thousand sealed out of every tribe of ***the*** sons of Israel. Out of ***the*** tribe of Judah, twelve thousand ***were*** sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Gad, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Asher, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Levi, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed; out of ***the*** tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand sealed.

7:9-17 After these things I saw, and look, a great multitude which no one was able to number, out of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands; and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "The salvation ***is*** to our God, to the One sitting on the throne, and to the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell before the throne on their face and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! The blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength ***be*** to our God to the ages of the ages. Amen." And one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Because of this they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and the One sitting on the throne will tabernacle over them. They will not hunger anymore, nor will they thirst anymore, nor will the sun by any means fall on them, nor any scorching heat; because the Lamb who ***is*** in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and will lead them to living fountains of waters; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Chapter 7 Preview

Two great groups of people appear in this chapter. The first are 144,000 Jewish believers, sealed for God's protection. The second is a "great multitude" that no one can count, from every nation. Together, they are the redeemed of the Tribulation period.

Chapter 7 Study

7:1 *And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, so that no wind might blow on the earth nor on the sea nor on any tree.*

In the previous chapter, John saw Jesus open six of the seven seals. Now he sees four angels at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds so that no wind blows anywhere, on land, sea, or tree. These winds are not literal weather; they represent the major forces that push nations and people toward a goal: political power, religious power, economic power, and military power. These four angels are heavenly beings entrusted with holding these winds back until God's appointed time, and then releasing them.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 6:5 (alluded to)

7:2-3 *And I saw another angel ascending from **the** rising of **the** sun, having **the** seal of **the** living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to harm the earth and the sea, saying, "Do not harm the earth nor the sea nor the trees until we seal the slaves of our God on their foreheads."*

An angel comes from the east, carrying the seal of God, and calls out to the other four angels not to harm the earth until God's servants are sealed. This seal is God's mark, not the mark of the beast; it sets these people apart from harm. The ones chosen for this seal are the remnant of Israel (Ezekiel 9:4), identified in the next verse.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 9:4 (alluded to)

7:4 *And I heard the number of those who were sealed: one hundred forty-four thousand sealed out of every tribe of **the** sons of Israel.*

144,000 people are sealed, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons. Interestingly, the tribe of Dan is left off this list, possibly because of that tribe's history with idol worship (Judges 18), and the tribe of Manasseh takes its place. Ephraim is not named either; Joseph stands in for him. These 144,000 sealed servants will be witnesses for Christ; the Greek word for "slaves" here, doulos, is the same word Paul and James used to describe themselves as bond-servants of Jesus Christ. This suggests these 144,000 will spread God's Word throughout the world as believers in Christ.

7:5-8 *Out of **the** tribe of Judah, twelve thousand **were** sealed; out of **the** tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Gad, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Asher, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Levi, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed; out of **the** tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand sealed.*

Twelve thousand come from each tribe: Judah, Reuben, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Manasseh, Simeon, Levi, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin, for a total of 144,000.

7:9 *After these things I saw, and look, a great multitude which no one was able to number, out of every nation and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands;*

Now John sees an uncountable multitude, dressed in white, from every nation and language. There are two main interpretations: some see this as a mid-Tribulation Rapture of the church, and others see these as Gentiles who came to believe in Christ during the Tribulation itself. The palm branches were traditionally waved during victory celebrations.

7:10 *and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "The salvation **is** to our God, to the One sitting on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

They cry out that salvation belongs to God and to the Lamb, a clear declaration that they believe in and have accepted Christ as their Savior.

7:11-12 *And all the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell before the throne on their face and worshiped God, saying, "Amen! The blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength **be** to our God to the ages of the ages. Amen."*

Everyone in God's throne room, the four living creatures, the elders, and all the angels, falls down and worships God, acknowledging His wisdom, power, and strength forever.

7:13-14 *And one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where did they come?" And I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*

An elder asks John who this multitude is, and John admits he doesn't know. This tells us they aren't from the Old Testament or the church of John's own time. They are people who made it through the Great Tribulation and were washed clean by Christ's blood, the Tribulation saints.

7:15 *Because of this they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and the One sitting on the throne will tabernacle over them.*

These Tribulation saints stand before God's throne day and night, joyfully serving Him in fellowship. God spreading His tabernacle over them represents their full acceptance into His heavenly kingdom.

7:16 *They will not hunger anymore, nor will they thirst anymore, nor will the sun by any means fall on them, nor any scorching heat;*

Every need of those in heaven will be fully met. Some believe this reflects what they went without on earth during the Tribulation, connecting back to the famine of the third seal (6:5-6). They will never again suffer the sun's heat; in heaven, the only light needed comes from God Himself.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 49:10 (alluded to)

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

Jesus will care for and provide for His people forever. He will be with them for eternity, and His presence will satisfy every need, because He is the living water. God will wipe away every tear. Think about what made you cry this year. None of it follows you into heaven, because heaven is where God dwells, and suffering does not live there.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 49:10 (alluded to); Isaiah 25:8 (alluded to); Psalm 23:2 (alluded to)

Chapter 7 Summary

Chapter 7 is a pause between the sixth and seventh seals. Here, John addresses who will be able to stand on the day of God's wrath. Four angels are told to hold back God's destructive forces until 144,000 people from the tribes of Israel are sealed for protection. Then a multitude who came through the Great Tribulation gathers before God's throne to worship Him.

Chapter 7 Study Questions

1. What do you think you will enjoy most about heaven?

2. Why are the angels holding back the four winds of the earth? (7:1-3)

3. Who is marked with the sign of God? (7:3-8)

4. How does John describe the crowd gathered before God's throne? (7:9-10)

5. Who are the people dressed in white robes before God's throne? (7:13-15)

6. Why do you think God singles out 144,000 people from the tribes of Israel for His special mark?

7. What three words would you use to describe the scene before God's throne?

8. What does it mean that God will wipe every tear from the eyes of those gathered before Him?

9. When will you set aside time this week to reflect quietly on your own future in heaven?

Chapter 8: Seventh Seal and Trumpet Judgments 1-4

Scripture: The Seventh Seal and the First Four Trumpets

8:1-6 And when He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might give ***it*** with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which ***is*** before the throne. And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of ***the*** hand of the angel before God. And the angel took the censer and filled it from the fire of the altar and cast ***it*** to the earth; and there were voices and thunders and lightnings and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves so that they might sound.

8:7-13 And the first angel sounded, and there was hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was cast to the earth; and a third of the trees was burned up, and all green grass was burned up. And the second angel sounded, and ***something*** like a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood; and a third of the creatures which ***were*** in the sea, those having life, died; and a third of the ships was destroyed. And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell out of heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters becomes wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter. And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them might be darkened, and the day might not shine ***for*** a third of it, and the night likewise. And I saw, and I heard one angel flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

Chapter 8 Preview

The seven trumpets begin to sound, and terrible disasters follow. These judgments are so severe that they nearly destroy the whole planet. The world descends into war, and all life is at risk.

Chapter 8 Study

8:1 *And when He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.*

Jesus breaks the seventh and final seal on the scroll, the title deed to the earth given to Him by God, the only one worthy to open it. This begins the judgments held on its pages. The silence that follows may represent two things: the "calm before the storm," the quiet that often comes before a major disaster; or a parallel to Jewish Temple worship, where solemn silence was kept during the offering of incense while people prayed quietly (Psalm 62:1; 65:1). Either way, all of heaven falls silent to see what happens next.

8:2 *And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.*

Breaking the seventh seal doesn't unleash anything by itself; instead, it introduces the seven trumpet judgments. Seven angels, each given a trumpet, stand before God (Gabriel is thought to be one of them, as in Luke 1:19). These trumpets are often compared to the trumpets that brought down the walls of Jericho in Joshua 6.

8:3-4 *And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might give **it** with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which **is** before the throne. And the smoke of the incense went up with the prayers of the saints out of **the** hand of the angel before God.*

Many commentators believe this "another angel" is Jesus Christ Himself, since He alone, our one mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), is worthy to present the prayers of the saints to God. The incense mixing with the prayers is a beautiful picture: our prayers are always heard by God, including the prayers of those who have suffered and been persecuted for their faith throughout history.

Old Testament links: Psalm 141:2 (alluded to)

8:5-6 *And the angel took the censer and filled it from the fire of the altar and cast **it** to the earth; and there were voices and thunders and lightnings and an earthquake. And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves so that they might sound.*

The angel throws the fire-filled censer to earth, and thunder, lightning, and an earthquake follow. The prayers of the saints have been heard, and now they will be answered. The seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets, unleashing the next wave of judgment.

(A note on interpretation: some read these trumpet judgments literally, pointing to the plagues of Egypt in Exodus 7-11, where five of the same plagues appear, and those were literal events. Others read them symbolically, pointing to how the Old Testament often used symbols that are explained in later verses. Both readings appear below for each trumpet.)

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 10:2 (alluded to)

8:7 *And the first angel sounded, and there was hail and fire mixed with blood, and it was cast to the earth; and a third of the trees was burned up, and all green grass was burned up.*

Hail, fire, and blood are cast onto the earth, burning up a third of the trees and grass. Read literally, this describes massive destruction of plant life, whether from God's direct judgment or perhaps a limited nuclear exchange. Read symbolically, grass often represents mankind (Isaiah 40:6), showing human frailty, while trees represent human pride and independence from God (Judges 9:7-15; Daniel 4:4-27). As I said in the Introduction, I take the text literally unless it tells me otherwise, so I read this as real fire on real land. But whichever way you read it, the point is the same: this is judgment falling on people who turned down the Gospel.

Old Testament links: Exodus 9:24 (alluded to); Exodus 9:23 (alluded to); Ezekiel 38:22 (alluded to)

8:8-9 *And the second angel sounded, and **something** like a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood; and a third of the creatures which **were** in the sea, those having life, died; and a third of the ships was destroyed.*

A burning mountain is thrown into the sea. Literally, this could be a large meteor striking the earth. Symbolically, the "mountain" may represent a powerful, idol-worshiping nation, a spiritual "Babylon" (Jeremiah 51:25), while the sea represents godless humanity (Isaiah 57:20). Either way, massive destruction follows in the world's waters and shipping.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 51:25 (alluded to); Exodus 7:20 (alluded to)

8:10-11 *And the third angel sounded, and a great star fell out of heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. And the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters becomes wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter.*

A great star named Wormwood, meaning "bitter," falls and poisons a third of the earth's fresh water. Literally, this could describe another meteor. Symbolically, some connect this falling star to Satan's fall in Revelation 12, and his bitterness spreading to a third of mankind.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 9:15 (alluded to); Jeremiah 23:15 (alluded to)

8:12 *And the fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them might be darkened, and the day might not shine **for** a third of it, and the night likewise.*

A third of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened. Literally, this could mean shortened daylight hours. Symbolically, the sun, moon, and stars often represent ruling authorities, so this may picture the old order of the world breaking down as Satan runs rampant and darkness spreads.

8:13 *And I saw, and I heard one angel flying in mid-heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining voices of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"*

An angel flies through heaven, crying out three woes (some Greek manuscripts read "eagle" here), a warning about the last three trumpets still to come, called the "three woes" of Revelation. Even though the first four trumpets were terrible, the text warns that what follows will be even worse.

Chapter 8 Summary

When the Lamb opens the seventh seal, heaven falls silent for half an hour. Then seven angels are given trumpets to bring the next wave of judgment on the earth. The first four trumpets are devastating: a third of earth's vegetation is destroyed, a third of the seas turn to blood, a third of the rivers are poisoned, and a third of the sun, moon, and stars go dark, all because of humanity's great sin.

Chapter 8 Study Questions

1. What is the worst natural disaster you have ever witnessed or read about?

2. What causes heaven to fall silent for about half an hour? (8:1)

3. What damage follows the first trumpet blast? (8:7)

4. How is the earth's water supply affected by the second and third trumpets? (8:8-11)

5. How are the sun, moon, and stars affected by the fourth trumpet? (8:12)

6. Which of these judgments do you think would be most devastating to live through?

7. How does reading about these events shape your view of God's justice?

8. How does the coming judgment shape how you want to share the Good News with others?

Chapter 9: Trumpet Judgments 5-6

Scripture: The Fifth and Sixth Trumpets

9:1-12 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star that had fallen out of heaven to the earth; and the key of the pit of the abyss was given to him. And he opened the pit of the abyss; and smoke went up out of the pit like ***the*** smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. And out of the smoke locusts came out onto the earth, and authority was given to them, as the scorpions of the earth have authority. And it was said to them that they should not harm the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, except only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And it was given to them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months; and their torment ***was*** like ***the*** torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die, and death will flee from them. And the likenesses of the locusts ***were*** like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads ***were*** as ***it were*** crowns like gold, and their faces ***were*** like ***the*** faces of men. And they had hair like ***the*** hair of women, and their teeth were like ***those*** of lions. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings ***was*** like ***the*** sound of chariots of many horses running into battle. And they have tails like scorpions, and stings were in their tails; and their authority ***was*** to harm men five months. And they have as king over them the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew ***is*** Abaddon, and in the Greek he has ***the*** name Apollyon. The first woe has passed; look, two woes are still coming after these things.

9:13-21 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard one voice from the four horns of the golden altar which ***is*** before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels were released, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, so that they might kill a third of men. And the number of the armies of the cavalry ***was*** two myriads of myriads; and I heard their number. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those sitting on them, having breastplates fiery and hyacinth and sulfurous; and the heads of the horses ***were*** like heads of lions, and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and sulfur. By these three a third of men were killed: by the fire and by the smoke and by the sulfur which proceeds out of their mouths. For their authority is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails ***are*** like serpents, having heads, and with them they harm. And the rest of men, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so that they should not worship the demons and the idols of gold and of silver and of bronze and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their sexual immorality nor of their thefts.

Chapter 9 Preview

The fifth and sixth trumpets bring an unprecedented crisis: demonic oppression, followed by a massive military invasion. A third of the world's population is wiped out.

Chapter 9 Study

9:1 *And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star that had fallen out of heaven to the earth; and the key of the pit of the abyss was given to him.*

A star falls from heaven to earth. There are three main views on who this "star" is: some believe it's the same angel described in Revelation 20:1, given the key to the Abyss as a position of trust, since God wouldn't grant that honor to Satan or a demon; others believe it represents a false leader who has abandoned the faith; and a third view, which I hold, is that this star is Satan himself, permitted by God to open the abyss and release what has been locked inside.

9:2 *And he opened the pit of the abyss; and smoke went up out of the pit like **the** smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.*

The pit is opened, and thick smoke pours out, blocking part of the sun and darkening the air. This could describe literal smog-like smoke, or it could represent false teaching blotting out the light of God's truth, or a horde of demons bringing spiritual darkness to the earth.

Old Testament links: Genesis 19:28 (alluded to); Exodus 19:18 (alluded to)

9:3-6 *And out of the smoke locusts came out onto the earth, and authority was given to them, as the scorpions of the earth have authority. And it was said to them that they should not harm the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, except only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And it was given to them that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months; and their torment **was** like **the** torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; and they will long to die, and death will flee from them.*

Locusts, given the power to torment like scorpions, emerge from the smoke. They are commanded not to harm plants, only people without God's seal on their foreheads. Old Testament locust plagues were already among the worst disasters people faced (Exodus 10:1-20; Joel 1:2-2:11), and these locusts may represent literal torment, spiritual deception clouding people's minds, or demonic beings inflicting anguish. They cannot kill, only torment for five months, and the suffering will be so intense that people will want to die but won't be able to.

Old Testament links: Job 3:21 (alluded to); Exodus 10:14 (alluded to)

9:7-10 *And the likenesses of the locusts **were** like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads **were** as **it were** crowns like gold, and their faces **were** like **the** faces of men. And they had hair like **the** hair of women, and their teeth were like **those** of lions. And they had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings **was** like **the** sound of chariots of many horses running into battle. And they have tails like scorpions, and stings were in their tails; and their authority **was** to harm men five months.*

This strange, frightening description can be read literally, as monstrous creatures, or symbolically: horse-like readiness for battle, golden crowns representing acceptance of false teaching, human faces representing prideful human wisdom, hair like a woman's representing seductive appeal (Song of Solomon 7:5; 1 Corinthians 11:6-7), lion's teeth representing danger and cruelty, iron breastplates blocking people from seeing the truth, and loud, chariot-like wings representing the swiftness of their conquest. Either way, we should be grateful that God limits their power to just five months.

Old Testament links: Joel 2:5 (alluded to); Joel 1:6 (alluded to); Joel 2:4 (alluded to)

9:11 *And they have as king over them the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew **is** Abaddon, and in the Greek he has **the** name Apollyon.*

Their king is named Abaddon in Hebrew and Apollyon in Greek, both meaning "the Destroyer." Many believe this refers to Satan himself, though some think it's a fallen angel locked in the abyss.

9:12 *The first woe has passed; look, two woes are still coming after these things.*

The first of three woes has now happened. Two more are still to come.

9:13-14 *And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard one voice from the four horns of the golden altar which **is** before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."*

A voice from God's throne room tells the sixth angel to release four angels bound at the Euphrates River. Some believe these are angels of God, restrained there to hold back evil forces; others believe they are demonic beings, tied to the empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

9:15-16 *And the four angels were released, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, so that they might kill a third of men. And the number of the armies of the cavalry **was** two myriads of myriads; and I heard their number.*

These four angels, prepared for this exact moment, are released to kill a third of mankind. Behind them comes an army of 200 million mounted troops. Some believe it comes from the east; others believe it represents a spiritual army.

9:17-19 *And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and those sitting on them, having breastplates fiery and hyacinth and sulfurous; and the heads of the horses **were** like heads of lions, and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and sulfur. By these three a third of men were killed: by the fire and by the smoke and by the sulfur which proceeds out of their mouths. For their authority is in their mouth and in their tails; for their tails **are** like serpents, having heads, and with them they harm.*

This terrifying army brings death through fire, smoke, and sulfur, whether read as a literal modern army with devastating weapons, or a spiritual force of destruction. Either way, this is not an army meant to call people to repentance; it comes to kill.

9:20-21 *And the rest of men, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so that they should not worship the demons and the idols of gold and of silver and of bronze and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. And they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of their sexual immorality nor of their thefts.*

Even after all this, the survivors refuse to repent. They keep worshiping lifeless idols and keep committing murder, sorcery, sexual immorality, and theft. Their hearts remain hard, proud, and unwilling to recognize God as their Creator.

Old Testament links: Daniel 5:23 (alluded to); Psalm 115:4-5 (alluded to)

Chapter 9 Summary

Seven angels bring judgment on the earth through their trumpets. The first six are devastating: earth's vegetation destroyed, the seas turned to blood, rivers poisoned, the sun, moon, and stars darkened, humanity tormented by demonic locusts, and a third of the population killed, all because of the great sin of mankind. Even so, the survivors refuse to repent.

