



STANLEY PH CHURCH

THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION



A COMPLETE STUDY GUIDE CREATED BY
DR. DANNY PENNY

W O R D S F R O M D R . D A N N Y P E N N Y



Thank you for embarking on this incredible journey in the exploration of the Book of Revelation, a text that has captivated hearts and minds for centuries. It's an honor to have you join me in wrestling with its profound mysteries and seeking a deeper understanding of its message.

As we delve into the pages of this final book of the Bible, please know that I make no claim to the ownership of the material within. The truths and insights presented here are not my own, but rather a culmination of the wisdom and scholarship of countless individuals who have dedicated their lives to studying God's Word. I am profoundly indebted to the many authors and writers whose tireless work has contributed so much to this subject. In particular, I must acknowledge the Rev. Alan Carr, whose helpful insights and inspired teachings have been a guiding light in my own study and a source of great inspiration for this work. May this book serve as a useful companion on your own path of discovery, opening your eyes to the rich imagery and eternal hope found within the Revelation.

-Dr. Penny



Stanley PH Church

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Rev. 1:10-11; 2:7 WHEN JESUS BRINGS THE MESSAGE

Introduction: Often the preacher takes some abuse for the sermons he preaches. Yet, if he is listening to the Lord, he is in reality only the mailman. When the sermon is Bible based and the preacher is Spirit-filled, then the Lord is responsible for the sermon and for its contents! With that in mind, consider what it would be like if the Lord Himself came here to preach this evening. Many folks have the impression that Jesus was some sort of soft spoken, mild-mannered wimp of a preacher. But, I believe that Jesus was willing to preach the truth and expose evil among His people. Regardless of what people think, everything is not OK with the Lord! Sometimes sin must be rebuked and evil dealt with. So, what would it be like if the Lord came here this evening, looked around and began to preach to this church? In the book of Revelation, there are 7 churches mentioned. Jesus took the time to speak to all of them. Only 2, Smyrna - the persecuted church, and Philadelphia - the evangelistic church, did not receive a complaint from Jesus. 5 churches were rebuked for their failures. It might be today that some of the traits that caused Jesus to rebuke these churches, might be found here at Stanley PH Church. If that is the case, then we must deal with these flaws. How would Jesus preach to us if He came here today? Would all be in order? Or would the Lord find things to speak against? This evening, let's listen in as JESUS brings the message. Let's notice the 5 rebukes He levels at His people.

I. THE PREACHER

A. HIS IDENTITY - 1:10-18 - Jesus Himself. Jesus is interested in the activities of the church. He watches all that goes on. He misses nothing!

B. HIS INDIGNATION - The Lord is grieved by the sins of His people. They do not go unchallenged, or unnoticed - Num. 32:23; Gal. 6:7 (Heb. 12:29)

C. HIS INTENTIONS - He wants His church to be able to fulfill His Great Commission - Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 10:31

II. THE PROBLEMS

A. 2:1-7 (**Ephesus**) FIRST LOVE LOST – (**Ephesus**): (Ill. First love - Original, Emotional, Motivational) Ill. all the trappings of Christianity, yet they had ceased to love Jesus first! - All we do must be done out of a boundless love for Jesus, or it is all worthless! - 1Cor. 13:1-3. Do you love Him, as you should? (Ill. John 14:15)

B. 2:8-11: (**Smyrna**): THE CHURCH THAT WOULD SUFFER PERSECUTION – NO CONDEMNATION

C. 2:12-17: (**Pergamos**) TOLERATED SIN IN THE CHURCH - This church tolerated sin in its midst. They taught that it was all right to sin, after all they were God's people. (Ill. Balaam - Num. 22-24) (Ill. Pergamou = Marriage) It is never right for the church to marry the world. Ill. 2 Cor. 6:17. (Ill. The Nicolaitians - Put a distinction between the Clergy and the laity - All God's people are priests! -Rev. 1:6) (Those who tolerate sin are just as guilty as those who commit sin!) 2 Thes. 3:6; Rom. 16:17

D. 2:18-29: (**Thyatira**) TOLERATED FALSE PROPHETS: This church was probably founded by a woman; She led God's people astray with false doctrine. False Doctrine must not be tolerated! (Ill. Jezebel!) (Ill. Jezebelism is prominent today!) There is nothing wrong with old-fashioned Bible based preaching! Gal. 1:7-8

E. 3:1-6: (**Sardis**): NO REALITY - This church had a reputation for life, but there was no reality. They had no flame to back up their fame. The most important testimony that a church can bear is that it's works are complete. (Ill. They do not reach Heaven.) (Ill. Doing and Dabbling) Ill. Reputation is useless unless there is reality behind it! (Are we real? Do our works reach Heaven?) (Ill. Signs of life - Growth, Harmony, Emotion!)

F. 3:7-13: (**Philadelphia**): REAL LOVE – THE CHURCH THAT GOD BLESSES: NO CONDEMNATION: Hell did not know what to do with this church.

E. 3:14-22 (**Laodicea**): THE CHURCH THAT WAS LUKEWARM - This church had two problems. 1. Spiritual Indifference 2. Spiritual Ignorance They had enough contact with the truth to know the heat, yet were indifferent to it. Therefore, they were a mixture of Hot and Cold and they made God sick. (Ill. Many in our today in the modern church world!) Jesus knows the truth! (Ill. Lost, cross, No concern, unable to move for the Lord, Misrepresents Jesus.)

III. THE PRESCRIPTION

A. Jesus spoke to each church and gave them the remedy to their problem. If we have looked at ourselves and seen a problem, there is a remedy for us also. Notice what He said to each church.

B. THE REMEDIES

1. NO LOVE - Rev. 2:5 - Remember, Repent, Repeat or Removal
2. TOLERATING EVIL - Rev. 2:16 - Repent - Turn or face the wrath of Jesus.
3. TOLERATING FALSE PROPHETS - Rev. 2:24-25 - Stand firm on the truth. You'll never stand alone when you stand with the Lord.

4. LACK OF REALITY - Rev. 3:2-3 - They are to wake up and revive that which is lacking. Ill. Rom. 13:11
5. LUKEWARMNESS - Rev. 3:18-20 - Recognize a dependence upon the Lord and repent of failures. But, especially open the doors of both the hearts of the people and of the church itself and let Him in! So that He might be in first place.

C. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO CONCERNING YOUR WALK WITH THE LORD? Jesus has the remedy that you need. Always remember that regardless of where you are right now, Jesus can put you where He wants you to be. The key word for all the churches is to REPENT. If we come, He will cleanse - 1 John 1:9

Conclusion: If Jesus were standing before you today, with his eyes like a burning fire, how would you respond to this message? You may not see Him, but He is here! He is watching and He is waiting to see how we will use the things we have been given. He is watching to see what kind of church we turn out to be. I challenge every person here to look inwardly right now and ask yourself, "Where do I stand before the Lord? In service, in attitude, in evangelism, in spiritual growth, in love for God and the brethren, etc. Then, come to Him and make it right."

How To Be An Overcomer In Each Of The Church Ages: Divine Incentives for Becoming An Overcomer: Revelation 2:1-7

Introduction: The seven letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor hold a special place among all the literature of the Word of God. Jesus Christ speaking to the very people in the Letters to the Churches of the Revelation that He died to save. Most of these letters contain words of Commendation; words of Correction; and words of Challenge. One thing all of these letters have in common is that each one concludes with a precious promise to the **overcomers** in each church. The word “**overcomer**” means “**to conquer, or to carry off the victory.**” It refers to saved people who remain faithful to Jesus in the face of enemies, temptations, and persecution.

Now, there is a sense in which every believer is an overcomer, or a conqueror. Positionally, because of our faith relationship with Jesus, we are conquerors, **Rom. 8:37**. Through Jesus and His finished work on the cross, we have overcome sin, Satan, death, and hell! However, there is another sense in which we can become an overcomer. **1 John 5:4** tells us that we as believers will achieve victory over this world and its power.

This seems to be the sense in which the word overcomer is used in Revelation 2 and 3. While every saint of God enjoys absolute victory over death, Hell, and Satan, many are not as victorious in their day to day walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Jesus looks at and speaks to these seven churches, He sees believers and non-believers. He sees people who are faithful and people who are not. He sees people who love Him and people who love themselves. As He looks at our church this evening, He sees that we all those classes of people present with us as well.

As Jesus speaks to the overcomers in each church, He is exhorting the faithful, sold-out believers to continue on for the glory of God. He is also challenging those who are not where they need to be to get where they need to be so that they too can experience the life of an overcomer. As He concludes each letter, He makes certain promises to the redeemed people in each of these churches. The promises serve as incentives for the faithful to remain faithful. They also serve as incentives for the unfaithful to get faithful. Every promise He makes in these verses belong to the saints. Let's examine these seven **Divine Incentives For Becoming An Overcomer**, and let's allow the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts. May He teach us the How and give us the Hunger to become overcomers for the glory of His name!

I. 2:7 THE INCENTIVE OF IMMORTALITY: Ephesus

- A. III. The Ephesian church. They were busy for God, but they had fallen out of love with Jesus. He calls upon them to remember where they had once been with Jesus and to get back to the place where He was number one in their lives.
- B. His promise to the overcomer is this: They will enjoy a glorious eternity in His presence. They have passed from death unto life. What the first Adam took from them, Jesus has restored to them, **Rom. 5:12, 19**. The “**No Trespassing**” sign that was erected in **Gen. 3:22-24** will forever be torn down and we will eat of the tree of life in God's Heaven.
- C. Salvation, restoration of fellowship with God, a home in heaven, everlasting life, these are all great incentives for living the best life possible!

II. 2:11 THE INCENTIVE OF INVINCIBILITY: Smyrna

- A. Smyrna was a church that was undergoing severe persecution! They were being hounded by their enemies and they are told that some of them will be imprisoned and others will be put to death. Jesus exhorts them to remain faithful to Him unto death and He will reward them!
- B. The Overcomers in the church are promised deliverance from the second death. What is the second death? **Rev. 20:11-15** tells us all there is to know about it. It is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire. These redeemed people might have to give their lives down here, but they need not worry about Hell. They have been delivered from the wrath of God through the blood of Jesus, **Rom. 5:9**.
- C. We may face death one day if the Lord doesn't return in our lifetimes, but we need not fear that. After all, Jesus has conquered death and removed its sting, **1 Cor. 15:42-57**! We will never go to Hell if we are saved by grace! What an incentive to serve Him! Hallelujah! Hell-proof and Heaven bound!

III. 2:17 THE INCENTIVE OF INTIMACY: Pergamos

- A. The church at Pergamos was also enduring intense persecution. They were even located in the center of satanic activity. A number of their members had been martyred for Jesus' sake in Pergamos. But, there was sin in the camp! Sin which they tolerated and sin for which they were commanded by Jesus to repent. He calls them to come back to Him before He comes to them in judgment!
- B. But, there was a faithful remnant in that church. To them, Jesus makes two precious, intimate promises. First, He promises to give them the "**hidden manna**." Just as the children of Israel were given the mysterious manna from heaven to feed them as they wandered through that wilderness, Jesus would nourish these faithful ones as they fought the battles for Him! (**Note:** The O.T. manna was a clear picture of Jesus - Small, white, round, sweet, satisfying!) He also promises to give them a white stone. This may refer to several things, but there are two that stand out. In that culture, it was common to decide court cases and other matters using black and white stones. White stone meant acquittal and black stones meant conviction. When the judge decided the case, he would put a white stone in an urn for acquittal or a black stone in an urn for conviction. When the verdict was handed down, the urn was tipped over and the stone inside would roll out! He may be telling these believers that they will not be banned in Heaven, but that they have been acquitted of their sins! You see, when Jesus saved me, my urn was filled with black stones. Jesus removed them all and dropped in the white stone of grace! Now, when I stand before the Judge and the urn is tipped over, all that will come out against me is grace and I will stand acquitted before the bar of glory!

Another thought is this: Often friends would take a stone they called a "**tessera**." They would break that stone in half and engrave special phrases, words, or nicknames for each other on them. Each would carry the half engraved by the other as a constant reminder of their friendship and mutual love. Jesus may be telling these folks that He will one day give them a stone that has on it a special Name for Him. You see, Jesus means something different to each of us. Such is the intimacy of our relationship!

Often, white stones were given to athletes who were victorious in the games. They were also given as tokens of citizenship. When you had been a faithful and productive citizen in a city they would give you one of these white stones.

C. He is going to nourish me through the wilderness of this world. He is going to give me a stone to signify my acceptance into Heaven; the victory I have in Him; my standing as a citizen of glory; and to reflect the intimacy of my relationship with Him. Friends, that is an incentive to serve the Lord!

IV. 2:26-28 **THE INCENTIVE OF INVOLVEMENT: Thyatira**

- A. The church in Thyatira was an active church. They were busy in the service of the Lord and they were recognized for their works. However, they were roundly condemned for allowing a wicked woman to dominate their worship and work as a church. She lead them down the path of paganism and idolatry and Jesus promised to deal with her and those who followed her. His judgment would be swift and sure!
- B. But, even in a hotbed of iniquity like Thyatira, there was still a faithful remnant! The overcomers in this church are promised that they will one day reign with Jesus Christ when He established His kingdom. His promise to them is that they will share His rule one day. This is taught throughout the New Testament - **1 Cor. 6:3; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4**. When He returns, we are coming with Him, **Rev. 19:14**. What a great promise!

They are also promised the “**morning star**.” This is the star that appears during the darkest part of the night, signaling all those who see it that morning is coming! Well, Jesus is the Bright and Morning Star, **Rev. 22:16**. I think this statement is meant to say to them, “It may look dark in the world beloved, but you keep looking to the sky, for I am coming to get you one day!” That is a promise all God’s children share tonight, **1 Thes. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52**! It may be dark in this old world tonight, but you can see Him working and you know from His Word that He is returning someday! That thought can brighten the darkest of nights!

- C. His children will reign with Him one day, but before that ever happens, He will return to this earth to receive us unto Himself and take us away to be with Him, **John 14:1-3**. What a glorious incentive to be faithful to Him!

V. 3:5 **THE INCENTIVE OF IDENTIFICATION: Sardis**

- A. The Church at Sardis: This poor church thought all was well, but Jesus placed His finger on their pulse and pronounced them dead! He challenges them to hold on to the few things they still have going for them. They are to remember how things were and are supposed to be and they are to repent. Otherwise, they will face Him in judgment!
- B. But, even in a dead church there are still those with the love of God in their souls! These people are promised that they will be clothed in white robes, which speak of perfect righteousness, **Rev. 19:8**. It speaks of being clothed in Jesus Christ’s imputed righteousness, **Phil. 3:9**. They are promised that their names will remain in the book of life. (**Note**: There is no danger of names being taken out of the Lamb’s Book of Life, for they were written there before the foundation of the world, **Rev. 13:8**. What Jesus refers to here is the “**book of life**”. It contains the names of all those who have ever lived. As

men die without Christ, their names are removed from the book of the living. When men stand before God at the Great White Throne, the book of life and the Lamb's book of life will match perfectly.) Jesus is merely giving them His blessed assurance that they are eternally saved by His grace.

Then, He promises to confess their names before God, this may refer to His role as our Intercessor, **Heb. 7:25**. Or, it may mean that one day, Jesus Himself, will lead us past the pearly gates of glory, through the jasper walls, silent ranks of angels, down the golden street of Heaven, and into the very throne room of God Himself. There He will publicly proclaim us to be one of His Own! Either way, I am glad He knows my name, **John 10:3**, and that He is not ashamed to admit that I am His, **Heb. 11:16**.

C. Let's see, I am dressed in His righteousness, my name is securely and eternally written in the book of life and He is and will confess my name in Heaven before the presence of the Lord! I say those are some good incentives for being all He has saved me to be!

VI. 3:12 **THE INCENTIVE OF ILLUMINATION: Philadelphia**

A. The church in Philadelphia was a blessed church! They were little in strength, but the Lord was using them to reach the world for Jesus. The Lord has no words of complaint for this church. All He has for them is praise. He has promised them open doors and blessings. He even promised them that their enemies would one day acknowledge the fact that God's blessings rested upon them.

B. This church was filled with overcomers. They are promised several great blessings. In them, He opens their eyes to the future!

1. First, they are to be set as pillars in the Lord's temple in Heaven. In Philadelphia, it was customary to recognize outstanding citizens by placing a pillar in their honor in one of the temples of the gods. On this pillar would be engraved their name, what they had done to receive it and the names of the officials who had bestowed it. It stood a permanent reminder that this person was someone of note in the community. You see, this little church was getting no recognition or respect in that city, but God said, ***"I see what you are doing and I will honor you when you get home!"***

2. Second, the phrase, ***"Shall go out no more"*** is important. This is a reference to the fact that Philadelphia was built near an active volcano. When that mountain would begin to rumble, the citizens of the city would be forced to flee. In many ways it was a very unsafe place to live. An earthquake shook the city in 17 B.C. and destroyed many of the temples. The earthquake was so devastating that many of the people refused to move back into town, but remained in the countryside instead. Jesus reminds them that they are headed to a place of safety in Heaven. This world may be changing and there may be dangers on every hand, but those who have the door of Heaven opened to them find a place of eternal safety, peace, and rest! He is going to place them in His city and give them permanent stability.

3. Third, These people would be clearly marked as belonging to the Lord. They would bear His Name upon them so that no matter where their duties carried throughout the universe, they would instantly be recognized as belonging to God and as a citizen of Heaven.

C. With His promise to securely fix us in Heaven and with His promise to mark us as His Own, we certainly have even more incentive to serve Him faithful until He fulfills those things for us.

VII. 3:21 **THE INCENTIVE OF INSPIRATION: Laodicea**

A. The church at Laodicea was a self-centered, materialistic congregation. They did feel that they were totally self-sufficient and did not need the Lord. In fact, Jesus is pictured as being outside the church desiring to enter the presence of the family for which He died. He tells them that their attitude and self-righteous posture makes Him sick at His stomach. He challenges them to seek Him and promises to have intimate fellowship with anyone who will open the door to Him.

B. There are even overcomers in this wicked church. The Lord's promise to them is that they will join Him in His throne, which is also His Father's throne. What He is promising them is the most glorious kind of exaltation. Think of it! Today, we are seated with Him in Heaven, spiritually speaking, **Eph. 2:6**. When we get there, He will invite His people to join Him in His glory and in His exaltation. We do not deserve that kind of love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace, but it is ours through Him!

C. If anything were to serve an inspiring incentive to serve the Lord, the promise of this verse is it!

Conclusion: Are you an overcomer? Would you like to be? The first step is that of coming to Him by faith and getting down before Him and asking Him for His help. I need to do that! How about you? If you want to be all He has saved you to be, then this altar is open to receive you into His presence at the throne of grace.

Oh, How I Loved Jesus! Revelation 2:1-7

Introduction: What we have before us is the first of seven letters written to seven different churches that existed in Asia Minor in the First Century. These letters can be considered from three different perspectives.

1. ***They can be viewed Prophetically*** – These churches represent different stages of the church over the last 2,000 years (Church Ages). The church at Ephesus represents the time period between the Day of Pentecost and 100 AD. This was a time of great expansion for the early church. It was also a time when some began to lose their zeal and fervency.
2. ***They can be viewed Practically*** – These letters were sent to literal, real congregations that were actually functioning at the close of the First Century. While they were written to real churches existing in that day, they still speak to every church in existence today. God has a word for every church in these verses!
3. ***They can be viewed Personally*** – These letters speak to congregations, but we should also be mindful that the Lord has a word for the individual in these letters as well. He has something to say to you and to me about our relationship with Him.

As Jesus begins to write to this church, He does so in glowing terms, commending them for their works and their doctrinal purity. It appears that this was a very busy congregation. They were active with many ministries occupying the time of the members of the congregation.

- A. In **verse 2**, Jesus uses three words to describe the business of this church. The word “**works**” refers to their “**accomplishments**.” This was a church that had been used of the Lord to do great things in the community. The word “**labor**” literally refers to “**a beating**.” It speaks of “**intense work involving toil and pain**.” The word “**patience**” reminds us that they carried out their works for the Lord in the midst of great “**persecution**”. The city around them hated them and the message they preached. This was a working church.
- B. **Verses 2-3** and **verse 6** also tell us that this church was doctrinally pure. They stood for the truth and against evil. They publicly exposed false prophets. They were what we would call “**an old-fashioned, fundamental**” church. They were not allowing the world to influence their worship or their walk. Anyone looking in from the outside would have concluded that they were a rock-solid congregation. Anyone attending their services would have been in awe of their work and their calendar of activities.

While those around them were looking at them, Someone far more important had His eye on this church. The Lord Jesus Christ was walking in their midst, **verse 1**, but they were unaware of His presence. While they had much to commend them, there were problems in the church of Ephesus.

The Lord knew what the people around them did not know. The Lord knew what the church itself did not know. The Lord knew that this church was just going through the motions of serving Him. He knew that they did not love Him like they had once loved Him.

If this church had been honest about their condition, their favorite hymn would have been “**Oh, How I Loved Jesus!**” I want to consider the Lord’s letter to this ancient congregation. What He said to them then is relevant to us today.

As it was in Ephesus, many in our day are merely going through the motions. Many simply do not love Jesus like they once did, and it shows.

I want to point out some simple **facts** that present themselves in this text. I want to preach on the subject: **Oh, How I Loved Jesus!** I want you to let the Lord speak to your heart today, and ask yourself a couple of questions.

- Do you love Him with all of your heart, your soul and your mind?
- Are you serving Him because it is what you do, or do you serve Him because you are consumed with love for the Lord Jesus?

Let’s focus in on **verses 4-5** in this message as I try to preach what the Lord has given me from this passage. I pray that God will speak to our hearts and help us to fall in love with Jesus again!

I. v. 4 **THE LORD’S CASE AGAINST THIS CHURCH**

(III. After commending them for their works, Jesus condemns them for their lack of love for Him. He tells them that there is a real problem in their hearts. Let’s notice the nature of this problem.)

A. **It Is A Personal Problem** – “***I have somewhat against thee...***” The Ephesians probably thought their biggest problems were the pagans around them and the persecution they faced. Jesus tells them that the biggest problem they faced was a personal problem with the Lord Himself.

This reminds us that the Lord cares about His people. If He did not have His eye on them, He would have been unaware of their problem. In **verse 1**, we are told that He “**walks**” among them. In **verse 2** He tells them “***I know...***”

He knows us too! He knows us far better than we know ourselves. No one in the church of Ephesus would have guessed that there was a problem between them and Jesus, but there was!

Most of us would look at ourselves and think that we are all right. The problem with our way of gauging our own state of rightness is to compare ourselves with others. Of course, we never compare ourselves with anyone who lives holier than we do; we always compare ourselves with those who live less holy than we do. God's standard of holiness is a bit higher than that. His standard of righteousness is Christ Himself.

We think our biggest problems are society and government. The truth is, our biggest problem in the modern church is that, like Ephesus, we have offended a Holy God! He has a problem with us because we are not where He wants us to be spiritually!

- B. **It Is A Passion Problem** – Jesus tells them exactly what they have done to offend Him. He tells them “***thou hast left thy first love.***” Jesus tells them that they just don't love Him like they used to.

While all the words in that phrase scream for our attention, there are two that demand special notice. They are the words “***left***” and “***first.***”

The word “***left***” is an expressive word that means “***to send away.***” It was used of a husband divorcing his wife. It also means “***to expire; to let alone; to omit; to forsake; to abandon; to leave on place to go to another; to disregard.***” Jesus is talking to a people who have walked away from their love for Him. They have abandoned His love. They have forsaken His love. They have disregarded His love. Like a man divorcing an unwanted wife, they have symbolically sent the Lord way.

The word “***first***” means “***first in rank or importance.***” They still love their church. They still love their doctrines. They still love their activities. They still love their busy schedules. They still love all they do. They just don't love Jesus more than the other things.

(Note: We might think that falling out of love with Jesus is a minor thing. We might think it is something that happens to a lot of people that it's not such a big deal. That it's something we can get fixed up at the next revival, or the next service we decide to attend. Let me show you why I think falling out of love with Jesus is a serious issue.

- ***When we do not love Jesus as we should, we are in violation of the greatest commandment – Matt. 22:37-38.***

This opens us up to great sin! When we do not love Him as we should, we are more likely to break the first four commandments.

1. ***Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.***
2. ***Thou shalt not make any graven images.***
3. ***Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord Thy God in vain.***
4. ***Thou shalt remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.***
 - ***When we do not love Jesus we should, we are more likely to violate the second commandment*** – Matt. 22:39. When we are not in love with Him, we will not love others like He wants us to. Love is part of the Fruit of the Spirit, Gal. 5:22. Love for others is the work of God in our hearts, 1 John 4:7-12. This makes it far more likely that we will break the last six commandments.
5. ***Honor thy father and mother.***
6. ***Thou shalt not kill.***
7. ***Thou shalt not commit adultery.***
8. ***Thou shalt not steal.***
9. ***Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.***
10. ***Thou shalt not covet.***
 - ***When we do not love Jesus as we should, we will not have a desire to be with Him.*** (III. Honeymoon love – Always want to be with the object of your affection. That's how it is for a new believer. Over time, the love fades and the desire to be around Jesus and His people fades too. What is the problem? It can all be traced back to a loss of "***first love***.")
 - ***When we do not love Jesus as we should, we will not serve Him as fervently as He wants us to.*** We may attend church, but we will not be faithful. We might say we are saved, but we will never share the faith with the lost. We might teach a class, preach a sermon, lead a prayer meeting, lead a Bible study, but there will always be something lacking. Fervent, emotional, extravagant love for Jesus will always manifest itself in active, public service for Him.
 - There is much more that could be said about the dangers of not loving Jesus as we should. Many of us have been in that place where we were consumed with love for Him, and many of us have been in that place where the flame of passion became a dying ember. We know the difference and we know which honors Him the most!

II. v. 5a **THE LORD'S CALL TO THIS CHURCH**

(III. Having addressed their problem, Jesus gives them a plan of action. He tells them how they can go about rekindling the flames of passion for Him that once burned so brightly.)

- A. **He Calls On Them To Remember** – They are commanded to “***Remember from whence thou art fallen.***” The Lord’s command is for them to look back. They needed to remember a time when their love for Him was powerful, all-consuming and the most important thing in their lives. They were to remember those early days of salvation when the love of God for them was overwhelming. They were to remember how it felt to be saved and to know that all their sins had been forgiven. They were to remember what it felt like to know that they were no longer dead in sin, but had been made alive in Jesus. They were to remember the excitement that every new revelation from the Word of God brought to their hearts.

I say to you that we need to remember! We need to remember that moment when sin rolled away and Jesus moved in. we need to remember those early days of excitement and joy. We need to recapture the excitement of that early love we felt for Jesus when He first saved us from His sins. (III. ***Do you remember?***)

- B. **He Calls On Them To Repent** – Once they remembered what He had done for them, they would see how far they had fallen. When they remembered they would recognize their sins. The word “***repent***” refers to “***a change of mind that leads to a change of action.***” When they saw the depths of their sin, they were to turn from it and fall in love with Jesus again.

The greatest need of the modern church is for us to fall in love with Jesus once again. Before we can do this, we are going to have to recognize that our lack of love for Him is a sin! We are going to have to understand that all the things we have allowed to come between us and Him are idols. Our fun, our family, our work, even our church work can come between us and loving Jesus.

The modern church doesn’t really need a revival. The modern church doesn’t need more money, more recognition in society, or more presence in the community. The modern church simply needs to fall in love with Jesus once more. When we repent of our sin and turn from a lack of love, He will fill us with His presence, His wonder and His power.

- C. **He Calls On Them To Repeat** – He calls on them to “***do the first works.***” That word “***first***” is the same as the word “***first***” in **verse 4**. It speaks of that which is “***first in rank and importance.***” In other words, Jesus calls them to return to the things that are most important.

What is most important when it comes to our relationship with Him? The Lord's call here is for the Ephesian believers to return to the simple fundamentals of the faith.

It is a call to return to the altars of prayer. It is a call to come back to the Word of God. It is a call to return to a place of worship. It is a call to obedience to His will. It is a call for the church to walk in Holiness before the Lord.

(Note: Jesus is still calling the church to return to these basic, fundamental, foundational activities. If we do not seek Him in prayer; if we do not feed on His Word; if we are not active in His worship; if we do not walk in holiness and obedience; then we do not love Him. If we do not do these things, we cannot expect Him to bless us. If we do not do these things, we cannot expect Him to move in power among us when we gather at His house.

If we love, we will do these things! If we love Him, He will respond to our love by manifesting Himself in our lives as individuals and in the life of our church. So, do want to see souls saved? Fall in love with Jesus and let that love be seen. Do you want the power of God on the church? Fall in love with Jesus and let Him live through you every day. If we can recapture fervent, emotional, extravagant, first love for Jesus, that is all we need! It would forever transform the child of God and the church of God.

Our problem in the modern church is really a Calvary issue; It is that we do not love Jesus like we should. Oh, we love Him, but it isn't the all-consuming love that it needs to be! Oh, we love Him, but there was a time when we loved Him more! If we were to be honest, we would have to sing with the Ephesians, "***Oh, How I Loved Jesus!***"

III. v. 5b **THE LORD'S CHALLENGE TO THIS CHURCH**

(III. Because the Lord loves His church, He lets them know that their lack of love for Him holds serious consequences down the road. If they stayed the course and refused to repent, they faced certain judgment. The Lord describes this judgment in this verse.)

- A. **They Are Challenged Concerning Abrupt Judgment** – The Lord says that He will come "***quickly***." The word means "***without delay***." The Lord is telling this church when judgment comes, it will be swift and sure.

We can be sure that the Lord will not tolerate deadness and a lack of love among His people for an extended period of time. Sin will be judged! Of that we can be sure!

- B. **They Are Challenged Concerning Appalling Judgment** – He tells them that He will "***remove thy candlestick out of his place***." This means that they will cease to exist as a congregation. Jesus is telling the church at Ephesus that their lack of love is so serious that it threatens the very existence of their church.

This prophecy was literally fulfilled in Ephesus. From what I can read, there is nothing where this great city once stood, but a pile of rubble. There is no Christian church there. The land is inhabited by Muslim nomads. There is not Christian witness. There is no light of the Gospel. All of that is the result of a church that failed to stay in love with Jesus.

Look around today. Everywhere you look there are little, struggling churches with a handful of aged believers. It's not the case everywhere, but many of those churches are in their present condition because, somewhere a long time ago, they stopped loving Jesus with a passionate, all-consuming love. When they did, their worship became lifeless and dead. Their preaching lost its power and its effectiveness. The people moved away and the church began to die.

Regardless of what you might think, it can happen anywhere ! We are less than a generation away from this very thing taking place right here in America! I pray that it won't, but I can see some of the signs already. You can too, if you will just look! That's why the Lord led me to share this message with you today. If anybody in our church is going to repent and turn to Jesus; if anybody is going to seek Him, repent of not loving Him and fall in love with Jesus again, then let it be you today.

- C. **They Are Challenged Concerning Avoidable Judgment** – I don't want Jesus to take away our candlestick, but He will if our light ceases to shine. The Ephesians are told that they can avoid their fate, if they will repent of their sins. The modern church is dying. She is dying because she doesn't love Jesus like she used to. The only remedy is repentance and restoration.

Conclusion: It is a serious thing when a church ceases to love the Lord. That church might wander off into apostasy, a few do. More likely, that church will simply fade away and cease to exist. I heard just this week that the Southern Baptist Convention will have 50% less members than it has right now by 2050, if something doesn't change. Why is that happening? It is happening because many love their church, their doctrines and their rituals, but they just don't love Jesus.

What about you? If you are honest today, can you sing "***Oh, How I Love Jesus?***" Or, would you have to sing "***Oh, How I Loved Jesus?***" If He has spoken to you, you need to listen to what He is saying. Is it time for you to remember, rent and repeat? If we don't there is no remedy but removal! Let's mind our Savior of how much we love Him!

The Rich Little Poor Church Revelation 2:8-11

Introduction: The city of Smyrna was located some 35 miles north of Ephesus. It was a prosperous city with a population of over 100,000 in John's day. That location has been inhabited for over 3,000 years and no one knows for sure who founded Smyrna or when it was founded. The city was destroyed by a massive earthquake a few years before the birth of Jesus, but the city was rebuilt and thrived. It possessed a safe harbor, where ships from all over the world came to buy and sell goods. It was called "**The Crown City**" because it was surrounded by hills that resembled a crown. It was also called "**The Flower Of Asia**." When the city chose a motto to be imprinted on their coinage, they chose the phrase "**First in Asia in Size and Beauty**."

Several characteristics made the city of special in its day. First, it was famous for the production of myrrh. This substance came from a shrub-like tree that produced a bitter gum. When the leaves of this tree were crushed, they exuded a very fragrant odor. Myrrh was used as a fragrance by the living and an embalming agent for the dead. Myrrh was mentioned in association with the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, **Matt. 2:11; Mark 15:23; John 19:39**. The word myrrh means "**bitter**" and it came to be associated with suffering and death.

Among the other factors that made the city of Smyrna special include the fact that it was a planned city. Most cities of that day just sprang up without design. Smyrna and its streets were planned down to the last detail. It was a very religious city with many temples dedicated to the pantheon of gods and goddesses they worshipped. There were temples dedicated to Zeus, Cybele, Asklepios, Apollo, and Aphrodite, among others. In fact, there was a street that was paved with gold that ran from the temple of Zeus to the temple of Cybele. While pagan religions dominated the life of Smyrna, there was also a thriving Jewish community there.

Smyrna was a free city. They governed themselves, but were intensely loyal to Rome. On one occasion, the citizens of Smyrna stripped the very clothing off their backs and sent it, along with all the food they could find, to Roman soldiers who were cold and hungry on the battlefield.

In this beautiful, wealthy pagan city, there existed a struggling Christian community. The church in Smyrna was undergoing intense and withering persecution. The Lord Jesus comes to them with a word of comfort for their dark days. He tells them that even though they appear to be so weak and so poor, they are, in fact, rich beyond imagination.

Prophetically, this church pictures the terrible persecution inflicted upon believers by the Roman emperors between the years of 100 AD and 312 AD. Practically and personally, there is a word here for everyone who has ever or will ever suffer for Jesus' sake. Let's look at our Lord's words to this struggling little congregation to find the encouragement we need to be able to stand when everyone else is against us. I want to take these verses and preach on the thought, **The Rich Little Poor Church**.

I. v. 9b-10a **SMYRNA WAS A CRUSHED CHURCH**

(III. It is easy to see that this church was going through intense problems because of their testimony for the Lord Jesus. They were letting their light shine in a dark world and they were being persecuted for it. Notice how they were crushed.)

A. **They Faced Persecution – Tribulation** – The word means “**pressure**.” It was used in that day to refer to crushing an object under the weight of very heavy stones. The word “**tribulation**” comes from the Latin word “**tribulum**.” It refers to the stone wheels that were used to crush wheat to separate the kernel from the shell. This church was paying the price for their allegiance to Jesus. The pressure was on and they were suffering.

This persecution did not come from the pagans in Smyrna alone. **Verse 9** tells us that they were also suffering at the hands of the Jews. The Jews in Smyrna joined hands with the idolaters in that city to defeat and destroy the Christians by whatever means necessary. Jesus calls them “**the synagogue of Satan**” and accuses them of blaspheme (**slander**) against these believers. Why did the people of Smyrna hate the believers so? There are several reasons.

1. The Jews and the pagans accused the Christians of cannibalism. Christians kept communion and part of that observance was eating the bread and drinking from the cup. These represented the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus, **1 Cor. 11:24-26**.
2. When the Christians gathered, they would often hold what they called “**Agape Feasts**”. These “**love feasts**” were nothing but times of fellowship, where believers enjoyed one another’s company. The pagans, however, accused the Christians of engaging in orgies.
3. The Christians were hated because their beliefs and practices often split families. This was what Jesus said would happen, **Matt. 10:34-36**. Thus, Christians were accused of being anti-family.
4. Christians were accused of being atheists because they did not worship the many gods of the pagans and because they used no statues and icons in their own worship. So, any natural disasters other calamities were blamed on the Christians for incurring the wrath of the gods.
5. Christians were accused of being political enemies of Rome because they refused to say, “**Caesar is Lord!**” Every Roman citizen was required to do this every year. To fail to do so brought severe punishment and even death.

- B. **They Faced Poverty** – *poverty* – This word speaks of being “**absolutely destitute**.” These poor people had nothing of this world’s goods because of their relationship with the Lord Jesus. They were denied jobs and promotions because of their testimony. These people had nothing in a city that possessed everything. Imagine how Satan must have mocked these people. As they passed the ornate temples and walked down that golden street, surely he said, “**Serving Jesus has cost you everything!**” Can you hear him whisper to them, “**Look at you! You are nothing and you have nothing. Give up on Jesus. You are starving! Deny Him and prosper!**”
- C. **They Faced Prison** – In **verse 10**, Jesus tells them that there is more trouble ahead! They will face more persecution. The “**ten days**” mentioned here might refer to the ten persecutions the Christians suffered under the Romans. Or, it might simply mean that their persecution will be severe, but brief. Either way, they are informed that more pain and suffering is coming their way.

Now, prison in that day was nothing like it is today. When people went to prison under the Roman system, they did not receive a college education, learn a skill and spend their days writing books and watching television. When a person went to prison in those days, it was to await execution. The only way you got out was to die. And, death was usually a horrible affair. You might be killed by a sword, burned alive, thrown to wild animals, or any of the dozens of other cruel methods of torture and torment they had devised. This was a suffering congregation!

(III. One example of their suffering comes to us from history, just a few years after they received this letter. In 155 AD, the Bishop of the church of Smyrna, a man named Polycarp, who was a disciple of John the Beloved, was martyred for Jesus. This man was arrested at the request of an angry mob that cried, “**Away with the Atheists; let Polycarp be sought out!**”

The old preacher, he was 86 at the time, was given the opportunity to renounce Jesus. The magistrate, who did not want to see the old man die, said, “**What harm is there in saying, Lord Caesar?**” But, Polycarp refused! When they entered the stadium, where the executions took place, they tried again saying, “**Swear by the fortune of Caesar; repent, and say, Away with the Atheists.**” Polycarp fixed his gaze on the crowd, waved his arms at them and said, “**Away with the atheists!**” The magistrate again attempted to get Polycarp to renounce his faith and said, “**Swear, and I will set thee at liberty, reproach Christ.**” To that, the old man cried, “**Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?**”

After a few more attempts to get the old preacher to renounce Jesus, they led him away to the stake to burn him alive. They were about to nail him to the post and Polycarp said, “**Leave me as I am; for He, that giveth me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain without moving in the pile.**” So, they left him loosely bound and they lit the

fire. As the flames rose around him, he was heard to pray and rejoice in Jesus. He died for his faith and in doing so he left an indelible imprint on the fabric of time.)

(Note: Let me just make a statement here. Everyone who will live a holy, separated, dedicated for Jesus Christ, in any generation, is going to face persecution, **2 Tim. 3:12**. This should not shock us, nor should it surprise us. Jesus said that it would be this way, **John 15:18-25; Mark 13:13; John 16:33**.

The reason the world hates the believer today is the same reason the world hated the believers then. They used all the excuses that I mentioned earlier, but the people of Smyrna hated the believers for just one reason: they loved Jesus! Folks that is why the world hates us! That is why the liberals hate us. That is why the homosexuals, the lesbian, the abortion lobby and the rest of the perverts, infidels and in-for-hells hate us. That is why the liquor and drug crowd hate us. That is why the Muslim, the Jew and religionist hate old time fundamental believers.

They hate us because we tell them there is one way to God and that His name is Jesus. They hate us because we tell them that they are headed to Hell unless they repent. They hate us because we will not join them and confirm them in their abominations. They hate us because we are different; we are intolerant and we are not afraid to say so. They hate us today, but things are just going to get worse!

It used to cost something to name the name of Jesus. Now, folks can call themselves a Christian and do what the world around them is doing. I think the day is coming when the fires of persecution will burn around us. I think God will use the hatred of humanity against His Son Jesus to purify the Bride of Christ before she is taken home to glory. I am not a prophet of doom, but I think there are some difficult days ahead for the faithful, fundamental people of God!)

I. Smyrna Was A Crushed Church

II. v. 9a **SMYRNA WAS A CONSISTENT CHURCH**

(II. Even though they were paying a harsh price for their faithful love and service to the Lord Jesus, these people did not back up from their profession. They stayed the course and demonstrated a faithful testimony for the glory of God. Remember that Smyrna was famous for myrrh. It was only when the leaves of the tree were crushed that their fragrance was released. These people were being crushed under the terrible and terrifying pressure of persecution and they were releasing the fragrance of love and faithful to Jesus into the atmosphere of Smyrna. Let's examine their testimony for a few minutes.)

- A. **They Had A Positive Testimony** – Jesus sent seven letters to seven different churches. Five of the seven churches received words of rebuke and correction. Only this church and the church at Philadelphia received no corrective words. The Lord had been observing their walk and He was pleased. They were consistent!

(**Note:** If He were to comment on our church, would He have any words of correction for us, or would He come to us with a positive word of encouragement?)

- B. **They Had A Powerful Testimony** – Jesus says to them “*I know thy works*” – The word “**works**” refers to that “**business which occupies a person’s life.**” In spite of all the darkness around them, these people continued to be a light for Jesus in the midst of an ever darkening world. They were not intimidated by their enemies; they were not frightened by the hatred of their opponents. They proved they were genuine and that their faith was real by the way they carried themselves in that society. Their testimony was powerful because they stayed the course and stuck to the task for the glory of God! They were a consistent church!

(**Note:** What do our works say about us as a church? What do your works say about you as an individual? In a world like ours, where darkness, wickedness and opposition to our way of life abounds; there is a tendency to back of the message, to tone things down. The church has withdrawn from the public square, from the public schools and from the public arena. We have moved within the walls of our building where we are safe from the critics and the enemies of truth. What we fail to see is that we cannot impact the world if we never confront the world. If our message is maintained within the walls of our churches and never shared with a lost and dying world, we can never make a difference for the glory of the Lord.

We need to step out of our comfort zone and reenter the world with the message of salvation. We need to publicly proclaim, without fear, the saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to take our stand for the Lord Jesus one more time and be willing to suffer or to die, if need be, for the glory of God. That was Paul’s desire, **Phil. 3:8-10**. It should be ours as well!

If we would be a powerful witness for the Lord Jesus, then we must live out our profession, regardless of the personal or public cost. Those men who walked with Jesus paid a terrible price for their faith. Every one of the disciples, with the exception John, died a horrible death for their testimony. Down through the years some 70 million believers have died for their faith in Jesus. Every year some 300,000 believers are martyred for their faith. One day, it may be our turn to take a stand for Jesus. If that day comes, are you ready to stand? Are you ready to die if necessary? Are you prepared to live out a powerful testimony?)

(**Note:** Regardless of what comes our way, we should ask the Lord to help us be consistent and faithful to Him. When we think of all that He has done for us, He deserves at least that much from us!)

I. **Smyrna Was A Crushed Church**

II. **Smyrna Was A Consistent Church**

III. v. 8-11 **SMYRNA WAS A COMFORTED CHURCH**

(III. Jesus comes to this beleaguered little church and gives them a message of comfort they desperately needed to hear. Let's look into our Lord's precious message to this persecuted church.)

- A. v. 9a **They Had The Interest Of Heaven** – Jesus says “*I know thy works*” – The Lord of Glory has taken a personal interest in the church in Smyrna. The word “*know*” means “*to know by experience.*” Jesus is saying, “*I know you folks are having it tough; but you need to know that I am in this with you. I experience everything they do to you. When they do it to you, they do it to me!*” He is telling them that what they are going through is bigger than they are. He is telling them that Satan is using the evil people of Smyrna to attack Jesus through His church. He just wants them to know that they are not alone in their struggle.

(**Note:** I don't know about you, but that encourages me! I am glad that our Lord is with us every step of the way, **Heb. 13:5**. When we are attacked, He knows all about it because it touches Him too, **Heb. 4:15**. Thank God, He can help us weather the storms and endure the pain. He is always there to help His suffering saints, **Heb. 2:18; John 14:16-18**.)

- B. v. 8 **They Had The Involvement Of Heaven** – When Jesus comes to this church, He comes as “*the first and the last.*” He comes as He “*which was dead, and is alive.*”

If you will remember from **chapter one of Revelation**, the title “*first and last*” identifies Jesus as the “*I AM.*” It labels Him as the One Who is in control of all things. The people in the church in Smyrna might have thought things were out of control, but they were in the hand of the Lord. Jesus is still Sovereign! Let the devil do whatever he pleases, he controls nothing! God is the One Who calls all the shots and lets Satan have what liberty he exercises against the people of God. He is a chained lion and that is all, **1 Pet. 5:8**.

The statement “**which was dead, and is alive**” identifies Jesus as the One Who has been there. He is telling these saints that He knows what they are facing because He has already faced it. The people hated Him. They persecuted Him. They crucified Him. They poured out all their wrath, hatred and anger upon Him; and He prevailed! Since He is the One Who has been through the trials and conquered them all, He is able to help His people when they face the fires of persecution and hatred, **Heb. 2:18; John 10:29; 2 Tim. 1:12.**

(**Note:** None of us know what we will be called on the face before we leave this world behind. But, we have the blessed assurance that no matter what comes our way, our Lord has already been there. He has already secured the victory for us and He will meet us there when we arrive at that place. We are “**more than conquerors through Him that loved us**,” **Rom. 8:37.** “**Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place**”, **2 Cor. 2:14.** Glory to God, I can face anything if I know He will be with me! “**What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?**” **Romans 8:31**)

(III. Many hundreds of years ago, in the days when men were just beginning to take to the seas, their maps did not show the world as we know it today. Their maps were only able to represent the places man had already sailed. In the places where men had never been before, in those unexplored, in those unknown areas, they would write on their maps, “**Here Be Dragons**,” and it indicated that it was the unknown, that they didn't know what was there.

When you and I are voyaging on the seas of life, and when you come to the spots where you've never been before; when you come to those unknown places in life, across the map of your life you can write, “**Here Is Jesus**.” Wherever you go Jesus Christ has been there and He is there. So to this church of Smyrna the Lord says, I want to encourage you with My Person, I am the first and the last, I was dead, I am alive for evermore.)

- C. v. 9b **They Had Their Investment In Heaven** – Jesus says, “**I know...thy poverty**”. They were poor beyond belief, but then He adds this statement, “**but thou art rich**.” They may have lacked this world's goods, but their faith and the faithful display of their testimony had purchased them treasures in Heaven. They were poor here, but they were rich over there! The world may have taken everything they had down here, but they had treasures on the other side that were safe from the hands of any enemy, III. **Matt. 6:19-21.** These people had nothing, yet they possessed everything, **2 Cor. 6:10.**

(III. There was a believer who was arrested during these same terrible days of tribulation. They attempted to threaten him to cause him to recant his faith in the Lord Jesus. So they said to him, ***“If you do not recant your faith, we are going to banish you.”*** And the Christian said, ***“Do what you will with me because my Jesus said, ‘I’ll never leave thee nor forsake thee.’”*** The magistrate then said, ***“We’ll take all of your property and your possessions away from you.”*** That faithful saint said, ***“No, you can’t do that either, my treasures are laid up in heaven where no human hand can touch them.”*** The magistrate then said, ***“If you do not renounce Jesus, we will put you to death.”*** He said, ***“You can’t do that either. I’ve been dead with Jesus for 40 years; my life is hid with Christ in God and you can’t touch it.”***)

(**Note:** The day may come when this world will take us and our property. They day may come when they threaten us with death. The day may come when our testimony becomes a death sentence in this world. If that day ever comes, take comfort that all you are giving up is what you would have lost at some point anyway. Even if everything you have is taken away, including your life, the treasures you have laid up in Heaven are safe and your soul will merely be liberated to fly home to glory. Therefore, do as Jesus said in **verse 10**, ***“Be thou faithful unto death.”***)

Folks, all we really have is what we give away for Jesus. III. A certain wealthy believer had given away great sums of money over the years. When the stock market collapsed in the Great Depression, he lost the remainder of his resources and was left penniless. A fellow asked him this question, ***“Aren’t you sorry that you gave away all that money?”*** The man answered, ***“Oh no! What I gave away is all I have left!”*** May our lives be an investment in the Kingdom work of the Savior!)

- D. v. 10b-11 **They Had Their Inheritance In Heaven** – Their faith had purchased for them more than just a testimony here. Their faith had purchased eternal life for them in Heaven. Jesus is telling them that while they may lose it all down here, they might even lose their lives, but they will live forever over there. They may endure Hell on earth for a while, but there will be no Hell for them in eternity. He is telling them that they can’t die but once!

He promises them ***“a crown of life.”*** That word for crown refers to the ***“stephanos”*** or the laurel crown that was given to victors in the ancient Greek games. You see, this church looked like a bunch of losers to the world around them. In reality, they were mighty victors, waging spiritual warfare in the name of Jesus Christ! The day would come when they and their faith would be vindicated!

The lost man will die twice. He will live without God in this world and he will die. After death, he will go to Hell. Then he will stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne judgment and he will be sentenced to the Lake of Fire for all eternity, **Rev. 20:11-15**. That is the second death. The saints of God need never fear that happening to them. They have passed from death unto life, **John 5:24**. Their faith has bought them eternal life and they will be crowned with victory and glory when they arrive home. Thank God, there is far more waiting on us there than we will ever have down here!

Conclusion: Church, it might get bad down here before we leave this world. There may be trials and there may be tribulations. There may be pain and there may be persecutions. But, I want you to know that, at the end of the road, we're going home to be with Jesus. So, press on my brother! Press on my sister! It won't be very long and we will leave this world far behind and we will enter that precious land of song!

The Church That Married The World

Revelation 2:12-17

Introduction: The city of Pergamos was the capital city of Asia Minor. It was renowned for its political power, its intellectual achievement and its pagan worship. It was a wealthy city given over to luxury and fashion. There are two special features that caused Pergamos to stand out in its time.

First, there was a 200,000 volume library there. That may not sound like many books to us, but when you consider that every page of every book was handwritten on papyrus and parchment, it was quite an achievement. Along those same lines, Pergamos was the place where parchment was invented. Parchment was a type of writing material developed from animal skins and far stronger than papyrus, which was made from reeds.

A second feature that marked ancient Pergamos was its pagan temples. There was a temple in Pergamos to Aesculapius, the god of healing and medicine. His temple was filled with snakes and when a person needed healing, they would go into that temple, lie down on the floor and spend the night there. If a snake crawled across them during their stay, they considered themselves healed. There were three temples in Pergamos devoted to the emperor worship cult. As I have already mentioned, once each year, every Roman citizen was required to walk into one of these temples, place a pinch of incense on an altar and say, "**Caesar is god.**" Of course, Christians refused to do that a severe persecution arose. On the hill outside the city there was a massive altar dedicated to Zeus, the supreme ruler of the gods. This altar was one hundred feet square and forty feet tall.

It is to the Christian congregation in this city that Jesus addresses this letter. They were a church in desperate need of a word from the Lord. So, when Jesus comes to them, He comes as One having "**the sharp sword with two edges.**" The two-edged sword is a clear picture of the Word of God, **Eph. 6:12; Heb. 4:12.** Jesus comes to them declaring that He has a word for them from God.

As we study these verses, we are going to discover that this church was doctrinally pure; but they had drifted into compromise. Jesus comes to call them back to the right path. In these verses, there is a word for our hearts today. There is always the danger that we too might drift of center. There is the danger that we might hold the right doctrines, but still drift into compromise with the world around us.

Let me remind you that these letters can be viewed three different ways. **Practically** – These are real letters to real churches living in a real world. **Prophetically** – These letters picture the church during different eras of history. This particular church symbolizes the church as it existed during the years **313-590 AD**, when the church married the world. **Personally** – There is a word here for our church and for the individuals in our church today.

With these thoughts in mind, let's turn our attention to the Lord's words to the church in Pergamos. Jesus comes to them with a word from God. Notice the **kinds** of words He speaks as I preach in the subject: ***The Church That Married The World.***

I. v. 13 **WORDS OF COMMENDATION**

(III. "***I know thy works***" – Jesus knew all about this church, where it was, what it was doing and what it was facing. He knew them intimately. We need to remember that He knows this church intimately too. He knows everything there is to know about them and He begins by giving them words of commendation.)

A. **He Knows Their Situation** – "***where Satan's seat is... where Satan dwelleth***" - This church operated right in the middle of a city chosen by Satan as his headquarters on earth. Regardless of what some people think, some preachers preach and some songs say, Satan is not now, nor has he ever been in Hell. He dreads that place more than any lost man ever has. When he is sent to Hell, it will spell his eternal doom, and he knows it, **Rev. 20:10**.

In our day, Satan is free and he operates as the "***god of this world***," **2 Cor. 4:4**; and as "***the prince and power of the air***", **Eph. 2:2**. In other words, Satan is active in our world and he has a seat of power somewhere. It might be New York, Las Vegas, Washington DC, Moscow, or any of a thousand other places.

These words are used to let these people know that Jesus knows they are living in a tough place. He knows where they are and He has a word just for them.

(**Note:** He knows your situation too! He knows it when you are in a difficult marriage. He knows it when you face persecution on your job, at school, at home, or even at church. He knows the pressures society places on the dedicated child of God. He knows, He cares, He is there and He will help you, **Heb. 13:5; 4:15-16!** That is what we need to remember!)

B. **He Knows Their Steadfastness** – We are told that they "***dwelled***" in Pergamos. There are two words translated " ***dwell*** " in the New Testament. One means "***to take up a temporary dwelling***." The other one, the one used here, means "***to settle down to stay; to take up a permanent residence***." These people had settled down in Pergamos and they were not running away from the trouble around them. They set a good example for churches existing in this day. Far too often, we allow the world to cause us to run and hide in fear. They are trying their best to drive the church away into oblivion. We must make our stand in this world and be willing to stand up and speak up against the evils and wickedness that mark our society, whatever the cost!

The church in Pergamos was doing a couple of things right and Jesus commends them for it. Let's see what Jesus found to brag on as He looked at this church.

- First, they “**held fast to His name.**” This church was not ashamed of the name of Jesus. His name is the most divisive name in history, yet His name is the only name “**whereby men must be saved,**” **Acts 4:12.** There are some churches you can go to and you can sit through an entire service and never hear the name Jesus mentioned. That is sad and it is an abomination. We need to make much of that name! We need to sing it, shout it, preach it and tell it! Our church ought to be marked as a “**Jesus**” church. When folks come here, they ought to hear about Jesus! We are not here to promote ourselves, this church, this preacher, or anything else you want to name; we are here to exalt Jesus! We need to be in the business of lifting up the name of Jesus, **John 12:32!**
- Second, they are commended because they have “**not denied the faith.**” This church was doctrinally pure. They held on to the fundamentals of the faith, and Jesus praised them for it. There are some non-negotiable truths in Christianity. There is plenty of room for liberty in our service to the Lord. We don't all have to live by the same opinions. If you have a problem with that, read **Romans 14-15** sometime and it will settle that matter for you. However, there are some things that are non-negotiable. If you do not hold these certain things to be true, then you are not a Christian, no matter what you say! This ancient church held fast to “**the faith.**” We must as well! What are these fundamentals?
 - The Verbal, Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures
 - The Virgin Birth of the Savior
 - The Vicarious Death of the Savior
 - The Victorious Resurrection of the Savior

We need to take our stand on these precious truths. Far too many groups are turning away from the fundamental doctrines of the faith and are swiftly sliding into apostasy. Regardless of what anyone else does, or even what our denomination does, we must take our stand on the fundamental doctrines of the Word of God.

- C. **He Knows Their Sacrifices** – Their stand for Jesus had been costly. Even when this church was undergoing severe persecution, they stood for the Lord and for His Word. Jesus mentions a man by the name of Antipas. He is called a “**faithful martyr.**” History tells us that Antipas refused to offer the pinch of incense and say,

“Caesar is god.” Because of his refusal to worship Caesar, Antipas was placed inside of a brass bull. A fire was built under the bull and Antipas was roasted to death. In spite of this, the Christians in Pergamos held fast to their witness. Jesus applauds them for their stand.

Notice this, Antipas is called **“my faithful martyr.”** This is the same name that was given to Jesus in **Rev. 1:5**. Because Antipas stood with the Lord, even though it cost him his life, Jesus calls Antipas by His Own Name! Notice this also, Antipas has been all but forgotten by history. Still, Jesus knows his name! We need never fear that our sacrifices for Him are in vain. He sees the mall and will reward them openly some day!

It is still costly to be a fundamental believer. If you hold to the right doctrine and live the right kind of life, you are going to offend some people and you are going to be persecuted, **2 Tim. 3:12**. Be sure, when that happens, your Lord sees, knows and He will reward your faithful service in His time.

I. He Comes With Words Of Commendation

II. v. 14-16 **WORDS OF CONFRONTATION**

(III. When the Savior looks at this church, He finds some things that please Him; but not everything is to His liking. Having offered them some **Words of Commendation**, He now gives them some **Words of Confrontation**.)

A. v. 14-15 **He Confronts The Compromise In The Church** – The name Pergamos means “married”. As we look at what Jesus points out about this church we are given a glimpse of a church that has fallen into a state of compromise with the world. This church has held onto pure doctrine with one hand and with the other, they have embraced the world. They are literally in an unequal yoke with unbelievers and Jesus confronts them about it in these verses. Here is what He says is wrong with this church.

1. v. 14 **There Is Corruption In The Membership** – He tells them that some of their number **“hold the doctrine of Balaam”**. Balaam is one of the strangest characters on the pages of the Bible. He is an enigma, a real mystery. On the one hand, he was a man intimately acquainted with God. He knew about God, about God’s character and he even talked with God. On the other hand, he was motivated by greed and he was guilty of leading the people of God into immorality and idolatry. His story can be found in **Numbers 22-25**.

In those verses, Balak, the king of Moab wanted to curse the nation of Israel, so he called for Balaam to come do the dirty work. He promises him wealth and promotion for his services. Four times Balaam tries to curse Israel, each time the Lord turns his curses into blessings. When he sees that his attempts to curse Israel have failed, Balaam apparently suggests that since they can't curse Israel, they should corrupt them. This is accomplished by leading them off into immorality and idolatry and thus bringing the wrath of God down upon them, **Num. 25:1; 31:16**.

Basically, the “**doctrine of Balaam**” is wickedness and worldliness. The church at Pergamos was tolerating people in their midst who claimed to be Christians, but who lived like the world around them. Some of their membership were living immoral lives and participating in pagan worship. Jesus is not at all pleased with these things.

(Note: This same problem is rampant in the modern church. There are so many who believe that since you are saved by grace and kept by grace, you can live any way you please. It is no wonder that society has no respect for the church! It is no wonder that there is no power in the church. We live as we please without regard for the clear commands of the Lord.

Here is the fact of the matter: if you are saved, you will not be like the world around you. If you are saved, you will walk differently, talk differently, and you will have a different set of standards than the world. If you can adopt this world's attitude about substance abuse, sex, music, etc, you are most likely not saved. When Jesus saves a soul, He creates a new creature, **2 Cor. 5:17**. His changes everything about that saved person's life. They are different and they live like it!

Whether you like it or not there are some clear standards for living in this book! We can either do them and prove we are of the truth; or we can ignore them and prove we are of the darkness. But, you can't have it both ways. If you are saved, live like it. If you are not, then do as you please!)

2. v. 15 **There Is Confusion In The Leadership** – Others there held “**the doctrine of the Nicolaitans**”. As we discovered back in **Rev. 2:6**, the word “**Nicolaitans**” means “**to conquer the people**” and probably refers to a priestly class that had developed within the church. What was merely “**deeds**” in **verse 6** has become a “**doctrine**” in **verse 15**. It had started out with the leadership in the church elevating themselves above everyone else and it has turned into a doctrine in that fellowship.

Now, God has established certain offices within the church. Those in these offices are to be respected and listened to, if they carry out their office according to the Word of the Lord. For instance, we have Deacons. They have a biblical office and they are to be respected and honored when they fulfill the demands of that office. If they don't fulfill their obligations, they should return to the right way and obey as in the beginning.

I am the Pastor of this church. When I preach the Word of God, and preach it correctly, you would do well to listen to the message and adjust your life to it. Not because I am preaching, but because this office is mandated by the Lord. In this church, I am the leader, but I am not the Lord.

No one in the church is to be worshipped or place on a high pedestal of honor. We are all under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and we are all accountable to Him! I don't think we have a problem with leadership trying to dominate the people, but we must always be on the lookout for the "**little dictators**" that try to get a grip on power from time to time.

- B. v. 16 **He Confronts The Consequences For The Church** – He tells them to "**repent.**" This word means "**to change the mind.**" Repentance is really "**a change of mind that results in a change of direction.**" If they refuse to repent and deal with the corruption and confusion in their midst, He is going to come to His church and fight against those who trouble it. Notice the change of pronouns in **verse 16**: "**thee**" to "**them**". The Lord knows who belongs to Him and who doesn't. He will come to His church and afflict those who are not really His people, but who would bring trouble into the church. Those who will not repent are going to have to face the Lord in judgment.

(**Note**: It is a fearful thing to be found on the wrong side of the Lord. It is dangerous business to be found fighting against and causing trouble in the church. The Lord loves His church! He loves her so much that He died to redeem her! He will not stand idly by while she is attacked and undermined either! III. What man would stand by while his wife was attacked, either verbally or physically? Any man worthy of the name would take his wife's part and defend her! Jesus Christ will not tolerate those who attack His Bride!)

I. He Comes With Words Of Commendation

II. He Comes With Words Of Confrontation

III. v. 17 **WORDS OF CONSOLATION**

(III. The Lord makes some precious promises to the overcomers in the church. Those who walk with Him in spite of the dangers and defections can expect some precious things from His hand.)

- A. **He Promises Special Provisions** – He promises them “*hidden manna*.” In the Old Testament, when the children of Israel wandered through the wilderness, God fed them by sending Manna down from Heaven. Some of this Manna was gathered and kept in a golden pot in the Ark of the Covenant. Ancient Jewish tradition says that when Israel was taken into captivity by the Babylonians Jeremiah hid this pot of Manna, and when Messiah returns, He will feed the people of Israel again. This Manna is a picture of God’s precious promise to feed His children.

You see, the people in Pergamos were idolaters. They worshipped in religions that thrived on “*secrets and mysteries*.” The early Christians were excluded from the secrets and mysteries. Jesus says, “*You don’t need their secrets. Walk with me and I will take you into a special place and feed you something this world knows nothing about.*” The saints of God might be excluded from many things in this world, but we have a place we can go. We can enter into His sanctuary and hide in His pavilion. When we are there, He will feed us with delicacies the world cannot imagine or duplicate! He has some secret things hidden away just for His children!

The world and those in it have to search for ever deepening experiences. They go to the table of sin and eat their fill. The true saint of God is content to be alone with His Lord in His tabernacle, feeding on His Word and His presence, **Psa. 27:1-5**. He promises His people a place of escape and refreshment, even during the most difficult of times.

- B. **He Promises Special Privileges** – Not only will He provide for the overcomers; He will grant them some special privileges not enjoyed by others.
1. **A New Degree** – “*a white stone*” – The Lord promises to give His faithful ones a white stone. This does not mean much to us, but it held special meaning to the people of that day. There are several possible meanings attached to the white stone. I want to point out a few that speak to us.

- ***White and black stones were used to indicate judgment in ancient courts of law.*** When a judge rendered his verdict, he would place a stone in a container and at the appropriate time, he would roll the stone out, thus rendering his judgment. A black stone indicated a judgment of guilt, while a white stone indicated a judgment of innocence.

Jesus is telling these people that they might be blackballed by the world, but they were innocent in His eyes. He had taken all the black stones that were against them and He had washed them white in His blood.

- ***White stones were used to signify citizenship.*** A white stone was often given to people who had proven their allegiance to the city. Jesus honors those who live for Him.
- ***White stones were used as a symbol of victory.*** They were given to those who had won a victory in one of the ancient games. These white stones were called “***tessera***” and they allowed the owner free access to all public entertainment. Jesus allows His victors access to the glories of His heaven!
- ***A courageous gladiator would be given a white stone with the initials “S.P.” on it.*** This stood for “***spectatus***,” and meant that “***his valor had been proven beyond all doubt.***” So, Jesus promises to honor those who take a stand for Him!
- ***White stones were a symbol of friendship.*** Often two friends would take a white stone, break it in half and write the other friends name on their half. When they met, even after many years, they could place the halves of their stones together, signifying their lasting relationship.
- ***White stones were used to gain access.*** When a wealthy person would throw a party, they sometimes gave their invited guests a white stone. When it came time for the celebration, the person who presented a white stone was granted access to the banquet. Jesus allows His people access to the greatest banquet of all times: the marriage supper of the Lamb, **Rev. 19!**

2. **A New Designation** – Jesus promised His overcomers that their white stone would contain “a new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” This is a promise of intimacy. It was customary in that day for guests at a dinner to have a white stone placed at their seat. When they were seated, they could look at the stone and underneath would be a private message from the host. It was a way for the host to share an intimate thought with each guest.

Jesus promises those who are faithful to Him that He will reveal Himself to them in a personal, intimate way. You see, He is my Savior and I hope He is your Savior too. But, I have a relationship with Jesus that you cannot have. You have a relationship with Him that I cannot have. We are all saved the same way, but He has done things in, for and to me that He hasn't done in for and to you. We have a special relationship. And, those who walk with Him and separate from the world will see this intimacy heightened and taken to new levels as the years go by.

Conclusion: We have covered a lot of territory in these verses. I wonder; is your relationship with Jesus all that it should be? Are you actively separating yourself from the world to love Him and Him alone? Or, has your life been invaded by the “**doctrine of Balaam**”?

- Do you profess to know Jesus even while you are living for the world? If so, you need to repent, or He will come and fight against you. He might already be doing that. It might explain why some people seem to have so much trouble all the time.
- Maybe you would like to come to Jesus for salvation. He is still saving all those who come to Him by faith.
- Maybe you would like to come pray for your church. In a day when so many churches are abandoning the right path, we must have the will to stay the course for the glory of God.

If He has spoken to your heart, you need to get before Him and do business with Him today.

The Church That Compromised With The World: Revelation 2:18-29

Introduction: The city of Thyatira was the smallest of the seven cities mentioned in the letters to the churches. It is also the city about which the least is known. Yet, it is to this little known church in a little known city that Christ addresses His longest letter.

While not a lot is known about ancient Thyatira, some things are known and they are worthy of mention.

- Thyatira was probably founded by Alexander the Great some 300 years before Christ.
- The name Thyatira means “**Unceasing Sacrifice**.” It probably received this name because it was a military buffer city. It was located some 40 miles southeast of Pergamos, the capital city of that province. When enemies invaded, they would naturally come to Thyatira first. While its location did not allow it to defend itself very well, its mission was to hold the enemy just long enough for Pergamos to prepare itself for battle. As a result, Thyatira was destroyed and rebuilt many times during its history.
- It was somewhat famous in its day for commerce. There was main trade route that went through the city. Thus, tradesmen from around the world bought and sold there.
- Thyatira was known for its woolen industry, especially for the dyes produced there. They manufactured a very expensive purple dye that was valued by royalty and the wealthy of that era. This dye was obtained from a certain shellfish. This little creature was brought up by divers; its throat was slit open; and a single drop of this dye was obtained. That dye, coupled with the chemical composition of the water of Thyatira, made colors possible there that could not be reproduced anywhere else on earth. This industry is mentioned in the Bible. We are told about a woman named Lydia who is called “**a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira...**,” **Acts 16:14**.
- Thyatira was also known for its trade guilds. These were like the ancient unions of the day. Workers from the various industries of the city, bakers, wool worker, dyers, bronze workers, potters, and others, all banded together to set prices, guarantee work. To refuse to join a guild was to give up all prospects of work. This little fact will become important as we move through these verses.

- Thyatira was also a center of occult worship. There was a temple in the city dedicated to fortune-telling. It was presided over by a female oracle named **Sambathe´**.

It was to the church operating in this city that Jesus sends this letter. We do not know who founded this church. It is possible that the Gospel was brought to Thyatira was by Lydia who was saved in Philippi, **Acts 16:12-15**. Or, as some think, it might have been evangelized by believers from Ephesus. There is one thing we know for sure. **While the church in Thyatira might have been founded by a woman, it was certainly being confounded by a woman!** There were serious problems in the church of Thyatira and the Lord comes with a word tailored just for them and their need.

Jesus comes to this church in **verse 18** and presents Himself in three ways. He comes as:

1. **The Saving One** – “**The Son Of God**” – He reminds these people that He is the Savior and that He alone is worthy of worship.
2. **The Searching One** – “**eyes like unto a flame of fire**” – He comes as one Who sees all. He sees the works of the hands and the motives and thoughts of the heart. He comes seeing all. He comes, not as the meek and lowly Jesus, but with His eyes ablaze with anger over sin.
3. **The Sovereign One** – “**feet like fine brass**” – Brass, or bronze, in the Bible is symbolic of judgment. Jesus not only comes as One able to see all; He also comes as One able to judge all.

If there is one word that describes the situation we find at Thyatira it is the word “**compromise**.” This is a church that has left its founding principles and has gone off into compromise and apostasy. Let’s examine these verses and consider **The Church That Compromised With The World**.

Remember, these letters can be viewed three ways: **Practically** – They are literal letters to real churches with real issues. **Prophetically** – They speak to the church in different periods of church history. The church of Thyatira speaks of the period between **600 AD to 1500 AD**. The time known as the Dark Ages. Many practices here similar to Roman Catholicism. **Personally** – These letters have a message for every church and every believer who will hear and heed. A church just like every one of these seven churches can still be found in the world today. Folks, there is a word here for us if we will receive it today.

With all this in mind, let's turn our attention to these verses and consider ***The Church That Compromised With The World***.

I. v. 19 **HE COMMENDS THE SERVICE OF THE CHURCH**

A. **He Commends Their Ministries** – This was an active church. They were working within their own number and within the community around them. Their ministry is noted by the words Jesus uses.

1. **They Are Busy – *Works*** – This word means “***deeds***”. It speaks of them as being active in good deeds and benevolent outreach.
2. **They Are Burdened – *Service*** – This word means “***ministry***”. It is the same work translated “***Deacon***” throughout the New Testament. The word carries the idea of “***those who kick up dust***.” In other words, they were so busy that they kicked up a cloud of dust as they went from task to task.