Chapter 9 Study Questions

1. What is something you have seen people refuse to give up, even when it was hurting them?

2. How does John describe the locusts that emerge from the pit after the fifth trumpet? (9:1-11)

3. What are the four angels freed to do after the sixth trumpet sounds? (9:13-19)

4. Why do you think God allows the locusts to torment but not to kill? (9:5)

5. How does it make you feel to read about these events?

6. What do these events tell us about God's patience and His justice?

7. Why do you think people refuse to repent even after such devastating judgment?

8. How does this chapter change the way you think about sharing the Good News with others?

Chapter 10: The Little Scroll

Scripture: The Angel and the Little Scroll

10:1-7 And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow ***was*** on ***his*** head, and his face ***was*** like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire; and he had in his hand a little scroll opened. And he placed his right foot on the sea, and the left on the land; and he cried out with a loud voice, as a lion roars. And when he cried out, the seven thunders spoke their own voices. And when the seven thunders spoke their voices, I was about to write; and I heard a voice out of heaven saying to me, "Seal up what the seven thunders spoke, and do not write these things." And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by the One who lives to the ages of the ages, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that time will be no longer; but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God should be finished, as He preached the gospel to His own slaves the prophets.

10:8-11 And the voice which I heard out of heaven was speaking with me again, and saying, "Go, take the little scroll which ***is*** opened in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." And I went to the angel, saying to him, "Give me the little scroll." And he says to me, "Take and eat it up; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey." And I took the little scroll out of the hand of the angel and ate it up; and it was sweet as honey in my mouth; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter. And he says to me, "You must prophesy again concerning peoples and nations and tongues and many kings."

Chapter 10 Preview

This chapter pauses the action between the sixth and seventh trumpets. It includes the mysterious seven thunders, which are sealed up and kept secret. The seventh trumpet is held off until John can take the "little scroll," eat it, and prophesy again.

Chapter 10 Study

10:1 *And I saw another strong angel coming down out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow **was** on **his** head, and his face **was** like the sun, and his feet like pillars of fire;*

Scholars debate who this "strong angel" is. Some believe it's a created angel; many believe it's actually Jesus Christ Himself, appearing here as He did to Israel in the Old Testament, given how closely His description matches Revelation 1:15-16. Being clothed in a cloud symbolizes divine glory, the rainbow recalls God's covenant mercy, and His sun-bright face and fiery feet echo the earlier description of Christ.

10:2 *and he had in his hand a little scroll opened. And he placed his right foot on the sea, and the left on the land;*

The identity of this "little scroll" is also debated. If this angel is Jesus, the little scroll is likely the same scroll from Revelation 5, the title deed to the earth given by God to His Son. Standing with

one foot on the sea and one on the land shows His ownership over the whole earth and His authority over everyone on it. He is claiming His rightful inheritance.

10:3 *and he cried out with a loud voice, as a lion roars. And when he cried out, the seven thunders spoke their own voices.*

He cries out like a roaring lion, fitting since Jesus is the Lion of Judah. When He roars, seven thunders speak. Some connect this to the sevenfold description of God's voice in Psalm 29:3-9: powerful over the waters, majestic, breaking cedars, striking with flame, shaking the wilderness, and more. Others see this as a warning of judgment for those without Christ.

10:4 *And when the seven thunders spoke their voices, I was about to write; and I heard a voice out of heaven saying to me, "Seal up what the seven thunders spoke, and do not write these things."*

Just as John begins writing down what the thunders said, he's told to keep it sealed and secret. These may be further judgments so terrible that God, in His mercy, chose to withhold them from us.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:4 (alluded to)

10:5-6 *And the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by the One who lives to the ages of the ages, who created heaven and the things in it, and the earth and the things in it, and the sea and the things in it, that time will be no longer;*

The angel raises his hand and swears by God, the Creator of everything, that there will be no more delay. This answers the cry of the martyrs from Revelation 6:9-11, who were told to wait a little longer. Now, the waiting is over.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:7 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 32:40 (alluded to)

10:7 *but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God should be finished, as He preached the gospel to His own slaves the prophets.*

Just before the seventh trumpet sounds, "the mystery of God" will be completed, as He promised His prophets. Many understand this "mystery" to be salvation itself: how a holy God could love sinful people so much that He sent His only Son to die for them. Others see it as the fuller mystery of all things, salvation, sin, good and evil, and creation. Either way, this mystery is the good news that the prophets were given to declare.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:7 (alluded to)

10:8-9 *And the voice which I heard out of heaven was speaking with me again, and saying, "Go, take the little scroll which* ***is*** *opened in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land." And I went to the angel, saying to him, "Give me the little scroll." And he says to me, "Take and eat it up; and it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."*

John is told to take the little scroll and eat it. This closely echoes Ezekiel 3:1-3, where Ezekiel eats a scroll that tastes sweet as honey, meaning we should take God's Word fully into ourselves, so we can share it more vividly with others. The sweetness in the mouth but bitterness in the stomach shows the joy of God's Word alongside the heavy grief of the persecution and suffering still to come.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 3:1-3 (alluded to)

10:10 *And I took the little scroll out of the hand of the angel and ate it up; and it was sweet as honey in my mouth; and when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.*

John does exactly as told. The sweetness may represent the joy of God's Word, while the bitterness may reflect the painful separation from worldly things that comes with truly accepting Christ, or the unsettling weight of knowing what judgment is still to come for those who reject Him.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 3:1-3 (alluded to)

10:11 *And he says to me, "You must prophesy again concerning peoples and nations and tongues and many kings."*

John is told he must prophesy again, to every nation, tribe, and person. His mission is to make sure God's Word reaches the whole world.

Chapter 10 Summary

John's vision takes another dramatic turn as a strong angel comes down with a little scroll. This angel announces that the end has come, that when the seventh trumpet sounds, God's victory will be complete. John is told to eat the scroll; it is sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his stomach.

Chapter 10 Study Questions

1. What is the most unusual thing you have ever eaten?
2. How does John describe the mighty angel who comes down from heaven? (10:1-3)
3. What is John forbidden to write down? (10:4)
4. By what power does the angel make his promise? (10:6)
5. What will be finished when the seventh angel is ready to sound his trumpet? (10:7)
6. What happens when John eats the little scroll? (10:9-10)
7. Why do you think John was allowed to record so much, but forbidden to write down what the seven thunders said?
8. What might make God's Word sweet at first, but harder to accept once it sinks in?
9. What difficult Bible passage or Christian idea will you spend time studying this week?

Chapter 11: Trumpet Judgment 7

Scripture: The Two Witnesses

11:1-6 And a reed like a staff was given to me, and the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it. And leave out the court which ***is*** outside the temple, and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city ***for*** forty-two months. And I will give to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy ***for*** one thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the God of the earth. And if anyone desires to harm them, fire goes out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone desires to harm them, thus he must be killed. These have authority to shut heaven, so that no rain may fall in ***the*** days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague as often as they desire.

11:7-14 And when they have finished their testimony, the beast which comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and will overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies ***will be*** on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And ***those*** from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies three days and a half, and will not allow their dead bodies to be put into tombs. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and will celebrate, and will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth. And after the three days and a half, a spirit of life from God entered upon them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice out of heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them. And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand names of men were killed in the earthquake; and the rest became terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second woe has passed; and look, the third woe is coming quickly.

11:15-19 And the seventh angel sounded, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of the world have become ***those*** of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign to the ages of the ages." And the twenty-four elders who sit before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to You, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was and who is coming, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to Your slaves the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Your name, to the small and to the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth." And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple; and there were lightnings and voices and thunders and an earthquake and great hail.

Chapter 11 Preview

The Gentiles invade Jerusalem, alongside the rise of the two witnesses. The scene shifts to earthly Jerusalem, the center stage of the coming conflict with the beast. The witnesses are killed, then miraculously raised back to life.

Chapter 11 Study

11:1-2 *And a reed like a staff was given to me, and the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship in it. And leave out the court which **is** outside the temple, and do not measure it, because it has been given to the nations; and they will trample the holy city **for** forty-two months.*

This vision involves a Temple standing in Jerusalem during the Tribulation (see also 2 Thessalonians 2:4). Measuring something in Scripture usually signals that God is marking off what belongs to Him. John is told to measure the Temple itself, but not the outer courtyard, which will be given over to the nations for 42 months, the same period Daniel describes (Daniel 9:27; 12:7). Some believe those who worship in that outer court represent people with false or hypocritical faith.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 40:3 (alluded to); Daniel 8:13 (alluded to)

11:3 *And I will give to My two witnesses, and they will prophesy **for** one thousand two hundred sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."*

There are a few views on who these two witnesses are: some think they symbolize a faithful remnant of Judah; others believe they are two entirely new prophets from the last days; and many believe they are Elijah and Moses returning, pointing to Malachi 4:5 and the fact that both men appeared with Jesus at His transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5). Others believe they are Enoch and Elijah, the two men who never died (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11). They will prophesy for 1,260 days, three and a half years counted as 42 months of 30 days (11:2-3), wearing sackcloth, the traditional clothing of Old Testament prophets calling people to repent.

11:4 *These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the God of the earth.*

Some see the two olive trees and lampstands as symbolizing the church, Jewish and Gentile believers together, supplied by these two witnesses with the Spirit, often pictured as oil (Isaiah 61:1; Zechariah 4:6). Their actions closely mirror Moses and Elijah: Moses turned water to blood and struck Egypt with plagues; Elijah called down fire and stopped the rain for three and a half years, the same length of time these witnesses will prophesy.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 4:11-14 (alluded to)

11:5-6 *And if anyone desires to harm them, fire goes out of their mouth and devours their enemies; and if anyone desires to harm them, thus he must be killed. These have authority to shut heaven, so that no rain may fall in **the** days of their prophecy; and they have authority over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague as often as they desire.*

For the full three and a half years, these witnesses cannot be harmed; anyone who tries will be struck down. They can stop the rain, turn water to blood, and bring any plague, echoing the miracles of Elijah (1 Kings 17:1) and Moses (Exodus 7:17-21).

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 5:14 (alluded to); 1 Kings 17:1 (alluded to); 2 Kings 1:10 (alluded to); Exodus 7:17 (alluded to)

11:7 *And when they have finished their testimony, the beast which comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and will overcome them and kill them.*

This is the first mention of "the beast" in Revelation, widely understood as the Antichrist described fully in Chapter 13. Rising from the abyss points to his demonic origin. Only after the witnesses finish their assigned testimony does the beast gain power to kill them.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:21 (alluded to)

11:8-9 *And their dead bodies **will be** on the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And **those** from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies three days and a half, and will not allow their dead bodies to be put into tombs.*

The witnesses' bodies lie in the street of Jerusalem, called "Sodom" for its wickedness and "Egypt" for its idolatry and oppression. The world watches their bodies for three and a half days and refuses to let them be buried.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 1:10 (alluded to)

11:10 *And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and will celebrate, and will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.*

The world celebrates their deaths, even exchanging gifts, relieved that the plagues and suffering the witnesses brought have finally ended.

Old Testament links: Esther 9:22 (alluded to)

11:11 *And after the three days and a half, a spirit of life from God entered upon them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who were watching them.*

After three and a half days, God breathes life back into them, just as He first breathed life into Adam (Genesis 2:7). Those watching are struck with great fear, much like the Roman guards at Jesus' empty tomb (Matthew 28:4).

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 37:10 (alluded to)

11:12 *And they heard a loud voice out of heaven saying to them, "Come up here." And they went up to heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.*

A voice from heaven calls the two witnesses up, and they ascend in full view of their enemies. Mid-Tribulation believers point to this verse as support for their view, believing this may be when the faithful in Christ are also called up to God. In the Pre-Tribulation view I hold, the church has already been taken up before the Tribulation began (see the notes on 4:1), so I read this as the two witnesses' own resurrection and ascension.

Old Testament links: 2 Kings 2:11 (alluded to)

11:13 *And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; and seven thousand names of men were killed in the earthquake; and the rest became terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.*

At that same hour, a great earthquake destroys a tenth of Jerusalem, killing 7,000 people. The survivors, terrified, cry out to God, though this fear-driven response doesn't necessarily mean their hearts have truly turned to Him.

11:14 *The second woe has passed; and look, the third woe is coming quickly.*

The second of the three woes has now passed, with one more still to come.

11:15 *And the seventh angel sounded, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of the world have become **those** of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign to the ages of the ages."*

The seventh and final trumpet sounds, and heaven declares that the world now belongs to God and His Christ, forever. The earlier judgments are complete; now the world's kingdoms fully become Christ's kingdom.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:14 (alluded to); Exodus 15:18 (alluded to); Daniel 2:44 (alluded to); Daniel 7:27 (alluded to)

11:16-18 *And the twenty-four elders who sit before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying, "We give thanks to You, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was and who is coming, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign. And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time of the dead to be judged, and to give the reward to Your slaves the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Your name, to the small and to the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."*

The elders give thanks for God reclaiming His power. This verse gives us a preview of everything still to come in Revelation: God's wrath against the nations, the judgment of the dead, the reward of the righteous, and the destruction of the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon.

Old Testament links: Psalm 115:13 (alluded to); Psalm 2:1 (alluded to)

11:19 *And the temple of God in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple; and there were lightnings and voices and thunders and an earthquake and great hail.*

Heaven's temple opens, revealing the Ark of the Covenant, a powerful symbol of God's faithfulness to His people. This forms a fitting close to the trumpet judgments and sets the stage for the next section of Revelation, chapters 12 and 13, which focus on God's ongoing faithfulness to His people.

Chapter 11 Summary

During the end times, God empowers two witnesses to prophesy and perform miracles for 1,260 days. The Antichrist kills them, and their bodies are left unburied and celebrated by the world.

After three and a half days, they are miraculously raised and taken up into heaven. With the seventh trumpet, the authority to rule the world is given fully to Christ.

Chapter 11 Study Questions

1. What kind of people are most effective at communicating God's Word?
2. How long will the two witnesses minister before they are killed? (11:3)
3. Why are the two witnesses dressed in rough cloth? (11:3)
4. What happens when the seventh trumpet sounds? (11:15-19)
5. What message do you think the two witnesses will preach?
6. Why do you think the people of the earth will celebrate the death of the two witnesses?
7. If the power to rule the world is fully given to God in the last days, who holds power now?
8. How will God reward His servants?
9. What can you do this week to publicly acknowledge God and share His truth with others?

Chapter 12: The Beginning

Scripture: The Woman, the Dragon, and the Child

12:1-6 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and having ***a child*** in ***her*** womb, she cries out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven; and look, a great fiery red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems. And his tail drags a third of the stars of heaven, and he cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male, who is about to shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there they might nourish her one thousand two hundred sixty days.

12:7-12 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels warred against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels warred, and they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them any longer in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the ancient serpent, who is called ***the*** devil and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life until death. Because of this rejoice, O heavens and you who tabernacle in them! Woe to those who dwell ***on*** the land and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great fury, knowing that he has a short time."

12:13-17 And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male ***child***. And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished there a time and times and half a time, from ***the*** face of the serpent. And the serpent cast water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be carried away by the river. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon had cast out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Chapter 12 Preview

Right in the middle of Revelation is a kind of scorecard, introducing the key symbolic figures in the end-times drama. Understanding who these figures represent is crucial to understanding the rest of the book. The "woman" who gives birth to "a son, a male," is especially important.

Chapter 12 Study

12:1 *And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;*

There are three main views of who this woman represents: the Virgin Mary, the church as a whole, or Israel. The most likely view is that she represents Israel, which gave birth to the Messiah, Jesus. Israel had been preparing since Abraham to bring forth this child who would bless the whole world. Being clothed with the sun points to the New Covenant, the moon under her feet to the Old Covenant, and the crown of twelve stars to the twelve tribes of Israel (echoing Joseph's dream in Genesis 37:9-10, where the sun, moon, and stars stand for Jacob, Rachel, and the sons of Israel).

12:2 *and having **a child** in **her** womb, she cries out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.*

This language closely echoes Isaiah 26:17, Isaiah 66:7-8, and Micah 5:3, where Israel is pictured as a woman in labor. The labor pains picture the long, national struggle of Israel and the ongoing line leading to the Messiah.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 66:7 (alluded to); Micah 5:3 (alluded to)

12:3 *And another sign appeared in heaven; and look, a great fiery red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems.*

This great red dragon represents Satan. The Bible teaches that Satan is a real, literal being, not just a symbol for human evil, an actual angel who rebelled against God out of pride and was cast out of heaven, taking a third of the angels with him. His seven heads represent his complete grip on the world's earthly authorities, his ten horns represent ten kings who will rule during the Tribulation, and his seven crowns represent his authority. These images come from Daniel 7:7-8 and 20-24, showing that Satan is the ultimate power behind the final kingdom of the Antichrist.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:7 (alluded to); Daniel 7:20 (alluded to)

12:4 *And his tail drags a third of the stars of heaven, and he cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.*

The dragon's tail sweeping away a third of the stars represents his powerful deception, which led a third of the angels to follow him out of heaven. He also stood ready to kill the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, echoing Herod's slaughter of infants in Bethlehem after Jesus' birth (Matthew 2:3-16), an attack led, ultimately, by Satan.

Old Testament links: Daniel 8:10 (alluded to); Isaiah 66:7 (alluded to)

12:5 *And she gave birth to a son, a male, who is about to shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.*

This child, born from Israel, is destined to rule over every nation: this can only be Jesus Christ Himself. His being "caught up to God and to His throne" points to His ascension, described in Luke 24:51.

Old Testament links: Psalm 2:9 (alluded to); Isaiah 66:7 (alluded to)

12:6 *And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, so that there they might nourish her one thousand two hundred sixty days.*

The nation of Israel flees to the wilderness, to a place God has already prepared, where they will be protected and provided for over 1,260 days.

12:7-8 *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels warred against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels warred, and they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them any longer in heaven.*

A war breaks out in heaven between the archangel Michael and his angels against the dragon and his demons. Satan's forces lose, and there is no longer any place for them in heaven.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:1 (alluded to)

12:9 *And the great dragon was thrown down, the ancient serpent, who is called **the** devil and Satan, who deceives the whole inhabited world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*

Satan and his angels are cast out of heaven permanently. This verse confirms plainly who this dragon is: the ancient serpent, the devil, Satan, the deceiver of the whole world.

Old Testament links: Genesis 3:1 (alluded to); Genesis 3:13 (alluded to)

12:10-11 *And I heard a loud voice in heaven saying, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life until death.*

A loud voice announces that God's kingdom is coming, and Satan, the accuser of God's people, has been permanently removed. Believers overcome him through the blood of the Lamb and their own testimony, remaining faithful even when facing death.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 3:1 (alluded to)

12:12 *Because of this rejoice, O heavens and you who tabernacle in them! Woe to those who dwell **on** the land and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great fury, knowing that he has a short time."*

Heaven rejoices that Satan is gone from their presence. But this is bad news for those still on earth, since Satan, knowing his time is short, will bring his wrath there instead.