B. **He Commends Their Motives** – What was behind these works? What motivated them to do the things they were doing?

1. **They Are Motivated By Their Charity – *Love*** – This is the word “***agape***”. It refers to an “***unconditional, unceasing love that knows no boundaries and that is not influenced by the worth of the object being loved***.” It is God's kind of love.

Now, let's face it, the only real motive for good works is love. Everything we do is to be done out of a heart of love or it is worthless, **1 Cor. 13:1-3**. And, a love that won't act is not genuine love at all, **1 John 3:18**. It is good that this church had love, but we are not told what they loved. Did their works arise out of genuine love for the Lord? Or, did they simply love their fellow man? As the verses unfold, I think we will see that their love was centered on man and not on God.

Godly works always arise out of a heart aflame with love for God almighty. That was Paul's motive, **2 Cor. 5:14**. It must be ours too!

2. **They Are Motivated By Their Consecration – Faith** – This word refers to "**faithfulness**". These were folks that could be counted on to get the job done. They were faithful and not fickle.

Too many times there is work to be done around the church and no one who wants to do that work. That was not a problem in Thyatira. There was work to do and plenty of people willing to do the work. That is a good situation.

- C. **He Commends Their Maturity – Works; and the last to be more than the first** – When I say maturity, I am not talking about spiritual growth. I am talking about growth in the level of their works. They were developing and progressing on their works. Their outreach and ministry to their fellow man was ever on the increase.

(**Note:** What Jesus says about the church of Thyatira should be true of our church as well. We should be a church that is busy for the glory of God. Not just having activities for the sake of doing something. One preacher said it this way, "***We (can) Bowl for Blessings on Monday night, Jog for Jesus on Tuesday night, eat in the kitchenette and endure a sermonette on Wednesday night. We have Home runs for Heaven on Thursday night, Golf for Glory on Friday, and spread the table to stay able on Saturday.***"^[1])

We should be active in the Lord's work; but, we should see that everything we do is motivated by either ***Edifying the Saints; Evangelizing the Sinner; and/or Exalting the Savior***. Those three tasks comprise the whole of our business and we should be actively engaged in them for the glory of God.

I would just remind you that God knows our works too. He did not save us to be lazy Christians, but to be busy in His Kingdom work: **Eph. 2:10; James 2:18**. There is not room for laziness and slothfulness in God's business!

I heard about these two men who were walking down the street when they saw these three bums lying in the gutter. One said to the other, "**Which of those three bums do you think is the laziest?**"

"**I don't know**" said his friend, "**but I'll find out.**" So, he walked over to those three bums and said, "**Hey there, I'll give this twenty dollar bill to the one of you that is the laziest.**"

One of them jumped right up and said, "**I'm your man! Give it to me.**"

The man with the money said, "**You're not the laziest.**"

The second bum just kind of rolled over a little, reached up his hand and said, "**Hand it here. I reckon I'm the laziest man I know.**"

The fellow with the money said, "**I don't think you're the laziest either.**"

The third bum just laid where he was and said, "**Just put that twenty in my pocket if you will.**"

Now, that's lazy! That's not how the Lord wants His children to be. Sadly, that's just the way many are!)

I. He Commends The Service Of The Church

II. v. 20-23 HE CONFRONTS THE SIN IN THE CHURCH

(III. While this church appeared to be everything a church ought to be on the surface, at its heart there was a festering sore. The church at Thyatira looked good on the outside, but it was corrupt at its core. Jesus comes to confront their sin.)

A. v. 20-23 He Confronts The Teacher Of This Church – The church in Thyatira was being led away from the Lord by the teachings of an influential woman in their congregation. Jesus exposes her, her teachings and her judgment in these verses.

(**Note:** This woman is called “**Jezebel**.” She is called by the name of one of the most infamous women in the entire Bible. A little background on the biblical Jezebel will help us to understand what this woman was doing in this church.

Jezebel was the wife of wicked king Ahab, **1 Kings 16:31**. Her name means “**chaste**” but she was anything but that. She was the wicked daughter of a Gentile king. She was a devoted worshiper of the god Baal and she kept up some 850 prophets of that wicked, sensual religion, **1 Kings 18:19**. Baal was a fertility god and his prophets and priests were no more than temple prostitutes. Baal was worshiped through vile sexual acts and gross wickedness.

When Jezebel came to Israel, she brought her perverted religion with her. She led her weak-kneed husband to follow her gods and thus influenced Israel to seek Baal instead of Jehovah, **1 Kings 21:25**. She even did her best to kill every true man of God she could get her hands on. She threatened old Elijah one time and he ran away in fear, **1 Kings 19:1-3**.

You might remember the story of Ahab and his desire for Naboth's vineyard, **1 Kings 21:1-29**. It was Jezebel that arranged for the murder of Naboth so that Ahab could have the vineyard. This act prompted Elijah to pronounce God's sentence upon Ahab and Jezebel, **1 Kings 21:17-24**. He told Ahab that Jezebel would be eaten by the dogs, **1 Kings 21:23**. This was literally fulfilled years later when Jehu commanded Jezebel's servants to throw her down from a second floor window. They did and Jehu drove his chariot over her body. He went into the house, had a meal and commanded the servants to bury her. When they went out to retrieve her body, all that was left was her skull, her feet and the palms of her hands. The dogs had eaten the rest, **2 Kings 9:1-37**.

Jezebel came to be identified with wickedness and idol worship.)

1. v. 20 **Her Sin Is Described** – This self-appointed prophetess, whoever she was, was guilty of leading the people away from the true worship of God. No one is quite sure what was actually going on, but here is my theory.

Remember when I mentioned the trade guilds earlier? These guilds would often have meetings in the pagan temples around town. Such meetings were often immoral affairs involving drunkenness, drug abuse and sexual immorality. These meetings would also involve a meal and would either begin or end with a sacrifice to a pagan god.

When an animal was sacrificed in a pagan temple, often only a small portion was actually sacrificed. Sometimes, just some hair clipped from the head of the animal might be all that was used. The rest of the animal was then divided between the pagan priest and the worshiper. That worshiper could either sell his portion of the meat in the marketplace, or he could throw a feast for his friends and they would eat the sacrifice.

When the pagans in Thyatira were saved, they were faced with a problem. Did they refuse to join the guilds and be unemployed; or did they participate in the pagan rituals and compromise their testimonies? The mind of God in this matter is found in **Acts 15:29**. There, newly converted Gentiles are commanded to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, among other things. For more information concerning eating meat sacrificed to idols you can read **1 Corinthians 8-10**.

So, the teaching at Thyatira may have been the same teaching that was rampant in that era. It may have been the idea that an individual could be saved by grace and indulge the fleshly appetite for sin. Some people held the view that the soul and the flesh were not connected. In other words, they taught that what a person did in their body had no effect on their spiritual life and vice versa. This teaching is addressed and countered in the Epistle of **First John**.

This woman preacher may have been telling the people in this church that they could hold onto their pagan beliefs and practices and still serve the Lord; that they could sin and still be saved; that one thing had nothing to do with the other. This may have been the tool that church was using to get the pagans of Thyatira to come to their church. They were compromising their standards to attract the world. They were saying, ***“Oh, come as you are! Don’t change a thing. Keep living like you have always lived. We’ll accept you just like you are. God loves you and we do too. Neither He nor us expects you to change one thing.”***

Whatever she was doing, she was leading the people of God astray. The word “**seduce**” means “**to lead out of the right path.**” She was leading them into immorality. The word “**fornication**” comes from the word “**pornia.**” We get the word “**pornography**” from it. It refers “**to any sexual sin.**” The word literally means “**to prostitute one’s body to the lusts of another.**” It can refer to sexual sin, or it can be used as a metaphor for idol worship. Regardless of what they were doing, the Lord calls it “**the depths of Satan,**” **v. 24.**

(Note: The same teaching abounds in the modern era. Everywhere people who call themselves Christians claim that they can have a relationship with the Lord on the one hand and live lives of open sin on the other. Homosexuals, pornographers, drug abusers, drunkards, adherents to false religions, etc. all claim to be saved and still able to so as they please.

Somebody is a liar! The Lord told His people to separate from that kind of lifestyle, **2 Cor. 6:17**. He told us that His people received a new birth, **John 3:3**. And, that they became new creatures, **2 Cor. 5:17**. The Bible tells us that anyone who lives a lifestyle of committed, continual, unrepentant sin is lost, **1 John 2:9-10**. We have liberty as Christians, but our liberty is not a license to sin!)

2. v. 21 **Her Stubbornness Is Denounced** – The Lord had given this woman and her followers time to turn from their sins, but they refused to do so. Now, His patience has run out and she is slated for judgment.

(Note: Our God is a patient, loving God! He gives lost sinners and wayward believers opportunity on top of opportunity to get right with Him. When they refuse, they can expect nothing less than His judgment, **Pro. 29:1**.)

3. v. 22-23 **Her Sentence Is Declared** – Because of what she has done, she and all her followers will face God's wrath. By using the phrase "**cast...her into great tribulation**," He is telling us that these people are not saved. But, notice the grace in His judgment: He is still giving them space to repent! If they refuse, they will be judged "**according to your works**." Salvation is always based on God's grace; judgment comes based on man's works.

(Note: Let us not deceive ourselves. People who will not bow to the Lord Jesus Christ, trust Him for salvation and demonstrate that salvation through a changed, dedicated life are people who have never been saved! They abide under the wrath of God and will be judged by Him according to their works, **Rev. 20:11-15**.

If you have never trusted Jesus as your personal Savior, let me challenge you to come to God while there is still time. One day, the patience of God will reach an end and nothing will remain but death, judgment and Hell!

Did you notice the reference to “**her children**” in **verse 23**? The young people are the ones who suffer the most when there is compromise and hypocrisy in the church. They see the inconsistency and they turn their backs on God and stumble off blindly toward Hell.)

- B. v. 20 **He Confronts The Tolerance Of This Church** – Jesus expresses displeasure with this church because they allowed this woman to be in a position of leadership and because they tolerated the lies she was teaching for truth. The word “**sufferest**” means “**to tolerate, to permit, to allow.**” God is displeased that they would allow things of that nature to go on there.

They were probably like many in our day. They might have said, “**Well, I don’t agree with it, but we shouldn’t say anything because we might hurt their feelings.**” Some folks need their feelings hurt! When false doctrine is being preached in the church, those who know the truth have a duty to stand up and do something about it! When we sit back and allow that kind of wickedness to go unchecked, we invite the anger and judgment of God!

Some churches pride themselves on their tolerance. I think God still expects His people to be different from the world around them. When we do like Thyatira and compromise our standards to appeal to the world, we are turning our backs on truth. When we open the door to let the world come in, do not be surprised if the Lord walks out!)

- C. v. 23b **He Confronts The Testimony Of This Church** – The Lord tells this church that He would use them as an example to teach other churches what happens when truth is compromised. The church in Thyatira had been established to bring the word of God to a pagan city. They had functioned well for a while; then they had abandoned the right path. They are going to pay a heavy price for their sin.

(**Note:** The Lord will not tolerate sin in the church when it is allowed to flourish. **1 Pet. 4:17** reminds us that judgment must begin at the house of God. In other words, when there is sin in the camp, the Lord will deal with it. He will remove His presence, His power and His touch off the wayward congregation. He will write Ichabod over the door and watch us dwindle away to nothing. That is the price for compromise.)

I. **He Commends The Service Of The Church**

II. **He Confronts The Sin In The Church**

III. v. 24-29 **HE COMFORTS THE SAINTS IN THE CHURCH**

(III. Not everyone in Thyatira had walked away from the Lord. Even in that tolerant, compromising, sinful church there was a faithful remnant. The Lord has a few words of hope and comfort for them as they struggled to walk holy in an unholy congregation.)

A. v. 24-25 **He Comforts Them Concerning Their Duty** – He tells them that all He expects from them is that they stay the course. He wants them to avoid being sucked into the vortex of evil that is swirling there in Thyatira.

(**Note:** That is His will for us in these confusing days as well. He wants us to stay the course for the glory of God. Just because everyone around us is taking a new path does not mean that we have to. We can stand our ground and be faithful until death or the rapture takes us away, III. **Eph. 6:11-18** – We are told to “**stand**” three times!)

B. v. 26-27 **He Comforts Them Concerning Their Destiny** – The Lord Jesus promises them that if they will remain faithful to Him, they will rule with Him when He comes in His kingdom. He seems to be saying, “***You folks are powerless to change your situation now, but the day is coming when I will put My power into your hands. You will reign with Me and your struggle for holiness will be worth it all in the end.***”

(**Note:** If you are going to be a holy, godly Christian in these days, you might as well get ready to be hated, misunderstood and persecuted. But, this is not the end of the matter! One day, the King is coming! When He does, He is going to let His faithful servants reign with Him. We might be weak today. The worldly, compromising churches might be the ones with all the people, all the power and all the prestige. But, when the King comes, those who have served Him faithfully now will reign with Him then! It will be worth it all when that day comes!)

- C. v. 28 **He Comforts Them Concerning Their Deliverance** – Jesus promises these faithful believers “***the morning star.***” There is much debate among biblical scholars as to what He is talking about here. Some believe that He is promising them Himself. After all, He is the “***bright and morning star,***” **Rev. 22:16**. Some think this refers to Satan, **Luke 10:18**; that Jesus will let the church see Satan get what’s coming to him someday. We will see that, **Rev. 20:10**.

I think He is talking about the Rapture. You see, when the night grows the darkest, the morning star, or the planet Venus, becomes visible. When that heavenly body appears you know that daybreak is not far behind. I think the Lord is telling these folks to just hold on for a little while longer. He seems to be saying, “***It’s mighty dark now, but there is a glimmer of hope in the heavens. Hang on; I’m coming to get you!***”

Folks, that is His promise to us as well! This dark night we are in right now will not last forever. The Lord is coming! The signs are visible all around us. Symbolically, the morning star has appeared, and it signals the approach of a new day. He is coming and we are going! So, hang on a just little longer!

Conclusion: I don’t think our church is anything like the church in Thyatira. However, I do think that Satan would love nothing better than to slither his way into our fellowship and cause us to abandon the Lord’s truth. We must be vigilant, **1 Pet. 5:8**. We must watch and work against his tactics at every turn. We must look not only at the church as a whole, but at our own individual hearts.

Is it not true that sin comes in not in great numbers, but when we as individual believers allow Satan a stronghold in our lives? Has the Lord touched your heart through this message?

If He has called you to come before Him to deal with your sins, you come. If He impresses you to pray for this church and other churches that are holding out against the rising tide of compromise, you come. Will you obey His voice as He speaks to your heart?

An Autopsy Of A Dead Church

Revelation 3:1-6

Introduction: Imagine you are crawling, scorched, near-death, across a hot burning desert. You are dying of thirst and close to perishing. But, ahead, you see a sign that reads, “**Cool, clear, life-giving water - only five miles ahead.**” This sign gives you renewed energy, new hope and you continue your tormenting crawl across the parched sand. As you arrive at the promised place, you see a magnificent building, radiant in its beauty, the sign outside invites you in, even beckoning you with the promise of life-giving water.

So you crawl through the entrance into a glorious building and there before you is the promised well, with the bucket ready to be let down and filled with water to quench your thirst and to pour life back into your body. With the last bit of your strength, you lower the bucket into the well, expecting a splash as the bucket hits the water, but it never comes. The only sound is the dull thud of the bucket hitting the bottom.

You think that perhaps you are just delirious, so you reel in the bucket only to find it full of dust. Dust that cannot quench your thirst, but dust that only deepens the thirst and destroys all hope. Sound far-fetched? This is the experience of many people who go to God's house expecting to be filled and fed with the water and bread of life, only to find all the trappings and the rituals, but no help or hope for all those who've made their way there.

Such was the condition of the church we are considering today. The church in Sardis had taken on the character of the city in which she resided. A little background on the city will help us understand the condition of this church.

- Sardis was the capital city of Lydia.
- It was founded about 1,200 BC.
- The original city sat on the top of a 1,500 foot high plateau. There was one narrow road leading into the city. The other sides of the plateau were just steep cliffs. This made the city very safe and nearly impenetrable by invading armies.
- Sardis was the home of Aesop, whose fables we all heard as children.
- Gold and silver coins were first minted here.
- The city of Sardis was famous for the industries that operated there. Carpet, wool and dyed cloth were their primary products. It is said that the art of dyeing was invented at Sardis.
- At one time, Sardis had been one of the greatest cities in the world. It reached its zenith under King Croesus. King Croesus and Sardis were famed around the world for their wealth. In that part of the world, it is still common to hear the phrase, “**As wealthy as Croesus.**”

- While Sardis reached its zenith under Croesus, it also fell under his reign. He and the people of the city became complacent in their wealth, their power and their city's apparent invincibility. When that region where Sardis was located came under attack by Cyrus the Persian, King Croesus and his people retreated to their city, believing they were safe. One night, one of the Persian soldiers saw a Sardinian soldier drop his helmet over the wall of the city. He watched as that soldier followed a hidden path down the side of the mountain to retrieve his helmet. When nightfall came, Cyrus and his troops followed the hidden path up the side of the mountain, entered the city while the guards slept and conquered Sardis.
- Sardis regained some of its former wealth under the reign of Alexander the Great, but was invaded and defeated by Antiochus the Great, who also entered the city at night while the guards slept.
- When the Romans came, Sardis was still a wealthy, powerful city, but it was just a shell of its former self. By John's day, Sardis was just a shell of what it had been. The people had grown lazy, degenerate, immoral and complacent. Sardis was dying through apathy and indifference.
- The city was proud of its past; it was proud of its reputation. But, its reputation was all it had left. For all intents and purposes, the city of Sardis was dead, even while it lived.

Apparently, the church in Sardis had adopted the atmosphere of the city. The church had become a thermometer that registered the temperature of the city instead of a thermostat that changed the temperature of the city. It is to this church that had become lazy, apathetic and complacent that the Lord Jesus comes. Just as surely as the city of Sardis was dying, so was the church of Christ in that city. Jesus has no words of commendation for them, but He does have some words of counsel. I would like for us to look at our Lord's words to this dying church. There is a word of warning for us in these verses as well.

Let me just remind you that these letters can be viewed three ways. 1.) **Practically** – These letters were written to real churches with real issues. 2.) **Prophetically** – These letters picture the church at various stages of church history. This particular church pictures the period between 1,500 and the Rapture. It pictures the Protestant Reformation. It pictures dead orthodoxy. It pictures the state of many churches in our world. 3.) **Personally** – These letters have something to say to every church and every believer who comes under the sound of their message.

I want to consider the words of Jesus to this church today. He has something to say to them and He has something to say to us as well. Let's listen in as Jesus, the Great Physician, performs ***An Autopsy Of A Dead Church***.

I. v. 1 **THE GREAT PHYSICIAN'S PRONOUNCEMENT**

- A. **He Comes Proclaiming His Deity** – Jesus comes to this church as One Who has the “***seven Spirits of God***” and as One Who is holding the “***seven stars***.”

The “***seven Spirits of God***” refer to the Holy Spirit in His complete ministry. The seven-fold ministry of the Spirit is defined in **Isaiah 11:2**. In His hand is the plentitude of the Holy Spirit. This is a reminder to the churches that we are to operate, not under the power of human skill, leadership and organization, but under the awesome power of the Holy Spirit. When the church walks in the power of the flesh, we will surely fail, but when we walk in the power of the Spirit, there will be success. There will be glory and there will be power and life instead of deadness and ineffectiveness!

(III. When the human spirit is in control of the human body, amazing things can be accomplished. For instance, a pianist can sit down at a keyboard; perform thousands of delicate, precise movements that will produce beautiful music. However, let that same pianist suffer some injury that leaves the arms paralyzed, and the mind is no longer in control of those arms, hands and fingers. Then, try as it might, the human spirit cannot the hands to make music. So too, when the Spirit of God is in control of the members of the church, great things can be accomplished. However, when He is not, paralysis is the result and nothing can be accomplished for God.)

The “***seven stars***” are the Pastors of the churches, **Rev. 1:20**. They are the messengers who bring the people the Word of God.

Jesus appears as One Who has everything the church needs to succeed. His Spirit has all the power the churches need. His Word has all the direction His churches need.

Jesus seems to be saying, “***If you will submit to me, you will find in me all you need to accomplish my mission in this world.***”

(Note: That is a message the modern church needs today. Men are trying every method under the sun to reach sinners, and to do the work of the church. But, all the power we need is found in the fullness of the Holy Ghost and in the Word of God. What we need is not a new method; but a new desire to seek the fullness of the Holy Spirit and do everything according to the teachings of the Word of God.)

- B. **He Comes Proclaiming His Discernment** – Jesus tells them, “***I know thy works.***” He comes as One Who sees all and knows all. He does not commend their works and He does not condemn their works. He merely tells them that He knows everything they are doing.

(**Note:** He knows everything we are doing too! He sees it all, along with the motives that drive us to do what we do, **Heb. 4:12-13; Psa. 139:2**. He sees us as a whole, and He sees the individual as well. He knows your heart. He knows everything you do and He knows why you do it. That is a sobering thought.)

- C. **He Comes Proclaiming His Diagnosis** – Apparently, their works gave them the appearance of life. Jesus tells them that they have that reputation. They were a busy, working church with a great reputation among men. From all outward appearances, this church was everything a church ought to be. They believed the right things and they were busy to do good all over the community. Everyone who saw them looked at them and said, “***That church is on fire!***” I am sure that when people moved to Sardis from other towns, their Pastors suggested that they visit this church. It had all the appearances of life.

But, things were not as they seemed! The Great Physician placed His finger on the pulse of this church and pronounced them dead! No matter what others thought, Jesus knew the truth. Regardless of what others may have thought about this church, Jesus knew the truth.

He tells them that even though everyone thinks they are alive, they are, in fact, dead! This word means just what it says! Like a dead man, the church at Sardis was “***destitute of force or power. They were ineffective and inoperative.***” They were dead! There was activity, but it was not spiritual in nature. There was busyness, but they were bringing nothing eternal to pass. They were preaching, but lives were not being changed and sinners were not being saved. They were busy, but they were operating in the energy of the flesh and not the energy of the Spirit of God. Everyone looked at them and spoke of their life. Jesus, the One Who knew then better than anyone, looked at them and pronounced them dead!

(**Note:** Looks are deceiving! These flowers on this table have all the appearance of life. They are beautiful; they are filled with color and fragrance; but they are dead! They have been severed from the roots that gave them life. It won't be many days until their colors fade; their blooms wilt; their leaves turn brown and they will be taken and thrown away. They look alive, but they are dead!

The same can be said about animals on display in a museum. They look very life-like. They are placed in natural habitats, but they are dead. Our world is filled with similar fakes. Things like silk flowers, wax fruit, etc, they all look alive, but they are dead!)

(Note: III. The Polar Star. Astronomers tell us that it takes 33 years for the light from that star to reach the earth. For all we know the Polar Star might have burned out 20 years ago and we would not know it for another 13 years. It looks like it still there, but it may not be. It could be a dead star.

Many, many churches are in that same shape today. They have all the appearance of life, but the Great Physician, Who has His finger on their pulse, knows they are dead. Folk, His finger is on the pulse of Calvary Baptist Church today. Does He feel a pulse? Is it strong and steady? Or, is it weak and failing? What does He know about our church that we may not know?)

(Note: Here are some of the signs that a church is dying.

- A dying church rests on its past accomplishments and is satisfied with its present state.
- A dying church is more concerned about their rituals and their formalities than they are about spirituality.
- A dying church is more concerned about social change than they are about seeing people changed by the power of God.
- A dying church is more concerned with material growth than it is with spiritual growth.
- A dying church is more concerned with pleasing men that it is with pleasing God.
- A dying church clings more tightly to its creeds and confessions that it does to the Word of God.
- A dying church is one that loses its conviction that the Bible is the Word of God.)

(Note: Those are some of the signs of a dying church, here are the signs of life in a church.

- **Growth** – All living things are characterized by growth. As long as you and I live in the bodies, we are maturing; we are changing; and we are growing. When the growth stops, it means we are dead!

The church is no exception. When people think of growth in the church, they immediately think of numerical growth. I think that is part of it. But, the primary way a church demonstrates life is through spiritual growth. A church that is alive will continue to develop spiritually. When a church ceases to grow spiritually, it is degenerating and dying.

- **Harmony** – When a physical body develops problems, it is because there is disharmony in the body. Cancer is a good example of this. Some of the cells become infected by the cancer and they attack other cells in the body. If this is left unchecked, the result will be disintegration and death for that body.

The same is true in the church. When a church is alive and well, there will be unity and harmony in the fellowship. When there isn't, the body is diseased and is headed for trouble, unless the infected parts come back into harmony. When a church becomes fractured, it is headed for disaster and death.

- **Emotion** – Another mark of life in the physical realm is emotion. Because I am alive, I can laugh; I can cry; I feel pain; I feel joy; I have emotions and they demonstrate the fact that I am alive. When a physical body dies, one of the clearest indications is the total lack of emotion. The deceased person does not show one sign of emotion. They can't because they are dead.

Again, the same is true in the church. A living church is an emotional church! There will be times when we will laugh together, weep together, shout together, sing together, hurt together, and pray together. In other words, when there is life, there is emotion.

- **Motion** – Another sign of life is motion. Physical bodies are bodies in motion. One sure sign of death is the absence of motion.

So it is within the church. When there is life in a church, there will be motion. The church will be active in the world doing the work of the Lord.)

(Note: So, how do we measure up? Do we exhibit the signs of life, or the signs of death? I do not think we are dead! But, I do think we could show more signs of life.)

I. The Great Physician's Pronouncement

II. v. 2-3 THE GREAT PHYSICIAN'S PRESCRIPTION

(III. The church in Sardis is in sad shape, but not all is lost! It appears that there is still hope for them to make some changes and get back where they need to be.)

A. **They Are Commanded To Watch** – They are told to “***be watchful.***” Literally, this means that they are to “***chase sleep.***” This church is a church with a glorious past. They have allowed their past success to lull them into a state of complacency and spiritual slumber. Jesus calls upon them to chase away sleep. His command is for them to wake up and realize that the victories of yesterday are not sufficient for this day!

(III. The people in Sardis would have understood exactly what Jesus was talking about. As I mentioned earlier, Sardis was located on the top of a mountain. It had one entrance on the southern side which was the only way you could get into the city in the old days. Therefore, all that Sardis had to do was to put a detail at that one place to watch the city. But on two occasions in their history they had been invaded by their enemies because they had felt secure, believing that the hill was impregnable, and the guard went to sleep on the job. In 549 B.C. the soldiers of Cyrus scaled the parapet, and then again in 218 B.C. Antiochus the Great captured Sardis because a soldier slipped over the walls while the sentries were careless. When we allow ourselves to sleep because of what we have enjoyed in the past, we are going to find ourselves conquered by the enemy, **1 Pet. 5:8.**)

(III. This happens far too often in churches. A church will struggle in its beginning and the core group who founded that church will have to work, pray, witness, give and yield to God to see the church stay alive. Over time, more people come in. More money comes in. Buildings are built and good services are enjoyed. Yet, in the midst of all these good things, something terrible happens. The church begins to lose the vision that made them so strong in their early years. They become content to sit back and enjoy the fruits of their labors. And, while we ought to be thankful for what the Lord has done for us, we will never reach a place where can let up! There is no time to look back to yesterday! Our vision ought to be for today and for tomorrow. Look around! We are aging! Who will take our place? Look around! We are full, but our vision is gone! Look around! We are satisfied with what we have and we have lost the fire that made us strong!

We must fight the tendency to become still, satisfied, complacent and apathetic.)

B. **They Are Told To Work** - The Lord gives this church four activities that they are to be busily engaged in. These things will help any church that has been caught napping on Jesus!

1. **Revive** – “***strengthen the things which remain***” - He tells them that not everything about them has died. There are still some things that have a spark of life in them. These things are to be revived before they die out. (III. The phrase, “***that are ready to die,***” literally means, “***that are knocking on death's door.***”) This is a call for them to get stirred up again for the things of God! It is a call to revival!

(III. “***For I have not found thy works perfect before God.***” This means that their “***works are incomplete and do not reach Heaven.***” They have some things in their midst that are good, but they are works that need reviving before they will make an eternal difference. They were singing, praying, preaching and giving, but their works were not reaching Heaven. They were accomplishing nothing of eternal value. They were a dead people doing dead works.

It is possible to be busy in the things of God and yet to be doing nothing for God. Unless our works are complete, they will never reach Heaven, and there will be no glory for God in the church. What churches like this need is to be stirred by the Spirit of God into new life and activity for the glory of God!)

2. **Remember** – “***Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard***” - These people are counseled to remember where the Lord brought them from and what He has done for them. They are to remember the days when they served the Lord out of a glad heart and wanted more than anything to do His will! They are to remember what it was like to walk in the power of God while the fire of His glory burned in and He used them for His glory!

(III. Memory can be a bad thing, especially when our memories cause us to live in the past and rest on past glory. However, if memory wakes us up and causes us to be resurrected in the present, then memory serves a great purpose! If we are to remember anything, let us remember the God Who makes churches great for His glory and let's seek Him once again!)

3. **Resolve** – “***Hold fast***” - This church is told to hold on to the things that are still alive in their midst. They are to resolve before the Lord that they will not allow those things to die as well.

(III. There is always a danger in focusing our attention in one area or another. We must not revive one thing while we allow another to die. Doing so leaves us in the same condition we are already in. What we are looking for is a total transformation that preserves the living things, and revives the dead things!)

4. **Repent** – “**Repent**” - In this verse, they are confronted concerning their sin. When the things of God are allowed to die, the only recourse the church has is repentance!

(III. The idea of repentance is a foreign one to many in our day and time. People seem to have the opinion that whatever they want to do is just fine and should be accepted by everyone. My friends, God is not obliged to accept the things you do!

When there is sin in the life of an individual, there must be repentance before there can be restoration and revival. The same is true for a church. When a church has allowed itself to be lulled into a state of slumber, their only hope is to repent!

What does it mean to repent? It means that we come to a place where we experience a change of mind about our sins that results in a change of direction. We turn from our sins and we turn toward God. Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of action! How long has it been since we as individuals and we as a church have repented before the Lord for our laziness, our complacency, our apathy, our wickedness, our deadness, etc?)

- C. **They Are Told To Wait** – “***I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee***” - This church is told that if they will not do the serious work of changing themselves, the Lord Himself will come into their midst and take away the things that remain alive and that church will be totally and fully dead! Like a thief, He will come in and take the best, and they will not even know when He comes and when He goes. They will be in a state of total death.

(III. Many churches are in that very condition today! When the call to repentance came from the Lord, they ignored it and He came to them in swift judgment. Now, they function the same way they always have! They have services. They have preaching. They have outreach ministries. They give to missions. But, they are dead! They are ineffective! They are merely going through the motions! There is no life in their midst. Jesus has pulled the plug and pronounced them dead! The Lord has written “***Ichabod***” over the door and no one is aware of it. Like Samson, the Lord has left them and “***they wist not that the Lord had departed.***” That is a situation we want to avoid at all costs!)

I. The Great Physician’s Pronouncement

II. The Great Physician’s Prescription

III. v. 4-6 **THE GREAT PHYSICIAN'S PROMISES**

- A. v. 4 **His Promise To The Remnant** – As bad as things were in Sardis, there were some there who were saved and seeking to serve the Lord. They are given the Lord's promise that they will walk with the Lord in white. They have lived out the truth in this world, and they can be confident that they will share His glory in that world.

White clothing was worn in Roman times during festivals and times of celebration. It was a symbol of purity, victory and festivity. What a promise to the faithful members of that church. Jesus says, ***"You folks are standing faithful. You have not defiled your garments with the deadness that exists all around you. You are saved and you are serving. One day, you will walk with Me in My Heaven. It will be a time of victory, festivity and purity."*** That is His promise to all those who are saved by His grace.

- B. v. 5 **His Promise To The Repentant** – Jesus tells the rest that is they will repent, and turn to Him, they will receive some precious promises.

- ***"the same shall be clothed in white raiment"*** - They will be made pure and victorious.
- ***"I will not blot out his name out of the book of life"*** - They will be made secure in the relationship with Him. By the way, God is not saying that He blots out names. This verse is often used by people who try to say that Christians can ***"lose their salvation."*** It is not a verse that serves as a threat of loss. It is a verse that offers a precious promise of absolute security to all those who believe in Jesus.

There is a lot that can be said about these books. It appears that there is a book of life that contains all the names of those living, **Ex. 32:32**. It also appears that there is a Lamb's Book of Life that contains all the names of the redeemed, **Rev. 21:27**. When a person is saved, their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Jesus said that this was the real reason for rejoicing, **Luke 10:20**. It may be that when a person dies lost, their name is blotted out of the book of the living. So, when the end comes, the names written in both books will match.

- ***"I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels"*** - Someday, Jesus will usher His redeemed ones into the presence of the hosts of Heaven and say, ***"This is one of Mine! He was not ashamed of me and I am not ashamed of him!"*** (III. Illustrate this truth visually.)

(Note: You see, the majority of the people in the church in Sardis were not just cold and out of God's will. They were lost, dead sinners in need of salvation. Jesus comes to them to give them an opportunity to be saved.

It might sound prideful and arrogant, but I am convinced that most churches are filled with lost sinners. They go through the motions, but they are merely practicing dead works. Churches in that shape do not need revival, they need a resurrection!)

Conclusion: Vance Havner once commented that ministries often begin with a man who has a vision. That vision is captured by others and becomes a movement. As the movement gains followers and momentum, it becomes a machine. After a while, people forget all about the vision and what was once a movement becomes nothing more than a monument to a man and a glorious past.

There is always the danger that any church can die. As Denis Lyle has so eloquently written, ***"Tragically, many churches are dead. Like the rotting carcass of Lazarus, these church bodies have the foul stench of death upon them. They have the appearance of life, but they are in actuality, dead. Their sanctuary is A Morgue with a Steeple. They are congregations of corpses. They have undertakers for ushers; embalmers for elders; and morticians for ministers. Their pastor graduated from the Cemetery. The choir master is the local coroner. They sing, "Embalmed in Gilead." At the Rapture, they will be the first churches taken for the Bible says, "the dead in Christ shall rise first."***^[1]

The Great Physician has His finger on the pulse of this church and on that of every member. What does His touch reveal about us? I want to challenge each of you to examine your heart and the life of this church. If He has spoken to you about any need. This altar is open!

The Church of the Open Door

Revelation 3:7-13

Introduction: We are continuing to move through the letters of our Lord to the seven churches of Asia Minor. We have covered five of the seven churches thus far and we will soon pass beyond these letters into the heart of the book of Revelation. Let me just remind you that these letters can be viewed from three different perspectives.

- 1.) **Practically** – These letters were written to real churches functioning in that day.
- 2.) **Prophetically** – Each church represents a different period of church history from Pentecost to the Rapture. This particular church represents the period between **1,700 AD and 1,900 AD**. During this period, the true Christian churches, though weak numerically and financially, began the modern missions movement. This was also the period that saw the “**Great Awakenings**” and revivals in America and Britain.
- 3.) **Personally** – These churches have something to say to every individual believer and to every church in existence.

Today, we will consider the church in Philadelphia. I want to preach about ***The Church Of The Open Door***.

- Philadelphia was the youngest and smallest of all the cities addressed in these letters.
- The city was located in a narrow pass between two mountain ranges. It stood as a literal doorway between Asia Minor and Asia.
- Because of its strategic location, it was used as a military buffer city. Enemy armies passing through the narrow pass could be delayed by a small force at Philadelphia.
- The city was named for King Attalus II, the king of Pergamum. He was renowned for his love of his brother Eumenes, and he came to be called “**Philadelphos**.” The word means “**one who loves his brother**.” Thus, Philadelphia became known as “**The city of brotherly love**.”
- Philadelphia was built on a geological fault. As a result, the city was plagued by frequent earthquakes and tremors. The citizens were often forced to flee the city to avoid being injured or killed by falling buildings.
- Philadelphia was also the home to numerous temples desiccated to the gods and goddesses of ancient Greece.
- Philadelphia was the last of the seven cities to lose its Christian testimony. There was a thriving Christian community there as late as 1,000 AD, when the city was captured by the Muslim armies of the Middle East.

It is to the church in Philadelphia that Jesus speaks in these verses. He comes to them with no words of complaint. He comes to them with words of praise and words of promise. I think the Lord’s words to this weak, but faithful church, have much to say to our own hearts today. If we are going to model ourselves after any of these seven churches, it should be this church. Let’s examine our Lord’s words and find out why. I want to preach on ***The Church Of The Open Door***.

I. v. 7-8a **THE CHURCH AND HER MASTER**

A. **The Master's Attributes** – Jesus comes to this church and He identifies Himself in two powerful ways.

1. **He Comes As The Sinless One** – The word “*holy*” tells us that Jesus is sinless and pure.

- *That is the Bible's testimony to Jesus, 1 Pet. 2:22; Heb. 7:25; 1 Cor. 5:21.*
- *That is Hell's testimony to Jesus, Mark 1:24.*
- *That is Heaven's testimony to Jesus, Luke 1:35.*
- *That was Jesus' testimony to Himself, “Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?” John 8:46. (III. His question never was answered!)*

Jesus is speaking to a church that is striving to be holy in the midst of a corrupt and sinful world. He comes to say to them: “***It is possible to live for God! I am holy, and I can help you be holy too.***”

(III. That is a word of encouragement we all need from time to time. This world is against us and sin and Satan are pressing us in on every side. Jesus has the power to help us to live the holy lives He desires us to live.)

2. **He Comes As The Sincere One** – The word “*true*” here means “***that which is genuine***”. We know that His Word is true, now He tells His people that He is the real Savior; He is the only genuine Lord.

These early believers were surrounded daily by that which was false. False gods and false worship abounded in that day. Jesus just wants them to know that He is the real deal. They are not wasting their time serving Him. They did not make a mistake when they turned their back on their idols and pagan gods. When they came to Jesus Christ, they came to the only Savior, **Acts 4:12; John 14:6.**

(III. We live in an age when many things are mere imitations. We have sugar substitutes, salt substitutes and meat substitutes. We have faux fur and fake leather. We have rent-a-dates, virtual reality and surrogate mothers. We are surrounded by that which is fake and pretend.

It is a comfort to be reminded that at least one thing is real! Jesus is the real deal! Jesus is not a substitute for anything! When you trusted Jesus Christ, you got in on something that is real! Salvation is real! Prayer is real! Grace is real! Heaven is real! His presence is real! His Word is real! His power is real! I am just saying, Jesus, and not Coca-Cola is the real thing!)

B. **The Master's Authority** – Jesus identifies Himself as the One Who is in control! He has the keys and He opens and closes the doors.

1. **He Carries The Keys** – Jesus says that He has “*the key of David*”. Look at **Isa. 22:20-25**. This passage speaks of a man named Eliakim. This is an Old Testament prophecy that the glory of God; the power of God; the authority of God will rest on his shoulders. Then, we are told that he will be set as a nail in a sure place and that he will be cut off after a while. This ancient prophecy is a picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God placed on His Son His kingdom and His government, **Isa. 9:6**. He set Him “*as a nail in a sure place*”. But, after a time, He was cut off. This is a clear picture of the cross of our Lord. We are told that He will have the “*Key of David*.” What does this mean?

Well, what are keys for? Keys grant you **authority, access and availability**. Jesus comes to this ancient church and says, “I have the keys!” He is telling u today that He “has the keys.” What kind of keys does Jesus have?

- a. **He Has The Keys Of Sleep** – **Rev. 1:18**. Jesus alone is the Master of death. You can't even die until He opens the door! You can't stay dead if you know Him, **John 11:25-26**.
 - b. **He Has The Keys Of Suffering** – **Rev. 1:18** - Only He can open Heaven and shut Hell. Jesus is the Key to Heaven!
 - c. **He Has The Keys Of Salvation** – **John 4:12; John 14:6; John 10:9**. Only He can open the door into eternal life for those who will come to Him.
 - d. **He Has The Keys Of Service** - **1 Cor. 16:9** – He decides when we serve, where we serve and how long we serve.
 - e. **He Has The Keys Of Safety** – **Col. 3:3** – No one can touch those who are locked away within Jesus Christ.
2. **He Controls The Doors** – Jesus is in the business of opening and closing doors in the lives of His people. We see this truth at work in the life of the Apostle Paul, **Acts 16:6-10**.

When God opens a door of opportunity in your life; run through it as fast as you can. It may be a once in a life time opportunity. How tragic it would be to get to Heaven and see what we could have done if only we would have trusted the Lord and stepped through the open door He gave us.

By the same token, when He closes a door, don't try to force it open. You don't want to be where God doesn't want you to be. The path to blessing is to be where the Lord wants us to be, when He wants us to be there.

I think there is a word here for the church as well. There will be times along the way when God lines things up for His church. He may give us an opportunity to make inroads into our community. He may give an open door to ministry to our town. When that open door comes, it is not a time for delay. It is a time for faith and action. When we see that door opened, we must go through it, regardless of the cost. We need to pray that God will give us spiritual wisdom to see the doors when He opens them.

- C. **The Master's Appraisal** – As He does with the other churches, Jesus reminds them that He knows everything about them. He sees their works and He sees the motives that drive the work.

Just a reminder, He knows us too, **Heb. 4:13; Pro. 15:3!** When He looks at our lives and at our church, what does Jesus see about us?

II. v. 8b-11 **THE CHURCH AND HER MINISTRY**

(III. Philadelphia was a small church with tremendous potential for the glory of God. These verses tell us something about their ministry.)

- A. v. 8 **Their Ministry Involved Opportunities** – In His sovereignty, the Lord had given this church a powerful open door of ministry. Jesus says, “***thou hast a little strength.***” This may mean that they were small in number and lacking in political and financial influence. They were weak, but the Lord was using them in a mighty fashion. They were weak, but they were making a tremendous impact on their city! Why?

They had kept His Word. This means that even though they were weak in many ways, they were pure and strong in their doctrine.

They had not denied His Name. They were not ashamed of Jesus or of their relationship to Him.

I think this means that they were not keeping the Gospel to themselves! They were actively spreading the Word of God to a lost and dying world. God had given them an open door of ministry there in Philadelphia and they had stepped through it and were doing what they could.

Because they were faithful to Him, He was blessing them! They were preaching and exalting Jesus and the enemies of the cross were powerless to stop them. Such was the power of God in their midst!

(Note: I think the same principles still apply today. Fundamental, Bible-believing churches are in the minority in our world. If we will honor God's Word and keep Jesus at the center of all we do, the Lord will honor that by giving us an open door of ministry in this world. But, we have to do what He says here. We must “***keep His Word.***” This means that we are to hear it, love it, do it and share it.

We must “**not deny His name.**” That is, we must not minimize Jesus to draw a crowd. But, we must make Him the centerpiece of our church and of our worship! God blessed that kind of church 2,000 years ago and I believe He still will today!

If we will love the Book and live the Book; if we will love Jesus and lift Jesus; God will use us in this world in ways we cannot begin to imagine! He “**opened**” that door long ago, and it remains open today!)

- B. v. 9 **Their Ministry Involved Opposition** – The phrase “***synagogue of Satan***” probably refers to the local Jews who were persecuting them.

The phrase “***which say they are Jews and are not***” can be interpreted by what Paul said in **Rom. 2:28-29**. This church is suffering at the hands of people who claim to love God, but are lying! They have rejected their Messiah and they are headed to Hell, **Rev. 21:8**.

Jesus tells them that He is aware of their mistreatment. But, He wants them to know that a day is coming when they will see those who oppose them bowing before them. He is probably referring to that day when “***every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.***” **Phil. 2:10-11**. One day their enemies would experience total defeat. Whatever the Lord is speaking about here, He wants them to know that He is in control of the critics too.

(Note: We might as well face this fact: old-fashioned churches are not as popular as they used to be. There was a day when most churches were good churches. They preached the Word. They live right. They evangelized the lost and exalted the Lord. That day is long gone! Just because a church has the right name on its sign does not guarantee you that you will find the right kind of church behind the doors.

And, in our day, old-fashioned churches are going to be ridiculed, maligned and persecuted, **2 Tim. 3:12; John 3:20**. Like it or not, we can usually measure the level of our effectiveness by how much criticism we receive.

When people talk about your church and make fun of you for your standards, don't worry! Just respond like Jesus taught us to respond, **Matt. 5:44**. And, remember that there is a day coming when God will have the last word! Vengeance is His jurisdiction; simple obedience is ours!)

(Note: By the way, if I were moving to a new town and started looking for a new church to attend, I would listen to the talk around town. That church that everybody laughed at, criticized and mocked, is the church I would attend first. Why? The world and all that are joined to it hate the truth and they hate any church that preaches truth.)

- C. v. 10 **Their Ministry Involved Optimism** – This is a precious promise to a suffering people. They have endured much, but they will be spared the horrors that will come upon the entire world and those who dwell in it. Jesus promises them that their faithfulness to them guarantees them deliverance from the terrible time of tribulation that is to come upon this earth.

(Note: The phrase “*them that dwell upon the earth*” can be literally translated “*the earth dwellers*.” We will encounter this phrase several more times in Revelation. It refers to those who are part of this world’s evil system. It speaks of those people who do not know the Lord. They will face the wrath of God in the tribulation, but His people will not!

Will the church pass through the tribulation? Absolutely not! Jesus is coming and He is going to remove His church before God pours out His wrath upon this world, **Rom. 5:9; 1 Thes. 4:16-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-52!**)

- D. v. 11 **Their Ministry Involved Obligations** – The believers in Philadelphia are told to be on the lookout for two things. First, they are to be watching for the coming of the Lord. Second, they were to watch their walk.

Jesus is coming and His people need to be ready to meet Him. That means we are to live as if He might come at any minute and we are to work like our time is short. But, as we watch and as we work, we are to be careful of how we live our lives. We must not allow ourselves to become like the world around us. We are to live for Jesus, love Jesus and look for Jesus; guarding everything He has given us, so that we can be confident of a reward when He comes. We will face our Lord some day at the Judgment Seat of Christ. That day can be a day of reward, or it can be a day of loss, which depends on how we live now, **1 Cor. 3:10-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:12.**

(Note: As He relates to them all that He has given them and is doing for them and through them, it is possible that they didn’t even know just how much the Lord was blessing them and using them for His glory. Here’s what Jesus saw as He looked at the ministry of the church in Philadelphia.

I think it is very likely that we don’t know the extent of our outreach and the strength of our influence in this world. We may never know until we get to Heaven. But, I am confident that God is using Calvary Baptist Church in ways that we cannot begin to comprehend! He would tell us to watch, wait and work. He would also tell us to guard what we have so that we can meet Him with joy on that day!)

III. v. 12 **THE CHURCH AND HER MESSAGE**

(III. Jesus closes His letter to this church by giving them a message of hope for the future. This message is just as valid for us today as it was for the people in Philadelphia.)

A. **A Message Of Stability** – Jesus tells these believers that He will make them as a pillar in God's temple and they will go out no more. This was a message of hope to the people in Philadelphia. With all the earthquakes the city suffered, they were used to having to evacuate their city. Now, Jesus promises them that they will enjoy stability in His kingdom.

(**Note:** This world may rock and reel and troubles and trials may assault us day by day, but we have been placed on a solid rock and we are headed to a sure destination. There may be little stability in this world, but the saints of God will be fixed firmly in Heaven above and they will never be threatened, assaulted or attacked again! Nothing that troubles the church down here will be allowed to enter over there, **Rev. 21:4, 27.**)

In that city, the highest honor that could be bestowed on an individual was for a pillar in one of the pagan temples to be dedicated in his honor. His name would be written on it and the reason for the honor would be inscribed there too. Jesus is saying to these saints, ***"You might not be well known or honored down here, but things are different in Heaven. You might be a nobody today on earth, but you are a somebody in Heaven!"***

(**Note:** It's the same for us, my friends! This world hates us; the devil hates us; and each day sees the church become the focus of increasing attacks and hatred. But, in Heaven, we are somebodies! We are the redeemed children of God! We are the spotless, chaste, virgin bride of the Lamb of God! Our names are known over there and one day, we'll enter that city and be firmly fixed there forever! Praise His name!)

B. **A Message Of Security** – God says that His people will be identified with ***The Creator***, with ***The City***, and with ***The Christ*** –

- God puts His name on them to establish ownership. He has redeemed them and they are His forever!
- He places the name of the city on them because that is their destination. They might be living on the earth today, but they are headed for glory.
- He writes a new name for Jesus on them because they are special to Him. The name of Christ represents the fullness of His Person. And, in Heaven, they will see Christ in all His fullness! In the Old Testament era, His name was Jehovah. In the New Testament era His name is Jesus. In Heaven, He will have a new name!

The world might not see their value, but God does and He honors His faithful servants. The people in the church of Philadelphia had no security in the city where they lived. But, they had absolute hope in their relationship with Jesus Christ and in His kingdom!

(Note: This verse reminds us of the wonderful blessedness all the redeemed have in Jesus. We have been saved to the uttermost, **Heb. 7:25**. We have been given everlasting life, **John 6:47**. We can hold to everything we have been given in Jesus, **John 10:28; 6:37-40**. If we remain faithful, we can be sure for Heaven as if we were already there, because in God's mind, we are already there, **Eph. 2:6**.

God has claimed us as His children, **1 John 3:1-3**; He has addressed us for special delivery to our new home in glory, **John 14:1-3**; and He placed us in the body of His Son, **1 Cor. 12:13**. That is a reason for rejoicing!)

Conclusion: I am grateful to be a member of a Philadelphian kind of church. Of all the churches in these two chapters; Our church is more like this one than any of the others. We are blessed and we should never take what we have for granted. The Lord has given us much and there are more opportunities waiting on us down the road.

So, here is the invitation: If you are lost and you would like to give your heart to Jesus, you come. If you are saved, but you haven't been watching and you know you are in danger of losing your rewards, you come. If you are thankful to be a member of a great church and want to ask God to help us, and to give us wisdom as we move into His future, you come.

These precious words from our Lord should motivate us to serve Him faithfully until He returns for us.

Laodicea: The Church That Made Our Lord Sick

Revelation 3:14-22

Introduction: It has taken us a while, but we have finally arrived at the last of the seven churches of Revelation. A couple of these churches have been good, but a glance at most of these churches reveals some serious problems. The downward slide that began with a loss of first love in Ephesus culminates with total apostasy in Laodicea. This church had gotten so far away from what the Lord founded it to be that it literally made Him sick.

Before we dig into these verses, I would like to remind you that these letters to the churches can be viewed from three perspectives. 1.) **Practically** – These are real letters to real churches with real problems. 2.) **Prophetically** – These letters portray the church at various stages of church history. The Laodicean church pictures the state of the church from about **1900 AD to the Rapture**. It is largely the church as we see it in the world today. It is the apostate church. 3.) **Personally** – These letters speak to every Christian and to every church that reads them. They have a word for you as an individual and they have a word for us as a congregation.

If we are going to understand our Lord's words to this church a little background on the city of Laodicea is in order.

- This city was founded by Antiochus II sometime before 253 BC. It was named after his wife Laodice.
- The city was located on a high plateau and was very secure from enemy attack.
- The one defensive problem in Laodicea was the fact that there was no ready source of water in the city. Water had to be piped in through aqueducts. Water from the hot springs in Hierapolis six miles to the north was brought into the city. Water was also piped in from Colossae, which was located 10 miles to the east. This fact will be important as we move into the passage.
- Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in 61 AD. The city was so wealthy and so self-sufficient that they rebuilt their city with their own resources, refusing an offer of aid from Caesar.
- The city was famous in its day for three primary characteristics.
 1. **Finances** - It was a center of banking and finance, known through the Roman Empire for its wealth and financial power.
 2. **Fashion** - It was renowned for the soft, black wool produced there. This wool was considered a luxury item and was sought after for clothing and rugs. Laodicea was the center of fashion in its day. The newest styles appeared here first.
 3. **Pharmaceuticals** - There was a famous medical school in Laodicea which produced a tablet that was sold all over the Roman Empire. This tablet was crushed, mixed with water to form a paste. This paste was rubbed into the eyes and was supposed to cure a variety of eye problems.

With this background in mind, let's look into these verses and consider our Lord's words of condemnation and warning to this church. I think these words are particularly relevant in our day, for churches like Laodicea, and people who call themselves Christians but who have a Laodicean mentality, abound in our world.

The Lord Jesus came to this rich, powerful church and He said to them "**Laodicea, You Make Me Sick!**" Let's take that statement as our title today and find out why He said that to these people. Let's also see if there is a word here for our church and for us as individuals.

I. v. 14-17 **THE PROBLEMS IN LAODICEA**

(III. Jesus comes to this church without a single word of commendation. As He considers their works and their way, He has nothing good to say to them at all. He simply comes to them and lays out the problems as He sees them.)

A. v. 14 **The Problem Of Possession** – Notice the words "**the church OF the Laodiceans**". If you will take a moment to look at each of the other letters in **Revelation 2 and 3**, you will see the words, "**the church OF or IN...**", and then the name of the city. In the other cities, it was the Lord's church in that city. In Laodicea, it was their church, and not the Lord's! He identifies a problem of possession. It was their church and they did as they pleased, not considering the will of the Lord.

(Note: We must never forget why the church exists. It is not a platform that allows us to become well known in our world. It is not a forum for us to advance our agendas or our ideas. It is not a place we can "**run**" or "**dominate**". This church is not "**our church**"; it is His church!

Jesus died for the church. He purchased it with His Own blood, **Acts 20:28**. He builds it and He sustains it, **Matt. 16:18-19 ; Eph. 2:19-22**. The church exists for His glory. We are here for Him and for Him alone! Our duty is to preach Him; praise Him; promote Him; and publish Him.

This is not your church! This is not my church! It is His church! He possesses it and He is to control it. We need no other Lord but Jesus. No man, no group of men and no congregation is qualified to take His place. III. We need no one like **Diotrophes**es – **3 John 9**. We must ever keep this church and this ministry centered in Him!)

- B. v. 15a **The Problem Of Passion** – Jesus tells them that like the water in their city, they have become lukewarm. Remember that water problem I spoke of earlier? Water from the hot springs in Hierapolis six miles away was brought into the city by aqueducts. By the time it reached Laodicea, the water was no longer hot; it was lukewarm. Cold water from Colossae was also piped in; by the time it reached Laodicea, this water was lukewarm as well. This tepid, lukewarm water made getting refreshment in Laodicea difficult.

The church had also become lukewarm. This means that they had lost their passion for the things of the Lord. They had become indifferent and apathetic. They had reached a place where they were going through the motions, but they were unmoved by the things of the Lord. Apparently, they were indifferent toward the cross of Jesus; the Word of God; and the condition of the lost people around them. These folks were not burning hot with passion for Jesus, neither were they totally dead and cold. They were somewhere in between. Their condition makes Jesus sick!

(Note: Is this not the condition of the modern church? People are going through the motions, but there is no burning passion for the things of the Lord!

Church people in our day are no longer moved by the cross! They read about the crucifixion, they hear about it, and they sit unmoved! Church people in our day are unmoved by the plight of the lost! They know people are lost and they know that lost people are going to Hell; but they really don't care. They say, "***That's terrible, I wish they would get saved.***" But, they don't pray or witness; they don't care!

The average church in our day is a study in apathy! They are not exactly dead because they are praying, preaching, singing, etc. But, they are not exactly on fire either. There is no excitement and no passion about Who they serve, what they hear, and what they are doing. They are somewhere in the middle of the road. That is where the modern church is! People enter the church, take their seat, fold their arms and say, "***Bless me if you can!***" They never feel the need to go to an altar to pray. They never feel a need to testify. They never feel a need to do anything but come and go.

How can you hear about Jesus; His love for your soul; His death for you and all that He has done for you and remain unmoved? How can you know Him and never be moved by that relationship?

I certainly don't expect everyone to respond like I would; but I think there ought to be some signs of life; some show of emotion; some hint that the spirit is moved by the word of God, the Spirit of God and the work of God. Where is our passion for the things of the Lord?

There are some major problems with a church that reaches this point.

1. **It is the hardest kind of church to Pastor.** The people believe right; they come in and out of the buildings; but they are indifferent. They've heard it all and are totally unmoved by it. This kind of indifference is hard to take! I'd rather have an ice cold church under which the Lord could build a spiritual fire; or one that had too much zeal, which the Lord could tone down a little, rather than I had to try and pastor a bunch of people that are satisfied! You can't move them!

2. **It is the hardest kind of church to move for the Lord.** They just don't care! If folks are saved, fine. If they aren't, that's fine too. If the preaching is good, great! If not, well, that's OK too. That's a tough attitude to handle!

3. **This kind of church misrepresents the Lord.** Jesus was a Man of passion! He was on fire and it showed in His life and ministry. His disciples were passionate men and they lived lives burning with passion for the Lord Jesus. When we are indifferent and unmoved and unconcerned, it gives a false impression of Jesus and what He is all about!)

(**Note:** Let me just say this and I will move on: ***there are some things about which you cannot be indifferent!*** Indifference and apathy are not options when it comes to Jesus Christ! No one, who is right with God, can pass Calvary and see the Lord bleeding, broken and dead, and be unmoved.

No one can hear the claims of Christ and be ambivalent! He claims to be God in the flesh! He claims to be the only Savior! He lays absolute claim to your life and mine! No one can walk in the middle of the road when it comes to Jesus! You are either for Him, or you are against Him! You must either accept Him or you must stone Him!

III. C.S. Lewis hit it right on the head when he said, "***A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us.***")

- C. v. 17 **The Problem Of Perception** – When the people in Laodicea looked at themselves, they saw the perfect church. They were wealthy, powerful and they felt they had all they needed. They looked at their position, their possessions and their power and they said, "***We have arrived!***" There they sat, indifferent, apathetic, and unmoved and they thought they were in good shape.

The problem with this attitude is that it is based in blindness. Jesus tells them that they are totally wrong about what they have and where they are. We will look at His words to them in a moment. For now, we need to remember that how we see ourselves and how He sees us may be two different things altogether.

(Note: Sadly, many churches are right here today. There is a sense that they have arrived. If you walk into the average church today and told them that they needed a revival, they would be offended. If you encouraged them to get on fire for God, they would say, “**Look at us and all we have! We are doing fine and we need nothing!**”

I pray that we never reach that place! The sad truth is that some people get more excited about money in the bank than they do souls on the altar. They get more stirred up about a big number on a board than they do about sincere worship of the Lord. They are more blessed by what they have than by the Lord showing up and moving in a service! **How do we see ourselves? How does He see us?**

I will tell you what we need more than money; more than crowds; more than buildings; more than recognition in the community; more than many of the things we place such great value in: **we need Jesus and we need what He can do for us!** I would rather have Him, His presence and His power than anything material you can name! We need Him! We must seek Him! We must welcome Him! We must worship Him!

III. In some ways a church is like an airplane. An airplane is about the only vehicle that does not have brakes. When an airplane stops going forward, it starts going down! The same is true with a church. When a church stops moving forward; when a church loses its vision; when a church stops being passionate about Jesus and what He can do for them; they are headed for a rough landing! I'll say it again: We need Him!

I. The Problems In Laodicea

II. v. 14-19 THE PRESCRIPTION FOR LAODICEA

(III. This church is in trouble, but not all hope is lost. There is hope! Jesus comes to give them His cure for their ailment.)

His cure comes in the form of...

A. v. 14 **A Divine Appearance** – Notice how Jesus comes to this wayward church.

1. **He Comes As The Confirming One** – He comes as the “**Amen**”. This is an Hebrew word that means “**So be it; let it be so; or it is so**”. It was used to express the ideas of faithfulness and truth, **Isa. 65:16; Deut. 7:9**.

When we use it to end our prayers, we are saying, “**Let it be so!**” When we use it to respond to a message, we are saying, “**It is so, or it is true!**” It is a word of confirmation and finality.

When Jesus comes to this church, He comes as God's final word to humanity, **Heb. 1:2**. He comes as the confirmer of all God's promises, **2 Cor. 1:20**.

Regardless of how this church saw itself, Jesus comes to tell them the truth, He comes to have the final say to Laodicea.

2. **He Comes As The Confronting One** – He also comes as “*the faithful and true witness*”. This church had a vision of itself what was flawed. Jesus wants them to know that He knows them as they really are and that He has come to reveal their true state. Their testimony lied about Him and He has come to set the record straight.
3. **He Comes As The Controlling One** – He is also called “*the beginning of the creation of God*”. This identifies Jesus as the Creator and the Controller of all things. Not a speck of dust can move in this universe without His permission! He is in control. He comes to a church that thought it was running its own show. Jesus comes to remind them that in spite of what they might think, His hand is still on the wheel and He is the One Who controls the church.

(Note: It would do us well to remember Who Jesus is! He is still God’s final word to the church. He is the One Who knows us better than we know ourselves. He is the One in control, in spite of what some people may think!)

B. v. 15b-16 **A Divine Announcement** – He has a word for this church.

1. v. 15b **The Lord’s Desire For The Church** – The water situation in Laodicea is reflected in the church. By the time the water reached Laodicea, it no longer possessed the therapeutic properties of the hot water out of the springs in Heirapolis; nor did it provide the refreshing quality of the cool waters from Colossae. The waters were tepid and undesirable.

Jesus tells His church that He wants them to be either “*hot or cold*”. He wants His church to be a place people can relax and find healing, like a trip to a hot spring. He wants His church to be a place people where can be refreshed by His worship and His presence. The church should be a healing place and it should be a place of refreshment. I heard one of our men describe Calvary Baptist as an “*oasis*”. I like that!

2. v. 16 **The Lord’s Disgust With The Church** – Because of their condition, the Lord tells them that He will “*spue them out of His mouth*”. The word “*spue*” is a strong word. It means “*to vomit, to throw up*”. The Greek word is “*emeo*”. We get our English word “*emetic*” from it. An “*emetic*” is something that makes you want to throw up. For instance, ipecac is a drug often used to induce vomiting in cases of poison, etc. (Ill. Lukewarm sulphur water.)

Jesus tells this church that, like a drink of lukewarm water, they make Him want to vomit them out of His mouth. What He means is this: He cannot and will tolerate their indifference and apathy! I do not want to be a part of any church that brings disgust to our Lord!

3. v. 17 **The Lord's Description Of This Church** - According to **verse 17**, they thought they had it all. He looks at them and tells them they have nothing!

They were proud of their achievements. Jesus calls them "**wretched**", which means "**troubled**"; and "**miserable**", which means "**to be pitied**".

They were proud of their wealth. Jesus tells them they are actually "**poor**". This word means, "**destitute and reduced to begging**."

They were proud of their vision of themselves. Jesus tells them that they are "**blind**". They cannot see themselves as they really are. Someone said, "**There is no one so blind as he who will not see**."

They were proud of their fashions and fine clothing. Jesus tells them that they are "**naked**". They are totally exposed and revealed for what they really are. (Ill. To be naked in that society was the ultimate humiliation. Now, it is a badge of honor!)

- C. v. 17-18 **A Divine Advertisement** – Jesus tells this church exactly where they can find all they need.

1. **Come For Spiritual Value** – If they will come to Him, put Him first and live out the Word of God, they will know true riches. He calls them to get on the "spiritual gold standard" and live out a genuine faith before a lost world. They might see their wealth disappear down here, but they will be laying us treasures over there, **Matt. 6:19-21; 1 Pet. 1:3-5**.
2. **Come For Spiritual Vesture** – He invites them to adorn themselves in spiritual garments. This is an invitation to come to Him for salvation. They are naked and lost in their sins. If they will come to Him, He will cloth them in robes of righteousness and they will be no longer naked and exposed in the sight of God, **Isa. 61:10; Rev. 19:8**.
3. **Come For Spiritual Vision** – He invited them to come to Him so that He can restore their spiritual vision. When that spiritual vision is restored, they will be able to see themselves as they are and they will be able to see Him as He is. This will lead the repentance, obedience and humble service. We need that spiritual vision!

Why are people dead, dry, and indifferent spiritually? Because they cannot see themselves or the Lord as either truly is! Jesus can open the blinded eyes, **2 Cor. 4:4; Luke 4:18**.

D. v. 19 **Some Spiritual Advice** – Jesus invites them to come to Him, then He gives them a much needed word of advice.

1. **A Word Of Compassion** – “*as many as I love*” – In spite of their indifference toward Him, He still loves them! What a blessing! Jesus doesn’t just write people off when they don’t do as He pleases, but He calls them and continues to love them even when they reject Him and His love.
2. **A Word Of Caution** – “*I rebuke and chasten*” – Jesus tells them, and us, that just because He loves us like we are, He loves us too much to leave us as we are. In an effort to get our attention, He will use two methods to turn us to Him.

First, He will “**rebuke**”. This word means “**to convict, or to correct**”. He will speak to us in our condition. He will send His Word and He will convict us in our hearts through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, **John 16:7-11**. If we come to Him, He will receive us.

If we fail to heed His rebukes, He will use more direct methods. The word “**chasten**” means “**to correct with blows**”. He may touch any area of life to get our attention; He might even use death, **1 Cor. 11:30**.

Those who refuse to walk in God’s path will encounter trouble in their lives, **Pro. 13:15; Jer. 2:19; Pro. 15:10**.

3. **A Word Of Counsel** – “*be zealous...and repent*” – The word “**zealous**” gives us the word “**zesty**”. It means “**to come to a boil**”. Jesus is calling this church to “**get on fire for Him**”. When they see their need and turn to Him, it will manifest itself in genuine repentance. Remember, repentance can be defined as “**a change of mind that results in a change of direction**.” If Laodicea were to repent, they would come alive to the Lord and His presence in their church. They would be moved by the cross and by the plight of the lost sinner.

(Note: We need to hear and heed the voice of the Lord in these days, and we need to repent. We need to ask the Lord to let us see ourselves as we really are. We need to be able to see Him as He really is. We need to “come to a boil”; to get on fire for Him and repent of our indifference, our apathy our lack of conviction and concern. God help us to get to Him before His judgment falls on us, **1 Pet. 4:17**.)

I. The Problems In Laodicea

II. The Prescription For Laodicea

III. v. 20-21 THE PROMISES TO LAODICEA

(III. Our Lord closes this letter with some truly blessed promises. The sad truth is that Laodicea has evicted Jesus Christ from their church. He is on the outside trying to gain admission.)

- A. v. 20a **A Present Promise** – He says “***I stand at the door and knock***” – In His effort to get back into this church, Jesus stands there and knocks. These verbs are in the Present Tense. It could be stated this way, “***Behold, I am continually standing at the door, and I am continually knocking on the door...***” He never gives up in His efforts to enter the lives of those He loves. (III. I am glad that He never gave up on me!)
- B. v. 20b **A Personal Promise** – “***if any man hear my voice, and open the door...***” – Jesus does not need for the whole church to get on fire so that He can come in; He merely needs just one person to hear him and to open the door. Jesus is a gentleman! He will knock and He will call, but He will not break down the door. It must be opened by an act of the will.

(III. Holman Hunts famous painting, which depicts Jesus standing outside a door with a light in His hand. He is knocking on the door. When that painting was first finished, a man looked at it and commented to the painter, “***You made a mistake.***” Holman Hunt said, “***Where is the mistake?***” The critic said, “***You forgot to paint a handle on the outside of the door.***” Hunt responded, “***There is no mistake. The handle is on the inside. Jesus knocks, but you must open the door!***”)

- C. v. 20c **A Precious Promise** – “***Sup with him...and he with me***” – The ancient Greeks enjoyed three meals. They usually ate a large breakfast, a much smaller lunch, and then a leisurely evening meal, which they called “***supper***”. At this evening meal, the family would take their time, talk and fellowship. It was a time of intimacy for the family. Jesus says, “***If you will just open the door, I will come in and have fellowship with you!***”

(Note: You can be a member of a dead, dry church, but you don’t have to be that way yourself. If you will open the door to Jesus, He will come in to you. You can have revival in your life while everyone else sits around in deadness and apathy. Don’t blame your dry condition on others; open the door and let Jesus in!)

- D. v. 21 **A Powerful Promise** – This verse is a promise that all the benefits of salvation will be given to the person who overcomes. The converted person will become identified with Jesus; His heavenly Father and His heavenly Home. Those who come to Jesus are promised that they will reign with Him and rejoice with Him in His heaven someday. That is a powerful promise!

When Jesus speaks to the church of Laodicea, He is speaking to a church filled with lost people. He is inviting them to be saved and His promises to them make coming to Jesus worthwhile.

(Note: I am glad that He made that offer to me one day, and I am glad He gave me grace to accept Him. Have you been saved? You can be if He is calling you to come to Him!)

Conclusion: Where does this message find you? Are you saved by His grace? Are you zealous and committed to the Lord and His work? Or, are you indifferent and apathetic toward the things of the Lord? Can you hear His voice calling: “***Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.***” Is the door open? Does it need to be? He wants our fellowship with Him; does He have it?

Gonna Be Moving One of These Days | Revelation 4:1

Introduction: As we move into **chapter 4** of the book of Revelation, we are heading into strange country. We just left the past as we dealt with the seven churches of Asia Minor. Yet, while we studied those churches, we came to understand that we were, in reality, very much in the present. Now, when we get to this chapter, we are about to step off into the future.

This chapter, and the one that follows takes us into the very throne room of God, where we can see ourselves and what we will be doing when we get to Heaven. After that, our focus will be primarily on the earth until we get to **chapter 21**.

What I want you to understand is that **Revelation 4:1** is a very special verse. In fact, if you do not understand this verse, then you cannot understand the rest of the book. If you mess up here, you will be out of step all the way through the rest of this great book.

III. Have you ever buttoned your shirt, only to get down to the last button and find you didn't have a buttonhole to put it in? So, you back up and see what happened and you usually find that your problems begin right at the start. If the right button is not placed in the right button hole, you are in trouble. Things will never turn out right! The same is true with this book.

Since this verse is so vital, I want to take some time and move through it in detail today. Now, I don't know if you know this or not, but this verse is all about our future. It tells us about the day when all the children of God will leave this world together. I want to show you the **facts**, as they are presented in this verse, and I want to preach on the thought **Gonna Be Moving, One Of These Days**.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS VERSE

- A. **It Is A Transitional Verse** – Notice that this verse begins with the phrase “**after this**” and it ends with the word “**hereafter**”. In the Greek text, these words are exactly the same. Both of these English expressions translate the Greek words “**meta tauta**”.

Now, this is not the first time that we have encountered this phrase in this book. Look back to **Rev. 1:19**. “**Meta tauta**” shows up here too! John is commanded to write three different things: “**the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter.**” There is our phrase. It is the Greek phrase “**meta tauta**” that ties these verses together.

What we have in **Rev. 1:19** is the basic outline of the book of Revelation.