12:13 *And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the male* ***child****.*

Once Satan realizes he no longer has access to heaven, he turns his anger toward Israel.

12:14 *And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished there a time and times and half a time, from* ***the*** *face of the serpent.*

Israel is given a supernatural way to escape and hide in the wilderness for the same three and a half years, 1,260 days, mentioned earlier.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:25 (alluded to); Exodus 19:4 (alluded to); Daniel 12:7 (alluded to)

12:15-16 *And the serpent cast water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be carried away by the river. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river which the dragon had cast out of his mouth.*

Satan tries to sweep Israel away with a flood. Some see this as literal flooding, others as a flood of false teaching meant to deceive. Either way, the earth itself protects the woman, swallowing up the threat.

Old Testament links: Numbers 16:32 (alluded to)

12:17 *And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went away to make war with the rest of her seed, who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

Unable to harm Israel directly, Satan turns his rage on believers, both Jewish and Gentile, who keep God's commandments and hold to their faith in Jesus.

Old Testament links: Genesis 3:15 (alluded to)

Chapter 12 Summary

John sees a pregnant woman in heaven, with a dragon waiting to devour her child. After the child's birth, He is taken up to heaven, and the woman flees to the wilderness for 1,260 days. After a battle in heaven, Satan himself is cast down to earth, where he tries to attack the woman, then turns his war on her other children, believers who obey God and hold to their faith in Jesus.

Chapter 12 Study Questions

1. How is the devil portrayed in our culture today?
2. What two signs does John see in heaven? (12:1-4)
3. What is the giant red dragon poised to do? (12:4)
4. What happens to the mother and child after the birth? (12:5-6)
5. What happens as a result of the war in heaven? (12:7-9)

6. How does the woman escape the dragon's attacks? (12:13-17)

7. What events do you think are symbolically described in this account of the woman and the dragon?

8. Why do you think God uses imagery and symbolism here, rather than a plain, direct account?

9. What does this passage teach us about the nature and power of Satan?

10. How does this imagery help you understand the seriousness of the spiritual battle happening around your own church and life?

Chapter 13: The Beginning of the End

Scripture: The Two Beasts

13:1-10 And I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on its horns ten diadems, and on its heads a name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and its feet like ***those of*** a bear, and its mouth like ***the*** mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority. And I saw one of its heads as having been slain to death, and the wound of its death was healed; and all the earth marveled after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who ***is*** like the beast? Who is able to make war with it?" And a mouth was given to it speaking great things and blasphemies; and authority was given to it to act ***for*** forty-two months. And it opened its mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle and those who tabernacle in heaven. And it was given to it to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority was given to it over every tribe and tongue and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship it, whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from ***the*** foundation of ***the*** world. If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone gathers ***into*** captivity, into captivity he goes; if anyone will kill with the sword, he must be killed with the sword. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.

13:11-18 And I saw another beast rising out of the earth, and it had two horns like a lamb, and it was speaking like a dragon. And it exercises all the authority of the first beast before it, and it makes the earth and those who dwell in it worship the first beast, whose wound of death was healed. And it performs great signs, so that it even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth before men. And it deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which were given to it to perform before the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast which has the wound of the sword and lived. And it was given to it to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak, and might cause that as many as do not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And it causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, that it should give them a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one should be able to buy or to sell except the one who has the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of its name. Here is the wisdom. The one who has understanding, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is a man's number; and its number ***is*** six hundred sixty-six.

Chapter 13 Preview

Two beasts rise into view: the beast from the sea, symbolizing the Antichrist, and the beast from the earth, symbolizing the false prophet. Both are empowered by Satan, forming an unholy counterfeit trinity, evil and deception in full form. Together they will control the world economically, politically, and religiously in the Last Days.

Chapter 13 Study

13:1 *And I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on its horns ten diadems, and on its heads a name of blasphemy.*

Having failed to destroy Jesus at birth, Satan now assembles the final empire that will try to resist Christ's takeover of the earth. This beast rises out of the sea (representing the nations of the world), with ten crowned horns and seven heads carrying blasphemous names. Many futurist scholars believe this beast is the Antichrist, and many tie him to a revived form of the Roman Empire, matching the description of the other horn, "a small one," in Daniel 7. Revelation 17:9-15 explains further that the seven heads and ten horns represent kings and kingdoms who will give their power to the Antichrist during the Tribulation.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:7 (alluded to); Daniel 7:3 (alluded to)

13:2 *And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and its feet like **those of** a bear, and its mouth like **the** mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority.*

The leopard, bear, and lion recall Daniel's vision in Daniel 7:2-7, representing the great world empires before Rome: Babylon (the lion), Media-Persia (the bear), and Greece (the leopard). Rome, the fourth and final empire in Daniel's vision, combined elements of all three. Satan grants this beast the same kind of power and authority he gave those ancient empires.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:4-6 (alluded to)

13:3-4 *And I saw one of its heads as having been slain to death, and the wound of its death was healed; and all the earth marveled after the beast. And they worshiped the dragon who gave authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who **is** like the beast? Who is able to make war with it?"*

There are different views on this "wound of its death": some see it as describing the fall and miraculous revival of a kingdom, like Rome; others see it as a literal, miraculous healing of the Antichrist himself after a mortal wound. Either way, the world is stunned into amazed worship, both of the dragon and the beast, since no one can defeat or remove him.

13:5-6 *And a mouth was given to it speaking great things and blasphemies; and authority was given to it to act **for** forty-two months. And it opened its mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle and those who tabernacle in heaven.*

The beast is given a period of 42 months (three and a half years) to speak arrogant, blasphemous words against God, His name, and His people in heaven, echoing the small horn of Daniel 7:8, 20.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:8 (alluded to); Daniel 11:36 (alluded to); Daniel 7:20 (alluded to); Daniel 7:21 (alluded to); Daniel 7:11 (alluded to); Daniel 7:25 (alluded to)

13:7-8 *And it was given to it to make war with the saints and to overcome them; and authority was given to it over every tribe and tongue and nation. And all who dwell on the earth will worship it,*

*whose names have not been written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from **the** foundation of **the** world.*

The beast is given authority to wage war against believers and, for a time, to overcome them, meaning those who come to faith during the Tribulation won't receive blanket protection from him. Everyone on earth will worship him, except those whose names are already written in the Lamb's book of life, God's elect, who will not take his mark.

Old Testament links: Psalm 69:28 (alluded to); Daniel 7:21 (alluded to)

13:9-10 *If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone gathers **into** captivity, into captivity he goes; if anyone will kill with the sword, he must be killed with the sword. Here is the endurance and the faith of the saints.*

This is a call to pay close attention. Some of these Tribulation believers will face captivity, others martyrdom, but believers are told: for those in captivity, perseverance will win the day; for those facing death, faith will win the day.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 15:2 (alluded to); Jeremiah 43:11 (alluded to)

13:11 *And I saw another beast rising out of the earth, and it had two horns like a lamb, and it was speaking like a dragon.*

A second beast appears, widely understood as the false prophet, who will lead a false religious system meant to deceive the world. He looks like a lamb, gentle and harmless, but he speaks like the dragon, with the same blasphemous authority as the first beast.

13:12 *And it exercises all the authority of the first beast before it, and it makes the earth and those who dwell in it worship the first beast, whose wound of death was healed.*

The false prophet operates entirely under the authority of the first beast, the Antichrist. His whole purpose is to make the world worship the Antichrist.

13:13-14 *And it performs great signs, so that it even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth before men. And it deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which were given to it to perform before the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast which has the wound of the sword and lived.*

The false prophet performs miraculous signs, including fire from heaven, deceiving the world into building an image to honor the Antichrist.

Old Testament links: 2 Kings 1:12 (alluded to)

13:15 *And it was given to it to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak, and might cause that as many as do not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*

This image is somehow given the power to "speak," likely blasphemy like the beasts themselves, and anyone who refuses to worship it will be killed.

Old Testament links: Daniel 3:6 (alluded to)

13:16-17 *And it causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the slaves, that it should give them a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one should be able to buy or to sell except the one who has the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of its name.*

Every person, regardless of wealth or status, will be required to take a visible mark, either the beast's name or its number, on their hand or forehead. Without this mark, no one will be able to buy or sell anything, an unmistakable counterfeit of God's own seal on His people. If you are a believer and worry that you could take this mark by accident, look at what the text says: the mark goes together with worshiping the beast (13:15-16; 14:9-11). It is a deliberate choice to give him your loyalty, not something done to a person without knowing it.

13:18 *Here is the wisdom. The one who has understanding, let him calculate the number of the beast, for it is a man's number; and its number **is** six hundred sixty-six.*

Many have tried to calculate exactly who this number identifies, with guesses ranging across history from ancient emperors to modern political figures. Since these end times have not yet come, we can say with confidence that all such guesses so far have been wrong. What we do know is that six is the number associated with mankind in Scripture, one short of the perfect number seven, since mankind was created on the sixth day. Three sixes together may point to the full expression of mankind's pride: humanity's last attempt to claim divinity for itself and rob God of His glory.

Chapter 13 Summary

John sees a beast with seven heads and ten horns rising from the sea, given power by the dragon to wage war against believers for 42 months. A second beast rises from the earth and deceives the world into worshiping the first beast through miraculous signs. Those who worship the beast receive his mark.

Chapter 13 Study Questions

1. What is the most effective way you've seen someone convince a large group of people to follow them?
2. How does John describe the beast that comes from the sea? (13:1-3)
3. What is this beast given power to do? (13:5-7)
4. What role does the second beast, from the earth, play? (13:11-12)
5. How does the second beast accomplish its mission? (13:13-17)
6. How are people pressured into accepting the mark of the beast? (13:17)

7. In what ways do people speak against God in our society today?

8. What do you think the mark of the beast, and the process of receiving it, might actually look like?

9. What reassurance would you offer someone worried about these end-times events?

Chapter 14: The End of the Beginning

Scripture: The Lamb, the 144,000, and the Harvest

14:1-5 And I saw, and look, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred forty-four thousand, having the name of His Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a voice out of heaven like ***the*** sound of many waters and like ***the*** sound of loud thunder; and I heard a voice of harpists harping with their harps. And they sing as ***it were*** a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, who had been purchased from the earth. These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were purchased from among men, firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth no deceit was found, for they are blameless before the throne of God.

14:6-13 And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and springs of waters." And another angel followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon, the great city, because she has made all the nations drink of the wine of the fury of her sexual immorality." And a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself also will drink of the wine of the fury of God, which has been mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath; and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur before the holy angels and before the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up to ages of ages; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and its image, and if anyone receives the mark of its name." Here is ***the*** endurance of the saints; here ***are*** those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice out of heaven saying to me, "Write: Blessed ***are*** the dead who die in ***the*** Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors; and their works follow with them."

14:14-20 And I saw, and look, a white cloud, and on the cloud ***One*** sitting like a son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to the One sitting on the cloud, "Send in Your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come for You, because the harvest of the earth has become dry." And the One sitting on the cloud cast His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. And another angel came out of the temple which ***is*** in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, having authority over the fire; and he called with a loud cry to the one having the sharp sickle, saying, "Send in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, because its grapes are fully ripe." And the angel cast his sickle to the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast ***it*** into the great winepress of the fury of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the bridles of the horses, for approximately 180 miles (1,600 stadia).

Chapter 14 Preview

Having introduced the key players in the end-times drama, John now returns to the unfolding story. The everlasting gospel is proclaimed, and the fall of "Babylon" is announced. The Son of Man appears to judge the world and tread the winepress of God's wrath.

Chapter 14 Study

14:1 *And I saw, and look, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred forty-four thousand, having the name of His Father written on their foreheads.*

This is a new vision. The Lamb, Jesus, stands on Mount Zion, God's earthly city (the seventh bowl later splits "the great city" into three parts, 16:19). With Him are the same 144,000 sealed Jewish believers first introduced in Revelation 7:4, and we now learn what their seal actually was: the name of His Father, written on their foreheads.

14:2-3 *And I heard a voice out of heaven like **the** sound of many waters and like **the** sound of loud thunder; and I heard a voice of harpists harping with their harps. And they sing as **it were** a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one was able to learn the song except the one hundred forty-four thousand, who had been purchased from the earth.*

John hears an overwhelming, beautiful heavenly choir singing a new song, one that only the 144,000 on earth are able to learn. They are called "purchased," the firstfruits of the salvation God has promised to the nation of Israel.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 43:2 (alluded to)

14:4-5 *These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were purchased from among men, firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth no deceit was found, for they are blameless before the throne of God.*

Four things describe this group: they have remained sexually pure; they follow the Lamb wherever He goes; they were redeemed as "firstfruits," a term used elsewhere in the New Testament (Romans 8:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20) to describe an initial group with more still to come; and they are morally blameless, with no lie found in their mouths, closely echoing Zephaniah 3:13's description of a faithful remnant of Israel.

Old Testament links: Zephaniah 3:13 (alluded to)

14:6-7 *And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; and worship the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and springs of waters."*

An angel flies through the sky, proclaiming an "eternal gospel," a final, universal call for all humanity to recognize God's authority: fear Him, give Him glory, and worship Him as Creator, because the hour of judgment has finally arrived.

Old Testament links: Exodus 20:11 (alluded to)

14:8 *And another angel followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon, the great city, because she has made all the nations drink of the wine of the fury of her sexual immorality."*

A second angel announces the fall of "Babylon," spoken of as already certain, even though it hasn't fully happened yet. Whether this points to a literal city or a symbol for a corrupt world system, the point is that Babylon has spread spiritual immorality across every nation, like wine that leads people into passion for sin.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 51:7 (alluded to); Isaiah 21:9 (alluded to); Daniel 4:30 (alluded to)

14:9-11 *And a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself also will drink of the wine of the fury of God, which has been mixed undiluted in the cup of His wrath; and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur before the holy angels and before the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up to ages of ages; and they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and its image, and if anyone receives the mark of its name."*

A third angel gives a solemn warning: anyone who worships the beast and takes his mark will face God's full wrath and eternal torment. This isn't stated because there's doubt that people will do this; it's meant to make clear just how serious the consequences are.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 34:10 (alluded to); Psalm 11:6 (alluded to); Genesis 19:24 (alluded to); Psalm 75:8 (alluded to); Jeremiah 25:15 (alluded to)

14:12 *Here is **the** endurance of the saints; here **are** those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*

This verse explains why this warning comes at this exact point in the story: the final judgments, the bowl judgments, and the battle of Armageddon are close at hand. While the warning is aimed at the wicked, its purpose is really to encourage believers to remain faithful.

14:13 *And I heard a voice out of heaven saying to me, "Write: Blessed **are** the dead who die in **the** Lord from now on." "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors; and their works follow with them."*

This is the second of seven blessings in Revelation (the first was in 1:3). Those who die in the Lord from this point on, likely referring to martyrs, are blessed immediately with rest from their labor, and their faithful works are remembered.

14:14 *And I saw, and look, a white cloud, and on the cloud **One** sitting like a son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle.*

A unique heavenly figure appears, sitting on a cloud, echoing Daniel 7:13. He wears a golden crown and holds a sharp sickle, ready for harvest.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:13 (alluded to)

14:15-16 *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to the One sitting on the cloud, "Send in Your sickle and reap, because the hour to reap has come for You, because the harvest of the earth has become dry." And the One sitting on the cloud cast His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

An angel calls out that the time of harvest, judgment, has finally come, because the earth's wickedness has "ripened" and demands punishment. This echoes Joel 3:13, which combines the imagery of both a grain harvest and a grape harvest, here split into two separate events.

Old Testament links: Joel 3:13 (alluded to)

14:17-18 *And another angel came out of the temple which **is** in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, having authority over the fire; and he called with a loud cry to the one having the sharp sickle, saying, "Send in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, because its grapes are fully ripe."*

A second harvest begins, the grape harvest, again drawing on Joel 3:13. The metaphor points to the wicked finally receiving their deserved punishment.

Old Testament links: Joel 3:13 (alluded to)

14:19-20 *And the angel cast his sickle to the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast **it** into the great winepress of the fury of God. And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress up to the bridles of the horses, for approximately 180 miles (1,600 stadia).*

The wicked are gathered and thrown into the "winepress" of God's wrath, trampled outside the city, almost certainly Jerusalem. The image of blood flowing as high as a horse's bridle for 1,600 stadia (about 180 miles) is figurative, but even so, it points to a massive, devastating judgment.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 63:3 (alluded to)

Chapter 14 Summary

John sees three angels each deliver a message to the world: the first calls people to fear and worship God; the second announces the fall of Babylon; and the third warns against worshiping the beast or taking his mark. The chapter closes with two harvest images, grain and grapes, representing the final judgment of the wicked.

Chapter 14 Study Questions

1. If you had an urgent message you needed as many people as possible to hear, how would you spread it?

2. What is the eternal Good News that the first angel preaches to every nation? (14:6-7)
3. According to the second angel, what is Babylon responsible for? (14:8)
4. According to the third angel, who will suffer eternal torment? (14:9-11)
5. What are God's people instructed to do in the middle of all this? (14:12)
6. How is the gospel being spread throughout the world today?
7. How do you personally tell others about the Good News of Christ?
8. Why is patience such an important trait for believers during hard times?
9. What practical step could you take this week to help spread the gospel?

Chapter 15: Prelude to the Bowl Judgments

Scripture: The Seven Angels and the Seven Bowls

15:1-4 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having seven plagues, the last ***ones***, because in them the fury of God is finished. And I saw ***something*** like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who are victorious over the beast and over its image and over its mark ***and*** over the number of its name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous ***are*** Your works, Lord God Almighty! Righteous and true ***are*** Your ways, O King of the saints! Who will not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For ***You*** alone ***are*** holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, because Your righteous acts have been made manifest."

15:5-8 And after these things I saw, and look, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in pure and bright linen, and girded around the chests with golden sashes. And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the fury of God, who lives to the ages of the ages. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Chapter 15 Preview

This is the last round of judgment. It's called "seven plagues, the last ones," and they're carried in seven golden bowls. Before they're poured out, the martyrs who died during the Great Tribulation appear in heaven, singing songs of victory. Then seven angels step out of God's temple, each carrying a bowl full of His wrath.

Chapter 15 Study

15:1 *And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having seven plagues, the last **ones**, because in them the fury of God is finished.*

This is the third and final "great sign" in this part of Revelation. Seven angels are holding seven plagues, called the Bowl Judgments. They're called "the last" because after these, God's wrath is complete. First Thessalonians 1:10 makes clear that anyone who trusts in Jesus is saved from this wrath, and these bowls fall on those who took the mark of the beast and worshiped its image (16:2).