- “***the things which thou hast seen***” points to the events of **chapter 1**.
- “***The things which are***” points to the events of **chapters 2-3**, or the letters to the seven churches. Notice the last words of **chapter 3**, “***He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches***”, **Rev. 3:22**. These events cover the history of the visible church from the days of the Apostles until the end of the church age.
- “***The things which shall be hereafter***” point to the events that will occur after the age of the church has ended. **Chapters 4 and 5** find the redeemed saints of God in Heaven, in His presence, worshipping Him there. **Chapters 6-19** deal with the Tribulation period and with the wrath of God as He judges this sinful world and purifies His people, Israel.

➤ So, **Rev. 4:1** is an important verse that must be understood correctly if we are going to stay on track as we move through this book. It is also important because it signals a time of transition for the people of the Lord. After this point, the church is never mentioned as being on the earth again.

This verse tells us about that day when we are going to be moving up to gloryland! I don’t know about you, but I am looking forward to that day!

- B. **It Is A Typical Verse** – This verse tells us that one man, John, was called up into Heaven. Just one man is affected, just John. But, in this verse, John becomes a representative man. He pictures what will happen to all those believers who are living on the earth when Jesus comes back for His people in the Rapture.

Now, I don’t want to give away the rest of the message, but this event called the Rapture is very important. When the Rapture occurs, several events will be set into motion.

- The Bride of Christ will be taken out of this world, **1 Thes. 4:16-18**. (III. The Rapture is called “***the blessed hope***”, **Titus 2:13**. Thank God for that hope!)
- The Spirit of God will be taken out of this world, **2 Thes. 2:7**.
- This sinful, rebellious world will be plunged into Great Tribulation, **Rev. 24:21**.

So, this verse stands as a type, or as a picture, of what will happen when Jesus returns for His children. Are you ready for that day? (**Matt. 24:44**)

II. THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THIS VERSE

(III. The book of Revelation is a book filled with signs, symbols and illustrations. Back in **Rev. 1:1**, we are told that “**He sent and signified it**”. Take that word “**signified**” and sound it out. If you do, it becomes “**sign-i-fied**”. In other words, the Lord tells John that He is going to reveal some of the content of this book in signs and symbols.

If you have read the book of Revelation, you know how true this is. Jesus is pictured as a “**Lamb**”. The redeemed saints are pictured as “**twenty-four elders**”. The New Jerusalem is pictured as a “**bride**”. The Antichrist is called “**the beast**”. There are many other examples that could be given.

The use of symbols in no way changes what God says; everything He says will come to pass as a literal event. He merely uses the language of symbolism to describe actual events. He uses symbols so that people of all generations will be able to understand what He means. There are two symbols or illustrations given to encourage us in this verse. Let’s look at them today.)

A. **Involved The Eyes** – John says that he saw a “**door opened in Heaven**”. This phrase literally means that there was a door “**standing open**” in Heaven. This is the third door we have encountered in the Revelation thus far. Let’s review the doors we have seen.

➤ **The Door Of Service** - **Rev. 3:8** – The church in Philadelphia is told, “**Behold, I have set before thee an open door and no man can shut it.**” This is the door of Gospel opportunity and service. When a church is biblical and walking after the will of the Lord, He will set before it an open door of ministry. He is doing that with our church in these days!

➤ **The Door Of Salvation** – **Rev. 3:20** – Those in Laodicea are invited to open the doors of their hearts to let Jesus enter. The lost heart is closed to Jesus, but if it is opened, He will enter and He will save the lost soul.

(III. In our text, the door in Heaven is shown to be “**standing open**”. The tense of the verb means that this door has been opened and it continues to stand open for all who desire to enter. Now, we know Who the door is. In **John 10:9**, Jesus identified Himself as “**the Door**”. He is the only way to Heaven! People do not go to Heaven through the door of the church, regardless of the name over the door.

People do not enter Heaven through their good works. They do not go in by their own power. The only door into salvation and Heaven is Jesus Christ. He is the One Who died; the One Who rose again; the One Who paid the price for our salvation. He is the only way to God, **John 14:6!**

Today, that door stands wide open. It will allow “**whosoever will**” to enter and find peace, rest, salvation and Heaven. But, when the Lord calls His people home to Heaven, the door of salvation will close. People will still be saved after the Rapture, but only those who have never heard the Gospel will have that opportunity, **2 Thes. 2:11**.

(III. The 10 Virgins in **Matt. 25:1-13**, five failed to prepare and by the time they were ready, the door was shut, **Matt. 25:10**. It is foolish to presume upon time when it comes to your eternal soul. If you have been waiting to walk through the door of salvation, wait no longer, the time to enter will soon be gone forever, **2 Cor. 6:2; Pro. 27:1**.)

- **The Door Of Summons** – **Rev. 4:1** – This open door in Heaven becomes a door of summons. Those who are saved will one day be called up to go through the open door into Heaven.
- **The Door Of Splendor** – **Rev. 19:11** – One day Heaven will be opened again. This time it will not be to allow people to enter; it will open to allow Jesus to return to this earth with His church. He is returning in splendor, power and glory to stamp out evil and establish His kingdom.

B. **Involved The Ears** – Not only did John see a door; John heard a trumpet! This is the language of symbolism. He said, “***the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me***”. What John heard was not an actual trumpet, but a noise like that of a trumpet: piercing, loud and demanding attention.

Trumpets were very important in the life of ancient Israel. **Numbers 10:1-10** gives God’s instructions for the use of trumpets in Israel. They were to make two trumpets of silver. There were different types of trumpet blasts for various events. The trumpets were to be blown when it was time to break camp and move. The trumpets blew to announce sacrifices on feast days. Trumpets blew to summon the priests to the Tabernacle. Trumpets were used to sound an alarm in a time of war or danger. It was very important that the people listened to the various trumpet blasts, and that the trumpeters made the right sounds, **1 Cor. 14:8**.

(**Note:** Trumpets also figure heavily in the New Testament, particularly in connection with end time events. Look at **1 Thes. 4:16**. This verse shows us that there will be a trumpet that will sound signaling the Rapture. **1 Cor. 15:52** also speaks of a trumpet's sound in connection with the Rapture. Do you see the connection?

It appears that God will use a trumpet sound to signal His people when it is time to depart. I don't think this world will hear it, but we were implanted with a special listening device the moment we were saved.

When that trumpet sounds, it will be time to break camp and move off to glory! When that trumpet sounds, it will signal a declaration of war on sin and this evil world system. One of these days, a trumpet blast will sound and the saints will leave this world behind forever! Hallelujah!)

(**Note:** John says that this trumpet was "**a voice**". I wonder if this is not the voice of the Lord calling for His people. In **1 Thes. 4:16**, we are told that "**the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout...**" When Jesus comes, that trumpet will call the living up, but it is His shout that will call the dead. Look at the New Testament, every time Jesus shouted in the Bible, there was a resurrection!

- He shouted at the tomb of Lazarus and he got up – **John 11:43**.
- He shouted on Calvary and many of the dead saints arose – **John 19:30; Matt. 27:50-53**.
- He will shout at the Rapture and all the redeemed will hear His voice and come out of their graves – **1 Thes. 4:13-18**.

I do not know what Jesus will say when He comes. He may say "**Come up hither!**" He may say, "**Come forth!**" He may say "**Come home!**" Whatever He says on that day, His voice will cause gravity to lose its hold on these bodies, we will be changed into His likeness, and we will fly away to our heavenly home.

III. **THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS VERSE**

(III. There is a river of glory running through this precious verse. Let's not miss the implications of this verse for our lives.)

- A. **It Speaks Of A Deliverance** – John is told that he is going to see “***things which must be hereafter.***” He is referring to future things. It won't be long until we move in **Revelation chapter 6** and beyond. When we get there, we are going to encounter details of events too horrible and amazing to comprehend. When we come to **chapter 6**, we are going to witness a vivid description of the events of the Tribulation Period.

I think it is significant that John is caught up into Heaven before the Tribulation Period begins. As I mentioned, John is a representative man. He pictures the church and its removal from this world before the horrors of the Tribulation Period begin to unfold.

That is exactly what the Rapture of the church is. It is a rescue mission! Look at **1 Thes. 4:17**. Paul uses the words “***caught up***” to describe what we call the Rapture. In fact, the word Rapture does not appear in the Bible. Now, don't let that throw you, because the word “***grandfather***” does not appear either. Got any granddads here? The word “***rapture***” is a Latin translation of the Greek word “***harpazo***”, which is the word translated “***caught up***” in **1 Thes. 4:17**.

The word “***harpazo***” literally means “***to seize; to carry off by force***”. If you saw your child about to be hit by a car and you ran out and snatched that child out of the path of the oncoming vehicle, saving its life, then you have the meaning of this word. It has the idea of rescue from danger.

There is a terrible time of danger coming on this earth. God is going to pull His people out and He is going to pull His Spirit out too. He is going to break off diplomatic relations with this world. Then, He is going to declare war on sin and sinners. He is going to take His church out before that time comes.

Some people believe that the church will be here for the Tribulation. They say the church is so filthy and so impure that God will leave it here to be cleaned up during the awful time. Let me just ask those people one question: What could the Tribulation possibly do for the church that the blood of Jesus cannot do?

Yes, there is sin and sinners in the church, but when we are caught up; we will face Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We will give an account of our deeds and lives, but sin was paid for at Calvary! Praise His name!

Let me share a few reasons why I believe the church will be rescued before the Tribulation Period begins.

- Our salvation has delivered us from His wrath, **1 Thes. 1:10; 5:9**.
- We are looking for the blessed hope, not the horrors of the Tribulation, the Antichrist and the wrath of God, **Titus 2:13**.
- The biblical types suggest that we will be taken out before the Rapture – Enoch was removed before the flood, **Gen. 5:24**; Lot was removed before Sodom was destroyed, **Gen. 19:22**. There is a clear pattern. God removes His people before He manifests His wrath.
- One other proof is found in **Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22**. In these verses, Jesus uses these words, “***He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.***”
 - Now look in **Matt. 13:9, 43**, here Jesus says, “***Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.***” No mention of the “***Spirit***” or of the “***churches***”. Of course, this was before the church was formed and before the Spirit was given.
 - Now, look at **Rev. 13:9**. This verse says, “***If any man have an ear, let him hear.***” Do you see the difference? Jesus does not mention either the Spirit or the churches, why? Because they have both were removed at the Rapture. Praise God, we will not be here for the Tribulation!

(III. What we see here is exactly what happens in our world when war breaks out between nations. When hostilities begin to rise, one of the first things a nation does is call its ambassadors home. The church is God’s ambassadors to this world, **2 Cor. 5:20**. Before He declares war on earth, He will call His people home to be with Him! Thank God, we are leaving before the worse comes!)

(III. Some years ago, when Billy Graham was preaching at the University of Hawaii, he was talking about the second coming of the Lord, and one of the students said to him, “***Mr. Graham, doesn't this matter of the second coming of the church seem like escapism to you?***” And Billy Graham replied, “***Well perhaps it does, but, young man; before Satan gets through with this old world we're all going to be looking for the exit signs.***”

I agree with that! One of these days, we will be glad for the fact that Jesus is taking us out of here before things get real bad. As bad as it is today, we haven't seen anything yet!)

- B. **It Speaks Of A Destination** – Not only is there going to be an escape, praise God, there is also going to be an entrance! **1 Thes. 4:17** says, “***so shall we ever be with the Lord.***” Folks, when we pass from this world through that open door in the heavens, we are going home. We are heading to that place Jesus promised to prepare for us, **John 14:1-3**.

When we arrive there, we will join the saints of all the ages in the presence of the Lord in His city! Imagine the Old Testament saints and the New Testaments saints all together in that city. Imagine the martyrs of all the ages; the preachers; the faithful church folks, all together in glory! Imagine that city, free from the curse of this world; free from death; free from pain; and free from sin, **Rev. 21:4, 8, 27**. Imagine seeing Jesus and God the Father, and the Holy Ghost, **Rev. 22:4**. Imagine that day when we go home! Well, one day, we won't have to imagine for we will be there!

(III. Jim Hill got it right when he put his pen to his paper and wrote these words:

What A Day That Will Be

***There is coming a day when no heartaches will come
No more clouds in the sky, no more tears to dim the eye.
All is peace forevermore on that happy golden shore
What a day, glorious day that will be.***

CHORUS:

***What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see
And I look upon His face, the One who saved me by His grace.
When He takes me by the hand and leads me through the Promised
Land.
What a day, glorious day that will be.***

***There'll be no sorrow there, no more burdens to bear
No more sickness, no pain, no more parting over there.
And forever I will be with the One who died for me
What a day, glorious day that will be.***

CHORUS:

Conclusion: There are some exciting days ahead for the church! We are about to leave this world behind forever. That is the message of this verse! This verse says, “***We’re gonna be moving, one of these days!***”

The question I have for you is this: Are you in this verse? John was called up to Heaven, one day every saved child of God will be called up too. Will you be in that number? When the Lord comes and raptures His church, will you go with Him, or will you be left behind to face the Tribulation?

If you are saved, then praise His name, there is a great day coming. If you are not saved, then come to Jesus tonight, while there is hope, and be saved before it is too late.

What has the Lord said to your heart today? If there are needs, then you come as He calls.

Back To The Future

Revelation 4:2-11

INSIDE THE THRONE ROOM OF GOD

Intro: The last time we saw John, he had been air-lifted out of this world, through a door that had been opened in the heavens. He was told that he was about to receive a revelation of “**things which must be hereafter**”. As we studied **Revelation 4:1**, we came to understand that John was a representative man. He represents all true believers in Jesus Christ who will be taken out of this world at the end of the church age in the event called “**The Rapture**”. I praise the Lord for that blessed hope! He is coming, and we are going! Hallelujah!

As we move deeper into this chapter, we are given a glimpse inside the very throne room of God Himself. We are allowed to view some of the activities that take place in Heaven before God’s judgment is visited upon the world.

The scene that is described in these verses is almost beyond comprehension. But, in these verses, John gives us a small glimpse of what we will be doing one of these days. Let’s join John in God’s presence and try to grasp what is taking place in these verses. I want to take us up to Heaven and look **Inside The Throne Room Of God**.

You see, we need a heavenly perspective on this world. Taken by themselves, the events, the trials and the problems of this world often make no sense at all. From an earthly perspective, this world appears to be out of control today: war, disease, crime, wickedness, ungodliness, etc. But, when you understand that God is on His throne; and when you understand that He is in control; and when you think that He is working out a perfect, eternal, good plan, then it all falls into place. (III. A beautiful Persian rug looks like a mess of tangled strings and fiber when it is viewed from the backside; but when it is viewed from above, the pattern becomes very clear.)

So, today, let’s move up to Heaven and get a glimpse of what is taking place around God’s throne. I want to share the scenes John saw when he went up to Heaven, as I try to preach on the thought **Inside The Throne Room Of God**.

I. v. 2-3 THE PERSON ON THE THRONE

(III. The very first thing John sees is God Himself sitting on a throne in Heaven. What a thrill that must have been! To go to the White House and meet the President would be an honor. To go to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen of England would be an honor. But, to walk into the very throne room of God and see Him sitting on His throne would be glorious beyond description! Yet, that is the honor John was given and it is an honor we will enjoy one day soon! Let’s listen in as John describes his encounter with Sovereign God.)

- A. v. 2 **He Is The Ruling One** – The first thing John sees is a “**throne set in Heaven**”. A “**throne**” speaks of “**sovereignty and authority**”. We are viewing One Who occupies the place of absolute authority over all the affairs of Heaven and earth, **Psa. 47:8; 103:19**.

The word “**set**” speaks of “**stability, firmness, durability**”. God’s throne is an eternal throne! No foe will ever be able to force Him down from the place where He rules and reigns, **Psa. 45:6**.

This world may not recognize God’s authority and rule today, but He reigns nonetheless! Men do not give a second thought to the existence of God; but He notices all; controls all and He will ultimately judge all. Men may not give Him the time of day now, but we will all face Him some day. Man may not bow today, but they will one day, **Phil. 2:9-11; Rom. 14:12**.

- B. v. 3a **He Is The Resplendent One** – John attempts to do the impossible: he attempts to describe God. The One on this throne is God the Father. How do we know? God the Son takes the seven sealed book out of His hand in **Rev. 5:5-7**.

John describes God as being like a “**jasper and a sardine stone**”. The word “**like**” lets us know that we have encountered symbolic language. God is not a mineral or a stone, but His appearance reminded John of these two precious stones.

1. The “**jasper**” is clear and bright. It is possible that it is the same as a diamond. A diamond is a very hard stone and it speaks of “**firmness**”. This comparison reminds us that our God is “**firm and unchanging**”. Since we are in the context of a throne room, where sovereign authority is about to be exercised, this tells us that God’s laws, like God Himself, are firm and unchanging.

There are certain laws in nature that are firm and unchanging. Take gravity for instance, what goes up will come down! God has established the **Law of Gravity**, it is firm and unchanging.

If you place a pot of water on a stove eye and turn on the heat, you need not expect to find ice in the pot when you return. God has established the **Law of Thermodynamics**, it is unchanging.

The same is true concerning God’s moral law. He is unchanging and inflexible there too. Men kick against the moral laws of God. They call the Bible out of date and old fashioned. They do their own thing thinking that God will let them slide. The fact is, they are sinning against a God Who is firm and unchanging in His moral law.

2. The “**sardine**” stone is a blood red stone. It reminds us that while God is a God of sovereign rule and absolute authority, Who holds men to a high standard of holiness, is also the God of redemption! He is a God Who saved all those who will turn to Him by faith.

Thank God He is a saving Lord as well as a Sovereign Lord. If He wasn’t, then we wouldn’t have a chance! But, it was this holy, righteous, God of judgment and wrath Who was moved by mercy, love and grace to provide a way of salvation for all who will come to Him!

(Note: Before we leave these two stones behind, it is worthy to note that the “**Sardius**” and the “**Jasper**” were the first and last stones in the breastplate of the High Priest, **Ex. 28:17-21**. The “**sardius**” represented the tribe of Reuben, and the “**jasper**” represented the tribe of Benjamin. These two stones were representative of all twelve stones and were a reminder that God always kept His people and His covenants with His people close to His heart. In other words, these stones were a constant reminder that God would keep His Word and do everything He had promised to do.

Judgment will come, but it will be carried out by One Who has walked among us. There is a human side to His judgment. He will judge, but it will be tempered by His compassion and mercy.)

- C. v. 3b **He Is The Restraining One** – God’s throne is encompassed by an emerald rainbow. This rainbow is not like those we see here on earth. We only see half the bow; in Heaven it will all be visible. We also know that the rainbow signals the fact that the storm has ended. We also know that the first rainbow was given to Noah as a visible sign that God would never again destroy the earth by a flood, **Gen. 9:11-17**.

This rainbow in Heaven is a reminder that when we arrive there, the storms will be over for the children of God. It is a reminder that while we may not understand everything that happens here, we will when we get there. It is also a reminder that God will judge the earth, but that He will do in line with His promises and His covenants.

You see, the rainbow speaks of God’s mercy. Even as the wrath of God is about to fall on this doomed world, God is still moving in restraint and mercy. (III. **Habakkuk 3:2**)

(III. Every person in this room is headed for an encounter with God! You might have parked your car and walked into Wal-Mart today, but you were actually headed toward God. You might have parked your car in this parking lot and headed into this building, but you were actually headed straight toward God. One day, we will all be face to face with Him. We will meet Him in scenes of glory or in the halls of judgment, but we will meet Him just the same. Be ready for that moment!)

(Note: Has it dawned on you yet that you are going to see Him one day? Has it become clear that you will stand in His throne room and see His face? One day, the long road of life will end and we will be home. Our journey will be complete; our burdens lifted; our tears dried away; our questions answered; our broken hearts healed forever; and we will be home! Praise God, there is a better day coming!)

I. The Person On The Throne

II. v. 4 THE PEOPLE AROUND THE THRONE

- A. Their Association – Who are these individuals? Some people think they are angels, or cherubim. The word “**elders**” is never used to refer to angels in the Bible. Others think they represent some other group.

Personally, I think they represent all the redeemed children of God. Let’s examine the evidence.

- They are sitting on “**seats**”. This is the same word translated “**throne**” in **verse 2**. Thus, they are seen to be reigning with God. The saints will reign with Him some day, **2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 1:6; Rev. 2:26-27**.
- They seem to be a representative people. In **Rev. 21:12-14**, the New Jerusalem is described as having twelve gates names after the 12 tribes of Israel. It is built on twelve foundations which contain the names of the 12 Apostles. Twelve plus twelve equals twenty-four! I believe that these twenty-four elders represent the redeemed people of God of both the Old Testament and New Testament.

In the Old Testament, David appointed 24 Levites to represent the entire priesthood, **1 Chron. 23, 28**. When a meeting was necessary, it would have been impossible to gather every one of the thousands of Levites together; but when the twenty-four came together, they represented the whole body. The same is true of these Elders. They represent the entirety of the redeemed saints of God!

- These elders represent us!

- B. Their Activity – They are “**sitting**”. This signifies rest. Their labors are over and they are sitting, at rest in the presence of God in Heaven.

We are seated in Jesus in Heaven today, **Eph. 2:6**. That is our positional situation. Practically, I am still in this world; living, laboring and longing for Heaven. One day, we will be where God has already positioned us!

I just want to remind you that one day, this life with all its burdens, cares, worries and problems will be behind us forever. We will go to a new home where those things can never hinder or bother us again, **Rev. 21:4**. We will enter into His rest in Heaven!

- C. Their Attire – They are “**clothed in white raiment**”. White garments in the Bible speak of “**the righteousness of the saints**”, **Rev. 19:8**.

When God saved us, He forgave our sins and cleansed every stain of sin away from us forever. He declared us to be forgiven and justified in His eyes, **1 Cor. 6:11; Rom. 5:1, 9**, that is our positional standing. Practically, however, we are anything but righteous at times. We strive for that, but we have a hard time achieving perfect holiness. One day, this wicked flesh will drop away forever. We will be remade in His image and we will be

perfectly holy and righteous, just like He is! Thank God, there is a day coming when we will leave sin and the appetite for sin behind forever!

- D. **Their Adornments** – They have “**on their heads crowns of gold**”. There are two words for crown in the New Testament.

One is the word “**diadem**”. This is word that is used to describe the many crowns Jesus will wear when He returns in power and glory to reign on the earth, **Rev. 19:12**. This is the kingly crown; the crown of glory.

The other is the word “**stephanos**”. It refers to “**a victor’s crown**”. It speaks of the crown given to victors in athletic contests.

The “**diadem**” is worn by Jesus by divine right. The “**stephanos**” is earned by the saints. We are told of at least five crowns that can be won by the people of the saints of God.

1. **The Crown of Life** – **James 1:12; Rev. 2:10** – This crown is given to those who demonstrate their love for Jesus by successfully enduring trials and temptations.
2. **The Crown of Righteousness** – **2 Tim. 4:8** – This crown is given to those who live in the light of His coming. The saints, who long for, live for and love the coming of Jesus, can receive this crown.
3. **The Crown of Glory** – **1 Pet. 5:4** – This crown is the reward of the faithful Pastor.
4. **The Crown of Rejoicing** – **1 Thes. 2:19** – This crown is a reward for those who faithful share the Gospel message and point others to Jesus.
5. **The Imperishable Crown** – **1 Cor. 9:25** – Awarded to those who battle the flesh and seek to live holy lives.

(Note: You need not worry that your service for the Lord Jesus will go unnoticed. He sees everything you do for His glory. He knows about every sacrifice. He sees every effort. He takes note of every prayer, every witness, and every secret thing you do to bring glory and honor to His Name. He will reward your faithful service one day. You may not receive recognition here, but you surely will over there. In fact, if you do what you do for the praise of men, you have already received your reward, **Matt. 6:1-6**.)

I. The Person On The Throne

II. The People Around The Throne

III. v. 5-11 **THE PRAISE BEFORE THE THRONE**

- A. v. 5-6a **The Scene In Heaven** – As John watches, amazing things begin to take place around the throne of God. Let's observe the action.

1. v. 5a **He Speaks Of Wonders** – “*Lightenings, thunderings and voices*” – The things speak of approaching judgment. Heaven booms with the warning signals that judgment is on the way.

These same things are seen in **Ex. 19:16-19**. The heavenly noises then were a warning for the people of Israel to keep their distance from God's holy mountain. The sounds were a warning that men had better reverence God, or they will face Him in judgment.

2. v. 5b **He Speaks Of A Witness** – “*seven lamps of fire*” – This is the Spirit of God in His fullness, **Isa. 11:2**. The Spirit is no longer a “**Comforter**”, **John 14:16, 26**; He is now an instrument of God's judgment. He is there to witness to the righteousness of the judgments that are about to fall on the earth.

3. v.6a **He Speaks Of Waters** – “*a sea of glass like unto crystal*” – This crystal sea speaks of God's judgment as being firm and fixed. On this earth, there is nothing more constantly changing or in motion than the ocean. The sea is never still and it is never the same. This sea is solid and unmoving! Judgment is fixed and it cannot be altered!

If you will remember, there was a “*sea of brass*” called “*the laver*” outside the tent of the Tabernacle. Before the priests entered the tent they were required to wash in the laver. It symbolized cleansing and forgiveness of sin. How many times have I stopped at the laver of **1 John 1:9** and washed my sins and my stains away? I thank God that there is a place of forgiveness and restoration today.

In Heaven, that sea of brass has become a sea of glass. There will be no more need for the saints to come to God for cleansing. We will never fail Him again! That will be a blessing.

But, for the lost sinner, this sea reminds us that it has become too late for repentance. Judgment is set and fixed. Man has reached his limit and God is about to pour out His wrath on a lost and sinful world. What a horror awaits the “*earth dwellers*”!

- B. v. 6b-11 **The Shouts In Heaven** – This throne room is a place of judgment, but it is also a place of praise. There are two groups involved in the praise of God on this occasion.

1. v. 6b-9 **The Shout Of The Beasts**

- a. v. 6b-8a **Their Description** – The word “*beasts*” comes from the Greek word “*zoon*”. We get the words “*zoo*” and “*zoology*” from it. The word has the idea of “*living ones*”. John sees these four “*living ones*” and attempts to describe them for us.

- He says that they are “**full of eyes before and behind**”. This speaks of complete intelligence.
 - **One was like a lion** – This represents wild animal life.
 - **One was like a calf** – This represents domesticated animal life.
 - **One was like a man** – This represents intelligent life.
 - **One was like an eagle** – This represents bird life.
 - These four beasts represent the entirety of God’s creation gathered before Him.
 - They are “**full of eyes**” – perfect intelligence; They have “**six wings**” – speaks of swiftness; They “**rest not**” – speaks of ceaseless activity.
 - These representatives of all creation stand in the presence of God and lift their voices in praise to the Creator.
 - He is the Creator and everything that was made exists for Him and for His glory, **Col. 1:16-17**.
- b. v. 8b **Their Declaration** – They declare His holiness. They declare His eternal nature. They declare His sovereignty and His control over all things. All of nature is involved in praising the Lord. (III. The rain, the sun, the birds, the animals, everything but man exists to glorify God. Everything but man glorifies Him by doing what He formed them to do!)

(Note: Before we leave these beasts behind, we should also note that they represent different sides of the Lord Jesus.

- The Lion pictures Jesus as He is portrayed in the **Gospel of Matthew – The Lion of the tribe of Judah**. As a Lion, Jesus possesses majesty, power and authority.
- The Calf pictures Jesus as He is portrayed in the **Gospel of Mark – The Suffering Servant**. As a servant, Jesus demonstrated service and strength.
- The Man pictures Jesus as He is portrayed in the **Gospel of Luke – The Son of Man**. As the Son of Man, Jesus possesses perfect intelligence and absolute moral righteousness.
- The Eagle pictures Jesus as He is portrayed in the **Gospel of John – The Son of God** come down from Heaven. As the Son of God, Jesus possesses majesty and transcendence.

- These beasts are so much like Him because they are so often with Him!)
2. v. 9-11 **The Shout Of The Believers** – It isn't just the four living creatures that lift their voices in praise. When the four beasts begin to praise the Lord, the 24 four elders join right in.
- a. v. 9-10a **Their Praise Is Volitional** – Nobody is seen forcing them to praise the Lord. When they hear their Lord exalted, they cannot help but join right in. They fall down before Him and worship their Redeemer!
 - b. v. 10b **Their Praise Is Visible** – They don't just praise the Lord "*in their hearts*", they fall down before Him and offer visible, open, unabashed praise to the Lord.
 - c. v. 10c **Their Praise Is Valuable** – They take the crowns they have been given and they cast them at the feet of the Lord God. They acknowledge that where they are, when they have and all they have accomplished is a direct result of His power, His grace and His love. They owe it all to Him and they offer Him everything they have. They are not concerned about their own glory, but they are lost in His glory!
 - d. v. 11 **Their Praise Is Vocal** – On top of everything else, they open their mouths and loudly proclaim their love and adoration for the Lord.
 - They declare His "*worthiness*".
 - They declare His power.
 - They declare His right to rule and reign.
 - They declare their agreement with what He is about to do in the world.
 - They declare the fact that He made the world and all that is in it. It is His and He can do with it as He pleases! (Ill. There will be no songs about evolution in glory!)
 - Heaven will literally throb with the praises of God!

(Note: Anytime man enters the presence of God, man always falls down in worship – **Isa. 6:5; Eze. 1:28; Dan. 7:15**. Man is terrified in the presence of God and always falls down in humble worship.)

(Note: Do you want to know what we will be doing in Heaven? We will not be floating around on a cloud, strumming a harp. Neither will we be fishing, hunting, sleeping or any of the foolish things we hear from time to time. If you want to know what we will be doing, look no farther than this passage.

When we leave here, we will be called up, cleaned up and caught up in His praise and worship. When we arrive there, we will see what we were; where we were headed and what He has done for us in saving our souls. We will comprehend it and we will not be able to restrain our praise. Would to God it would become real down here! Oh, that His people would praise Him for all that He has done for them; where He is taking them and how He is blessing them!

There is nothing wrong with praising the Lord. The only thing wrong with it is that is not nearly enough of it going on! If we want to praise Him, then let's do it here like we will do it there. Our praise should be **volitional, visible, valuable and vocal.**)

Conc: I am excited about going to Heaven. How about you? I look forward to seeing my Lord and my God. I look forward to joining my voice with those of the other redeemed saints and praising the One Who sought me, bought and delivered me from my sins.

I want to live my life here as an expression of praise to the Lord Who loves me. I want to be found glorifying Him by the life lived and by how I praise Him. He is worthy of our love, our devotion, our adoration and our praise. He deserves it as much today and He will when we get home to glory. Let's give Him everything He deserves; and let's not wait to Heaven to do it!

If you are not saved today, I want you to know that you will face the Lord in judgment. You need to come to Jesus for salvation. If you are saved and you want to thank Him for what He has given you, this altar is open. Maybe you would just like to bow and praise Him; you can do that too.

Worthy Is The Lamb

Revelation 5:1-7

Introduction: As we enter this fifth chapter, it would be a good time for a little review. In **chapter 4**, John is caught up into Heaven. When he arrives there, he sees God Himself sitting on a glorious throne. John sees Heaven arrayed as a courtroom. God is preparing to unleash His wrath on the inhabitants of the earth.

In the midst of this awesome scene, we also see that Heaven is filled with the praises of Jehovah. Heaven understands what the Lord is about to do and the inhabitants of that city praise the Lord for His glory, His power and for His creation. They are also acknowledging His right to judge the earth.

It seems that John is taken to Heaven to give him a heavenly perspective concerning what is about to happen on the earth. I mentioned this last week, but it is still true: when the events of this earth are viewed from a purely earthly perspective, they can cause fear, doubt, and confusion. But, when all the events of history are viewed through the eyes of Heaven, everything makes sense!

So, **chapter four** ends with God receiving the praise of His created ones and of His redeemed ones. Heaven throbs with the voices of those caught up in their love for Almighty God. **Chapter five** finds us in the same courtroom in Heaven. Now, praise has ceased for a moment and heavenly business is about to be transacted, and we are going to have front row seats as it is acted out.

We are about to find out that, in Heaven, Jesus is the central Figure. He is the center of attention. I believe that Heaven will be a glorious, wonderful place. I believe there will be streets of gold, walls of jasper, gates of pearl, and more glory than you and I can imagine. I believe it will be great to see Abraham, Moses, Paul, and the rest. But the main attraction of Heaven will be Jesus Himself. In this passage, we are going to see Jesus Himself, in His rightful place; glorified and exalted in Heaven.

This passage sets the stage for the judgments that will come during the Tribulation. It also reveals Jesus in His exalted glory. Let's look at these verses and consider the thought: **Worthy Is The Lamb**.

I. v. 1

A MYSTERIOUS SCROLL

(III. As this chapter begins, God is said to be holding a book. Now, this is not a book like you and I think of a book. It is actually a scroll. Paper was made in long sheets, and as it was written on, it would be rolled up. A portion would be written, and it would be rolled up and sealed. Another portion would be written and then that portion would be rolled up and sealed. This scroll God holds has seven seals on it. This is a mysterious scroll; let's see if we can unravel the mystery of the scroll.)

A. The Character Of This Scroll – As we read these verses, the character of this scroll becomes clear.

- First, it has something to do with “*man*,” **v. 2-4**.
- Second, it has something to do with the “*earth*.” In **Revelation 6**, the seals of this scroll began to be opened and the contents of the scroll are read. When they are, they reveal what will be happening on the earth during the Tribulation Period.
- Third, it seems that this scroll has something to do with “*redemption*.” When Jesus takes this scroll, He is praised for His redemptive work, **Rev. 5:9-10**.

This is a book of redemption. Redemption is something we talk about a lot. It is an important truth. Understanding redemption is vital to understanding God’s great plan for the ages. Everything He does and has ever done is related to His redemptive work.

To understand redemption, we need to look back to Old Testament times. In that time period, three things could be redeemed.

1. **A Slave could be redeemed** – If a master lost a servant, he could pay a redemption price and buy that servant back. (Ill. That is what Jesus did when He came to die on the cross for us, **Rev. 5:9; Gal. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:18-19**. We have been “*bought with a price*,” **1 Cor. 6:19-20**.)
2. **A Wife could be redeemed** – If a woman was left as a widow with no male children, a close kinsman of her dead husband could redeem her, and her husband’s inheritance, by paying a redemption price. This is seen in the book of Ruth, when Boaz paid the price to redeem Ruth and her dead husband’s inheritance. (Ill. Jesus died on the cross to redeem a Bride unto Himself, **Eph. 5:25-27**.)
3. **Land could be redeemed** – If a man lost the land he had been given as an inheritance, he could buy his property back by paying a redemption price.

This truth is demonstrated in **Jeremiah 32**. Jeremiah’s uncle had lost a piece of property. Jeremiah’s cousin comes to him when he is in prison and he asks Jeremiah to buy back the property, **v. 8**. Jeremiah does this and records the transaction on a scroll and seals it up, **v. 10**.

From what I have read, they would record the information related to the redemption on both sides of a scroll. On the inside they would write the reason the land was forfeited. On the outside they would write the terms of the redemption.

Apparently, they kept two copies of this transaction; one was open to the public for all to read and another copy was kept sealed up, **v. 10-11**. These scrolls were laid up in the Temple, in earthen jars for safekeeping, **v. 14**. Jeremiah serves the function of a kinsman redeemer for the property that belonged to his uncle. (Ill. What we are witnessing in **Rev. 5** is the heavenly version of what men did in Old Testament times. If you will notice, the book God holds is written on both sides. It is written up and sealed just like a deed.

When Jesus died on the cross, He did not just die for us, He also died for a ruined creation, **Rom. 8:22-23**.)

- B. **The Contents Of This Scroll** – I believe this scroll that we see here, is the title deed to the planet earth. When man sinned in Eden, sin entered this universe. Man fell that day, and God's creation came under a tragic curse. We will never know the full extent to which sin has ruined creation; but we do know that when Adam fell; creation fell also.

Here is the problem, when God made man and placed him in the Garden of Eden, God gave man dominion over all of creation, **Gen. 1:27-28**. When man fell, he gave away his dominion and Satan became the god of this world, **2 Cor. 4:4**. When God sent Jesus to redeem mankind on the cross, the blood of Jesus redeemed fallen sinners. But it was and is also sufficient to break the bondage of sin over creation. The Second Adam bought back everything the first Adam gave away.

So, this scroll in the hand of God is written within and without. On the inside is the tragic story of sin, tragedy, death, failure, and defeat. On the outside are the terms of redemption. If we could read these terms, we would find that the redeemer must be one who is willing to redeem and one who is worthy to redeem.

I. A Mysterious Scroll

II. v. 2-4 **A METICULOUS SEARCH**

(III. That is a little information regarding the character and the content of this mysterious scroll John saw in the hand of God. For the next few verses, this scroll is front and center in Heaven, as a search is made for one who is worthy to break the seals and read the contents of the scroll.)

- A. v. 2 **The Requirements Of This Search** – An angel asks the all-important question, “***Who is worthy to open the book?***” The question is this: “***Who is morally fit to read the text of this scroll and to carry out all that is necessary to redeem the earth?***”

Notice that the angel did not say, “***Who is willing to open the book?***” There have been many men down through the ages that were more than willing, but they were not able. More than one ruler has determined that he would have dominion over the earth.

Alexander the Great conquered the known world by the time he was 33 and wept because there were no more lands to conquer. He did not redeem the world; he left it worse than he found it! Before him, Nebuchadnezzar saw himself as the greatest ruler ever. He was not worthy to take dominion either. Julius Caesar, Napoleon Bonaparte, Charlemagne, Adolph Hitler, and scores of others were more than willing to have dominion over the earth, but they were not worthy.

Soon, the world will see the rise of a demonically charged madman called the Antichrist. He will come far closer than any mortal man to ruling the world; but in the end, he will merely ruin the world. He too will prove that he is unworthy to possess the title deed to this planet and to rule over all.

Thank God, there is One Who is worthy to take the book and to open its seals. We will discover why He is worthy in just a few minutes.

- B. v. 3 **The Reach Of This Search** – A search is made throughout the universe for one man who is worthy to take the book and open it up. They searched Heaven above, Hell beneath and earth in between. They could find no one worthy to take the book!

There was no saint in Heaven, not Abraham, Moses, David, or Paul, found worthy. Gabriel, Michael and all the angelic host of Heaven were not worthy to take that book. No one living on the earth, no king, no president, no ruler, no billionaire, no politician, no scientist, no preacher, no one was worthy to take the book. No one in Hell, no demon, no doomed sinner, not even old Satan himself, was worthy to take that book.

They searched high and low, but no man was found who was even worthy to look upon the book that rested in the hand of Almighty God!

- C. v. 4 **The Results Of This Search** – When the results of the search are made public, something happens in Heaven that had probably never happened before or since: John burst into tears!

There are two words used for weeping in the New Testament. One is used in **John 11:35**, where the Bible says, “***Jesus wept.***” That word refers to “***silent weeping.***” Jesus stood there at the tomb of His friend and He wept in silence.

The other word is used when Jesus wept over Jerusalem, **Luke 19:41**. This word refers to “***uncontrollable sobbing.***” It is the kind of crying that a small child does when its little heart is broken. It is the kind of weeping you see when someone loses a loved one unexpectedly. It is open, unabashed weeping! It is the same word used of John’s weeping in this verse. John is in Heaven and he is weeping aloud because no one is worthy to open the book, or even to look upon it.

Why is John weeping? John knows what that book represents. He knows that if no one can open the book, creation is doomed to feel the effects of sin for eternity. John’s tears represent the tears of all humanity since man fell in Eden. John weeps for us all!

I. A Mysterious Scroll

II. A Meticulous Search

III. v. 5-7 **A MAGNIFICENT SAVIOR**

(III., We have seen ***The Mysterious Scroll*** and ***The Meticulous Search***. In these verses, we are going to meet the One Who is worthy to take the book, to look on the book and to open the book. We are introduced in these verses to ***A Magnificent Savior!***

John is weeping, but one of the elders comes to him and gives him some encouraging news. He tells John to wipe his eyes and stop his crying because, while no mere man is worthy, One has been discovered Who is! Let's examine this worthy One together.

Notice the elder's words, "***Weep not, behold...***" Then, he points John to Jesus! That is the message the church has been preaching for 2,000 years, "***Weep not, behold...***" Regardless of the problem, Jesus is the solution! Weep not, look to Jesus and He will meet the need! What a Savior!)

- A. v. 5 **A Conquering Lion** – The elder tells John that "***the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David hath prevailed...***" When John hears the title "***Lion of the tribe of Judah,***" he immediately knows that the elder is referring to the Messiah. In **Gen. 49:8-10**, the Jews are promised that a great ruler will arise out of Judah. Like a lion, He will be powerful, strong, brave, majestic, and He will be a mighty conqueror. The Jews were looking for a Messiah Who would throw off the yoke of their oppressors and give them liberty. They were looking for a military leader to lead them to victory over their enemies.

This person is also called "***the Root of David.***" This title reflects both the humanity and the deity of the Messiah Who was to come. He would raise up the withered branch of the line of David and bring it to power once again. That is the human side of the Messiah. But He was also the "***power behind the throne.***" The Messiah was the Root out of which David sprang! So, He was a King and He was the King of Kings!

When Jesus came to this world, claiming to be the Messiah, He did not fulfill the expectations of the Jewish people. Instead of delivering the Jews from their bondage in a great military victory, and establishing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, Jesus went around healing, preaching, and performing miracles. As a result, the Jews rejected Him as their Messiah and crucified the "***Lion of the tribe of Judah, and the Root of David.***"

When John hears of Jesus in Heaven, He is described as a mighty Lion and as a King and as the King of Kings. John is told that this Lion has prevailed. So, Jesus is described as a ***Conquering Lion.***

- B. v. 6 **A Crucified Lamb** – When John turns around to see this mighty, conquering Lion, he sees a "***lamb as it had been slain.***" The word "***lamb***" means "***a little lamb; a pet lamb.***" When John looked, he expected to see a great and powerful Lion; what he saw instead was a little, pet Lamb.

Of course, this scene is wrapped up in Jewish symbolism also. With this image of the "***little Lamb,***" we are reminded of the Passover lamb. In **Exodus 12**, the people of Israel were instructed to select a perfect lamb, one without blemish and without spot. They were to take that lamb into their home and nourish it and care for it for a number of days. During that time, you know what happened, that little lamb became like a pet lamb to that family. Then, on the prescribed day, they would take that lamb, kill it,

apply its blood to the doorposts of their home, roast its little body and eat it. When the people did this, they were promised that they would be spared when the Lord came to judge the Egyptians. Don't you know that it broke the hearts of that little family to kill that pet lamb?

In that little dead lamb, the Israelites were given a power picture of what the Lord was going to do someday through the Redeemer He was going to send into the world. Just as that family would kill their pet lamb; God would judge His darling Son on Calvary's cross. Oh, how it must have broken the Father's heart to send His Son into a world filled with people who would hate Him, reject Him, and crucify Him. How it must have broken the heart of the Father to judge the Son in the place of sinners!

But it was on the cross that Heaven won the greatest victory of all time and eternity! We are told that the Lion-Lamb has "**prevailed**." This word means "**to carry off the victory**." Just because Jesus is a Lamb does not mean that He is weak! Jesus carried off the victory at every possible turn.

- He carried off the victory on the Mount of Temptation, **Matt. 4:1-11**. (Satan thought Jesus would **Fail!**)
- He carried off the victory in the Garden of Gethsemane, **Matt. 26:38-44**. (Satan thought Jesus would **Fail!**)
- He carried off the victory on the cross, **John 19:30**. (Satan thought Jesus was a **Fool!**)
- He carried off the victory when He rose from the dead, **Matt. 28:1-8**! (Satan thought Jesus was **Finished!**)

Satan thought he had defeated Jesus when Jesus died on the cross. Hell must have celebrated as the broken, bleeding, body of Jesus was removed from that cross and placed in that borrowed tomb. For three days, the demons and devils of Hell must have cavorted in glee as they celebrated what they thought was Satan's victory over the Lord Jesus Christ.

What Satan thought was his greatest victory was in fact his greatest defeat! The cross was God's greatest accomplishment! In the cross, God displayed more power and glory than He did in creation. When Jesus cried "**It is finished**," it was a far greater achievement than when He said, "**Let there be!**" Jesus is called "**Lamb**" 28 times in the book of Revelation. Satan, the Lamb's enemy is described as "**a great, red dragon**," **Rev. 12**. Satan's power is described as massive. He masses a great human army and a great demonic army; all intend on defeating God. Heaven's response to this vast display of infernal power is to send "**a little Lamb**." When a nation chooses a symbol, they usually choose an animal that suggests power and authority. The Lion is the Symbol of Great Britain. The Bear is the symbol of Russia. The Eagle is the symbol of the United States of America. When Heaven looked for a symbol, it chose a "**slain Lamb**"; a symbol of meekness, submission and gentleness. Jesus conquered Satan's kingdom not by military might, but by meekness, compassion, love, and submission!

So, a “**little, pet Lamb**” won the victory and because of that, He is worthy to take the book. Before we leave this thought, let’s take a moment to examine this Lamb in a little more detail.

- **This Lamb is in Heaven** – He is not in a dirty manger. He is not on a dusty road in Galilee. He is not on a ship in a storm. He is not sitting wearied and thirsty on the rim of a well. He is not hanging in shame and agony on a cross. He is not lying in a cold, sealed tomb. He is where He deserves to be. He is in the throne. He is in Heaven! He is glorified and exalted.
 - **This Lamb had been there all along** – This Lamb had been in the middle of the action all along. John had not seen Him until now, but He had been there the whole time. Let me just remind you that Jesus is always in the midst when we gather. We might not recognize Him, but He is always here, **Matt. 18:20**.
 - **This Lamb still bore the marks of having been slain** – When we see Jesus in Heaven, we will see the marks of His suffering in His body. For all eternity, Jesus will bear the wounds of the cross as a constant reminder of what He did for us. There will be no room for pride in Heaven! No one will be able to brag about how he got there. When we see Him, we will see His love on permanent display. What a cause for continuous worship and praise!
 - **This Lamb was standing** – When Jesus ascended back to Heaven, we are told that He sat down at the right hand of God, **Heb. 1:3**. He sat down because His work of redeeming sinners was complete. He stands in these verses because His work of delivering the earth is about to begin!
 - **This Lamb has seven eyes** – He is all wise and all knowing. This Lamb is Omniscient. Nothing escapes His gaze.
- C. v. 7 **A Completing Lord** – The Lamb takes the book out of the hand of God. When He does, Heaven breaks out in an anthem of praise. Heaven knows that Jesus is about to do the work of the Lion and deliver the earth and all of creation from the bondage of Satan and from the blight of sin. He is about to complete His redemptive work.

The Lamb is worthy to take the book and open the seals. If this scroll really is the title deed to the planet earth, what right does He have to open it? There are at least three reasons why He has this right.

- The world is His **by right of Creation** – He made it!
- The world is His **by right of Calvary** – He redeemed it!
- The world is His **by right of Conquest** – He will retake it!

Conclusion: One day in Heaven, the Lamb will take the seven-sealed scroll out of the hand of the Father. When He does, it will signal the beginning of the end for sin and for Satan.

On that day, Jesus will receive the glory that He has been denied by the world for so long. He will be shown to be worthy of worship and to rule and reign over all of creation. He has earned the right because He squared off against all of Hell and He carried off the victory!

Jesus is a Winner! Those who know Him as their Savior are winners too. When Jesus stands, takes that scroll and opens it up; we will be standing there watching and we will rejoice as He takes the world by force.

Who is Jesus to you? He will be Who you let Him be! He will be a Lion Who will come to judge you some day if that is what you want Him to be. Or He will be a Lamb Who will conquer your sins and save your soul. I am glad I know the Lamb! And, because I do, I will never have to face the Lion! What about you?

Sweet Songs In Heavenly Places

Revelation 5:8-14

Introduction: This passage finds us still in Heaven in the presence of God and of the Lamb. The church has been raptured, perfected, and safely delivered home to Heaven. The landing has been safe! **Revelation chapters 4 and 5** find us in Heaven's courtroom. God is preparing to judge this world. But, before He does, there is a pause for praise in glory. It is that worship service that we have been looking at for the last few weeks.

In these verses, Heaven is unable to contain itself and all the residents of that fair land burst forth in rejoicing and praise to God and the Lamb. There is praising, singing and there is music. This is the first mention of music in this book, but it will not be the last.

Music is a vital part of our lives. From the time the alarm clock sounds in the morning, we are surrounded with music. The radio and television are all about music. We have music in our cars, in our homes and at our places of business. Music is used to move the minds of people. When a restaurant is busy, for example, they might play fast music. When fast music is playing, people eat faster and clear the tables sooner. Music can set the scene in a film and let you know whether you should be afraid, sad, or happy. Music is an important part of our lives.

It is also an important part of our walk with the Lord. **Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16** speak about the vital role music plays in our relationship with the Lord. Thank God for music that honors Him!

This passage seems to indicate that music will be one of the things that will follow us from earth to Heaven. The music in Heaven will but serve to make Heaven sweeter.

In these verses, John takes us into Heaven and gives us front row seats at the concert of the ages. Let's go in, take our seats, and listen to the hosts of Heaven as they lift their voices in praise and worship of God and the Lamb. As the Lord gives liberty, I want to preach on the thought of ***Sweet Songs In Heavenly Places***.

I. v. 8 **THE SINGERS OF HEAVEN'S SWEET SONG**

- A. **The Identity Of The Singers** – The four beasts and the twenty-four elders make up this heavenly choir. When the Lamb takes the book, they begin to praise His name. Remember, these four beasts represent all of created life. The twenty-four elders represent every one of God's redeemed ones. They picture all the saints of God, in His presence, singing His praises. (III. These twenty-four elders are us! What they are doing is what we will be doing on that day!)

- B. **The Involvement Of The Singers** – What are these redeemed ones doing? They are doing what they do every time we see them in the Revelation: they are on their face in the presence of their Redeemer, offering Him their love, their praise and their worship, **Rev. 4:10; 5:8; 5:14; 7:11; 19:4.**

Let there be no mistake about it, when we arrive home in Heaven, we will be busy praising the One Who died for our sins on the cross! We will all praise Him when we get to Heaven! (Ill. We ought to be doing it now – **Heb. 13:15; Psal. 107:21.**)

- C. **The Instruments Of The Singers** – We are told that these worshippers have certain items in their possession. They use these items in their worship of the Lord.

1. **Instruments Of Praise** – The harp was used to accompany the people of the Lord as they praised God and sang His psalms, **2 Sam. 6:5; Psalm 92:1-4; Psalm 150:3.**

It appears that instruments will accompany the singing and the worship in that land. I thank God for the ones who play the music in our services. What a blessing they are! Some of the rest of us will be able to make beautiful music to the glory of God when we arrive home.

2. **Instruments Of Prophecy** – The harp was also associated with prophecy, **1 Sam. 10:5.** Elisha prophesied while a man played on a harp, **2 Kings 3:15.** The harp is also tied to prophecy in **1 Chron. 25:1.**

The worshippers in Heaven are praising God because He is about to finish the fulfillment of all His prophecies. They worship Him because He has promised it and He is about to bring it all to pass.

3. **Instruments Of Prayer** – The “**golden vials full of odours**” are said to be full of “**the prayers of the saints.**” These worshippers come before the Lord with all the prayers of the redeemed through the ages. These prayers have ascended into God’s presence with a sweet aroma. These prayers that were offered in faith are about to be answered in power.

Ill. Jesus told His people to pray this prayer: “***Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,***” **Matt. 6:9-10.** God’s children have prayed that prayer for at least two thousand years. And, for two thousand years evil has reigned in this world. God has been hearing those prayers and He has not forgotten a single one of them. They are about to be answered in a demonstration of His power.

That is why Heaven praises God! He is a God Who hears and answers the prayers of His children! Not a single prayer that is prayed within the scope of His will ever falls to the ground unheard and unanswered, **1 John 5:13-14; James 4:2-3**. But everyone will be answered in His time and in His way.

I. The Singers Of Heaven's Sweet Songs

II. v. 9-10 THE SUBJECT OF HEAVEN'S SWEET SONG

(III. Down here, people sing about everything under the sun! If you listen to secular music, you know they make up songs about everything! The church is just about as bad. I heard a song one time that has a line that goes like this: "We are bound together in all we do by the Holy Spirit and Elmer's Glue." That is silly! Church folks will sing songs about mama and her Bible; daddy and his hands; "**The Little Brown Church In The Vale**;" angels holding up ladder, etc.

While many of the songs people sing in the church are about as spiritual as a worm wrestling, there are others that are helpful to our hearts. But isn't it true that most of the songs we sing are less about glorifying the Lord than they are about encouraging our own hearts?

In Heaven, every song will have the same theme. In Heaven, every song will be about Jesus. Every song will glorify Him: Who He is and what He has done. Let's examine this "**new song**" that they are singing in Heaven.)

A. v. 9a They Sing About The Person Of The Lamb – They lift their voices and sing "**Thou art worthy!**" The song of Heaven declares the worth of the Lamb of God. He is the focus of the song. He is the object of their praise. They lift up His Name because He is worthy to be praised.

By the way, Jesus is just as worthy of praise today as He will be when we arrive home in Heaven! He is still Lord. He is still God. He is still our Redeemer. He is worthy of every **Amen!** "**Hallelujah!**"; and "**Glory to God!**" He receives. He is still worthy of every saint who stands to say, "I love Jesus and I thank Him for saving my soul!" He is worthy!

Our problem here is that our praise is diluted by the twin problems of pride and evil. We don't praise Him because we are afraid of what someone else might think. And we don't praise Him because we are usually not in a position to feel the touch of His Spirit.

If we could just lose our pride and deal with our sins, the Lord would come close to us and remind us of the worth of the Lamb and we would offer up His praises. Whether we ever grasp it or not down here, Jesus is worthy to be praised.

- B. v. 9b **They Sing About The Passion Of The Lamb** – They sing because the Lamb was “***slain***”. That word means “***to butcher***.” It brings to mind the brutality of the death Jesus endured for you and me, **Isa. 52:14; Isa. 53:4-6**.

Heaven praises Jesus because He went to the cross and bore the sins of the guilty so they we might be saved. Heaven praises Him because He died for them!

That is a worthy refrain for us to pick up here on earth! I can't think of a better thing to sing about than the death of Jesus! I love those old songs about the Lamb and the blood! Praise God, when I hear Heaven sing about the Lamb, I am tempted to join right in!

At The Cross

Alas! and did my Savior bleed,

and did my Sovereign die!

Would he devote that sacred head

for such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I have done,

he groaned upon the tree?

Amazing pity! Grace unknown!

And love beyond degree!

Chorus:

**At the cross, at the cross where I first saw the light,
And the burden of my heart rolled away,
It was there by faith I received my sight,
And now I am happy all the day!**

Down At The Cross

**Down at the cross where my Savior died,
Down where for cleansing from sin I cried,
There to my heart was the blood applied;
Glory to His Name!**

**I am so wondrously saved from sin,
Jesus so sweetly abides within;
There at the cross where He took me in;
Glory to His Name!**

**Oh, precious fountain that saves from sin,
I am so glad I have entered in;
There Jesus saves me and keeps me clean;
Glory to His Name!**

**Come to this fountain so rich and sweet,
Cast thy poor soul at the Savior's feet;
Plunge in today, and be made complete;
Glory to His Name!**

Chorus

**Glory to His Name, glory to His Name:
There to my heart was the blood applied;
Glory to His Name!**

(III. There has been a move in recent years to modify the hymnbooks and remove old songs that talk about the blood! Many major denominations have already done this! The Southern Baptists tried it many years ago, but Dr. W.A. Criswell and some other godly men took a stand and demanded that the songs about the blood be left alone!

If you remove the blood, you remove the only hope for salvation that we have, **Heb. 9:22!** Thank God for the blood! It is the theme of Heaven's music; it should be ours as well!

- C. v. 9-10 **They Sing About The Purpose Of The Lamb** – Heaven sings about the Lamb and about His redemption. Those in Heaven remember where they were when the Lamb redeemed them. They know what they have become because of the blood of the Lamb.

They remember when they were lost sinners headed to a devil's Hell. They remember the day Jesus died for their sins and rose again from the dead. They remember how He came to them in their sins and how He saved them by His grace. They remember how He redeemed them and took them into His family. They know what they were, and they know what they are now, because of Him!

They praise Him because the color of the skin didn't matter. They praise Him because the depth of their sin was no issue to Him. They exalt Him because He has exalted them! They praise Him because He took a bunch of Hell-bound; Hell-deserving sinners, saved them by His grace and reconciled them to God. He has taken them to Heaven where they will reign with Him forever.

Heaven has the right perspective when it comes to praise and worship! We could use a little more of that down here. Look at all He has done for us! Look where He is taking us! Look at how He blesses us! Praise His Name; He is worthy to be exalted and glorified!

(III. Stop for a minute and think about what you were, where you were headed and what you deserved. Now, think about what Jesus has done in your life! He has saved your soul; reconciled you to God; received you as a sinner and transformed you into a saint; lifted you out of your sins and made a king and a priest; and He is going to let you reign with Him one day soon. Praise His Name, He is worthy of all the love, adoration, and worship we can muster. And He is worthy of it all right now.)

I. The Singers Of Heaven's Sweet Song

II. The Subject Of Heaven's Sweet Song

III. v. 11-14 THE SCOPE OF HEAVEN'S SWEET SONG

(III. When Heaven takes up the refrain and begins to praise the Lamb, all of creation blends in its voice, offering up praise to the Creator and Redeemer.)

- A. v. 11-12 Celestial Beings Praise The Lamb – John tries to tell us how many angels begin to praise the Lord, but the number was too great for him to fathom. Ten thousand was the largest number known to the Greeks. John says it is as many as you can imagine times that many again and many thousands more besides that.

What are these angels doing? They are praising their Creator. Did you notice that it says the redeemed ones “**sung**” v. 9; but the angels “**say**” v. 12? I cannot think of a single verse in the Bible that says that angels can sing. Every time they praise the Lord, they say. Even at the birth of Jesus, the angelic host said what was on their minds, **Luke 2:8-14**. The only verse that even comes close to saying they sing in **Job 38:7**; and the word “**sang**” in that verse means “**to shout out, or to give a ringing cry.**”

What's the point? Well, music is made up of two kinds of chords. There are minor chords and there are major chords. Minor chords make up the music of sorrow, pain, suffering and bereavement. Minor chords express suffering, heartache, and misery. Many of the sounds of nature are in the minor chords keys. Then, there are the major chords. These are the chords of victory, exaltation, triumph, and praise.

We humans know about the struggles of life. We know about the touch of the Master's hand. We know what it is to be redeemed by His grace lifted out of sin and its prison. We know what it is to have no hope and then to be given a "**new song**," **Psa. 40:1-3**.

The angels, on the other hand, have never had our experience with sin and redemption. All they know is glory, triumph, and victory. They have never been given a song, but we have, praise the Lord. But what they say they get exactly right! They also declare the worth of the Lamb! They praise Him for Who He is.

- B. v. 13 **Created Beings Praise The Lamb** – Here is an amazing verse. While Heaven is consumed with the praises of the Lord, the earth is busy ignoring God and continuing its slide into the flames of Hell. When this worship service breaks out in Heaven, every creature in the universe joins in to praise the Lamb. Think about it! Every lost sinner, every devil of Hell, even Satan himself will lift their voices together and give their praise to the risen Lamb of God! They will not be able to help themselves, but will bend their knees and lift their voices in praise! The Bible said that it would happen, **Rom. 14:12; Phil 2:9-11**, and it will! What a day that will be when a God-denying; Christ-rejecting world will praise the Lord Jesus Christ.

You will notice that they do not praise Him for redemption. They cannot for they have never experienced it. They praise Him for Who He is. What a day when all of creation cannot contain itself and begins to praise the Lord Who made it and Who redeemed it.

- C. v. 14 **Converted Beings Praise The Lamb** – When all of this takes place, the four beasts says "**Amen!**" They say, "**So it is and let it be so!**" When they join in, the twenty-four elders cannot contain themselves and they fall down before the Lamb in spontaneous, open worship.

Conclusion: I don't know about you, but I think we ought to sing today! Let's get a hymnal and stand and sing "***All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name!***"

It may be that you just want to come and praise Him for Who He is and for all that He has done. It may be that you want to be saved or to confess some sin and get things right with Him. Whatever the need, you mind Him today!

The Four Riders of the Apocalypse

(Horsemen on the Horizon): Revelation 6:1-8

Introduction: Revelation **chapter six** (6) is a shock to the senses. In the past two chapters, we have been allowed to witness scenes of heavenly **worship**. In this passage, we are going to see images of divine **wrath**. We have been in a place where there is **praise and shouting**. We are about to examine a scene filled with **pain and suffering**. In chapters four and five, we have been seated in “**heavenly places**” observing “**scenes of joy**”. In chapter six, we are brought down to “earthly places” to observe “**scenes of judgment**.”

Beginning in chapter six (6) all the way through chapter nineteen (19), we are placed in the middle of “**Tribulation Period**”, or the time known as the “**Great Tribulation**”. This period of seven years is broken down into two parts, with each portion lasting 3 ½ years.

This period of time is clearly described in the Word of God.

1. **Jeremiah 30:7, “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”**
2. **Daniel 12:1, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”**
3. **Matthew 24:3-24 (see text in your Bibles)**
4. **Matthew 24:21-22, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.”**

In this passage, the seven seals on the book in the hand of the Lord Jesus begin to be broken, one by one. As the seals are opened, a series of divine judgment is poured out upon the earth and those who dwell on the earth. The four seals that we will consider in this message describe events that will take place during the first 3 ½ year portion of the Tribulation.

We are about to witness a time of destruction, devastation and death that can hardly be comprehended by our mortal minds. These verses describe events that will take place on the earth after the church has been removed in the Rapture. The world we are about to see is a world that has no Gospel witness. There are no Christians, no Gospel singing or preaching, and no peace. This is a world that is in rebellion against its Maker; and it is a world that stands on the brink of terrifying judgments.

We are told in **verse one** that when the Lamb opens the first seal, there was “**the noise of thunder**” in Heaven. Just as thunder signals the approach of a storm, this heavenly thunder indicates that a storm is about to be unleashed upon this world that is almost beyond description.

Let’s examine these verses together as I try to preach about “**Horsemen On The Horizon**”. Let’s study some of what a lost world will face when Tribulation begins.

I. Rev. 6:2 **THE WHITE HORSE OF DECEPTION**

(III. There are some who read this and say that this rider is Jesus Himself. They cite the similarities between these verses and those in **Rev. 19:11-16**. While there are some similarities, there are many more differences. The man on this horse is not the Christ, he is the Antichrist! There are several reasons why this man cannot be Jesus.

- It is Jesus Who is breaking the seals, **Rev. 6:1**. How can Jesus be in Heaven opening the seals and riding this white horse at the same time?
- This rider wears a “**crown**”; Jesus wears “**many crowns**”.
- This rider wears a “**stephanos**”, a victor’s crown. His crown is a prize. Jesus wears many “**diadems**”, the many crowns of the King of Kings.
- The rider in these verses has his crown “**given unto him**”. This man was appointed a king by men. This rider is given a crown that he has earned. Jesus wears His crowns because of Who He is, not what He has done. He is the King of Kings by birthright. Jesus is not given a crown, He “**gives**” crowns, **Rev. 2:10**.
- This rider carries a “**bow**”. Jesus carries a “**sword**”, **Rev. 19:15**.
- The similarities between this rider and the Lord Jesus indicate that this man is the Antichrist. We will learn more about him as our study progresses. For now, it is important to note that he is not Jesus Christ.

Now, we know who this man is not; now let’s see what we can find about who he is.

- A. **He Is A Man Of Peace** – You will notice that this rider has a “**bow**” in his hand, but he has no arrows. This implies that he will conquer the world without bloodshed. He will accomplish this by providing the answer to the problems faced by the world today.

He comes on a white horse, bringing a promise of peace to this world. When the Antichrist comes, he will come with the solutions for the world’s problems. He will come with an explanation concerning the disappearance of all the Christians. He will come with a plan to bring peace to this world. When he comes, the world will fall at his feet and honor him as their ruler.

He comes as a Savior to a world desperate to be saved. Our world is in a state of turmoil, and things are only going to get worse. Historian Arnold Toynbee said, “***We are ripe for someone who can promise to give peace and to give tranquility to the earth. We will deify that individual if he comes.***” Well, he is coming and the world will love him.

(III. The problems that face our world today. Most of the turmoil centers on the nation of Israel. Iran, the Palestinians, and the rest of the Arab world, desires to wipe Israel from the face of the earth. When the Antichrist comes, he will have the solution to the problem and he will establish a peace plan that will satisfy the world, **Dan. 9:27.**)

- B. **He Is A Man Of Power** – We are told that “***he went forth conquering, and to conquer***”. We are also told that “***a crown was given to him***”. By whatever means he uses, the Antichrist will be given the key to the world. The leaders of the nations of earth will bow at this man’s feet and grant him the right to rule over the entire world. They have denied this right to the King of Kings. They have denied it to the Savior of men. They have denied it to the Son of God. But, they will grant that privilege to this child of Hell.
- C. **He Is A Man Of Pretense** – The problem with the Antichrist is that he is not the man he appears to be. He portrays himself to be one person when he is in fact another person altogether. He comes riding a white horse. (Illustration: The world is programmed to trust the man of the white horse! He is the good guy. He comes portraying himself as a man of peace. He will appear on the world stage promising peace, safety and prosperity; but he will be the most evil, dictatorial ruler the world has ever seen. Everything he is and everything he says will be a study in lies and falsehoods.

(**Note:** Some would argue that the leaders of this world are too smart to fall for a deception like this. If you watch the news, you will soon figure out that it is not always the best and brightest who rule our nation! Add to that the lessons from history and you will see that this world is ripe for a satanic deception.

Just look at what Hitler did prior to WWII. Hitler had outlined in detail his plans for conquest in his book ***Mein Kampf***, which was published more than a decade before WWII began. Yet, the Western Allies, persisted in believing Hitler's false claim to be a man of peace.

They stood idly by as he reoccupied the Rhineland (demilitarized after WWI), thus abrogating the Versailles Treaty. Then he annexed Austria, the Sudetenland, and Czechoslovakia. British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain met with Hitler at Munich in 1938.

Upon his return to England, Chamberlain triumphantly waved a piece of paper that contained a pledge of peace from Hitler, which he claimed guaranteed peace. Winston Churchill rose in the House of Commons to declare that England had suffered a total, unmitigated defeat. He was shouted down by angry members of Parliament.

The deception was nearly universal. Only after Hitler invaded Poland in 1939 did the allies acknowledge the truth. By then it was too late. The anti-Christ will be the same and do the same, only on a world-wide scale. This world is ripe for such a person to step to center stage.^[1])

I. The White Horse Of Deception

II. Rev. 6:3-4 THE RED HORSE OF DESTRUCTION

(Illustration: The second horse and rider appears. This horse is red. Red is the color of fire and of blood. Fire has the power to devour and to destroy. And when the fires of this war are unleashed upon this earth, there will be bloodshed on an unprecedented level. This seal unleashes a time of war such as the world has never known.)

- A. **The Peace Is Broken** – The peace instituted by the Antichrist seems to be short lived. War breaks out all over the world. Of course, this is what Jesus said would happen during the Tribulation, **Matt. 24:6-7**. He also warns men about putting too much stock in the cries of peace that are bantered about by the politicians and rulers of this world, **1 Thes. 5:3**.

Can you imagine a world that knows no peace at all? In every corner of the globe, violence and war will rage. That is the world that every lost sinner will face during the Tribulation.

- B. **The Planet Is Brutalized** – This rider is given a “**great sword**”. The word “**great**” refers to the extent of the warfare. It will be worldwide in its scope. The word “**sword**” refers to the short swords carried by Roman soldiers. These swords were used in hand to hand combat and were quite effective in putting the enemy to death.

When Antichrist first steps onto the world stage, he will be hailed as a man of peace. But, after he is given the reins of power, he displays his true colors. After men allow him a place of prominence and power, he will demand absolute power. When this happens, many of the powerful countries of this world will rebel and the world will experience war on a scale that it has never before witnessed.

III. During WWII some 50 million people died world-wide. That number will fall far short of the millions who will die during the wars that will rage during this period of time.

It is during this period that Russia and her allies will invade Israel in fulfillment of **Eze. 38-39**. Their army will be defeated by divine intervention, and Israel will burn the weapons of warfare for seven years, **Eze. 39:9-10**. The conflicts will not end here, however, the wars spawned by Antichrist will rage, one after the other, until Jesus, the Prince of Peace returns in power and glory!

(Illustration: Imagine a world consumed by war. Nations will fight against nation. Race wars, class wars and religious wars will abound. Peace will be elusive for everyone everywhere! The world is ripe for war today!

Add to that the fact that there will be no mothers, no fathers, and no churches praying for the soldiers in the wars. There will be no preachers taking the Gospel to men dying in fox holes. This will be a time of war fought without God, without Jesus and without hope. Every soldier killed in every conflict in that shattered world will leave a world in tribulation to spend eternity in Hell.)

I. The White Horse Of Deception

II. The Red Horse Of Destruction

III. Rev. 6:5-6: THE BLACK HORSE OF DESTITUTION

(III. The third seal is broken and another rider makes his appearance. This horse is black. Black is a color associated with famine. Famine always follows in the aftermath of war. Thus, worldwide wars will spawn worldwide famines. Jesus spoke of this in **Matthew 24:7**.)

- A. **A Time Marked By Shortages** – The rider on this horse has in his hands a set of scales. This indicates that the Tribulation Period will be marked by severe shortages in the necessities of life. Apparently, the famines will be so severe that food and other basic necessities will have to be rationed.

We know nothing about that in our day! We can go to a grocery store or to a restaurant and buy all the food we can eat. Our cabinets, our refrigerators and our freezers are filled to capacity. We know nothing about having to do with out or about having to make do with just a little. But, that day is coming!

(III. Some of you remember rationing here in America during World War II. When the war began, the military's demand for certain goods increased dramatically and there were shortages. Ration books were handed out and people used the coupons in those books to obtain the things they needed. Things that we take for granted like sugar, coffee, butter, meat, cheese, canned good, shoes and gasoline were all carefully rationed. During the height of the war, sugar was limited to 12 ounces per week. Gas was limited to 3 gallons per ration period. Coffee was rationed at 1 pound for a five-week period.