15:2 *And I saw **something** like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who are victorious over the beast and over its image and over its mark **and** over the number of its name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.*

John sees people who refused to bow to the beast: they didn't worship him, take his image, or accept his mark. They're standing victorious on a sea of glass, holding harps, ready to praise God.

15:3-4 *And they sing the song of Moses the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous **are** Your works, Lord God Almighty! Righteous and true **are** Your ways, O King of the saints! Who will not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For **You** alone **are** holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, because Your righteous acts have been made manifest."*

This song isn't a direct quote from any Old Testament song of Moses. It may be a new song being introduced here for the first time. It praises God the Father for His works and His just, true ways. The song asks a question that answers itself: "Who will not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?" No one who truly sees God could refuse Him. Yet, as we'll soon see, the beast's followers will still try.

Old Testament links: Psalm 145:17 (alluded to); Exodus 15:1 (alluded to); Psalm 86:9 (alluded to); Jeremiah 10:7 (alluded to); Psalm 92:5 (alluded to)

15:5-6 *And after these things I saw, and look, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in pure and bright linen, and girded around the chests with golden sashes.*

Heaven's temple opens, and seven angels step out dressed in bright, clean linen with gold sashes across their chests, a picture of purity and high honor. Their job is to carry out God's final judgments.

Old Testament links: Numbers 1:50 (alluded to); Daniel 10:5 (alluded to)

15:7 *And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the fury of God, who lives to the ages of the ages.*

One of the four living creatures hands each angel a golden bowl filled with God's wrath. A bowl empties quickly, and these judgments will come fast, one after another.

15:8 *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.*

Smoke, a sign of God's glory and power seen throughout the Bible (Exodus 19:18; 40:34-35; Isaiah 6:4), fills the temple. No one can enter until all seven plagues are finished. There's no room left for anyone to plead for mercy at this point. The time for appeal has passed. That door is still open today: "look, now is a day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Old Testament links: Isaiah 6:4 (alluded to); Exodus 40:35 (alluded to); 2 Chronicles 5:14 (alluded to)

Chapter 15 Summary

John sees everyone who refused to worship the beast standing victorious before God, singing praise on a sea of glass. Seven angels dressed in dazzling linen step forward, each handed a golden bowl filled with God's wrath: the last plagues the earth will ever face.

Chapter 15 Study Questions

1. In your opinion, what is God's most impressive quality?

2. According to John, when will God's anger finally be finished? (15:1)

3. Where do the seven angels come from, and how are they dressed? (15:5-6)

4. What is placed in the bowls given to the seven angels? (15:7)

5. What happens in the temple after the angels receive their bowls? (15:8)

6. Based on this chapter, how do you picture heaven?

7. What great things has God done in your own life that you could sing about?

8. How do you feel about the idea of worshiping God forever?

9. What is one way you could praise God this week, through a song, a poem, or simply words of thanks?

Chapter 16: Bowl Judgments 1-7

Scripture: The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

16:1-7 And I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the fury of God into the earth." And the first went away and poured out his bowl on the earth; and a bad and evil sore came on the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image. And the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood as of a dead ***man***, and every living soul died in the sea. And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and into the springs of waters, and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "You are righteous, O Lord, who is and who was and who shall be, because You judged these things; because they poured out ***the*** blood of saints and of prophets, and You gave them blood to drink; for they are worthy." And I heard another out of the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous ***are*** Your judgments."

16:8-11 And the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched ***with*** great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God, who has authority over these plagues; and they did not repent to give Him glory. And the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom became darkened; and they were gnawing their tongues because of the pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and because of their sores, and they did not repent of their works.

16:12-16 And the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from ***the*** rising of ***the*** sun might be prepared. And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole inhabited world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God the Almighty. "Look, I am coming like a thief. Blessed ***is*** the one who watches and keeps his garments, so that he may not walk naked and they see his shame." And they gathered them to the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon.

16:17-21 And the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air; and a loud voice came out from the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were voices and thunders and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as had not been since men were on the earth, so mighty an earthquake, so great. And the great city ***was split*** into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath. And every island fled, and mountains were not found. And great hail, weighing approximately 75 pounds (a talent), comes down out of heaven on men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for its plague is exceedingly great.

Chapter 16 Preview

The seven angels now pour out their bowls of judgment. One disaster after another shakes the earth, building up to the Battle of Armageddon. When the seventh bowl is poured out, a voice from God's own throne declares, "It is done."

Chapter 16 Study

16:1 *And I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the fury of God into the earth."*

Since no one could enter the temple (15:8), the voice giving this command must be God Himself. He gives the order, and the timing of these final judgments is entirely in His hands.

16:2 *And the first went away and poured out his bowl on the earth; and a bad and evil sore came on the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image.*

The first bowl causes painful, festering sores, much like the boils that struck Egypt during the Exodus (Exodus 9:9-11). This judgment falls specifically on those who took the mark of the beast and worshiped him.

Old Testament links: Exodus 9:10 (alluded to)

16:3-4 *And the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood as of a dead **man**, and every living soul died in the sea. And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and into the springs of waters, and they became blood.*

The second bowl turns every ocean into blood, like the blood of a corpse, killing all sea life. The third bowl does the same to every river and freshwater spring. Now all the world's water, salt and fresh, has become undrinkable blood.

Old Testament links: Exodus 7:20 (alluded to)

16:5-6 *And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "You are righteous, O Lord, who is and who was and who shall be, because You judged these things; because they poured out **the** blood of saints and of prophets, and You gave them blood to drink; for they are worthy."*

An angel connected to the waters speaks up, defending God's justice. The reason for turning the water to blood is fitting: these people shed the blood of God's saints and prophets, so now they're given blood to drink. The punishment matches the crime.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 49:26 (alluded to)

16:7 *And I heard another out of the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous **are** Your judgments."*

Even the altar itself seems to speak, affirming again that God's judgments are completely fair and true.

Old Testament links: Psalm 19:9 (alluded to)

16:8-9 *And the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched **with** great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God, who has authority over these plagues; and they did not repent to give Him glory.*

The fourth bowl intensifies the sun's heat until people are scorched. Rather than turning to God, they curse His name. You would think pain like that would drive them to their knees. It doesn't. That shows how hard a heart can get when it keeps telling God no.

16:10-11 *And the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom became darkened; and they were gnawing their tongues because of the pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and because of their sores, and they did not repent of their works.*

The fifth bowl strikes the beast's own throne, plunging his kingdom into darkness. His followers are in so much pain they bite their own tongues, yet they still refuse to repent, cursing God instead.

Old Testament links: Exodus 10:21-22 (alluded to)

16:12 *And the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from **the** rising of **the** sun might be prepared.*

The mighty Euphrates River dries up completely, clearing a path for "the kings from the rising of the sun" to march toward the final battle. This suggests that nations east of Israel will still be organized under kings at this point in history.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 50:38 (alluded to)

16:13-14 *And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole inhabited world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God the Almighty.*

Three demonic spirits, pictured as frogs (echoing the plague of frogs in Exodus 8), come from the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, the unholy trinity. They perform miraculous signs to convince the kings of the world to gather for one final war against God.

Old Testament links: Exodus 8:6 (alluded to)

16:15 *"Look, I am coming like a thief. Blessed **is** the one who watches and keeps his garments, so that he may not walk naked and they see his shame."*

In the middle of this terrifying scene, Jesus interrupts with a warning, echoing His own words about coming "like a thief" (Matthew 24:43-44; Revelation 3:3; see also 1 Thessalonians 5:2): suddenly and unexpectedly. This is the third of the seven blessings in Revelation. The message is simple: stay ready, stay faithful, because there won't be a warning before He comes.

16:16 *And they gathered them to the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon.*

The armies gather at a place called, in Hebrew, Har-Magedon, or Armageddon. This is the only place in the Bible where this name appears. It points to the region around the ancient city of Megiddo, on the southwest edge of the Valley of Jezreel in northern Israel, near Mount Carmel, a real, literal location where the final battle described in Revelation 19 will take place.

Old Testament links: Judges 5:19 (alluded to); Zechariah 12:11 (alluded to)

16:17 *And the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air; and a loud voice came out from the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"*

The seventh and final bowl is poured into the air itself. A voice (God's own voice, since the temple is empty of anyone else) declares, "It is done." The details of exactly how this plays out will be filled in later, in Revelation 17-19.

16:18 *And there were voices and thunders and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as had not been since men were on the earth, so mighty an earthquake, so great.*

A massive earthquake follows, unlike any in human history, bigger than anything that came before it in Revelation.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:1 (alluded to)

16:19 *And the great city **was split** into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath.*

"The great city," Jerusalem (as identified back in 11:8), splits into three parts. Zechariah 14:2-5 describes something similar happening to Jerusalem in the last days. Meanwhile, cities all over the world collapse, and "Babylon the great" finally receives the full cup of God's wrath, a judgment that will be described in much greater detail in Revelation 17-18.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 25:15 (alluded to)

16:20-21 *And every island fled, and mountains were not found. And great hail, weighing approximately 75 pounds (a talent), comes down out of heaven on men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, for its plague is exceedingly great.*

The earth's entire landscape is reshaped: islands and mountains vanish. Then, as a final blow, hailstones weighing about 75 pounds each fall from the sky. Even then, people respond not with repentance, but with more cursing of God.

Old Testament links: Exodus 9:24 (alluded to)

Chapter 16 Summary

Seven angels pour out God's final judgments on the earth: painful sores, seas and rivers turned to blood, scorching heat, darkness, a dried-up Euphrates that opens the way for a great gathering of armies, and finally a massive earthquake and devastating hail. Through it all, people still refuse to turn back to God.

Chapter 16 Study Questions

1. How do you picture the end of the world?

2. How are the followers of the beast affected by the first bowl judgment? (16:2)

3. What happens to the earth's water supply in the second and third bowl judgments? (16:3-4)

4. What takes place when the sixth angel pours out his bowl? (16:12-16)

5. What happens when the seventh bowl is poured out? (16:17-21)

6. Which bowl judgments echo the plagues of Egypt, and why might that matter? (16:2-13)

7. Why do you think people still refuse to repent even after suffering so much?

8. Why would a loving God allow judgments this severe?

9. How can reading about God's judgment shape the way you live with humility before Him this week?

Chapter 17: The Great Harlot

Scripture: The Woman and the Scarlet Beast

17:1-6 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on the many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality." And he carried me away into a wilderness in ***the*** Spirit; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, holding a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and uncleanness of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead a name ***was*** written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of the prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth. And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And having seen her, I marveled ***with*** a great marvel.

17:7-13 And the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast which you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go into destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names have not been written in the book of life from ***the*** foundation of ***the*** world, ***when*** they see the beast that was, and is not, though it is. Here ***is*** the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits. And they are seven kings: the five have fallen, and the one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. And the beast which was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven, and goes into destruction. And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings for one hour along with the beast. These have one purpose, and they will give their own power and authority to the beast.

17:14-18 These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those with Him ***are*** called and chosen and faithful." And he says to me, "The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the prostitute, and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire. For God has put into their hearts to do His purpose, and to do one purpose, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled. And the woman whom you saw is the great city which has kingship over the kings of the earth."

Chapter 17 Preview

A great harlot appears, riding a scarlet beast. She's called "Babylon the great." Her description points to a great city with worldwide power and influence. Together, Revelation 17 and 18 lay out the fall of this "Babylon" in detail.

Chapter 17 Study

17:1-2 *And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great prostitute who sits on the many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her sexual immorality."*

One of the bowl-carrying angels now shows John the judgment of a "great prostitute." Verse 17:15 tells us later that "many waters" represents "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues," meaning this harlot has influence over huge numbers of people. She's accused of leading "the kings of the earth" into moral corruption, and of getting the rest of the world drunk, spiritually speaking, on her influence.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 51:13 (alluded to); Jeremiah 51:7 (alluded to); Isaiah 23:17 (alluded to)

17:3 *And he carried me away into a wilderness in **the** Spirit; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.*

John is carried into a vision of a wilderness, where he sees a woman riding a scarlet beast covered in blasphemous names. The description matches the dragon of chapter 12 (seven heads and ten horns), tying this beast to the same evil power structure. The woman riding him shows she's partnered with his agenda.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:20 (alluded to)

17:4-5 *And the woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls, holding a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and uncleanness of her sexual immorality. And on her forehead a name **was** written, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of the prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth.*

Purple and scarlet were colors associated with royalty and wealth, and the woman is dripping in gold, jewels, and pearls, a picture of immense power and riches. But her golden cup is full of "abominations," and the name written on her forehead marks her as corrupt at her core. The name is called "a mystery," meaning it's symbolic and needs interpretation, not a literal name.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 51:7 (alluded to)

17:6 *And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. And having seen her, I marveled **with** a great marvel.*

This woman is responsible for the deaths of many believers. John is stunned by what he sees, and the angel is about to explain exactly who, or what, she represents.

17:7-8 *And the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns. The beast which you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to go into destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names have not been written in the book of life from **the** foundation of **the** world, **when** they see the beast that was, and is not, though it is.*

The angel offers to explain the mystery. The beast "was, and is not, and is about to come up," language that echoes the beast's apparent death and resurrection back in chapter 13. His final destination is destruction, in the lake of fire (Revelation 19:20).

17:9-11 *Here **is** the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sits. And they are seven kings: the five have fallen, and the one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while. And the beast which was, and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is of the seven, and goes into destruction.*

This calls for careful, wise reading. The seven heads represent seven mountains, and also seven kings, or kingdoms. Five have already fallen in history, one exists at the time John is writing, and one more is still to come, though its reign will be brief. The beast himself is described as an eighth king who is also, in some sense, one of the seven: a final ruler closely tied to this long line of kingdoms, and destined for the same defeat.

17:12-13 *And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings for one hour along with the beast. These have one purpose, and they will give their own power and authority to the beast.*

Ten future kings, tied to the ten toes and ten horns seen in Daniel's visions, will rule together with the beast for a short, God-appointed time. They're united by a single goal: handing their power over to him.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:24 (alluded to); Daniel 7:20 (alluded to)

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

These ten kings, together with the beast, will make war against Jesus, but Jesus wins. He's given the title "Lord of lords and King of kings," the same title used again for Him in Revelation 19:16. His followers are described as "called," "chosen," and "faithful," the saints who stood with Him through it all.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 10:17 (alluded to)

17:15-16 *And he says to me, "The waters which you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. And the ten horns which you saw on the beast, these will hate the prostitute, and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her up with fire.*

The waters are confirmed to represent people across every nation. Then comes a surprising turn: the ten horns, the kings who rule with the beast and once worked with the harlot, will turn on her, strip her, and destroy her completely. Even evil turns against itself in the end.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 16:39-41 (alluded to)

17:17 *For God has put into their hearts to do His purpose, and to do one purpose, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.*

Even this destruction happens under God's sovereign control. The unity among these kings, and their eventual betrayal of the harlot, are all part of God's plan being carried out, whether they realize it or not.

17:18 *And the woman whom you saw is the great city which has kingship over the kings of the earth."*

Finally, the angel identifies the woman plainly: she represents a great city with power over the kings of the earth. Some believe this points to Rome because of the seven mountains in verse 9. I believe it is a real city that will be the Antichrist's capital and the center of a world system, and I don't believe we can name it for certain until the time comes. The larger point of the passage is clear: any power, political or religious, that leads people away from God and toward the worship of the beast will ultimately be destroyed by the very forces it once used for its own gain.

Chapter 17 Summary

John sees a vision of a woman, called "Babylon," riding a beast with seven heads and ten horns. An angel explains that the heads represent a line of kingdoms and their kings, and the ten horns represent ten future kings who will unite with the beast, only to turn on the woman and destroy her once she has served her purpose.

Chapter 17 Study Questions

1. How good are you at solving mysteries, whether in books or in real life?
2. What does John see when the angel carries him into the wilderness? (17:1-4)
3. What title is written on the woman's forehead? (17:5)
4. What do the seven heads and ten horns of the beast represent? (17:9-13)
5. Who ultimately defeats the ten kings and the beast? (17:14)
6. Who, or what, is the woman finally revealed to be? (17:18)
7. What does it mean to be "called and chosen and faithful" to Christ?
8. Why do you think even evil powers eventually turn against each other?
9. What can you do this week to make sure your own loyalty stays with Christ rather than with worldly power or wealth?

Chapter 18: The Great City

Scripture: Babylon Is Fallen

18:1-8 And after these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated from his glory. And he cried out in might, with a loud voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit and a prison of every unclean and hated bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the fury of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth became rich from the power of her luxury." And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, "Come out of her, My people, so that you may not share in her sins, and so that you may not receive of her plagues; for her sins have reached as far as heaven, and God has remembered her unrighteous deeds. Pay back to her as she also paid back to you, and double to her double according to her works; in the cup in which she mixed, mix double for her. As much as she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so much torment and mourning give to her; because in her heart she says, 'I sit ***as*** queen, and I am not a widow, and I will by no means see mourning.' Because of this, in one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine; and she will be burned up with fire, because strong ***is the*** Lord God, the One who judges her.

18:9-20 And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep ***for*** her and will wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing from afar because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargo any longer: cargo of gold and silver and precious stone and pearl and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and all citron wood and every article of ivory and every article of most precious wood and of bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and incense and ointment and frankincense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and of horses and of chariots and of bodies, and souls of men. And the ripe fruit of the desire of your soul departed from you, and all the sumptuous things and the splendid things departed from you, and you will by no means find them any longer. The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand from afar because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, and saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, which was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls! For in one hour such great wealth was laid waste.' And every shipmaster, and all the crowd on the ships, and sailors, and as many as work the sea, stood from afar, and were crying out, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What ***city is*** like the great city?' And they threw dust on their heads, and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships in the sea became rich from her costliness! For in one hour she was laid waste.' Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and you prophets, because God has judged your judgment against her."

18:21-24 And one strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw ***it*** into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down, and will by no means be found any longer. And ***the*** sound of harpists and musicians and flute players and trumpeters will by no means be heard in you any longer; and any craftsman of any craft will by no means be

found in you any longer; and ***the*** sound of a millstone will by no means be heard in you any longer; and ***the*** light of a lamp will by no means shine in you any longer; and ***the*** voice of a bridegroom and of a bride will by no means be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because by your sorcery all the nations were deceived. And in her was found ***the*** blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth."

Chapter 18 Preview

The fall of Babylon, hinted at earlier, is now shown in full detail. This great center of global wealth and commerce is destroyed in a single hour. Sailors and merchants who once profited from her mourn as they watch her burn, but heaven is told: rejoice.