Those must have been difficult times to live through, but the shortages of Word War II will pale in comparison to the deprivations suffered by those left to endure the Tribulation.)

- B. **A Time Marked By Starvation** – Verse 6 tells us something of the problems that will exist during that time. A biblical “*measure*” would be enough food to feed a grown, working man for one day. A “*penny*” refers to the “*denarius*”, which was a day’s wages. Wheat is the food from which bread is made. Barley was used primarily to feed livestock, and at times, it was consumed by the very poor.

Here’s the image: a man will work all day just to be able to buy enough good food to feed him. Or, he can work all day just to buy enough food fit for an animal to feed three people.

Think about what this means! People will have to make some hard choices! People who cannot get out and work for themselves will be left to starve to death so that the workers can eat. It will be a terrible time, marked by terrible starvation.

(Illustration: None of us has ever experienced conditions such as these. But, many in our world know the horror of starvation all too well. Consider the following statistics:

- Every 3.6 seconds someone dies of starvation.
- Every year 15 million children die of starvation and of hunger related illness.
- 4 million people starve to death every year.
- 1.3 billion people live on less than \$1.00 of income per day. Another 3 billion have to try and survive on less than \$3.00 per day.^[2]
- As horrible as those figures are, they will be dwarfed by the starvation problem this world will face in the Tribulation.

- C. **A Time Marked By Separation** – The phrase “*and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine*” may indicate that luxury items will not be affected by the famines. Oil and wine have always been the items of the wealthy set. Oil is used in the manufacture of cosmetics, and alcohol has always been associated with the high life. In other words, while most of the world is plunged into poverty and starvation, the rich will continue to get richer and enjoy the extravagant lifestyles they enjoy now.

(III. This great divide already exists! In fact, those of us in this room live in the lap of luxury compared to most people around our world. Consider the following facts:

- The average American puts enough food in the trash can each day to feed a family of six in India.
- For the price of one missile, a school full of hungry children could eat lunch every day for 5 years.
- Throughout the 1990's more than 100 million children died from illness and starvation. Those 100 million deaths could have been prevented for the price of ten Stealth bombers, or what the world spends on its military in two days!
- To satisfy the world's sanitation and food requirements would cost only \$13 billion US dollars. This is what the people of the United States and the European Union spend on perfume each year.
- The assets of the world's three richest men are more than the combined GNP of all the least developed countries on the planet.^[3]
- The division between the “**haves**” and the “**have nots**” is vast today, but it is only going to grow wider during the Tribulation.)

I. The White Horse Of Deception

II. The Red Horse Of Destruction

III. The Black Horse Of Destitution

IV. v. 7-8 THE PALE HORSE OF DEVASTATION

(III. The fourth horse is said to be “**pale**” in color. The word pale comes from the same Greek word that gives us the English words “**chlorophyll**” and “**chlorine**”. The word means, “**Green**”. It refers to the “**sickly, yellow-green pallor of a corpse**”.

The events that take place in the wake of this horse and rider are also the things that inevitably follow a time of war. However, these events seem to take place independently from those which come before.

We are told that the rider of this pale horse is “**death**”. We are also told that “**hell**” follows behind him. The word “**death**” speaks of the death of the body. The word “**hell**” reminds us that there is a horrible place waiting to receive the souls of lost men when they are taken by death.)

A. The Breadth Of This Devastation – We are told that death will claim one-quarter of the world’s population. That is one out of every four people living during those days. If you take today’s population of six billion people, you are talking about the death of 1.25 billion people in a short period of time!

B. The Brutality Of This Devastation – The methods death will use to claim this great number of people are listed in this verse. The four methods mentioned are:

- Sword – This refers to warfare. During this period of time, it is almost certain that wars will be both convention as well as nuclear in nature. Some one will use a nuclear weapon in warfare some day. There can be little doubt that some countries will use biological and chemical weapons as well. The numbers that will die in these wars will be astronomical!
- Famine – We have already talked about the problem of starvation that will become worldwide in its scope during the Tribulation. Many millions will meet their deaths in that fashion.
- Death – This refers to deaths apart from warfare and famine. In **Matthew 24:7**, Jesus said this, “**For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.**”

The word “**pestilences**” is what I think this word “**death**” is referring to. Pestilence brings to mind diseases that will run rampant through the human race during this time period. Diseases like the “**bird flu**” will leave millions dead in their wake.

(III. We may think something like that cannot happen. But, think back to the Spanish Influenza outbreak during World War I. 25 million people died with the flu in a world without overnight, intercontinental air travel. Three times more people died of the flu during World War I than actually died in battle!

An outbreak of that sort in our world has the potential to kill hundreds of millions of people in a just a few short weeks. An outbreak like that would shut down society as we know it and would bring many more to the place of starvation.)

· **Beasts** – Animal attacks will account for many deaths. The word “**beasts**” can refer to “**small animals**” or to “**rodents**”.

The Bible does not say this specifically, but it could be referring to rats with this phrase. Consider this information concerning rats.

- Ø With all the warfare, the death and the carnage, the rat population of this world will explode exponentially.
- Ø One breeding pair can produce five litters of between 8 and 9 offspring per year.
- Ø If 95% of the rat population in a given area is destroyed, they can replenish their numbers within one year.
- Ø Rats are nasty animals. They carry some 35 known diseases.
- Ø They were responsible for killing 1/3 of the population of Europe during the Middle Ages as the bubonic plague raged.
- Ø Rats carry typhus, which has killed nearly 200 million people during one 400 year period.
- Ø Rats destroy some \$1 billion in food in the United States every year.

Conclusion: When I read these things, I am struck by two thoughts. First, I praise the Lord that I am saved by His grace! I do not have to worry about these things. Now, none of us knows how bad things will get before the Lord Jesus will come again. We are already seeing the beginnings of some of these things in our world. I praise the Lord that I am leaving here before the bottom falls out!

Second, I grieve for those who do not know the Lord. My family, friends and acquaintances; the people who come in and out of these buildings that are lost; lost neighbors and people we meet everyday who do not know Jesus; all of these will be left behind to face these things. All they have to look forward too is a life of pain and misery here and an eternity in Hell. That breaks my heart!

Here is the invitation. If you are not saved, please come to Jesus and look to Him for your salvation. If you are out of His will, please come back to Him so that He can use your life as a light for His glory. If you have people on your heart that need to be saved, bring them to Jesus and pray for their souls.

If you listen very carefully you can hear the sound of approaching hoof beats. The time I have tried to describe is coming! Are you ready?

[1] <http://www.thelivingwordtbc.com/rev16.htm>

[2] <http://library.thinkquest.org/C002291/high/present/stats.htm>

[3] IBID.

Two Worlds in Prayer: Revelation 6:9-17

Introduction: As we continue our journey through the book of Revelation, we are just beginning to deal with the events related to the Tribulation. As we understand it, this period of terror and judgment will not begin until the church has been removed from the world in the Rapture. The Tribulation Period itself is a seven-year period of time that is divided into two 3 ½ year segments. The first half is known as the Tribulation and the last half as the Great Tribulation.

In our last two studies we looked at the first of four seal judgments that will come upon the world. We saw the rise of the Antichrist, and the coming wars, famines and pestilence that will claim the lives of ¼ of the earth's population. The first four seals deal with the first 3 ½ year portion of the Tribulation. The two seals we will consider today will deal with the last 3 ½ year portion of the Tribulation Period.

Just so you will know, the book of Revelation is not written in chronological order. The events do not necessarily take place in order in which they are written. The events of this book overlap in time. As we continue to move through the book, we are going to be seeing events that will overlap one another from time to time.

In our verses today, we see an unusual dynamic at work. We see people in Heaven and people on the earth in prayer. We see both **saints** and **sinners** engaged in the business of prayer. We want to study these two seal judgments today. As we do, I would like to talk to you about a couple of the events that will take place during the latter portion of the Tribulation Period. I would like to preach for a while on Two Worlds In Prayer.

You might think that the Tribulation Period will be a time period devoid of prayer and religious activity. We are about to see that just the opposite is true. There will be prayer in Heaven and there will be prayer upon the earth. History's greatest prayer meeting will take place during the latter portion of the Great Tribulation, as saint and sinner alike lift their voices in prayer. Let's examine **Two Worlds In Prayer**.

I. v. 9-11 **THE TRIBULATION SAINTS IN PEACE** The Saints Under The Altar

(III. As these verses open before us, we are taken back up into Heaven and we are shown a scene of souls under the altar. There are a few things here worthy of our attention.

Ø When Moses was instructed to build the Tabernacle, he was to build it after the pattern of things in Heaven, **Heb. 8:5**. In other words, Moses built an altar where animals would be slain. That altar was merely a shadow of the altar in Heaven. Everything Moses built for Hebrew worship was only a shadow of what actually exists in Heaven. When these verses tell us that there are souls under Heaven's altar, they mean what they say!

- Ø These souls are people who have given their lives for the cause of Christ. When a lamb was slain on the altar, the blood and the ash would be a testimony to its sacrifice. Now, like a sacrificial lamb, these souls bear testimony to their own sacrifice.
- Ø These souls under this altar totally devastate two major doctrines being taught in our day. First, they do away with the notion of “**soul sleep**”. These souls are not lying in the grave in a body awaiting a resurrection. They are in Heaven. They are aware and talking. They are very much alive and in the presence of the Lord. Praise God, when our loved ones die, when we die, we do not go to the grave! We rise to be with our Savior, **2 Cor. 5:1-8**. Souls do not go to the grave! They either go to Heaven to be with the Lord, or they go to Hell, depending on what they have done with Jesus!

Another doctrine knocked down by these verses is the doctrine of “**Purgatory**”. There is absolutely no Scripture for the notion that men go to a place of fire where they atone for their sins. Then, when they have suffered enough, they can be set free and go to Heaven. That is Roman Catholic superstitious nonsense! There is no biblical foundation for such a doctrine.

In fact, the Bible is very clear! There are no four places to go when you die. If we listened to man we might believe that we could go to Heaven, Hell, Purgatory, or the grave. The Bible makes it clear that death comes; there are only two possible destinations. You can either go to Heaven, or you can go to Hell. There are no other choices! (Ill. Why I preach about Hell!)

- Ø With those thoughts in mind, let's look into these verses for a few minutes.
- A. v. 9 **Their Sacrifice** – Here is a multitude of people who have been “**slain**” for “**the word of God and for the testimony they held**”. The word “**slain**” means “**to butcher, or slaughter**”. These are people who turned to faith in Jesus after the Rapture of the church. These folks have given their lives for Jesus. They held fast to their testimony and to the testimony of Scripture. Even the threat of death could not cause them to turn away.

Yes, there will be people saved during the Tribulation. The Bible tells us that an army of Jewish evangelists are going to cover the globe preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. These evangelists will see a multitude that no man can number come to faith in Jesus. We will begin looking at these events in our next study. It is worthy to note that only those people who have never heard the Gospel will have the opportunity to be saved in that day, **2 Thes. 2:11**.

Most of the people who come to faith in Jesus during this time period will be called upon to lay down their lives for Jesus. These Tribulation saints will refuse follow the Antichrist. They will reject him and his system. They will be hunted down like dogs and they will be executed for their testimony of faith in Jesus Christ.

(III. The history of the church is a history of persecution and martyrdom. Since Stephen was stoned to death in **Acts 7**, many millions have been put to death for their faith in Christ. From the coliseums of ancient Rome to the death camps of Nazi Germany Christians have always been called upon to pay for their testimony with their blood. Whether it was a gulag in Soviet Russia or a prison in modern China, there is a high cost associated with faith in Jesus Christ. From the Spanish Inquisition to the conflict in modern Sudan, the followers of Jesus have paid a high price for their faith in Him.

There is no way we can tally the total of those who have been killed for nothing more than professing faith in Jesus. Over the last 2,000 years, believers have been crucified, burned alive at the stake; sawn in half; drowned; stoned; sown into the skins of dead animals while wild beasts were released at them; shot; stabbed; sealed in their churches and burned alive; raped; humiliated and tortured.

Emperor Nero tied Christians to poles, dipped them in wax and set them on fire to light his dinner parties. Thousands were murdered to satisfy the bloodlust of the Romans. In this day, over 150,000 Christians die every year just because they believe in Jesus! In the Sudan, young Christian girls are taken as sex slaves by Muslim men and raped and beaten until they are used up, then they are killed. And things are only going to get worse! Already, even in America, we are seeing the tide of public opinion turn against believers.

Christians are singled out and attacked for their faith. None would dare say a word about a Muslim or a Jew; but Christians are fair game! We are seeing a shadow of a world that is coming. When the Great Tribulation comes upon the earth, millions of believers will be put to death for their faith. It would not surprise me if we didn't see the persecution we face increase as the days and years go by.)

These sacrificed saints are under the altar! They are in the place where the blood ran down. They are in a place of **safety, salvation, and security**. They paid a terrible price for their faith, but now they are home and they are safe. We will say more about these people and the price they paid for their faith in Jesus when we get into **chapter 7**.

- B. v. 10 **Their Supplication** – These martyred saints are involved in prayer. They “cried with a loud voice” and filled Heaven with their petitions. The prayer they offer up is not a prayer for mercy for their enemies like that which Jesus prayed at Calvary, **Luke 23:34**. It is not a prayer like that which Stephen prayed as he was dying, **Acts 7:60**.

It is prayer for judgment. This kind of prayer is called “**imprecatory**” prayer. It is the kind of praying that calls on God to move in judgment. It is the kind of praying you read about in the Old Testament, **Psalms 94:1-4**.

In the New Testament age, in this age of grace, we are taught to pray for those who wrong us, **Matt. 5:44**. He set that example for us as He was dying on the cross, as I just indicted.

We are in a day of mercy and grace in this age. When the church and the Holy Spirit are removed and the Tribulation Period begins in this earth, it will not be a time of grace and mercy. It will be a time of justice and judgment. These saints pray this way out of a desire to see the name of God vindicated and honored. They call on God to judge the world and those in it, thus glorifying His Own name!

(III. Friend, the day of grace will end some day! When it does, it will be too late for you to be saved. Today is your day. Now is your time! Call on Jesus while there is hope; while there is grace to save your soul!)

- C. v. 11 **Their Satisfaction** – These saints are given “**white robes**”. This signifies their purity and their saved condition. They are clothed in white because they have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. They are told to “**rest yet for a little season**”. They are being told that more blood must yet be shed and they are to be patient until the Lord finishes His work upon the earth.

These people surely do not understand how the Lord can allow the martyrdom of His saints to progress upon the earth. They are comforted here by the Lord’s words, as He tells them, “**You just be patient for a while; this thing is winding down and it’ll be better after while!**”

(Note: There are many things we do not understand in this world today. Why do the wicked prosper while God’s children seem to suffer? Why are there such injustices in this world? Why does God allow these things?

We must learn to take our comfort from the fact that our God is working out an eternal plan. It will be better down the road. He will balance all the accounts one of these days. Our duty now is to remain faithful even when we don’t understand what He is doing. He knows best!)

I. The Tribulation Saints In Peace

II. v. 12-17 THE TRIBULATION SINNERS IN PANIC

(III. While prayer for judgment is being lifted up in Heaven; prayer for protection is being lifted up on the earth. While those in Heaven are at peace, those on the earth are in panic. Let's see why they are in panic and what they do about it.)

- A. v. 12-14 **A Universe In Turmoil** – These verses describe a universe caught in the grip of a terrible cataclysm. Earthquakes will rip through the earth with devastating power. Great clouds of dust and ash will be thrown into the atmosphere, dimming the powerful light of the sun. “**Sackcloth of hair**” refers to the black garments worn by mourners. The moon will take on the appearance of blood as it tries to shine through a ravaged atmosphere.

This “**great earthquake**” is the first of three earthquakes mentioned in the book of Revelation. They will all be terrible.

(III. This world is no stranger to earthquakes. Scientists tell us that more than 13 million people have died in earthquakes over the past 4,000 years. We saw with our own eyes what an earthquake can do when a powerful quake occurred under the Pacific Ocean in December of 2004. That earthquake spawned a tsunami that killed 300,000 people!

In 1811-1812 there was a series of great earthquakes in Arkansas that rearranged the landscape of the area; caused rivers to change their courses; filled the skies with dirt and ash; and caused fires.

On May 18, 1980 Mount St. Helen's in Montana, a volcano, erupted. This eruption was triggered by a violent earthquake that caused a rockslide comprised of one-half cubic mile of rock. As the summit and north slope of that volcano slid down her sides, pressure was released inside the volcano – where super-hot liquid water immediately flashed to steam. The northward-directed steam explosion released energy equivalent to 20 million tons of TNT, which toppled 150 square miles of forest in six minutes. In Spirit Lake, north of the volcano, an enormous water wave, initiated by one-eighth cubic mile of rockslide debris, stripped trees from slopes as high as 850 feet above the pre-eruption water level. The total energy output, on May 18, was equivalent to 400 million tons of TNT - approximately 20,000 Hiroshima-size atomic bombs. The explosion showered town as far away as 250 miles with volcanic ash. But it will nothing compared to the big one – the earthquake of God's wrath.[1])

We are also told that the stars of Heaven will fall down to the earth like the fruit of a fig tree that is shaken by a violent wind. This verse is telling us that there will be tremendous meteor showers that will fall upon the earth in those days. These

meteor showers will cause tremendous death and devastation. Whole cities and countries may be destroyed as the heavens come crashing down to the earth.

(III. In Winslow, AZ there is a meteor crater called the **Barringer Crater**. It was formed when a meteor between 90 and 150 feet in diameter slammed into the earth. That single impact left a crater 4,000 feet across, 2.5 miles in circumference and over 550 feet deep.

Another meteor fell to the earth in 1908 in Siberia. This one was estimated to be about 180 feet in diameter. When it hit, it flattened trees in a 25 mile radius and the explosion caused by its impact was heard half way around the world in London, England.[2])

There is no stability as the heavens above appear to roll up like a book and as the mountains and islands are moved out of their places by the devastating geological occurrences that are unleashed upon the earth in those tragic days.)

B. v. 15-17 **The Unconverted In Terror** – We are told that men of all ranks are overcome with fear. **Kings** are the rulers. **Great men** are the governmental leaders and men of power. **Rich men** are those who control the wealth of the world. **Chief Captains** are the military leaders. **Mighty men** are the celebrities and those with influence and power. **Bondmen** and **free men** alike are affected. When God's wrath is finally poured out upon this world, men will be reduced to the same level. Fear in the face of wrath will be the rule of the day. Let's examine these verses for a few minutes.

1. v. 12-14 **What They See** – As the universe convulses in geological and astronomical upheaval, men will see everything they have ever considered stable and permanent taken away from them. The earth is always there and it is always stable. It will be shaken. The sun, moon and stars are always there. They too will be taken away. For millennia men have worshiped this natural world and staked their hope and futures upon the stability of the universe. They will suddenly find themselves in a world where nothing is stable. Their world is literally coming apart at the seams and they are terrified!
2. v. 15-16 **What They Say** – In their terror they cry out for the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the terrible gaze of God on His throne and from the wrath of the lamb of God. Here is a world that has rejected God at every turn. They have denied Him and His Son while they have embraced Satan and His false Christ. Now, they must face His judgment and they are filled with fear.
3. v. 16 **What They Seek** – They run to the “**caves and dens of the earth**” to find a refuge from the presence of God. Folks, the evolutionists have sold this world a bill of goods! Cavemen are not in our past, they are in our future! (III.

You do your children a grave disservice when you trust them to a godless school system and never check up on what they are learning!)

They want to hide themselves from the face of God and from Jesus. They use a strange statement. They say they want to hide themselves from “**the wrath of the Lamb**”. That is a strange picture! There is probably no animal more tender or gentle than a little lamb. Yet, these big, powerful men want to be delivered from the “**wrath of the Lamb**”.

There are two words translated “**wrath**” in the New Testament. One is the word “**thumos**”. It refers to a “**sudden outburst of anger**.” It is like a shotgun blast that is over in a moment. The other word is the word “**orge**”. It speaks of anger that slowly rises like water against a dam, until the dam breaks and the flood comes. It has the idea of someone standing, red-faced with their fists clenched as they try to hold back their anger.

Well, God has held His anger for 6,000 years and the water of His wrath has risen against the dam of mercy and that dam is at the bursting point. Men are going to face the flood of God’s fury because of their sins and their rejection of Christ.

4. v. 17 **What They Sense** – Men sense that their time is up and that they are about to face the undiluted wrath of Almighty God; and they are absolutely right! Man’s time is up and judgment is coming! They pray, but their prayers will go unanswered. Nothing can deliver them from the judgment whose time has come!

Notice this: when these people begin to pray, they do not pray to God. They call on this natural world. That is where their faith is and this world will fail them in that day. There is no cry for grace or mercy from God. There is no confession of sin. There is only a desire to be free from wrath. Even in the midst of judgment, lost sinners are still selfish and unchanged!

Conclusion: The martyred saints in Heaven are praying for God to judge sin. The lost sinners on earth are praying to be delivered from the unflinching gaze of God. The saint’s prayer will be answered the sinner’s prayers will not!

Friend, it is either grace or wrath! **Psalm 130:3** says, “**If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?**” I would not want to face God in my own righteousness. The best man can produce is filth in the sight of God, **Isa. 64:6**. I thank God that I will stand before Him one day clothed in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, **Phil. 3:9**. How about you? When I see the Lamb, I will see Him as my Savior. Many will face Him as their Judge, **Rev. 20:11-15**. How will you meet Him?

The Mystery of the 144,000

Revelation 7:1-8

THE MYSTERY OF THE 144,000

Introduction: In **Revelation chapter 6** we were witnesses to a world under a storm of divine judgment. The Lord Jesus took possession of the title deed to this planet in **chapter 5**. He began opening the seven seals of that title deed. He is beginning the process of redeeming this planet out of the hands of sin, sinners, and Satan.

We watched Jesus open six of the seven seals on the scroll. Before He did, there was a great deal of thunder in Heaven, **Rev. 6:1**. Thus thunder signaled the approaching storm of God's divine wrath. As each seal was opened judgment and wrath began to be poured out upon the earth. I just want to remind you that we haven't seen the worst of the suffering and sorrow that coming upon this world. After the seals seven trumpets will sound and seven bowls will be poured out upon the earth. As we move deeper into the heart of this book we are going to death, judgment and sorrow intensify.

Before that happens, we are confronted with a divine parenthesis. **Chapter seven** is a parenthetical passage that represents a pause in God's plan to judge the earth. The first part of the storm has passed; the worst part lies unseen in the future. We will examine the events that come later in due course. Today, we will consider the first part of **Revelation 7**.

Let's watch as the Lord extends grace to a select group of people right in the midst of the Tribulation Period. Two groups of people are in view here in **Revelation 7**. The first group is identified as the 144,000 in **verses 1-8**. The second group is identified as a redeemed multitude in **verses 9-17**. We will consider the 144,000 today and, Lord willing, the redeemed multitude next time. Let's take these verses and see what God has to say about the 144,000. I would like to preach on ***The Mystery Of The 144,000***.

I. v. 1-3a

A DELIBERATE PAUSE

- A. **The Reason For This Pause** – God calls for a momentary peace to fall upon the earth because He has some divine business to transact. As God's wrath is rained down upon the earth, He pauses to answer a prayer that was prayed many centuries ago by the prophet Habakkuk, **Hab. 3:2**. By the way, this chapter is a great encouragement! Even during a time when death, suffering and wrath will reign supreme, God will still be extending grace and saving souls for His glory! This has always been the Lord's method of operation. He remembered mercy in wrath when the blood of the lamb was applied to the doorposts of the houses in Egypt, **Ex. 12**. He remembered mercy in wrath when He delivered Lot from Sodom, **Gen. 19**. He remembered mercy in wrath when He saved Noah and his family from the flood, **Gen. 6**. Let's take a look at this break in the action.
- B. **The Results Of This Pause** – We are told that four angels stand on the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth. Some questions immediately begin to form in my mind when I read these verses.

1. **Who are these angels?** – From **verse 2**, it is clear that these angels have been given the power to execute God's judgment upon the earth. The word "***hurt***" carries the idea of "***injury without mercy***." It is a picture of absolute destruction. These are avenging, judging angels.
2. **What are they doing?** – They are holding back the four winds of the earth. When these angels appear, there will not be as much as a breeze blowing anywhere on earth. There will not be a cold wind racing over the snowcapped peaks of Everest. There will be no siroccos blowing their scorching breath across the burning deserts of the world. There will be no ill winds or cool, pleasant breezes anywhere in this world. The winds will cease for a time.

This is an awesome display of divine power. The winds that race through the atmosphere of this world are driven by tremendously strong forces like the sun and the rotation of the earth. Yet, four angels are able to restrain the winds. The word "holding" translates a strong word. It was used to speak of horses straining against their bits. These winds are struggling to break free from the hold of the angels.

3. **What is meant by the winds?** – The word winds should be taken literally. As I mentioned there will be no winds blowing upon the earth. However, there is a sense in which the Bible uses wind in a spiritual sense. **Hosea 8:7** says, "***For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind:***" So, these angels are holding back the wind of divine judgment from off the earth as well. There is a lull in the storm as God takes care of His servants. God harnesses the winds of His divine judgment that they should not blow for a season.
4. **What is meant by "the four corners of the earth?"** – Does this mean that God thinks the earth is flat? Of course not! He answered that in **Isa. 40:22**. This is an idiomatic expression that refers to the four points of the compass. It is merely a figure of speech. (III. The ancient Jews superstitiously believed that winds which blew out of the north, south, east, or west were favorable or good winds. They also believed that winds which came from between these directions, hence from the four corners of the earth were ill-favored winds. These winds could certainly be described an ill-favored wind!)
5. **What is the significance of the number four?** – The book of Revelation uses numbers a lot. Often, these numbers have spiritual meaning attached to them. For instance, the number seven is the number of divine completions. There are seven days in a week and seven colors in the spectrum. Revelation identifies seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, seven horns, etc.

Four, on the other hand, is the number of the earth. There are four seasons, four elements – earth, wind, fire and water, directions, etc.

Here, four angels hold four winds at the four corners of the earth. This number just lets us know that we are dealing with events that are transpiring upon the earth. This is a time of earthly judgment!

I. A Deliberate Pause

II. v. 2-3

A DIVINE PERSONALITY

- A. **The Identity Of This Angel** – As John watches, a fifth angel appears on the earth. This angel rises from the east like the morning sun. Some have taken this to mean that this angel is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. However, the word “**another**” translates the Greek word “**allos**,” and tells us that this angel is just that, an angel.

We may not know who he is, but we do know that he has power awesome. He comes commanding the first four angels to refrain from their mission of destruction upon the earth.

- B. **The Intentions Of This Angel** – This angel has come to “**seal the servants of God in their foreheads**.” By the way, if you don’t know it by now, Satan is an imitator. Throughout this book he is seen attempting to duplicate many of the things God has done and is doing. We will see his place a mark on his servants in **Rev. 13:16-17**. He will give them the “**mark of the beast**.” This mark will identify them as his servants. In this passage, we are going to see the Lord God as He seals His servants.

The word “**seal**” refers to an official stamp. It brings to mind the signet rings used by kings to mark documents as official. A piece of wax would be placed on the document and the king’s signet ring pressed into it. This seal signified **possession, protection, and preservation**. This is seen several times in the Word of God, **Gen. 41:42; Est. 3:10; Dan. 6:17; Matt. 27:66**.

In the Bible, there are several instances of God sealing His people. Noah and his family were sealed up in the Ark, **Gen. 7:16**. Rahab was sealed by a scarlet thread hanging from her window, **Josh. 2:18**. The children of Israel were sealed by the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their homes, **Ex. 12:13**. The clearest example of this is in **Eze. 9:3-6**. Just as God sealed His servants in Ezekiel’s day and protected them, He will do the same for His servants during that Tribulation Period.

(Note: While we are on this subject, let me just remind you that if you are saved today, you too have been marked by God. You have been sealed by Him. In **Eph. 1:13-14**, the Bible says, “***In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.***”

When you were saved, an invisible mark was placed upon you. No one can see it, but it is there. God sealed you at that instant and He marked you as His Own. What does this invisible mark mean?

1. **It is a Seal of Possession** – God places His seal upon your life and marks you as being His possession! He claims you as His very Own. He paid the ultimate price to redeem you from your sins and He owns you now, **1 Cor. 6:19-20**. Because He owns you, He is going to return again for you some day. He will not desert you to the enemy.

2. **It is a Seal of Protection** – Since we are His, we can expect Him to protect us from the attacks of the enemy. Satan would love nothing better than to defeat us and drag our souls to Hell, **1 Pet. 5:8**. But, because we are sealed, he cannot get to us. We are “**kept by the power of God**,” **1 Pet. 1:5**. The word “**kept**” means “**garrisoned**”. The Lord has set an eternal guard around our souls and we are sealed and safe in Him!
3. **It is a Seal of Preservation** – **Eph. 4:30** – This verse tells us how long this seal will last. We are sealed until the day we arrive home in glory. Just as a jar of beans is sealed until someone pops that seal, we have been sealed by God and we are safe in Him until the day we make it home to Heaven.

I. A Deliberate Pause

II. A Divine Personality

III. v. 4-8

A DISTINCT PEOPLE

(III. Now, we are introduced to the people the angel has come to seal. He calls them the “**servants of our God**.” The word “**servants**” is the word for “**slaves**.” These people are saved, sealed, sold out servants of Jesus. But who are they and what do they do?)

- A. v. 4-8 **Their Origin** – The Bible is very clear as to where these people come from. They are from “**all the tribes of the children of Israel**.” Over the years, many groups have tried to claim that they are part of the 144,000. The Jehovah’s Witnesses, the World-Wide Church of God, the Seventh Day Adventists, among others, have all tried to make that claim. Well, if anyone ever comes up to you claiming to be part of the 144,000, just ask them which tribe they are from. That will usually put them on the run. Others have said that these 144,000 represent the church. The text is clear, however, these 144,000 are Jewish men, called and saved out of the tribes of Israel.

This brings to mind a few questions that need to be answered concerning these Jewish men.

1. **Why are there exactly 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes?** – Twelve in the Bible is a number associated with Israel. There were 12 tribes in Israel. There were 12 loaves of bread on the table of Shewbread in the Tabernacle. There were 12 gates into the city of Jerusalem. There were 12 stones in the breastplate of the high priest. The Lord is showing us that these men are from the nation of Israel. This teaches us a valuable lesson: God is not finished with Israel! He has a plan for their future restoration and redemption, **Romans 9-11**.
2. **Why are some of the tribes not mentioned?** – The tribes of Dan and Ephraim are not mentioned, while the tribe of Levi, which did not receive an inheritance among the other tribes is. You will also notice that the tribe of Joseph is mentioned. Back in **Genesis 48**, Joseph’s two sons Manasseh and Ephraim were adopted by Jacob

and given an inheritance in Israel. It appears that Dan and Ephraim are not mentioned here because they went away into deep idolatry during the kingdom years. Therefore, they are left out of the list.

3. **How and when will these 144,000 be saved?** – I believe they will be saved by the preaching of the Two Witnesses mentioned in **Rev. 11:1-12**. God will send two preachers to preach the Gospel in Jerusalem. These 144,000 will be converted and will be sealed to a special ministry by the Lord.
4. **What makes them so special?** – To answer that question, we have to fast forward to **Rev. 14:1-5**. There, we learn that these men are sexually pure. They are virgins. We are also told that they are completely dedicated to the Lamb of God. They follow Him wherever He goes. They do His bidding without question. They are also called to “**firstfruits**” to God and to the Lamb. They are the first of a vast multitude that will be saved during the dark, dangerous, deadly days of the Tribulation.

Another thing that marks them as special is that God knows who they are! There is only one Jew in the entire universe who knows which tribe He is from. There is only one Jew who still possesses an accurate genealogy of his ancestry and His name is Jesus Christ. He is from the tribe of Judah, **Matt. 1**. No other Jew knows which tribe he is from because all the genealogical records were destroyed in 70 AD when Titus, the Roman general, destroyed the temple in Jerusalem. The birth records were stored there and they were destroyed forever.

Now, no Jew may know which tribe he is from, but God does. He knows how to find them. He knows how to save them. He knows how to use them.

- B. **Their Occupation** – Now that we have a little more information regarding these men, let's look at what their mission will be during the Tribulation. Back in **Matthew 24:14** the Bible says, “***And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.***” Despite 2,000 years of evangelism and mission work, this verse has never been fulfilled. There are hundreds of millions of people in our world who have never heard the name of Jesus, much less the Gospel of grace.

There are places in our world where missionaries cannot go. During the Tribulation that will change. The Lord will raise up an army of 144,000 converted Jewish evangelists who will take the Gospel to the ends of the earth. They will fulfill the prophecy of **Matt. 24:14**. The Antichrist will try to stop them, but he will be powerless to hinder their ministry. He will not be able to silence them, kill them or stop them. They have been sealed by God and they will be protected until their ministry has been fulfilled. Have you ever met a converted Jew? When a Jew comes to faith in Christ, you have never seen anyone with as much zeal for souls as a born-again Jew!

(Note: For all intents and purposes, the church has failed in her efforts to reach the world. We have spent trillions of dollars and still the world is filled with the unconverted and the unreached. We live in a day of global communications and still we have not been able to take the Gospel to all the peoples of the earth. God help us, we won't even take the Gospel to our own city!

That will all change during the Tribulation! You might not imagine it, but the Tribulation will see the greatest evangelistic effort the world has ever witnessed. These 144,000 redeemed Jewish preachers will take the Gospel to the whole world and a vast multitude will be saved as a result.

That excites me! I am glad the Lord is going to redeem millions during the Tribulation. Still, I want to see us do more to get the Gospel out in our day! We could do better; we should do better and we must do better!)

Conclusion: These 144,000 are still a mystery to me. We will study them in some more depth when we get to **chapter 14**. For, now, we should take a moment thank God for His grace. We should praise Him that He has a great plan to save many people during the most horrible time earth will ever know. We should also thank Him for His sealing ministry in our lives. What a blessing it is to know that we have been sealed and that we are safe and secure in the Lord Jesus Christ. We should also look at our efforts to share the Gospel in these days. I don't know about you, but I am ashamed of myself! I could do a much better job of getting out the Gospel and I would like for you to pray for me.

So, here is the invitation. If you would like to praise the Lord for His grace in your life and for the seal He has placed on you, come, and do that now. If you would like to ask Him to help you be a better witness for the glory of God, you come now. If you would like to be saved so that you can miss the Tribulation, you can do that now.



A Multitude No Man Could Number

Revelation 7:9-17

Introduction: As we continue to move through the book of the Revelation, we are in the middle of a parenthetical passage. **Chapter seven** is inserted into the narrative to allow us to catch a glimpse of the grace of God at work during the most horrible time earth has ever known.

In our last study, we saw the Lord redeem 144,000 Jewish men. These men were sent out into the entire world to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all nations. In this passage, we will see the fruits of their preaching, as a vast multitude is brought to faith in Jesus Christ and is delivered out of the Great Tribulation.

It comforts my heart to know that the Rapture of the church does not spell the end of people being saved. I praise the Lord that He intends to redeem a multitude that no man could number during the dark years of the Tribulation Period. This passage reveals the heart of our great God. It is in His heart and plan to save sinners, and He is going to do just that during the Tribulation.