Chapter 18 Study

18:1 *And after these things I saw another angel coming down out of heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated from his glory.*

Chapter 17 announced Babylon's judgment; chapter 18 now shows it happening. An angel of unusually high rank descends, so glorious that his presence lights up the earth. His arrival signals that something momentous is about to unfold.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 43:2 (alluded to)

18:2-3 *And he cried out in might, with a loud voice, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, and she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit and a prison of every unclean and hated bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the fury of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth committed sexual immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth became rich from the power of her luxury."*

The angel repeats the earlier announcement from 14:8: Babylon has fallen. What was once a place of glory has become a haunt for demons and unclean creatures. Every nation was swept up in her influence, kings partnered with her corruption, and merchants grew wealthy riding on her coattails.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 21:9 (alluded to); Isaiah 13:21 (alluded to); Isaiah 34:11 (alluded to); Jeremiah 51:7 (alluded to); Ezekiel 27:33 (alluded to)

18:4-5 *And I heard another voice out of heaven, saying, "Come out of her, My people, so that you may not share in her sins, and so that you may not receive of her plagues; for her sins have reached as far as heaven, and God has remembered her unrighteous deeds.*

A voice, likely Christ's own, calls God's people to leave Babylon behind before judgment falls. Staying close to her sin means risking getting swept up in both the sin and its punishment. Her wrongdoing has piled up so high that God can no longer overlook it. This is not because He forgot before, but because His patience has reached its limit.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 51:45 (alluded to); Jeremiah 51:9 (alluded to); Isaiah 48:20 (alluded to); Isaiah 52:11 (alluded to)

18:6-7 *Pay back to her as she also paid back to you, and double to her double according to her works; in the cup in which she mixed, mix double for her. As much as she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so much torment and mourning give to her; because in her heart she says, 'I sit **as** queen, and I am not a widow, and I will by no means see mourning.'*

The judgment matches her pride. She believed herself untouchable ("I sit as queen, and I am not a widow, and I will by no means see mourning"), but her arrogance becomes the very measure of her punishment.

Old Testament links: Psalm 137:8 (alluded to); Jeremiah 50:29 (alluded to); Isaiah 47:7-8 (alluded to); Jeremiah 50:15 (alluded to)

18:8 *Because of this, in one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine; and she will be burned up with fire, because strong **is the** Lord God, the One who judges her.*

Her downfall comes swiftly, in a single day, a sharp contrast to her boast of endless security. Plague, grief, famine, and fire all strike at once. She thought her position made her untouchable, but God proves stronger than her defenses.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 50:34 (alluded to); Isaiah 47:9 (alluded to)

18:9-10 *And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep **for** her and will wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning, standing from afar because of the fear of her torment, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'*

The kings who once benefited from Babylon now watch from a safe distance, terrified that the same fate awaits them. Their grief isn't really for her; it's fear for themselves.

18:11-16 *And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargo any longer: cargo of gold and silver and precious stone and pearl and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and all citron wood and every article of ivory and every article of most precious wood and of bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and incense and ointment and frankincense and wine and oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and of horses and of chariots and of bodies, and souls of men. And the ripe fruit of the desire of your soul departed from you, and all the sumptuous things and the splendid things departed from you, and you will by no means find them any longer. The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand from afar because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, and saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, which was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stone and pearls!*

A long list of luxury goods follows: gold, silver, jewels, fine fabrics, rare spices, livestock, and tragically, "bodies, and souls of men" among the traded cargo. The merchants who built their fortunes on Babylon's commerce now watch their wealth vanish in an instant. Everything that once seemed so valuable is suddenly worthless.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 27:29-30 (alluded to); Ezekiel 27:13-16 (alluded to)

18:17-19 *For in one hour such great wealth was laid waste.' And every shipmaster, and all the crowd on the ships, and sailors, and as many as work the sea, stood from afar, and were crying out, seeing the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What **city is** like the great city?' And they threw dust on their heads, and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships in the sea became rich from her costliness! For in one hour she was laid waste.'*

Even sailors and shippers, another group who profited from her, join the mourning. Three separate groups (kings, merchants, and sailors) all keep their distance and grieve the same loss: their source of wealth and power is gone.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 27:32 (alluded to); Ezekiel 27:29-30 (alluded to)

18:20 *Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you holy apostles and you prophets, because God has judged your judgment against her."*

In stark contrast to the mourning on earth, heaven is told to celebrate. God's people, apostles, and prophets, those who suffered at Babylon's hands, finally see justice done.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 51:48 (alluded to)

18:21 *And one strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw **it** into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence Babylon the great city will be thrown down, and will by no means be found any longer.*

Picture a millstone, a stone big enough to grind grain for a whole village, thrown into the sea. It sinks, and nobody ever sees it again. That is how God says Babylon will fall. Not damaged, not weakened. Gone.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 51:63-64 (alluded to); Ezekiel 26:21 (alluded to)

18:22-23 *And **the** sound of harpists and musicians and flute players and trumpeters will by no means be heard in you any longer; and any craftsman of any craft will by no means be found in you any longer; and **the** sound of a millstone will by no means be heard in you any longer; and **the** light of a lamp will by no means shine in you any longer; and **the** voice of a bridegroom and of a bride will by no means be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.*

Music, craftsmanship, everyday work, the light of a lamp at night, even the joyful sound of a wedding: all of it disappears from this once-thriving city. The reason for her fall is made explicit: she deceived the nations through her influence and corruption.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 23:8 (alluded to); Jeremiah 25:10 (alluded to); Ezekiel 26:13 (alluded to); Nahum 3:4 (alluded to)

18:24 *And in her was found **the** blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on the earth."*

Babylon is ultimately condemned because she was responsible for the deaths of God's faithful people, prophets and ordinary believers alike, throughout history.

Old Testament links: Jeremiah 51:49 (alluded to)

Chapter 18 Summary

An angel announces Babylon's fall, and God's people are told to leave her before judgment strikes. Kings, merchants, and sailors who profited from her wealth and influence mourn as they watch her burn, while heaven above is told to rejoice, because justice has finally come for those she persecuted.

Chapter 18 Study Questions

1. What is the most impressive city you have ever visited, and what made it feel so powerful?

2. What causes Babylon's ruin, according to the angel? (18:2-3)

3. Who is instructed to leave Babylon before her destruction, and why? (18:4-5)

4. Why is it fitting and just for God to bring suffering upon Babylon? (18:6-8)

5. Who mourns Babylon's destruction, and why do you think their grief is really about themselves? (18:9-19)

6. Why are God's people told to rejoice rather than mourn? (18:20)

7. What can this account teach us about the dangers of trusting in wealth and power?

8. What temptations come with being wealthy or influential, even today?

9. What is one thing you can do this week to encourage a friend who is struggling because of their faith?

Chapter 19: The Great Army

Scripture: The Fourfold Hallelujah and the Rider on the White Horse

19:1-6 And after these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the honor and the power ***belong*** to the Lord our God, because true and righteous ***are*** His judgments; because He has judged the great prostitute who was corrupting the earth with her sexual immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His slaves from her hand." And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up to the ages of the ages." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down, and they worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And a voice came out from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His slaves and you who fear Him, and the small and the great." And I heard as ***it were*** a voice of a great multitude, and as a sound of many waters, and as a sound of strong thunders, saying, "Hallelujah! For ***the*** Lord God the Almighty has reigned.

19:7-10 Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And it was given to her that she should clothe herself in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. And he says to me, "Write: Blessed ***are*** those who have been called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb." And he says to me, "These are the true words of God." And I fell before his feet to worship him. And he says to me, "See ***that you do*** not! I am a fellow slave of yours and of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

19:11-16 And I saw heaven opened, and look, a white horse, and the One sitting on it ***is*** called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. And His eyes ***are*** like a flame of fire, and on His head ***are*** many diadems, having a name written which no one knows except He Himself, and clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven were following Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure. And out of His mouth goes forth a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike the nations; and He Himself will shepherd them with a rod of iron; and He Himself treads the press of the wine of the fury and of the wrath of God the Almighty. And He has on the robe and on His thigh a name written: "King of kings and Lord of lords."

19:17-21 And I saw one angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, "Come and be gathered to the supper of the great God, so that you may eat ***the*** flesh of kings and ***the*** flesh of commanders and ***the*** flesh of strong ***men*** and ***the*** flesh of horses and of those sitting on them, and ***the*** flesh of all, free and slave, and small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with the One sitting on the horse and with His army. And the beast was captured, and with this ***one*** the false prophet who did the signs before it, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worship its image. The two were thrown living into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And the rest were killed with the sword of the One sitting on the horse, which went forth out of His mouth. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

Chapter 19 Preview

This is one of the greatest chapters in the entire Bible. It brings together three of the most important events in the whole story: the marriage supper of the Lamb, the return of Christ with His church, and the final defeat of the Antichrist and false prophet. This is the climax of Revelation: Christ returns as King of kings.

Chapter 19 Study

19:1-2 *And after these things I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! The salvation and the glory and the honor and the power **belong** to the Lord our God, because true and righteous **are** His judgments; because He has judged the great prostitute who was corrupting the earth with her sexual immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His slaves from her hand."*

Heaven erupts in unified praise. "Hallelujah" simply means "Praise the Lord," and this great multitude, likely the redeemed of all the ages, praises God because His judgment of Babylon was completely fair, and because He has finally avenged the deaths of His people, fulfilling the promise made to the martyrs back in 6:10.

19:3-4 *And a second time they said, "Hallelujah! And her smoke goes up to the ages of the ages." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down, and they worshiped God who sits on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"*

The praise continues. Babylon's destruction is described as permanent and complete. "To the ages of the ages" is the same phrase used for God's own eternal reign (11:15). Here it shows that Babylon's judgment is permanent and will never be undone. The twenty-four elders and four living creatures, who appear throughout Revelation whenever heaven bursts into worship, join in.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 34:10 (alluded to)

19:5-6 *And a voice came out from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His slaves and you who fear Him, and the small and the great." And I heard as **it were** a voice of a great multitude, and as a sound of many waters, and as a sound of strong thunders, saying, "Hallelujah! For **the** Lord God the Almighty has reigned.*

A voice from the throne calls everyone, believers everywhere, to join the praise. Then an enormous chorus, as loud as rushing water and rolling thunder, declares the reason for all this celebration: God now reigns.

Old Testament links: Psalm 135:1 (alluded to); Psalm 115:13 (alluded to)

19:7-8 *Let us rejoice and exult, and let us give the glory to Him, because the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And it was given to her that she should clothe herself in fine linen, pure and bright; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*

The next great event is announced: the wedding of the Lamb. Throughout the Bible, God's people are pictured as His bride (see Hosea 2:19-20; Ephesians 5:25-32). Here, the bride is dressed in bright, clean linen, which represents the righteous deeds of God's people, not something they earned on their own, but a gift given to them.

19:9 *And he says to me, "Write: Blessed **are** those who have been called to the supper of the marriage of the Lamb." And he says to me, "These are the true words of God."*

This is the fourth of seven blessings pronounced in Revelation. Those invited to this wedding feast are called blessed, and John is assured that this promise is entirely trustworthy.

19:10 *And I fell before his feet to worship him. And he says to me, "See **that you do** not! I am a fellow slave of yours and of your brothers who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."*

Overwhelmed, John starts to worship the angel speaking to him, but the angel quickly stops him. Worship belongs to God alone. The angel reminds John that the entire point of prophecy, everything written in this book, is to point to Jesus.

19:11 *And I saw heaven opened, and look, a white horse, and the One sitting on it **is** called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.*

Heaven opens, and Jesus appears riding a white horse. Unlike the deceptive rider of the first seal in chapter 6, this rider is genuinely "Faithful and True." He comes to bring true, righteous judgment.

Old Testament links: Psalm 96:13 (alluded to)

19:12-13 *And His eyes **are** like a flame of fire, and on His head **are** many diadems, having a name written which no one knows except He Himself, and clothed with a garment dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of God.*

His blazing eyes echo earlier descriptions of Christ in Revelation 1 and 2. He wears many crowns, showing His supreme authority. His robe is already stained with blood before the battle even begins, and He carries the title "The Word of God." He is God's will and message, fully revealed and acted out.

Old Testament links: Daniel 10:6 (alluded to); Isaiah 63:1-3 (alluded to)

19:14 *And the armies in heaven were following Him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure.*

An army follows Him, dressed in the same bright linen worn elsewhere by the redeemed and by angels. Their linen, white and pure, matches what the bride wears in 19:8, "the righteous acts of the saints." I believe this army includes the church, taken up before the Tribulation and now returning with Christ, and it may include angels as well (Matthew 25:31). Their clean white clothing points to purity and holiness.

19:15 *And out of His mouth goes forth a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike the nations; and He Himself will shepherd them with a rod of iron; and He Himself treads the press of the wine of the fury and of the wrath of God the Almighty.*

Christ doesn't fight with a physical weapon; His word itself is the sword. He speaks, and the nations fall. He alone brings this final judgment; even His heavenly army doesn't need to fight. He will then rule with unbreakable authority, described as "a rod of iron."

Old Testament links: Psalm 2:9 (alluded to); Isaiah 11:4 (alluded to); Isaiah 49:2 (alluded to); Isaiah 63:3 (alluded to)

19:16 *And He has on the robe and on His thigh a name written: "King of kings and Lord of lords."*

His ultimate title is written plainly for all to see: King of kings and Lord of lords. No earthly or spiritual power comes close to His authority.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 10:17 (alluded to)

19:17-18 *And I saw one angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in mid-heaven, "Come and be gathered to the supper of the great God, so that you may eat **the** flesh of kings and **the** flesh of commanders and **the** flesh of strong **men** and **the** flesh of horses and of those sitting on them, and **the** flesh of all, free and slave, and small and great."*

In a jarring contrast to the wedding feast just described, an angel now invites birds of prey to a very different kind of feast: the aftermath of the coming battle. This grim imagery makes clear that no one who opposes Christ at this battle, regardless of rank or status, will escape.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 39:17-18 (alluded to)

19:19 *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war with the One sitting on the horse and with His army.*

The armies of earth, led by the beast, gather in one final, doomed attempt to fight against Christ.

19:20 *And the beast was captured, and with this **one** the false prophet who did the signs before it, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worship its image. The two were thrown living into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.*

The beast and the false prophet are captured and thrown, still alive, straight into the lake of fire. This is their final, permanent judgment. There is no trial to come later for them; their fate is already sealed.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:11 (alluded to)

19:21 *And the rest were killed with the sword of the One sitting on the horse, which went forth out of His mouth. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

The rest of the armies gathered against Christ are struck down simply by His spoken word. The battle is over almost as soon as it begins, and the grim supper announced back in verse 17 takes place exactly as promised.

Chapter 19 Summary

Heaven bursts into praise over Babylon's destruction, and the wedding feast of the Lamb is announced. Then Christ appears, riding a white horse as King of kings and Lord of lords, leading His army to a final, one-sided battle. The beast and false prophet are thrown alive into the lake of fire, and their armies are defeated by the power of Christ's own word.

Chapter 19 Study Questions

1. If you were heading into a battle, what kind of leader would you want in command?
2. How does heaven respond to Babylon's destruction? (19:1-6)
3. What event is announced next, and how is the bride described? (19:7-9)
4. Why does the angel stop John from worshiping him? (19:10)
5. What are the most striking details about the rider on the white horse? (19:11-16)
6. What happens to the beast and the false prophet? (19:19-21)
7. How is this picture of Jesus different from the way He's usually pictured in the Gospels?
8. What comfort can believers find in knowing how this cosmic battle ends?
9. What is one step you can take this week to stand firm in your own faith, no matter what battles you face?

Chapter 20: The Millennium of Christ

Scripture: Satan Bound, the Millennium, and the Great White Throne

20:1-6 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is ***the*** devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut him ***in***, and sealed ***it*** over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed; and after these things he must be released for a little time. And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them; and the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who did not worship the beast nor its image, and did not receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed. This ***is*** the first resurrection. Blessed and holy ***is*** the one having a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death does not have authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years.

20:7-10 And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released out of his prison, and will go out to deceive the nations which ***are*** in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for war, whose number ***is*** like the sand of the sea. And they went up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceives them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet ***are***; and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.

20:11-15 And I saw a great white throne and the One sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the ***book*** of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead who ***were*** in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who ***were*** in them; and they were judged, each one according to their works. And Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Chapter 20 Preview

Satan is bound for one thousand years while Christ reigns on earth alongside His people and the Tribulation martyrs. Then Satan is released for one final, doomed attempt to overthrow God's rule, and this time, he's thrown into the lake of fire for good. After that, everyone who has ever died and rejected Christ stands before the Great White Throne for final judgment.

Chapter 20 Study

20:1-2 *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the ancient serpent, who is **the** devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,*

An angel comes down with both the key to the abyss and a chain, symbols of God's total authority over evil. He seizes Satan, identified plainly here as "the ancient serpent," and locks him away for a thousand years.

Old Testament links: Genesis 3:1 (alluded to); Isaiah 27:1 (alluded to)

20:3 *and threw him into the abyss, and shut him **in**, and sealed **it** over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed; and after these things he must be released for a little time.*

Satan is thrown into the abyss and sealed in, no longer able to deceive the nations during this thousand-year period. Notably, unlike the beast and false prophet who are judged permanently after Armageddon, Satan's sentence is temporary. God still has one final purpose for him before his own permanent judgment.

20:4 *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them; and the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and who did not worship the beast nor its image, and did not receive the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.*

John sees thrones occupied by believers who are given the right to judge, likely the faithful of past ages already glorified with Christ. Alongside them, John sees another group: those martyred specifically for refusing to worship the beast or take his mark during the Tribulation. Both groups come to life and reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:9 (alluded to); Daniel 7:22 (alluded to)

20:5 *But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed. This **is** the first resurrection.*

Unbelievers who died throughout history remain in death until the thousand years are over. The resurrection that brings believers, from every age up through the Tribulation martyrs, into new life is called "the first resurrection."

20:6 *Blessed and holy **is** the one having a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death does not have authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him a thousand years.*

This is the fifth of seven blessings in Revelation. Anyone who has a share in this first resurrection has nothing to fear from "the second death" (identified later in this chapter as the lake of fire). Instead, they serve as priests of God and reign together with Christ for a thousand years.

20:7-8 *And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released out of his prison, and will go out to deceive the nations which **are** in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for war, whose number **is** like the sand of the sea.*

After a thousand years, Satan is set free and immediately returns to his old pattern: deception. He gathers an enormous army from across the earth, described using the phrase "Gog and Magog" (drawn from Ezekiel 38-39, where these names represent Israel's enemies), for one final war.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 38:2 (alluded to)

20:9 *And they went up over the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.*

This massive army marches against Jerusalem, "the beloved city," and the camp of God's people. But the battle is over instantly: fire falls from heaven and consumes them.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 39:6 (alluded to)

20:10 *And the devil who deceives them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet **are**; and they will be tormented day and night to the ages of the ages.*

Satan finally joins the beast and false prophet in the lake of fire. The fact that they're still there, still suffering, after a thousand years confirms that this judgment is truly eternal, not a temporary punishment.

20:11 *And I saw a great white throne and the One sitting on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled, and no place was found for them.*

A new vision begins: the Great White Throne, distinct from every other throne mentioned in Revelation. Its appearance marks the complete end of the old creation, setting the stage for the new heaven and new earth described in the next chapter.

Old Testament links: Daniel 2:35 (alluded to)

20:12 *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the **book** of life. And the dead were judged out of the things written in the books, according to their works.*

Everyone who died without Christ now stands before God. Books recording their deeds are opened, alongside "the book of life," and each person is judged according to what they did.

Old Testament links: Daniel 7:10 (alluded to)

20:13 *And the sea gave up the dead who **were** in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who **were** in them; and they were judged, each one according to their works.*

No one escapes this judgment, no matter where or how they died. The sea, death, and Hades all release those held within them so that every person can be judged fairly.

20:14 *And Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

Death itself, along with Hades, is finally thrown into the lake of fire. From this point forward, death as an enemy is gone for good.

20:15 *And if anyone was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

If there is one verse in this chapter I want you to sit with, it's this one. At this throne there is one question: is your name written in the book of life? If it is, you have nothing to fear. If it isn't, the lake of fire is what's left. If you're not sure where you stand, please turn to the prayer at the end of this book before you go any further.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:1 (alluded to)

Chapter 20 Summary

Satan is bound for a thousand years while Christ reigns with His people on earth. When Satan is released, he leads one final rebellion, which God crushes instantly, and Satan joins the beast and false prophet in the lake of fire forever. Then everyone who died without Christ stands before the Great White Throne, and anyone whose name isn't written in the book of life is cast into the lake of fire.

Remembering Satan's final end changes how I see temptation. Temptation only leads to sin, and sin leads to destruction. Satan's end is certain. I do not want to follow him anywhere.

Chapter 20 Study Questions

1. What would the world look like today if Satan had no influence in it at all?

2. Why is Satan locked away for a thousand years? (20:1-3)

3. Who reigns with Christ during that thousand years, and why? (20:4-6)

4. What happens when Satan is released, and how quickly is his final rebellion put down? (20:7-10)

5. How does John describe the Great White Throne judgment? (20:11-15)

6. How might remembering Satan's ultimate fate change the way you respond to temptation today?

7. What reasons do people give for not accepting Christ, and how do you think those reasons will hold up at the final judgment?

8. Why do you think God gives Satan one last chance to deceive the nations rather than simply keeping him bound forever?

9. What is one way you can remind yourself this week of where your own name stands, written in the book of life?

Chapter 21: New Heaven, New Earth, and New Jerusalem

Scripture: The New Heaven and the New Earth

21:1-8 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no longer. And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, "Look, the tabernacle of God ***is*** with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them, their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer, nor mourning nor crying nor pain will be any longer, because the first things passed away." And the One sitting on the throne said, "Look, I make all things new." And He says to me, "Write, because these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely. The one who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be God to him, and he will be the son to Me. But for ***the*** cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all the liars, their part ***is*** in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is ***the*** second death."

21:9-14 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came to me and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in ***the*** Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. And its radiance ***was*** like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; having a great and high wall, having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are ***those*** of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel: on ***the*** east three gates, on ***the*** north three gates, on ***the*** south three gates, and on ***the*** west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

21:15-21 And the one speaking with me had a golden reed so that he might measure the city and its gates and its wall. And the city lies square, and its length is as great as the breadth also. And he measured the city with the reed at approximately 1,400 miles (twelve thousand stadia); the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured its wall, approximately 216 feet (one hundred forty-four cubits), a measure of a man, that is, of an angel. And the structure of its wall was jasper, and the city ***was*** pure gold, like pure glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city ***were*** adorned with every precious stone. The first foundation ***was*** jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, carnelian; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates ***were*** twelve pearls; each single one of the gates was of one pearl. And the street of the city ***was*** pure gold, like transparent glass.

21:22-27 And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb. And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine in it; for the glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp ***is*** the Lamb. And the nations of those being saved will walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. And its gates will by no means be

shut by day; for night will not be there. And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. And there will by no means enter into it anything that defiles, and that practices abomination and a lie, except those written in the book of life of the Lamb.

Chapter 21 Preview

Revelation now reaches its grand conclusion: eternity itself. A new heaven and new earth appear, and with them, the New Jerusalem, the Bride of Christ. Every struggle of the old earth is finally over, and God's glory dwells with His redeemed people. This is paradise, fully restored.

Chapter 21 Study

21:1 *And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and the sea is no longer.*

John now sees a completely new creation. The old heaven and earth, described as fleeing away back in 20:11, are gone. Notably, the sea, present throughout the millennial kingdom, is no longer part of this new creation.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 66:22 (alluded to); Isaiah 65:17 (alluded to)

21:2 *And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

The New Jerusalem descends from heaven, beautifully prepared like a bride for her wedding day. This image stands in deliberate contrast to the corrupt "woman" of Revelation 17. One is a picture of everything false and self-serving, the other of everything pure and devoted.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 61:10 (alluded to); Isaiah 52:1 (alluded to)

21:3 *And I heard a loud voice out of heaven, saying, "Look, the tabernacle of God **is** with men, and He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them, their God.*

A voice announces what humanity has waited for since the Garden of Eden: God Himself will live directly among His people, fulfilling promises made throughout the Old Testament (see Ezekiel 37:27).

That promise was first spoken to Israel: "My tabernacle shall be over them; and I will be God to them, and they shall be a people to Me." Some teachers read Revelation 21 as proof that the church has taken Israel's place, but I believe God keeps that promise to Israel in the thousand-year kingdom and carries it on into the new earth, where Israel and the redeemed from every nation live with Him forever.

Old Testament links: Leviticus 26:11 (alluded to); Ezekiel 37:27 (alluded to)

21:4 *And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death will not be any longer, nor mourning nor crying nor pain will be any longer, because the first things passed away."*

Every source of grief disappears completely. Death, mourning, crying, and pain are all gone for good, fulfilling long-standing promises made in passages like Isaiah 35:10 and 65:19.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 25:8 (alluded to); Isaiah 35:10 (alluded to); Isaiah 65:19 (alluded to)

21:5 *And the One sitting on the throne said, "Look, I make all things new." And He says to me, "Write, because these words are true and faithful."*

God the Father speaks directly, one of the few times He does so in Revelation, announcing that He is making everything new. He instructs John to record this because these words can be fully trusted, a statement that applies to the entire book, not just this section.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 43:19 (alluded to)

21:6 *And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life freely.*

God declares His new creation complete. He identifies Himself as "the Alpha and the Omega," the beginning and end of all things, and offers eternal life freely, as a gift, to anyone who is thirsty for it.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 55:1 (alluded to)

21:7-8 *The one who overcomes will inherit all things, and I will be God to him, and he will be the son to Me. But for **the** cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and sexually immoral and sorcerers and idolaters and all the liars, their part **is** in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is **the** second death."*

Two destinies are laid out side by side: those who overcome inherit everything and become God's own children, while those who reject Him face the lake of fire. This verse essentially closes out the chronological storyline of Revelation: eternity has arrived, and both God's promises to the faithful and His warnings to the unfaithful now stand fulfilled.

21:9 *And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came to me and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."*

One of the bowl-carrying angels now offers John a closer look at "the bride," which, as the following verses make clear, is the New Jerusalem itself.

21:10-11 *And he carried me away in **the** Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. And its radiance **was** like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;*

From a high mountain, John watches this magnificent city descend, radiant with God's own glory, shining like the finest jasper.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 40:2 (alluded to)

21:12-14 *having a great and high wall, having twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names inscribed, which are **those** of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel: on **the** east three gates, on **the** north three gates, on **the** south three gates, and on **the** west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

Twelve gates, named for Israel's twelve tribes, show that Israel's promised place in God's plan is fully honored. Twelve foundation stones, named for the twelve apostles, tie the church age just as firmly into this eternal city. Together, they picture the full sweep of God's redeemed people, from every era, united in one place.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 48:31-34 (alluded to)

21:15-17 *And the one speaking with me had a golden reed so that he might measure the city and its gates and its wall. And the city lies square, and its length is as great as the breadth also. And he measured the city with the reed at approximately 1,400 miles (twelve thousand stadia); the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured its wall, approximately 216 feet (one hundred forty-four cubits), a measure of a man, that is, of an angel.*

The city's dimensions are staggering: 12,000 stadia (about 1,380 miles) long, wide, and high, a perfect cube. To put that in perspective, that's roughly the distance between New York City and Dallas, in every direction. This city has more than enough room for every believer throughout history to have a spacious home. The wall itself towers over two hundred feet high.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 40:3 (alluded to)

21:18-21 *And the structure of its wall was jasper, and the city **was** pure gold, like pure glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city **were** adorned with every precious stone. The first foundation **was** jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, carnelian; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates **were** twelve pearls; each single one of the gates was of one pearl. And the street of the city **was** pure gold, like transparent glass.*

The city is built from the finest materials imaginable: walls of jasper, twelve foundation layers each set with a different precious stone, gates each carved from a single enormous pearl, and streets of gold so pure it looks like glass. Every detail points to a city of unimaginable beauty and worth.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 54:11-12 (alluded to); Exodus 28:17-20 (alluded to)

21:22 *And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty is its temple, and the Lamb.*

Remarkably, there's no temple in this city. A temple exists to help people worship a God they can't see directly. But here, God and the Lamb are present in person, so no such building is needed.

21:23-24 *And the city has no need of the sun nor of the moon, that they should shine in it; for the glory of God illuminated it, and its lamp **is** the Lamb. And the nations of those being saved will walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.*

The city needs no sun or moon; God's own glory, with Christ as its light, illuminates everything. The nations of the earth will walk by that same light and bring their honor into the city.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 60:19-20 (alluded to); Isaiah 60:3 (alluded to)

21:25-27 *And its gates will by no means be shut by day; for night will not be there. And they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. And there will by no means enter into it anything that defiles, and that practices abomination and a lie, except those written in the book of life of the Lamb.*

The gates never close, a picture of complete safety and peace, since there's no threat left to guard against. Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will ever enter; nothing evil or deceitful will ever be allowed inside.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 52:1 (alluded to); Isaiah 60:11 (alluded to)

Chapter 21 Summary

John's vision reaches its climax with a new heaven and new earth, and the breathtaking New Jerusalem descending from above. God comes to live directly among His people, ending death, sorrow, and pain forever. Every detail of this magnificent city points to a place built with the finest care and love, where nothing evil can ever enter again.

Chapter 21 Study Questions

1. What's your pick for the happiest ending to any book you've read?

2. What happens to the old heaven and earth after the Great White Throne judgment? (21:1)

3. Where does the New Jerusalem come from, and how is it described? (21:2)

4. What things will God completely eliminate when He comes to live with His people? (21:4)

5. Who is left outside the city, and why? (21:8, 21:27)

6. Why is there no temple in the New Jerusalem? (21:22)

7. What part of John's description of this city stands out most to you, and why?

8. What do you imagine eternity with God will actually be like?

9. What is one thing you can do this week to live in a way that reflects thankfulness for this promised future?

Chapter 22: Epilogue

Scripture: The River and the Tree of Life

22:1-5 And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and of the river, on this side and on that, ***was*** a tree of life producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit according to each single month; and the leaves of the tree ***are*** for the healing of the nations. And ***there*** will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him. And they will see His face, and His name ***will be*** on their foreheads. And night will not be there, and they have no need of a lamp and of light of the sun, because ***the*** Lord God illuminates them; and they will reign to the ages of the ages.

22:6-11 And he said to me, "These words ***are*** faithful and true; and ***the*** Lord, the God of the holy prophets, sent His angel to show to His slaves the things which must take place quickly. Look, I am coming quickly. Blessed ***is*** the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book." And I, John, ***am*** the one seeing these things and hearing. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he says to me, "See ***that you do*** not! For I am a fellow slave of yours and of your brothers the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!" And he says to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near. The one who is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still; and the one who is filthy, let him be filthy still; and the one who ***is*** righteous, let him be justified still; and the one who ***is*** holy, let him be sanctified still.

22:12-17 And look, I am coming quickly, and My reward ***is*** with Me, to give to each one as his work will be. I am the Alpha and the Omega, ***the*** Beginning and ***the*** End, the First and the Last." Blessed ***are*** those who do His commandments, so that the right to the tree of life will be theirs, and they may enter by the gates into the city. But outside ***are*** the dogs and the sorcerers and the sexually immoral and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices a lie. "I, Jesus, sent My angel to testify these things to you for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star." And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who thirsts come; and the one who wishes, let him take the water of life freely.

22:18-21 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues which have been written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from ***the*** book of life and out of the holy city, and ***from*** the things written in this book. The One who testifies these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Yes, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ ***be*** with you all. Amen.

Chapter 22 Preview

Revelation ends with a beautiful picture of paradise fully restored. The tree of life, off-limits since the Garden of Eden, is once again open to humanity. Once the full vision is complete, John is told

not to seal it up, but to leave it open for everyone to read. And the book closes exactly as it should: with an open invitation to come to Christ.

Chapter 22 Study

22:1 *And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.*

A crystal-clear river flows directly from God's throne, echoing Jesus' promise in John 4:14 of "living water." This water represents the eternal life that flows from God Himself, pure and never-ending.

Old Testament links: Zechariah 14:8 (alluded to); Ezekiel 47:1 (alluded to)

22:2 *In the middle of its street, and of the river, on this side and on that,* ***was*** *a tree of life producing twelve fruits, yielding its fruit according to each single month; and the leaves of the tree* ***are*** *for the healing of the nations.*

The tree of life, forbidden to Adam and Eve after the fall (Genesis 3:22-24), is now freely available again. It produces a different fruit every month, and its leaves bring healing to the nations, a picture of complete restoration and unity, with none of the sickness, strife, or brokenness that marked the old creation.

Old Testament links: Ezekiel 47:12 (alluded to); Genesis 2:9 (alluded to)

22:3 *And* ***there*** *will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him.*

The curse placed on creation back in Genesis 3:14-19 is finally, completely lifted. God's own throne stands in the city, and His people serve Him directly.

22:4 *And they will see His face, and His name* ***will be*** *on their foreheads.*

Believers will see God's face directly, something no one has ever done (John 1:18). Just as the 144,000 were marked with God's name earlier in Revelation, all of God's people will now carry His name openly, a sign of full, permanent belonging to Him.

22:5 *And night will not be there, and they have no need of a lamp and of light of the sun, because* ***the*** *Lord God illuminates them; and they will reign to the ages of the ages.*

Night disappears entirely, because God's own presence provides all the light anyone will ever need. And His people will reign with Him forever, in a role that Scripture doesn't fully spell out, but one worth looking forward to with confidence in God's good plan.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 60:19 (alluded to); Daniel 7:18 (alluded to)

22:6 *And he said to me, "These words* ***are*** *faithful and true; and* ***the*** *Lord, the God of the holy prophets, sent His angel to show to His slaves the things which must take place quickly.*

This statement covers the entire book of Revelation. Everything in it comes from God and can be fully trusted.

22:7 *Look, I am coming quickly. Blessed **is** the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."*

This is the first of three times in this chapter that Jesus declares, "I am coming quickly," and it carries the sixth of the seven blessings in Revelation. Revelation belongs in the same category as every other true prophecy in Scripture, and those who take its message to heart are blessed.

22:8-9 *And I, John, **am** the one seeing these things and hearing. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. And he says to me, "See **that you do** not! For I am a fellow slave of yours and of your brothers the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!"*

John identifies himself once more as the author, and, overwhelmed by everything he's witnessed, he tries to worship the angel. Just as before, the angel firmly redirects him: worship belongs to God alone.

22:10 *And he says to me, "Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.*

Unlike Daniel, who was told to seal up his prophecy (Daniel 12:4, 9), John is told to leave Revelation open. Its message is meant to be read and understood now, not hidden away for a distant future.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:4 (alluded to)

22:11 *The one who is unrighteous, let him be unrighteous still; and the one who is filthy, let him be filthy still; and the one who **is** righteous, let him be justified still; and the one who **is** holy, let him be sanctified still.*

This describes two settled paths, not a command to keep sinning. It's a sobering reminder that by this point in the story, people's hearts have become fixed in one direction or the other. God still wants everyone to live righteously, but this verse acknowledges that some will never change.

Old Testament links: Daniel 12:10 (alluded to)

22:12-13 *And look, I am coming quickly, and My reward **is** with Me, to give to each one as his work will be. I am the Alpha and the Omega, **the** Beginning and **the** End, the First and the Last."*

Jesus repeats His promise to return soon, this time noting that He brings rewards with Him. He again identifies Himself with the same title used by God the Father earlier in the book. He has always existed and always will.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 44:6 (alluded to); Isaiah 62:11 (alluded to); Isaiah 40:10 (alluded to)

22:14-15 *Blessed **are** those who do His commandments, so that the right to the tree of life will be theirs, and they may enter by the gates into the city. But outside **are** the dogs and the sorcerers and*

the sexually immoral and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices a lie.

This is the seventh and final blessing in Revelation. The SLB reads "those who do His commandments"; some other Bibles follow manuscripts that read "those who wash their robes." Either way, the people meant are those made clean through faith in Jesus, whose lives show it. Only they have access to the tree of life and the city itself. Everyone else, those who never turned from sin, remains permanently outside.

Old Testament links: Genesis 2:9 (alluded to); Genesis 3:22 (alluded to)

22:16 *"I, Jesus, sent My angel to testify these things to you for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright and morning star."*

Jesus identifies Himself plainly and with full authority. He's both the source of David's line and David's own descendant, and He carries the title "the bright and morning star," a symbol of royal authority in the ancient world.

Old Testament links: Numbers 24:17 (alluded to); Isaiah 11:10 (alluded to)

22:17 *And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who thirsts come; and the one who wishes, let him take the water of life freely.*

This is Revelation's open invitation. Anyone who is thirsty, anyone at all, is welcome to come and receive the free gift of eternal life. The choice is entirely open to whoever wants it.

Old Testament links: Isaiah 55:1 (alluded to)

22:18-19 *For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues which have been written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from* ***the*** *book of life and out of the holy city, and* ***from*** *the things written in this book.*

A solemn warning closes out the book: don't tamper with its message, neither adding to it nor taking away from it. The consequences of doing so are severe and permanent.

Old Testament links: Deuteronomy 4:2 (alluded to); Deuteronomy 12:32 (alluded to)

22:20 *The One who testifies these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Yes, come, Lord Jesus!*

For the third and final time in this chapter, Jesus promises to return soon. John responds with the fitting prayer of every believer: "Come, Lord Jesus."

22:21 *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ* ***be*** *with you all. Amen.*

Revelation closes not with fear, but with a blessing, a prayer that God's grace would rest on everyone who reads it.

Chapter 22 Summary

John's vision closes with the river of life flowing from God's throne and the tree of life freely available once again. Jesus reaffirms that He is coming soon, and the book ends with an open invitation: whoever is thirsty may come and freely receive the gift of eternal life.

Chapter 22 Study Questions

1. If you could have one question about the end times or eternity answered right now, what would it be?

2. What does John tell us about God's servants in the new heaven? (22:3-5)

3. Why is there no need for light in the New Jerusalem? (22:5)

4. How does John respond to the angel, and how does the angel correct him? (22:8-9)

5. What does Jesus promise to do when He returns? (22:12)

6. What warning closes out the book of Revelation? (22:18-19)

7. What does it mean to you that God calls Himself the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End?

8. How does it make you feel to know that Christ's return could come at any time?

9. What practical step can you take this week to live like someone who is ready for Jesus to return?

Key Symbols and Terms

Revelation explains many of its own symbols. This list gathers them in one place, with the verse where the explanation is found. It also includes symbols this study explains from the rest of Scripture, and terms used in this study.

Symbols Revelation Explains Itself

Seven stars: the angels, or messengers, of the seven churches (1:20).

Seven golden lampstands: the seven churches (1:20).

Seven lamps of fire: the seven Spirits of God, the Holy Spirit in His fullness (4:5).

Seven eyes of the Lamb: the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth (5:6). The Lamb's seven horns picture His perfect strength.

Golden bowls full of incense: the prayers of the saints (5:8).

The great dragon, the ancient serpent: the devil and Satan (12:9; 20:2).

Many waters: peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues (17:15).

Seven heads of the beast: seven mountains on which the woman sits, and also seven kings (17:9-10).

Ten horns: ten kings who receive authority for one hour along with the beast (17:12).

The woman on the beast: the great city that has kingship over the kings of the earth (17:18).

Fine linen, bright and pure: the righteous acts of the saints (19:8).

The second death: the lake of fire (20:14; 21:8).

The bride, the wife of the Lamb: shown to John as the holy city, New Jerusalem (21:9-10).

Symbols Explained from the Rest of Scripture

The Lamb: Jesus Christ, slain for our sins and alive forever (5:6-12; John 1:29).

Twenty-four elders: the redeemed in heaven, possibly the 12 tribal leaders and the 12 apostles (4:4).

Four living creatures: heavenly beings around the throne, like the seraphim of Isaiah 6 and the cherubim of Ezekiel 1 (4:6-8).

144,000: Jewish believers, 12,000 from each of twelve tribes, sealed by God (7:4-8; 14:1).

The two witnesses: two prophets who preach for 1,260 days; many believe they are Moses and Elijah (11:3-12).

The woman clothed with the sun: Israel, which gave birth to the Messiah (12:1-6; Genesis 37:9-10).

The beast from the sea: the Antichrist and his kingdom (13:1-10).

The beast from the earth: the false prophet (13:11-17; 19:20).

The mark of the beast: a mark of loyalty to the beast, taken by those who worship him (13:16-17; 14:9-11).

666: the number of the beast's name, "a man's number" (13:18).

Babylon the great: in this study's view, a real city that will be the Antichrist's capital and the center of a world system, which we cannot name for certain until the time comes; some believe it points to Rome (Chapters 17-18).

Armageddon: the place where the kings gather for the final battle, the region of Megiddo (16:16).

The rider on the white horse: Jesus Christ, "Faithful and True," "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19:11-16).

Terms Used in This Study

Antichrist: the final world ruler who opposes Christ and demands worship (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 1 John 2:18).

Dispensational premillennialism: the view this study holds: the church is taken up before the Tribulation, Christ returns after it, and He reigns on earth for 1,000 years, fulfilling God's promises to Israel.

Rapture: the moment Christ catches up believers to meet Him in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). In this study's view, it happens before the Tribulation.

Tribulation: the final seven years before Christ returns, Daniel's seventieth seven (Daniel 9:27).

Great Tribulation: the last three and a half years of the Tribulation (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14).

Second Coming: Christ's visible return to earth in power and glory (1:7; 19:11-16).

Millennium: the 1,000-year reign of Christ on earth (20:1-6).

First resurrection: the raising of believers to life to reign with Christ; the second death has no authority over them (20:5-6).

Great White Throne: the final judgment of the dead after the Millennium (20:11-15).

Seals, trumpets, and bowls: the three series of judgments in Chapters 6-16. See the chart before Chapter 1.

Conclusion

The book of Revelation, as you've now read it, is full of vivid pictures and dramatic language. As I said at the very start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly and literally, unless the text itself signals that something should be understood symbolically.

I hope this study has done what I set out for it to do: open up real conversation, stretch your thinking, and encourage you to keep discussing the book of Revelation, and God's whole plan of salvation, with others.

From the start, I have called Revelation a book of love. I hope that by now you can see why. God lays out clearly what happens if we choose to walk away from Him, not to frighten us for no reason, but because He loves us enough to be honest with us about what's ahead. His love is so complete and so unconditional that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to die on the cross in our place. The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior. Jesus is our mediator, the one and only way to be with God forever.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of my life and make me a new creation, the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can devote yourself to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:41-42).

Revelation at a Glance

Here is the whole book of Revelation on one page: the seven parts, where each event is found, and where each part falls in the order of events as I understand it. A larger color copy is free to print from my website.

Revelation at a Glance

The whole book in seven parts, with where to find each event

1 Christ and the Seven Churches — Chapters 1-3

The church age: "the things which are"

1:1-8	Prologue: a blessing on all who read and keep it
1:9-20	John on Patmos sees Christ among seven golden lampstands
2:1-3:22	Seven letters: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea

2 The Throne and the Seven Seals — Chapters 4-7

The church is taken up; the Tribulation begins

4:1-11	A door opened in heaven; the throne of God
5:1-14	The Lamb takes the sealed scroll
6:1-8	Seals 1-4: the four horsemen
6:9-17	Seal 5: the martyrs cry out. Seal 6: the great earthquake
7:1-17	Pause: 144,000 sealed; a great multitude from every nation

3 The Seven Trumpets — Chapters 8-11

First half of the seven years

8:1-6	Seal 7: silence in heaven; seven trumpets given
8:7-13	Trumpets 1-4: earth, sea, rivers, and sky struck
9:1-12	Trumpet 5: locusts from the abyss
9:13-21	Trumpet 6: four angels released at the Euphrates
10:1-11:14	Pause: the little scroll and the two witnesses
11:15-19	Trumpet 7: the kingdom of the world becomes Christ's

4 The Great Conflict — Chapters 12-14

The middle and second half: 42 months

12:1-17	The woman, the child, the dragon, war in heaven
13:1-10	The beast out of the sea
13:11-18	The beast out of the earth; the image and the mark
14:1-5	The Lamb and the 144,000 on Mount Zion
14:6-13	Three angels: the eternal gospel and the warnings
14:14-20	The harvest and the winepress

5 The Seven Bowls and the Fall of Babylon — Chapters 15-18

The end of the seven years

15:1-8	Seven angels with the last seven plagues
16:1-11	Bowls 1-5: sores, sea, rivers, sun, darkness
16:12-16	Bowl 6: the Euphrates dried up; the gathering at Armageddon
16:17-21	Bowl 7: "It is done!"
17:1-18	The great harlot riding the beast
18:1-24	Babylon the great falls

6 The Return of Christ — Chapter 19

The Second Coming

19:1-6	Hallelujah in heaven
19:7-10	The marriage of the Lamb
19:11-16	The rider on the white horse: King of kings
19:17-21	Armageddon: the beast and false prophet thrown into the lake of fire

7 The Millennium and the New Creation — Chapters 20-22

The thousand years, then forever

20:1-6	Satan bound; Christ reigns a thousand years
20:7-10	Satan released, defeated, and thrown into the lake of fire
20:11-15	The great white throne judgment
21:1-8	A new heaven and a new earth
21:9-22:5	The New Jerusalem and the river of water of life
22:6-21	"I am coming quickly"

Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to take place after these. (Revelation 1:19)

Pre-Tribulation, premillennial view: the church is taken up before the seven years begin (4:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) and returns with Christ (19:14). Revelation counts half of the seven years five times: 11:2; 11:3; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5.

Daniel and Revelation Side by Side

Daniel and Revelation were written about six hundred years apart, one by a captive in Babylon and the other by an exile on the island of Patmos. But they tell one story. Daniel watched the kingdoms of this world rise and fall and saw God's kingdom take their place. John was shown how that story ends. Many of the same pictures show up in both books, sometimes in almost the same words, and God gave them to us so that each book helps explain the other.

This section lays the two books next to each other. First come the pictures they share, each with the Daniel passage, the Revelation passage, and a few words on what the pair tells us. Then a table lines up the numbers, followed by what each book adds that the other does not, and where I stand. All Scripture here is from the Steadfast Literal Bible.

You might ask, "Why not just read each book on its own?" You can, and you should. But reading them side by side keeps us honest. When Revelation borrows a picture from Daniel, Daniel usually tells us what it means, and when Daniel leaves something sealed, Revelation often opens it.

Beasts Out of the Sea

Daniel 7:3 *And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different this from this.*

Revelation 13:1 *And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns*

Revelation 13:2 *And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and its feet like **those of** a bear, and its mouth like **the** mouth of a lion.*

Daniel saw four beasts, one after another: a lion (Babylon), a bear (Medo-Persia), a leopard (Greece), and a fourth beast so terrible he could not compare it to any animal (Rome). John sees one beast that carries the leopard, the bear, and the lion all in its body. Notice that John lists them in the opposite order. Daniel was looking forward from Babylon, and John was looking back from the other end of history. I believe this tells us the final world power gathers up everything the empires before it stood for.

Count the heads. The leopard has four, and if the lion, the bear, and the fourth beast have one each, Daniel's beasts have seven heads among them, and the fourth beast has ten horns. John's beast has seven heads and ten horns. I don't believe that is an accident.

Ten Horns, Ten Kings

Daniel 7:24 *And the ten horns: from it, the kingdom, ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the former **ones**, and he will bring low three kings.*

Revelation 17:12 *And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings for one hour along with the beast.*

Both books explain the horns for us, so we don't have to guess: they are kings. Historic Rome never ruled through ten kings at the same time, and in John's day these kings had *"not yet received a kingdom."* That is why I believe the ten horns are a future union of rulers that grows out of the old Roman world and hands its power to the Antichrist (Revelation 17:13).

A Mouth Speaking Great Things

Daniel 7:8 *eyes like the eyes of man **were** in this horn, and a mouth speaking great **things***

Daniel 7:25 *And he will speak words against the Most High, and he will wear out the holy ones of the Most High*

Revelation 13:5 *And a mouth was given to it speaking great things and blasphemies; and authority was given to it to act **for** forty-two months.*

The little horn of Daniel 7 and the beast of Revelation 13 are the same person, the one we call the Antichrist. They have the same mouth, the same boasting against God, and the same time limit. Daniel 11:36 says the same thing a third way: *"against the God of gods he will speak extraordinary things."*

Don't mix this horn up with the small horn of Daniel 8. That one came out of the Greek kingdom and was fulfilled in Antiochus IV Epiphanes in the second century B.C. He was a preview of the Antichrist, not the Antichrist himself.

War Against the Saints

Daniel 7:21 *that horn was making war with the holy ones and prevailing against them*

Revelation 13:7 *And it was given to it to make war with the saints and to overcome them*

God does not hide the hard part. For a time, the Antichrist wins. But both books tell us how long it lasts. Daniel's very next verse says it goes on only *"until the Ancient of Days came"* (Daniel 7:22), and in Revelation *"the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings"* (Revelation 17:14).

As I explain in both studies, I believe the church is caught up to meet the Lord before these years begin. The holy ones who suffer here are those who come to faith during the Tribulation, and many of them pay with their lives (Revelation 20:4). I respect believers who see the timing differently.

Three and a Half Years

Daniel 7:25 *they will be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time*

Daniel 12:7 ***it will be*** *for an appointed time, appointed times, and a half*

Revelation 12:14 *where she is nourished there a time and times and half a time*

Revelation 11:3 *they will prophesy **for** one thousand two hundred sixty days*

A *"time"* is one year, *"times"* is two years, and *"half a time"* is half a year, so three and a half years in all. Revelation says the same length of time three ways: *"a time and times and half a time"* (12:14), forty-two months (11:2; 13:5), and 1,260 days (11:3; 12:6). Counted in prophetic years of 360 days, forty-two months and 1,260 days come out exactly the same. When three different ways of counting land on the same number, God is making sure we don't miss it.

The Seventieth Week

Daniel 9:27 *And he will make a covenant strong for the many **for** one seven; and **in** the middle of the seven he will cause sacrifice and grain offering to cease*

Revelation 11:2 *and they will trample the holy city **for** forty-two months*

Revelation never uses the words "seven years." That number comes from Daniel. Gabriel told Daniel that seventy sevens were set for his people and his city (Daniel 9:24). Sixty-nine of them ran from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah, who was then *"cut off"* (9:26). I believe the church age falls in the gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth sevens, and that the last seven years are still ahead.

Daniel splits that last seven in the middle, when the sacrifices are stopped. Jesus pointed to that same moment when He spoke of *"the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet"* (Matthew 24:15). Revelation then fills in the halves with its forty-two months and 1,260 days.

Not every Christian reads it this way. Many see no gap and believe the seventieth week was fulfilled in the first century, through Christ's ministry and death and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. I hold the futurist view, which means most of these prophecies are still ahead of us, for the reasons I give in the Daniel study.

The Throne and the Books

Daniel 7:9 *His clothing **was** white like snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool; His throne **was** flames of fire*

Daniel 7:10 *a thousand thousands were ministering to Him, and a myriad of myriads were standing before Him. The court sat, and books were opened.*

Revelation 5:11 *the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands*

Revelation 20:12 *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened*

Both men were taken into the same throne room. They saw the same crowd of angels too big to count, and the same books opened for judgment.

Here is something worth slowing down for. In Daniel, the white hair like wool belongs to the Ancient of Days, God the Father. In Revelation 1:14, John sees the same thing on Jesus: *"His head and hair were white, like white wool, like snow."* John is telling us that the Son shares the Father's glory.

One Like a Son of Man

Daniel 7:13 *with the clouds of the heavens **one** like a son of man was coming; and He reached the Ancient of Days*

Revelation 1:7 *Look, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him*

Revelation 14:14 *and on the cloud **One** sitting like a son of man, having on His head a golden crown*

Jesus' favorite name for Himself was *"the Son of Man,"* and He took it straight from Daniel 7. When the high priest put Him under oath, He answered, *"from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven"* (Matthew 26:64).

In Daniel, the Son of Man comes to the Ancient of Days and is given a kingdom that *"will not pass away"* (7:14). In Revelation, we see Him come from heaven to take it.

The Man in Linen and the Glorified Christ

Daniel 10:5-6 *a certain man clothed **in** linen, and his loins **were** girded with gold of Uphaz. And his body **was** like topaz, and his face like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like torches of fire, and his arms and his feet like the look of burnished bronze*

Revelation 1:13-15 *clothed **in a robe** reaching to the feet, and girded around at the breasts with a golden sash. And His head and hair **were** white, like white wool, like snow; and His eyes **were** like a flame of fire; and His feet **were** like fine bronze, as refined in a furnace*

Linen and gold, eyes of fire, and feet like polished bronze. The two descriptions are so close that John seems to be telling us he saw the same Person Daniel saw. Both men also fell on their faces: Daniel says, *"I was in a deep sleep on my face"* (Daniel 10:9), and John *"fell at His feet as dead"* (Revelation 1:17).

In Revelation 1 there is no question who it is. It is Jesus. In Daniel 10, I lean toward seeing the man in linen as an appearance of Christ before He was born in Bethlehem, though some see a mighty angel. I hold that loosely.

Michael and the Time of Distress

Daniel 12:1 *And at that time Michael will arise, the great prince who stands over the sons of your people; and there will be a time of distress such as has not been since there was a nation until that time*

Revelation 12:7 *Michael and his angels warred against the dragon*

Michael is the angel who stands guard over Israel, Daniel's people. Both books bring him in at the same point, right when the worst trouble the world has ever seen breaks out. Jesus described the same days: *"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not happened from the beginning of the world until now, nor by any means will happen"* (Matthew 24:21).

Both books also give the same comfort. In Daniel, those who escape are *"everyone who is found written in the scroll"* (12:1). In Revelation, the ones who refuse the beast are those whose names are written *"in the book of life of the Lamb"* (13:8). God's promises to Israel stay with Israel, and He keeps every name He has written down.

The Oath Toward Heaven

Daniel 12:7 *he raised his right **hand** and his left **hand** to the heavens and swore by the One who lives forever*

Revelation 10:5-6 *lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by the One who lives to the ages of the ages*

In Daniel, the oath answers the question *"Until when?"* with three and a half years (Daniel 12:6). In Revelation, the oath says *"that time will be no longer"* (10:6), meaning the waiting is over and *"the mystery of God should be finished"* (10:7). Daniel was told the end would come. John was told it had arrived.

Sealed, Then Opened

Daniel 12:4 *shut up the words and seal the scroll until the time of **the** end*

Revelation 22:10 *Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.*

Daniel was told to seal his book. John was told not to seal his. Daniel's visions reached far past his own lifetime, and he admitted, *"I heard, and I did not understand"* (Daniel 12:8). By John's day the Lamb had come, and He alone was worthy *"to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals"* (Revelation 5:5). What Daniel saw from a distance, John was allowed to see up close.

The End of the Beast

Daniel 7:11 *I was seeing until the beast was killed, and its body was destroyed and given to the burning of fire.*

Revelation 19:20 *And the beast was captured, and with this **one** the false prophet who did the signs before it*

The beast's end is sudden in both books. In Daniel, the horn is still bragging when judgment falls. In Revelation, the beast and the false prophet *"were thrown living into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur"* (19:20). No one fights his way out of God's courtroom.

A Kingdom That Never Ends

Daniel 2:44 *the God of the heavens will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed*

Revelation 11:15 *The kingdoms of the world have become **those** of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign to the ages of the ages.*

This is where both books are headed. Every vision in Daniel ends with God's kingdom winning and lasting forever (Daniel 2:44; 7:14, 27), and Revelation ends the same way. The empires of this world get a few verses each. The kingdom of God gets forever.

The Dead Will Rise

Daniel 12:2 *many of those who sleep in the ground of dust will awake, these to everlasting life, and these to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence*

Revelation 20:5 *But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were completed. This **is** the first resurrection.*

Daniel names both resurrections in one sentence. Revelation shows us that a thousand years come between them. Those who belong to Christ are raised first, and the rest of the dead are raised after the thousand years to stand before the great white throne (Revelation 20:11-12). Daniel saw two mountain peaks. John was shown the valley in between.

The Numbers Side by Side

Here are the numbers the two books share, in one place. Where Christians disagree, the right-hand column gives my view; the studies give the other views.

Number	Daniel	Revelation	What I believe it means
Seventy sevens (490 years)	9:24	Not named	The full time God set for Daniel's people and Jerusalem
Sixty-nine sevens (483 years)	9:25-26	Not named	From the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the Messiah, who is then cut off
The gap	9:26	Not named	The church age, between the sixty-ninth and seventieth sevens
One seven (7 years)	9:27	Not named, but both halves appear	The Tribulation, still future
Middle of the seven	9:27; 12:11	11:1-2; 13:5-6	The Antichrist stops the sacrifices and sets up the abomination of desolation
Time, times, and half a time (3 1/2 years)	7:25; 12:7	12:14	The Great Tribulation, the last half of the seven years
Forty-two months	Not named	11:2; 13:5	The same three and a half years
1,260 days	Not named	11:3; 12:6	The same three and a half years, at 360 days a year
1,290 days	12:11	Not named	Thirty days past the 1,260; Scripture does not say what they are for

Number	Daniel	Revelation	What I believe it means
1,335 days	12:12	Not named	Forty-five days more, with a blessing for the one who waits
Seven heads and ten horns	7:4-7 (heads counted together), 7:24	12:3; 13:1; 17:3, 9-12	The final world power and its ten kings
A thousand years	Not named	20:2-7	Christ's reign on earth after He returns

One more word on the numbers. They are real, and I believe they mean what they say. But they were given to help God's people recognize the season and hold on through it, not to circle a date on the calendar. Jesus said, *"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming"* (Matthew 25:13).

What Daniel Gives That Revelation Assumes

Daniel lays out the history. The statue in chapter 2 and the beasts in chapter 7 name the empires in order, and chapter 9 gives the timetable of the seventy sevens. Revelation takes all of that for granted. If you have never read Daniel, the beast with ten horns and the forty-two months come out of nowhere. If you have, they feel like old friends.

What Revelation Adds That Daniel Leaves Sealed

Revelation adds the second beast, the false prophet (13:11-17), and shows the dragon behind both of them (13:2, 11). It separates the two resurrections by a thousand years (20:4-6), and it carries the story past the last judgment to a new heaven, a new earth, and the new Jerusalem (21:1-2). Daniel was told to go his way and rest (Daniel 12:13). John got to see where Daniel's road comes out.

Where I Stand

Here is where I stand, the same as in both studies. I hold the dispensational premillennial view, which means Christ returns before His literal thousand-year reign on earth (Revelation 20:1-6). I hold the Pre-Tribulation view of the Rapture: before the seven years begin, Christ comes for His church, and believers are caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). At the end of the seven years He returns to the earth with His saints to reign.

Faithful Christians see these things differently. Some believe most of Daniel and Revelation was fulfilled in the first century. Some read Revelation as a picture of the whole church age. Some see the little horn only as Antiochus. Your view on the timing of the Rapture won't affect your salvation either way. What matters most is that we know Jesus and stay faithful to Him, just like Daniel did and just like John did.

Study Questions

1. Daniel saw four beasts and John saw one beast with parts of three of them. What does that tell you about the last world power?

2. Compare Daniel 7:8, 21, 25 with Revelation 13:5-7. List every way the little horn and the beast match.

3. Revelation says three and a half years three different ways. Why do you think God repeated it?

4. In Daniel 7:9 the white hair belongs to the Ancient of Days. In Revelation 1:14 it belongs to Jesus. What does that teach you about who Jesus is?

5. Daniel was told to seal his book, and John was told not to seal his. What changed between the two?

6. Both books promise safety to those whose names are written down (Daniel 12:1; Revelation 13:8). Is your name written there? How do you know?

Old and New Testament Links in Revelation

This table lists every Old and New Testament link printed in this study, in verse order. I took the links from the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge, with help from the OpenBible.info cross-references, and I checked each one by reading both passages in the Steadfast Literal Bible. Where I was not sure of a link, I left it out.

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
1:5-6	Psalm 89:27	alluded to
1:5-6	Exodus 19:6	alluded to
1:5-6	Psalm 89:37	alluded to
1:7	Zechariah 12:10	alluded to
1:7	Daniel 7:13	alluded to
1:10	Ezekiel 3:12	alluded to
1:11	Isaiah 44:6	alluded to
1:12	Zechariah 4:2	alluded to
1:13	Daniel 7:13	alluded to
1:13	Daniel 10:5	alluded to
1:14	Daniel 7:9	alluded to
1:14	Daniel 10:6	alluded to
1:15	Daniel 10:6	alluded to
1:15	Ezekiel 43:2	alluded to
1:16	Isaiah 49:2	alluded to
1:16	Judges 5:31	alluded to
1:17	Isaiah 44:6	alluded to
1:17	Isaiah 48:12	alluded to
1:17	Daniel 10:9-12	alluded to
1:17	Isaiah 41:4	alluded to
2:7	Genesis 2:9	alluded to
2:7	Genesis 3:22	alluded to
2:8	Isaiah 44:6	alluded to
2:8	Isaiah 48:12	alluded to
2:10	Daniel 1:12-14	alluded to
2:12	Isaiah 49:2	alluded to
2:14	Numbers 31:16	alluded to
2:14	Numbers 25:1-2	alluded to
2:17	Isaiah 62:2	alluded to
2:20	1 Kings 16:31	alluded to
2:20	2 Kings 9:22	alluded to
2:23	Psalm 7:9	alluded to
2:23	Jeremiah 17:10	alluded to
2:23	Psalm 62:12	alluded to
2:26	Psalm 2:8	alluded to
2:27-28	Psalm 2:9	quoted
3:5	Psalm 69:28	alluded to
3:7	Isaiah 22:22	alluded to
3:9	Isaiah 60:14	alluded to
3:12	Ezekiel 48:35	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
3:14	Isaiah 65:16	alluded to
3:17	Hosea 12:8	alluded to
3:18	Isaiah 55:1	alluded to
3:19	Proverbs 3:12	alluded to
4:2	Isaiah 6:1	alluded to
4:3	Ezekiel 1:28	alluded to
4:3	Ezekiel 1:26	alluded to
4:5	Exodus 19:16	alluded to
4:5	Ezekiel 1:13	alluded to
4:5	Zechariah 4:2	alluded to
4:6	Ezekiel 1:18	alluded to
4:6	Ezekiel 10:12	alluded to
4:6	Ezekiel 1:22	alluded to
4:6	Ezekiel 1:5	alluded to
4:7-8	Ezekiel 1:10	alluded to
4:7-8	Ezekiel 10:14	alluded to
4:7-8	Isaiah 6:2-3	alluded to
5:1	Ezekiel 2:9-10	alluded to
5:1	Daniel 12:4	alluded to
5:5	Isaiah 11:10	alluded to
5:5	Genesis 49:9	alluded to
5:6	Zechariah 4:10	alluded to
5:6	Isaiah 53:7	alluded to
5:8	Psalm 141:2	alluded to
5:10	Exodus 19:6	alluded to
5:11	Daniel 7:10	alluded to
6:2	Zechariah 6:2-3	alluded to
6:4	Zechariah 6:2-3	alluded to
6:4	Zechariah 1:8	alluded to
6:5	Zechariah 6:2-3	alluded to
6:8	Ezekiel 14:21	alluded to
6:10	Psalm 79:10	alluded to
6:10	Deuteronomy 32:43	alluded to
6:12	Isaiah 50:3	alluded to
6:12	Joel 2:31	alluded to
6:12	Isaiah 13:10	alluded to
6:12	Joel 2:10	alluded to
6:13	Isaiah 34:4	alluded to
6:14	Isaiah 34:4	alluded to
6:15	Isaiah 2:19	alluded to
6:16	Hosea 10:8	alluded to
6:17	Joel 2:11	alluded to
6:17	Malachi 3:2	alluded to
7:1	Zechariah 6:5	alluded to
7:2-3	Ezekiel 9:4	alluded to
7:16	Isaiah 49:10	alluded to
7:17	Isaiah 49:10	alluded to
7:17	Isaiah 25:8	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
7:17	Psalm 23:2	alluded to
8:3-4	Psalm 141:2	alluded to
8:5-6	Ezekiel 10:2	alluded to
8:7	Exodus 9:24	alluded to
8:7	Exodus 9:23	alluded to
8:7	Ezekiel 38:22	alluded to
8:8-9	Jeremiah 51:25	alluded to
8:8-9	Exodus 7:20	alluded to
8:10-11	Jeremiah 9:15	alluded to
8:10-11	Jeremiah 23:15	alluded to
9:2	Genesis 19:28	alluded to
9:2	Exodus 19:18	alluded to
9:3-6	Job 3:21	alluded to
9:3-6	Exodus 10:14	alluded to
9:7-10	Joel 2:5	alluded to
9:7-10	Joel 1:6	alluded to
9:7-10	Joel 2:4	alluded to
9:20-21	Daniel 5:23	alluded to
9:20-21	Psalm 115:4-5	alluded to
10:4	Daniel 12:4	alluded to
10:5-6	Daniel 12:7	alluded to
10:5-6	Deuteronomy 32:40	alluded to
10:7	Daniel 12:7	alluded to
10:8-9	Ezekiel 3:1-3	alluded to
10:10	Ezekiel 3:1-3	alluded to
11:1-2	Ezekiel 40:3	alluded to
11:1-2	Daniel 8:13	alluded to
11:4	Zechariah 4:11-14	alluded to
11:5-6	Jeremiah 5:14	alluded to
11:5-6	1 Kings 17:1	alluded to
11:5-6	2 Kings 1:10	alluded to
11:5-6	Exodus 7:17	alluded to
11:7	Daniel 7:21	alluded to
11:8-9	Isaiah 1:10	alluded to
11:10	Esther 9:22	alluded to
11:11	Ezekiel 37:10	alluded to
11:12	2 Kings 2:11	alluded to
11:15	Daniel 7:14	alluded to
11:15	Exodus 15:18	alluded to
11:15	Daniel 2:44	alluded to
11:15	Daniel 7:27	alluded to
11:16-18	Psalm 115:13	alluded to
11:16-18	Psalm 2:1	alluded to
12:2	Isaiah 66:7	alluded to
12:2	Micah 5:3	alluded to
12:3	Daniel 7:7	alluded to
12:3	Daniel 7:20	alluded to
12:4	Daniel 8:10	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
12:4	Isaiah 66:7	alluded to
12:5	Psalm 2:9	alluded to
12:5	Isaiah 66:7	alluded to
12:7-8	Daniel 12:1	alluded to
12:9	Genesis 3:1	alluded to
12:9	Genesis 3:13	alluded to
12:10-11	Zechariah 3:1	alluded to
12:14	Daniel 7:25	alluded to
12:14	Exodus 19:4	alluded to
12:14	Daniel 12:7	alluded to
12:15-16	Numbers 16:32	alluded to
12:17	Genesis 3:15	alluded to
13:1	Daniel 7:7	alluded to
13:1	Daniel 7:3	alluded to
13:2	Daniel 7:4-6	alluded to
13:5-6	Daniel 7:8	alluded to
13:5-6	Daniel 11:36	alluded to
13:5-6	Daniel 7:20	alluded to
13:5-6	Daniel 7:21	alluded to
13:5-6	Daniel 7:11	alluded to
13:5-6	Daniel 7:25	alluded to
13:7-8	Psalm 69:28	alluded to
13:7-8	Daniel 7:21	alluded to
13:9-10	Jeremiah 15:2	alluded to
13:9-10	Jeremiah 43:11	alluded to
13:13-14	2 Kings 1:12	alluded to
13:15	Daniel 3:6	alluded to
14:2-3	Ezekiel 43:2	alluded to
14:4-5	Zephaniah 3:13	alluded to
14:6-7	Exodus 20:11	alluded to
14:8	Jeremiah 51:7	alluded to
14:8	Isaiah 21:9	alluded to
14:8	Daniel 4:30	alluded to
14:9-11	Isaiah 34:10	alluded to
14:9-11	Psalm 11:6	alluded to
14:9-11	Genesis 19:24	alluded to
14:9-11	Psalm 75:8	alluded to
14:9-11	Jeremiah 25:15	alluded to
14:14	Daniel 7:13	alluded to
14:15-16	Joel 3:13	alluded to
14:17-18	Joel 3:13	alluded to
14:19-20	Isaiah 63:3	alluded to
15:3-4	Psalm 145:17	alluded to
15:3-4	Exodus 15:1	alluded to
15:3-4	Psalm 86:9	alluded to
15:3-4	Jeremiah 10:7	alluded to
15:3-4	Psalm 92:5	alluded to
15:5-6	Numbers 1:50	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
15:5-6	Daniel 10:5	alluded to
15:8	Isaiah 6:4	alluded to
15:8	Exodus 40:35	alluded to
15:8	2 Chronicles 5:14	alluded to
16:2	Exodus 9:10	alluded to
16:3-4	Exodus 7:20	alluded to
16:5-6	Isaiah 49:26	alluded to
16:7	Psalm 19:9	alluded to
16:10-11	Exodus 10:21-22	alluded to
16:12	Jeremiah 50:38	alluded to
16:13-14	Exodus 8:6	alluded to
16:16	Judges 5:19	alluded to
16:16	Zechariah 12:11	alluded to
16:18	Daniel 12:1	alluded to
16:19	Jeremiah 25:15	alluded to
16:20-21	Exodus 9:24	alluded to
17:1-2	Jeremiah 51:13	alluded to
17:1-2	Jeremiah 51:7	alluded to
17:1-2	Isaiah 23:17	alluded to
17:3	Daniel 7:20	alluded to
17:4-5	Jeremiah 51:7	alluded to
17:12-13	Daniel 7:24	alluded to
17:12-13	Daniel 7:20	alluded to
17:14	Deuteronomy 10:17	alluded to
17:15-16	Ezekiel 16:39-41	alluded to
18:1	Ezekiel 43:2	alluded to
18:2-3	Isaiah 21:9	alluded to
18:2-3	Isaiah 13:21	alluded to
18:2-3	Isaiah 34:11	alluded to
18:2-3	Jeremiah 51:7	alluded to
18:2-3	Ezekiel 27:33	alluded to
18:4-5	Jeremiah 51:45	alluded to
18:4-5	Jeremiah 51:9	alluded to
18:4-5	Isaiah 48:20	alluded to
18:4-5	Isaiah 52:11	alluded to
18:6-7	Psalm 137:8	alluded to
18:6-7	Jeremiah 50:29	alluded to
18:6-7	Isaiah 47:7-8	alluded to
18:6-7	Jeremiah 50:15	alluded to
18:8	Jeremiah 50:34	alluded to
18:8	Isaiah 47:9	alluded to
18:11-16	Ezekiel 27:29-30	alluded to
18:11-16	Ezekiel 27:13-16	alluded to
18:17-19	Ezekiel 27:32	alluded to
18:17-19	Ezekiel 27:29-30	alluded to
18:20	Jeremiah 51:48	alluded to
18:21	Jeremiah 51:63-64	alluded to
18:21	Ezekiel 26:21	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
18:22-23	Isaiah 23:8	alluded to
18:22-23	Jeremiah 25:10	alluded to
18:22-23	Ezekiel 26:13	alluded to
18:22-23	Nahum 3:4	alluded to
18:24	Jeremiah 51:49	alluded to
19:3-4	Isaiah 34:10	alluded to
19:5-6	Psalm 135:1	alluded to
19:5-6	Psalm 115:13	alluded to
19:11	Psalm 96:13	alluded to
19:12-13	Daniel 10:6	alluded to
19:12-13	Isaiah 63:1-3	alluded to
19:15	Psalm 2:9	alluded to
19:15	Isaiah 11:4	alluded to
19:15	Isaiah 49:2	alluded to
19:15	Isaiah 63:3	alluded to
19:16	Deuteronomy 10:17	alluded to
19:17-18	Ezekiel 39:17-18	alluded to
19:20	Daniel 7:11	alluded to
20:1-2	Genesis 3:1	alluded to
20:1-2	Isaiah 27:1	alluded to
20:4	Daniel 7:9	alluded to
20:4	Daniel 7:22	alluded to
20:7-8	Ezekiel 38:2	alluded to
20:9	Ezekiel 39:6	alluded to
20:11	Daniel 2:35	alluded to
20:12	Daniel 7:10	alluded to
20:15	Daniel 12:1	alluded to
21:1	Isaiah 66:22	alluded to
21:1	Isaiah 65:17	alluded to
21:2	Isaiah 61:10	alluded to
21:2	Isaiah 52:1	alluded to
21:3	Leviticus 26:11	alluded to
21:3	Ezekiel 37:27	alluded to
21:4	Isaiah 25:8	alluded to
21:4	Isaiah 35:10	alluded to
21:4	Isaiah 65:19	alluded to
21:5	Isaiah 43:19	alluded to
21:6	Isaiah 55:1	alluded to
21:10-11	Ezekiel 40:2	alluded to
21:12-14	Ezekiel 48:31-34	alluded to
21:15-17	Ezekiel 40:3	alluded to
21:18-21	Isaiah 54:11-12	alluded to
21:18-21	Exodus 28:17-20	alluded to
21:23-24	Isaiah 60:19-20	alluded to
21:23-24	Isaiah 60:3	alluded to
21:25-27	Isaiah 52:1	alluded to
21:25-27	Isaiah 60:11	alluded to
22:1	Zechariah 14:8	alluded to

Verse in this study	Old Testament passage	Kind
22:1	Ezekiel 47:1	alluded to
22:2	Ezekiel 47:12	alluded to
22:2	Genesis 2:9	alluded to
22:5	Isaiah 60:19	alluded to
22:5	Daniel 7:18	alluded to
22:10	Daniel 12:4	alluded to
22:11	Daniel 12:10	alluded to
22:12-13	Isaiah 44:6	alluded to
22:12-13	Isaiah 62:11	alluded to
22:12-13	Isaiah 40:10	alluded to
22:14-15	Genesis 2:9	alluded to
22:14-15	Genesis 3:22	alluded to
22:16	Numbers 24:17	alluded to
22:16	Isaiah 11:10	alluded to
22:17	Isaiah 55:1	alluded to
22:18-19	Deuteronomy 4:2	alluded to
22:18-19	Deuteronomy 12:32	alluded to

Bibliography

The following sources were consulted throughout this study to present a range of perspectives and to help clarify the meaning behind the book of Revelation. They informed the background research and interpretive views expressed in this study; all commentary in this book is written in my own words, and any direct quotation from an outside source is identified and cited at the point where it appears.

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