The Bible is clear that Jesus Christ came into this world for the sole purpose of saving sinners from their sins, ***"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief."*** 1 Timothy 1:15. It is also clear that God intends to save every person who will turn to Jesus by faith, ***"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out,"*** John 6:37. Here is God's promise to His elect, ***"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,"*** 2 Peter 3:9. That is the heartbeat of God and it can be heard in the verses before us today.

Let's go back into the heart of the tribulation period and rejoin John in his vision of that terrible time. In these verses, we are going to learn about a vast multitude of redeemed saints, and we are going to get a glimpse into glory as the curtain is pulled back just a little. So, let's take these verses and consider the subject: ***A Multitude That No Man Could Number***. I want to share some facts about this precious group of saints that are presented in these verses.

I. v. 9-12 **THE DESCRIPTION OF THIS MULTITUDE**

A. v. 9 **How They Are Shown** – Reading John's description of this multitude reveals a number of things about who these people are.

1. **Their Number** – They are described as "a multitude which no man could number." They are a group of people so vast that John makes no attempt at all to declare their number. What a wonderful image of the grace of God.

On the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 souls were saved, **Acts 2:41**. Sometime later, 5,000 were saved on one occasion, **Acts 4:4**. We are also told that God ***"added daily to the church such as should be saved,"*** Acts 2:47. I read that and I am amazed at His saving power! But wait, about 1,000,000 were saved in Nineveh when the entire city repented and turned to faith in God, **Jonah 3:5-10**. Praise God for His saving grace. Even more amazing than that is the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Over

3,000,000 were saved by grace when they placed the blood on the doorposts of their houses by faith, **Ex. 12**.

All of these great demonstrations of the powerful, saving grace of God pale in comparison to what He will do during the Tribulation Period! God will save a multitude that will number in the multiplied millions! Praise God for His grace!

2. **Their Nationalities** – We are told that they come from “***all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues***”. Here is a multitude that knows no racial, economic, social, or national distinctions. The Gospel has been preached worldwide, without respect to any people group and a vast multitude is saved. They are Gentiles and they have been saved by grace. In the first nine verses of this chapter, God dealt with Jews. Now, He extends His grace to the Gentile nations of the world.

(Note: I praise the Lord that the Gospel of grace is a message that applies to all people everywhere. We have our prejudices and we judge people by the color of their skin; by their ethnic background; by how they were raised; and by many other foolish, ignorant standards. God, however, holds no such prejudices! He will save any soul that will come to Him by faith! I praise God that it is that way. After all, if Jesus was a racist, us white folks would be in trouble!)

(Note: I would also like to remind us that the Gospel message is not a Baptist message either. You may have heard the old story about a wall in Heaven, and behind that wall there was a group of people just shouting and praising the Lord. One fellow, who was new to Heaven, asked another fellow what was going on behind that wall. The man answered, “***Oh, that the Baptists, they think they are the only ones up here!***”

There are some Baptists who think that way! I have been accused of being so narrow-minded that I think only the Baptists are going. Well, I am even more narrow-minded than that! I don't believe that all Baptists are going!

I praise the Lord that it isn't just the Baptists that are going to Heaven! Any person who will believe the Gospel, anywhere in this world will be saved and will go to Heaven.

But I still praise the Lord that I am a Baptist! If someone asked me what I would be if I was not a Baptist, I would reply that “***I'd be ashamed!***” I don't think the Baptists are right about everything, just most things! I am a Baptist because I think they are closer to the truth than any other group on earth. I know that being a Baptist won't get me to Heaven, but it will let me go there in still! The difference between being a Baptist and being anything else is the difference between driving a Yugo and a Rolls-Royce. That was a public service announcement. Now, back to the message.)

3. **Their Natures** – Some people look at this multitude and see the church. This multitude is not the church! First, they are “***standing***.” When the church is shown in Heaven, they are sitting, **Rev. 4:4**. Second, this crowd was saved out of “***Great Tribulation***”, **v.**

14. The church will be saved from that terrible time of wrath and judgment, **1 Thes. 1:10; Rom. 5:9; Rev. 3:10**. While they are not the church, their appearance and condition in Heaven is clearly described.

- a. **They Are Virtuous** – They are “*clothed with white robes*.” This is always a picture of righteousness in the Bible. These people are saved by grace and they have been rendered righteous. That is the promise of God to all who will come to Jesus Christ by faith, **1 John 1:7; Isa. 1:18**. He is in the saving and cleansing business!

(Note: I praise the name of the Lord that the blood of Jesus is able to reconcile us to God. When Jesus died, the wall of separation that had been erected by sin was forever torn down and now, we can be reconciled with God, **Eph. 1:6-7; Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Eph. 2:16.**)

- b. **They Are Victorious** – These redeemed saints have palm branches in their hands. Palms are a symbol of victory. The crowds waved palm branches and placed them in the road as Jesus entered Jerusalem 2,000 years ago, **John 12:13**. These saints are celebrating the great victory that was given to them over sin, Satan, and the power of the Antichrist. They have overcome and they enjoy the spoils of the victory they have been given.

- B. v. 10 **What They Shout** – These saints lift their voices in an anthem of praise to their Redeemer for His redemption. They know that they are in Heaven for one reason and for one reason only. They are there because of the grace of God and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They praise Him for His great grace!

(Note: If there was ever a reason for praise, it is the grace of God and the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins! His salvation is the one reason for praise that all saints share. Our circumstances may change and we may walk through hard places in life, but if you are saved, your name is written down in Heaven and it always will be. That is a reason for praise, for shouting, for singing, for testimony, for all the glory we can render unto our great God, **Luke 10:20**. By the way, we are way behind in the praise department!)

- C. v. 11-12 **What They Stimulate** – When the angelic host around the throne of God witness the unbridled praise of this redeemed multitude, they join their voices with them in praise to God. The shouts of the multitude inspire the angels to praise the Lord too. Can you imagine the sound of millions and millions of voices joined together in an anthem of praise?

Now, the angels lift their voices and cry “**Amen!**” Thus, they add their agreement to the praises of the redeemed. They add a seven-fold statement of glory to God and praise Him for Who He is and for what He does. They know what they have said is true, so they close their statement of praise with another “**Amen!**”

The angels cannot praise God for salvation, for they have never known the depths of sin. But these angels have seen the love of God in action as He went about the business of saving lost humans. They marveled as they watched as their Creator, the Lord Jesus, died on Calvary to save people who despised Him. They have witnessed the spontaneous

outbursts of praise as sinners have been saved down through the ages, **Luke 15:7**. Praising God for salvation is a human privilege

I. The Description Of This Multitude

II. v. 13-14 THE DELIVERANCE OF THIS MULTITUDE

(III. As John watches this powerful scene, one of the elders approaches him and asks John about the identity of this vast throng of people. John declares his ignorance of their identity and petitions the elder to tell him who they are. He proceeds to do just that.)

- A. The Ministry Of Their Deliverance – John is told that these are people who “**came out of great tribulation.**” These people have been living through the horrors of the Tribulations Period. But, even during that time of intense wrath and judgment, there is a ray of light as the amazing, boundless grace of God reaches down to touch a vast multitude of lost souls.
- B. The Method Of Their Deliverance – These people were saved the same way people have always been, and will always be, saved: by grace through faith, **Eph. 2:8-9**. We are told that they “**washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**” This simple statement reveals a profound truth: God only knows on method of salvation.

Whether it was Adam and Eve in the Garden; Abel with his sacrifice; Abraham and his ram; Israel and the sacrifices of the Tabernacle and the Temple; salvation in the Old Testament was through the blood of the Lamb. When they shed the blood of an innocent animal to atone for their sins, they were looking ahead to the day when God would send the perfect sacrifice that would take away sin forever. Those Old Testament saints were saved by looking forward to Calvary. When Jesus came and went to the cross, He accomplished what millions of animal sacrifices could only picture. When Jesus dies, He obtained eternal salvation for all who will believe on Him, **Heb. 10:10-14; 9:28**.

Those of us on this side of the cross are saved by looking back to what Jesus did at the cross and realizing that His death and resurrection are all that is needed to our salvation. When we trust Him by faith, we are eternally saved, **Rom. 10:9-10**. even in the midst of Great Tribulation, souls will be saved by the simple preaching of a simple Gospel. Here it is once again: “**For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:**” **1 Cor. 15:3-4**.

I. The Description Of This Multitude

II. The Deliverance Of This Multitude

III. v. 15-17 **THE DESTINY OF THIS MULTITUDE**

- A. **They Are Destined To A Heavenly Presence** – We are told in **verse 15** that this multitude finds themselves at home in Heaven in the presence of Almighty God. Their days of suffering and sorrow have ended and they have arrived in glory. They are no longer separated from the Lord by distance, by sin or by time. They are home with Him and they are there to stay!

Notice where they are! Because they have been redeemed and cleansed, they are allowed to stand in the presence of God! This was unheard of in Bible times. In the Temple there was a place called the “***Court of the Gentiles***.” This was the outer court of the Temple and non-Jews were not allowed to go any deeper into the Temple complex that this outer court. To do so brought a Gentile under the penalty of death.

When Jesus died, the veil in the Temple was ripped down the middle, **Matt. 27:51**. This signified the fact that all men had equal access to God. These redeemed Gentiles are brought into the very presence of God.

Their present condition must make Satan livid with rage! **Verse 14** tells us that they “***came out of great tribulation***”. These people are in Heaven because they were martyred for their faith in Jesus and for their refusal to embrace the Antichrist and their king and as their god. It is possible that these precious saints are the same crowd we saw praying from under the altar in **Rev. 6:9-11**. Now, their prayers are answered, they are home and judgment is being handed out upon the earth. The worst thing Satan could do to these people was to kill them, and it turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to them. They gave up the pain and sorrow of a world gone mad for the safety and joy of an eternity in the presence of God!

- B. **They Are Destined To A Heavenly Profession** – The Bible says they will “***serve Him day and night in His temple***.” This joyous, redeemed multitude is in the presence of God and they are at the beck and call of God. They will spend their eternity carrying out His will as they serve Him, worship Him, and bask in His presence.

(Note: By the way, never think for an instant that Heaven will be a boring place. We will not twiddle our thumbs, bored stiff while eternity passes us by. We will be busy serving the Lord. There will be plenty to do. I am convinced that just our praise and worship time will be enormous. We will rest from our labors, but we will not rest from our service to Almighty God. He’s got a job for you over there!

By the way, there’s no place to quit over here either! Oh, you might step aside and let someone else do a job. There comes a time when it is time for a change. There comes a time when it is time for “***new blood***” in some offices. However, there will never come a time this side of the grave when you can rightfully sit down on God and quit. As long as He leaves you here, He has a work for you to do. Get before Him, find out what it is, and get to it!)

- C. **They Are Destined To Heavenly Provisions** – Now, remember, these saints were saved out of the Tribulation Period. They had been saved, but they had also suffered with

everyone else on earth. Just because they turned to the Lord does not mean that they were sheltered from the horrors of those days. In fact, their faith in Jesus Christ might have made their lives even more miserable here on earth. Remember, the book of Revelation is not in chronological order. We are seeing people who are martyred throughout the years of Tribulation. We are told several things about their past and about what they can anticipate in Heaven.

- **They will hunger no more** – Remember the famines we talked about in **Rev. 6:5-6**? We are also told that Antichrist will require people to wear a mark in their bodies before they can buy or sell, **Rev. 13:16-18**. Because of their faith, they will refuse the mark and will go hungry. The Bible also says that their refusal to wear the mark will be a death warrant to them, **Rev. 13:15**. But, we are told that in Heaven, the Lamb will feed them! There will be no more hunger in glory. They are home and they will be well cared for!
- **They will thirst no more** – We are told that the waters of the earth will turn to blood and be unfit to drink during the Tribulation, **Rev. 8:8; 11**. As a result, the people of earth will be thirsty. But, in Heaven, they are led to fountains of living water by the Lamb. They are satisfied there.
- **They will suffer no more** – The references to the sun and the heat remind us that the Tribulation Period will be a period of intense physical suffering, and the redeemed saints of God will not be immune from the effects of God's judgments upon nature. In **Rev. 16:8-10**, the intensity of the sun will be greatly increased causing dehydrated men great pain and suffering. They will literally chew their tongues in their pain and agony. But, in Heaven, none of the things that hurt them on earth will be allowed to follow them there.
- **They will weep no more** – Imagine all they have seen and suffered because of their faith. Their hearts have been broken and their eyes wet with tears even as they gave their all for Jesus Christ. But the Lamb of God will wipe away the tears of their suffering and sorrow. He will comfort them and give them rest, peace and blessing.
- By the way, these blessings are ours as well, **Rev. 21-22**!

Conclusion: I praise God that He is a soul-saving God. I praise Him that He reaches down in grace to call lost sinners to Him that He might save them. It comforts my heart to know that He is coming to continue to do this even during the Tribulation Period. We ought to praise Him for His saving grace and power.

As I think about this multitude today, I know that neither I, nor anyone in this room, will ever be a part of that number. If you are saved, you will see them one day and watch as they shout their praises unto the God and the Lamb. If you are not saved today and Jesus comes back, you will never have another opportunity to be saved.

So, here is the invitation:

- If you are lost and would like to be saved, come to Jesus today and let us show you how you can come to know Jesus.
- If you are saved, but there are issues between you and the Lord that need to be addressed, you come and make it right.
- If you want to thank Him for His grace and blessings in your life, you come.
- If you would like to pray for some lost people on your heart, you come.
- If there are other needs, this altar is open.

When Heaven Falls Silent Revelation 8:1-13

Introduction: We continuing to watch as the events of the Book of the Revelation unfold. We have already witnessed the end of the church age, which will culminate in the Rapture of the church, **Rev. 4:1**. We have watched as Heaven worships God and the Lamb for Who They are, what They have done and for what They will do, **Rev. 4-5**. We have seen the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, take the seven-sealed scroll from the hand of His Father and, we have watched as He began the process of breaking the seven seals, **Rev. 6**. As He did, the earth was engulfed in horror after another as the judgments of God began to fall on sinful men. We also studied the events of **Rev. 7**, where 144,000 Jewish evangelists are saved, sealed, and sent out to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to all the nations of the world, **Rev. 7:1-8**. As they preached a vast multitude was saved out of great tribulation and washed their garments in the blood of the Lamb. This redeemed multitude is pictured, healthy and whole, in Heaven in the presence of the Lamb and of the Father, **Rev. 7:9-17**.

That brings us to our text for this study. Here, in **verse 1**, the seventh seal is broken by the Lord Jesus. When He breaks this seal, seven trumpet judgments are unleashed upon the earth. If you think things have been horrible thus far, you are right, but the worst is yet to come.

Today, we are going to watch as the first four of the trumpet judgments are sounded against the earth. We are going to see things go from bad to worse for those who will be living on the earth during the Great Tribulation. Allow me to share with you the observations offered in this passage as I preach on the subject ***When Heaven Falls Silent***.

I. v. 1 THERE IS SILENCE IN HEAVEN

- A. John describes a scene that must be a first in Heaven. Absolute silence reigns there for one-half an hour. Chapters four, five and seven all describe Heaven as a place of worship, praise, joy, and song. Heaven is described as a place alive with noise. It is pictured as a place that literally throbs with the excitement of its inhabitants. Yet, we are told there is silence in that land of praise for half an hour. The beast and elders are silent. The angels and the redeemed multitudes have neither shouts of praise nor songs of joy to offer up. There are no divine pronouncements from the throne. Heaven sits in total silence.
- B. Silence is a powerful thing. You can be about asleep in a service, but just let the preacher fall silent and you will snap to attention. The silence at the beginning of a wedding lets you know the time has come.

Silence can also be nerve shattering! Have you ever been listening to the radio and suddenly there is silence? You immediately wonder what has happened at the station, don't you? Imagine you have asked your girlfriend to marry you and she just sits in silence for thirty minutes. Imagine you have been accused of a crime and the jury has come back with your verdict. You are standing before the judge waiting for him to read it to you, and for thirty minutes he just sits there in silence.

- C. What we are seeing in this verse is the lull before the storm. The judgment of God is about to fall on the earth and Heaven has thirty minutes of silence before the judgments commence. **Habakkuk 2:20** says, “***But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.***” Earth will not hear the Lord's voice, nor will they acknowledge Him at all. They rush on in their sins, living their vain lives, all the while ignoring the God of Heaven. The inhabitants of Heaven, on the other hand, understand what God is about to do and they fall silent in awe at His presence and His power.

Here on earth, we often see people call for a moment of silence in the aftermath of tragic events. We saw that kind of thing after 9/11. We do it after the event because we have no way of knowing when tragedy will strike. Heaven, on the other hand, calls for a moment of silence before the event. Heaven knows tragedy is about to stroke and Heaven falls silent in the face of impending judgment.

I. There Is Silence In Heaven

II. v. 2-5 **THERE IS A SERVICE AT THE ALTAR**

- A. v. 2 **Involved Preparations** – Seven angels are pictured, standing before God, ready to do His bidding. By the way, these angels present a good lesson for us. We should also stand ready to do our Lord's bidding. In a day when people are concerned about education, wealth, health, and a host of other things they think they need to serve God; the greatest ability is still availability. The Lord is looking for people with a heart like that which Isaiah possessed. He is looking for people who will say, “***Here am I***” when He asks, “***Whom shall we send?***” (III. **Isa. 6:1-8.**)

These seven angels are given seven trumpets. These seven trumpets are going to be used to send judgments upon the earth. Trumpets, as you know, figured heavily in the lives of the ancient Jews. **Numbers 10:1-12** tells us that two silver trumpets were to be used to notify the people of Israel that certain events were about to occur. A certain blast was used to assemble all the people; another was used to assemble just the heads of the tribes. A certain sound was used to tell the people when it was time to break camp and march; another alerted them when there was a war. There was a certain sound that was to be made for each event. That is why Paul said, ***“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?”*** (1 Cor. 14:8) So, trumpets were very important to the people of Israel.

God’s people are listening for trumpets, **1 Thes. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52**. Trumpets are a big part of our future too.

Think with me for a minute about an event that occurred in the history of ancient Israel involving the use of trumpets. You will find the text in **Joshua 6:1-21**. The Israelites marched around Jericho once each day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. As they marched, they sounded their trumpets. Well, you know what happened! On the seventh day, after the seventh lap, they blew their trumpets and they shouted and the walls of Jericho fell down flat.

There is coming a day during the Tribulation when Heaven will sound its trumpets against a rebellious earth, and the walls of rebellion that have been erected against holy God by sinful man will fall before His unstoppable wrath. These trumpets are war trumpets and they are used to sound the attack. When God attacks the earth in His wrath, no one will be able to repel His advance.

- B. v. 3-4 **Involved Prayers** – Another angel takes a censer filled with incense. He takes the incense and offers it along with the prayers of the saints on the altar before God. The smoke of the incense and the prayers of the saints ascend together into the very presence of God.

These are mysterious verses, but they do have a couple of lessons to teach us today.

1. **The prayers of the saints are kept by God** – As our prayers leave our hearts and lips to ascend to the throne of grace, they are not just sent out into the ether to disappear forever. These verses show us that God holds onto our prayers and keeps them in His presence. You see, some prayers cannot be answered when we pray them; the time is not right! In His time, however, they will be answered, as we see in these verses.

2. **The prayers of the saints are answered by God** – I am convinced that we are seeing the prayers of the saints under the altar, **Rev. 6:9-11**, answered in these verses. I am also convinced that the prayers of God's people down through the ages are being answered as well. For two-thousand years, God's people have prayed, "***Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.***" Those prayers are about to be answered. For thousands of years the people of God have asked Him to demonstrate His power; avenge His name; and get glory over sin and sinners. Those prayers are about to be answered. They have been kept and they are mingled with the fire of the finished work of Christ from the altar. They ascend up before God and they will be answered!
3. **The prayers of the saints have power with God** – Here are prayers that have been heard, preserved, and answered in God's time. I have problems in the area of prayer! I have been saved for years, but I still feel as incompetent in my prayer life as I did when I first began to pray. There are no Ph. D's in prayer. There are no experts in prayer. We may struggle in the arena of prayer, but if we are saved, we have power with God in prayer.

Eph. 5:2 says that Christ's finished redemptive work is a "***sweet-smelling savor***" in the nostrils of God. When we pray in Jesus' name, our prayers mingle with His finished work and rise up before God as a sweet-smelling offering. It is an offering that He accepts and blesses for His glory! Our prayers ascend up to God on the basis of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and God hears us when we pray!

There is power in the prayers of the saints of God! Think about it, we have an Advocate in Heaven, **1 John 2:1**. An Advocate is a lawyer. We have one pleading our cause in Heaven. But wait, we have an Advocate in our hearts, **John 14:6** uses the word "***Comforter***" to refer to the Holy Ghost. It is the same word translated "***Advocate***" in **1 John 2:1**. We have one member of the Godhead pleading our cause in Heaven. We have one member of the Godhead pleading God's cause in our hearts. That is why you and I have power in our prayers!

Our praying may seem weak and ineffective at times, but by the time our prayers arrive in glory, they are not in the same form as they were when they left our feeble lips. The Spirit of God takes them and offers them up to the Lord Jesus, Who takes them and offers them up to God. When He hears our prayers, they are a powerful force that He uses for His glory!

The most powerful people in this world are not the political movers and shakers. The most powerful people are not the kings, queens, dictators, presidents, and generals. The most powerful people are not the celebrities and the wealthy. The most powerful people in this world are widows, women, men, children, the poverty stricken and others who believe in the God of Heaven and call out to Him be faith. So, pray Christian pray! As you do, your prayers are mingled with the finished work of Jesus and you have power with God! There is more power in your prayers than you could have ever imagined!

- C. v. 5 **Involved Premonitions** – The angel takes the censer and fills it with fire from the altar and he casts this into the earth. When he does, there are sounds from the earth. These sounds are the premonitions of the upheavals that are coming upon the earth.

Did you notice that the same fire that causes the incense and prayers to rise up also causes the judgments to come down? As Dr. Jerry Vines says, “***Judgment is merely the opposite side of rejected love.***” Men have rejected God’s love, His grace, the gift of His Darling Son, and there is nothing left for them but the undiluted wrath and judgment of an offended God. That is what we are about to see as these trumpets are sounded and judgment falls upon the earth.

I. **There Is Silence In Heaven**

II. **There Is A Service At The Altar**

III. v. 6-13 **THERE IS SUFFERING ON THE EARTH**

(III. **Verse 6** tells us that the angels take their places and prepare to sound their trumpets. As they do, we are about to see one horror after another visited upon the earth and her inhabitants.)

- A. v. 7 **The Trumpet Of Devastation** – The first trumpet brings hail and fire mingled with blood. This may be a description of hail falling from the skies, mingling with lava from volcanic eruptions. The blood might be that of men and animals killed in the cataclysm, or it could refer to contaminated water droplets that have the appearance of blood. Whatever the nature of this judgment, this storm of wrath falls upon the earth and burns up one-third of all the trees on the earth, along with all the grass.

As a result of this judgment, oxygen levels plummet and the quality of breathable air suffers greatly. (Ill. America has already denuded our country to the point that we only produce some 60% of the oxygen we consume.)

The word “**trees**” speaks of “**fruit trees**”. Wheat, which is used to produce bread, is a type of grass. Grass is used to graze livestock. So, this judgment will have a tremendous impact worldwide food supplies. Here we have a time of great geological, ecological, and economic disaster.

- B. v. 8-9 **The Trumpet Of Destruction** – When the second trumpet sounds a fiery mountain is seen falling into the sea. One-third of the sea is contaminated; one-third of the all marine life dies and one-third of all human ships are destroyed.

This could be a description of a meteor falling out of space and hitting the oceans. If that were to happen, it could easily destroy one-third of all life in the sea. This would contaminate the oceans with the dead, rotting bodies of marine life. It would also trigger massive tidal waves that would sink great numbers of ships. Their rusting hulks will choke shipping lanes and hinder the movements of men and materials.

Mankind is very dependent upon the resources he retrieves from the sea. When the oceans are taken away as a source of life and livelihood, man will suffer from hunger and economic disaster.

(Note: Verses 7 and 8 both mention blood. Blood will fall from the skies and the seas will be turned to blood. I think God is sending man a clear message. Man has rejected the blood of Jesus as the sole means of salvation. God places the blood before their eyes as a constant reminder that nothing but the blood of Jesus can wash away to stains of sin!)

- B. v. 10-11 **The Trumpet Of Death** – Another object falls from Heaven. It is probably a comet, since it is described as having a tail. It falls upon the fountains of fresh waters and causes them to become poisoned. The word “**wormwood**” translates the Greek word “**apsinthos**”. It means “**bitterness**”. It refers to a plant whose leaves are used to manufacture a certain drink called “**absinthe**”. This alcoholic beverage is so toxic that it is banned in many countries. One-third of the sweet, fresh waters of the earth are poisoned and many die from drinking these tainted waters.

- D. v. 12 **The Trumpet Of Darkness** – When the fourth trumpet sounds, God turns down the power of the sun, moon, and stars. Their power is reduced by one-third. They are dimmed and when they do shine, they are not as bright, nor do they shine as long as they used to.

This could be the result of all the ash and debris from the earlier judgments, or this could be the supernatural hand of God. However, the results are the same, the earth is plunged into darkness as the sun, moon and stars refuse to give their light. This will affect growing seasons, weather patterns, plant life, temperatures on the earth, and mankind's physical and emotional health. This trumpet will take a great toll on humanity.

(Note: Since the beginning of time, man has taken God for granted. Man has ignored Him, blasphemed Him, and lived as though He did not exist. Man has also taken God's creation for granted. There have always been plenty of trees and green grass. There has always been plenty of oxygen to breathe. The sea has always been there, and it has always yielded its bounty to man as he has traveled and fished its waters. There has always been plenty of fresh water to drink. Just go to the faucet or the water fountain and turn it on. The sun, moon and stars have always been in their places and they have always given their light. During the tribulation God will take away what man has always taken for granted. Man will be judged for his refusal to bow before God and to acknowledge His Lordship.

- E. v. 13 **The Testimony Of Doom** – This chapter closes with an angel flying through Heaven pronouncing further woes upon the earth. Things are bad, but not as bad as they will become. The worst part of the Tribulation still lies ahead!

If you have never been saved, this would be a good time to do something about that. If you have been saved, this would be a good time to rejoice that you will miss these events.

Conclusion: We look at these things as ask, “***How could this ever happen?***” It will happen, just as God says it will. There are a couple of verses I want to share as I close this message today.

The first is **Ezekiel 38:22-23**, “***And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus, will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.***” God will prove His glory in the day of His judgment. He will do the things we have read in these verses to show man just Who God is.

Another passage is **Matthew 24:29**, where Jesus says, “***Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.***” He is describing the very events that we have read about today.

Notice that last phrase: “***and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken***”. The word “**powers**” comes from the word “**dunamis**”, which gives us the word “**dynamite**”. It means “***inherit, explosive power.***” The word “**heaven**” come from the word “**uranos**”, which gives us the word “**uranium**”. And the word “**shaken**” means “to be set off balance”. Now, without trying to change what the Scripture says, but looking at it this way, it reads: “***And the powers of uranium shall be set off balance.***”

When God created the universe; He build within the tiniest part of this universe, the atom, the very power to destroy this universe. When man learned to “***split the atom***” he unleashed the most powerful and destructive force in existence. Mankind possesses the power to literally destroy the world. Could it be that God will use a nuclear explosion to accomplish some of these things? I do not know, but I do know that He has built the potential into every atom in this universe. Everything around you, from the air you breathe, to the pews upon which you sit, can become an instrument of destruction.

There is more that could be said, but the bottom line is this: Judgment is coming upon this earth and upon all those who refuse the accept Jesus as their Savior. The best thing you can do today is be saved by His grace and ready to meet Him when He comes so you can avoid the tragedies that are coming. Are you saved?

When Hell Come To Your House Revelation 9:1-12

Introduction: There can be little doubt that the Book of Revelation contains some of the most frightening images in the entire Bible. This passage may be the most frightening of them all.

We are in the midst of the seven trumpet judgments. The first four trumpets have been sounded and they brought forth horrible scenes of death and destruction. The earth's environment has been shattered and mankind is writhing under the awful judgments of a holy God. **Chapter 8** closes with an angel flying through Heaven pronouncing three "**woes**" upon the "**inhabiters of the earth**". This angel knows that the plagues unleashed by the sounding of the last three trumpets will be far more horrible than anything we have witnessed yet.

Why does the Lord give us these graphic descriptions of what the world will face during the Tribulation? Why write about such tragedy, death and suffering? I think there are three very good reasons why these things are dealt with in the book of Revelation.

1. These things are mentioned so the church will know what we have been saved from. It is exciting to know that God will deliver His people from this kind of judgment.
2. He extends this glimpse of the future as a warning to those who have not trusted Jesus as their Savior. He wants them to know what they will face if they continue on in their sin and in their rejection.
3. They are given so that those of us who know the truth might be motivated to share the Gospel with the lost.

As we consider the judgment associated with the fifth trumpet, I would like to share some of the awful realities that are presented in these verses. Regardless of whether you are saved or lost there is a word here for you.

We are living in a day when the subject of Hell is viewed with much skepticism. People just don't believe in a literal place of torment. In fact, many preachers and church members reject the notion of Hell, as it is presented in the Bible. People joke about Hell and use the word as a byword in everyday language. But, the fact is, Hell is a real place! Real people are going to endure real torments for a real eternity in a real place called Hell. They can attempt to deny it as they wish, but Hell is still real. In these verses, Hell visits earth. I would like to take these verses and point out the terrible realities that will be visited upon the earth in the last days. I want to preach on the subject ***When Hell Visits Your House***.

I. v. 1 **A HORRIBLE PERSONALITY**

(III. When the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, we are introduced to a horrible personality. It is my opinion that we are given a description of the Devil himself in this verse. Look at how he is described.)

- A. **He Is A Famous Personality** – He is called a “**star**”. Some commentators attempt to spiritualize this passage and link this being with the star of **Rev. 8:10-11**. I believe that “**star**” is a comet while this star is a literal person.

When we think of stars, we often think of celebrities; of those who are famous in this world. There is a sense in which this person is famous. In fact, he is known in three worlds. He is known in Heaven; he is known on earth and he is known under the earth. He is a famous personality.

Of course, the Devil has a name. His name is “**Lucifer**”, **Isa. 14:12**. The name “**Lucifer**” means “**Brilliant star; Light-bearer or Shining one**”. So, we are introduced to Lucifer, a famous personality.

- B. **He Is A Fallen Personality** – The word “**fall**” is a perfect tense verb. That means it refers to something that took place in the past which still has present results. In other words, the sense of that word is “**fallen**”. We are dealing with a fallen personality.

Satan’s fall took place sometime in the past, **Luke 10:18**. As you know, Satan or Lucifer was a highly exalted archangel, but he was not content to be what the Lord created him to be. He wanted to be God, **Isa. 14:12-17; Eze. 28:11-19**. Pride was found in Lucifer and he was cast out of Heaven. He still has access to the presence of God where he accuses the brethren, **Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7**. In fact, he is the “**prince of the power of the air**”, **Eph. 2:2**. But, there will come a day when Satan will be eternally cast down to the earth, **Rev. 12:10**. So, here we see Satan, cast out of Heaven and forced to confine his activities to the earth.

The thing that brought Satan down is the same thing that causes mankind his worst problems: **Pride**! Pride will cause you to think you are good enough without God. It will cause you to refuse to bow. It will cause you to walk in your own self-righteousness. It will take you to Hell.

God says if you will humble yourself under His mighty hand, He will lift you up, **1 Pet. 5:6**; but if you exalt yourself, He will bring you down, **Luke 14:11**. As the writer of Proverbs puts it, “**Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall,**” **Pro. 16:18**.

- C. **He Is A Fearsome Personality** – This famous, fallen figure is given a key to the bottomless pit. He is given the authority to unlock a terrible prison and unleash a horrific plague upon the world. We were told in **Rev. 1:18** that Jesus has the keys of “**death and of Hell**”. For a short time, the power over a host of demonic spirits imprisoned in Hell is given to Satan.

While we are on the subject of the devil, allow me to make a few statements about him. First, Satan is a real personality. He exists in this universe and his power is very real. He is not a myth; there is a very real Devil.

Second, Satan has never been in Hell. He is not there today and he never wants to go there. He will be sent there one day, **Rev. 20:10**. When he goes, he will go as a victim and not as a ruler. He hates the thought of Hell, but he will be punished there throughout eternity!

Third, Satan is one of the great mysteries of the Bible. Why would God allow a being like him to have the power that he does? Satan does have power! That is why we are told to be aware of him and of what he is doing, **1 Pet. 5:8**. He has more power than you or I have, but praise the Lord, God is far more powerful than Satan will ever be!

I. A Horrible Personality

II. v. 2

A HORRIBLE PLACE

(III. In this verse, Satan takes the key he has been given and he uses it to open the door to Hell. This verse tells us just how close men are to Hell. One turn of the key and Hell is unleashed upon the earth. This verse has some things to say about that place called Hell.)

- A. **It Is A Deep Place** – it is called a “**bottomless pit**”. The word “**bottomless**” gives us our word “**abyss**”. It refers to a very deep chasm. The word literally means “**well**”. When Satan turns his key and opens the pit, he is literally opening the shaft that leads into Hell itself.

Science denies it; lost men deny it; human reason denies it; but there is a place under this earth called Hell. The souls of lost people suffer in the fires of Hell. It is clear from the verses that follow in this chapter that certain demons are being held in Hell awaiting their liberty, **2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6**.

- B. **It Is A Dark Place** – We are told that smoke ascends out of this pit and the smoke is so great that it obliterates the light of the sun. There is an old saying that goes, “**Where there is smoke, there is fire**.” The same is true in this case.

Hell is a place of fire, **Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:10-11; 2 Thes. 1:8-9**. Yet, it is a place of darkness; and it is a place of anguish and torment **Matt. 8:12**. It is a place that no one should ever want to go. It is a place no one has to go!

Men joke about Hell and try to pass it off as silly superstition, but Hell is real and wise people make their preparations to avoid its flames. You may not believe it, but a good, gracious God will allow you to go to Hell. My advice to you is that you should flee the wrath to come. Run to Jesus and be saved!

- C. **It Is A Disturbing Place** – Hell is disturbing to me simply because it even exists. I have to think about it, but it is a real place where people will go unless they are saved. So, as disturbing as it is, we must take the time to consider it. Allow me to share a few features of Hell that make it truly disturbing.
- D. **It Is A Demonic Place** – Throughout the New Testament, Hell is associated with demonic activity. **Luke 8:31** teaches us the truth that the demons fear being sent to the abyss. **Rev. 11:7** tells us the Beast, the Antichrist, will ascend out of this place. As I have already mentioned, fallen angels are bound there and Satan himself will spend eternity in Hell.

I. **A Horrible Personality**

II. **A Horrible Place**

III. v. 3-12 **A HORRIBLE PLAGUE**

(III. When the abyss is opened a demonic plague spews out onto the earth. The demons that have been “**reserved unto judgment**”, **2 Pet. 2:4**, are released to carry out their infernal mission.

Imagine a world in which every prison door was suddenly opened. Murders, rapists, serial killers, the criminally insane, are all allowed to walk free. Can you imagine the chaos, the pain the suffering that would occur? Well, the prison doors of earth will not be opened, but Hell’s prison will be opened and emptied and a lost world will be thrown into a time of terrible judgment!

They are described as locusts. But, these are no insects. The description probably comes from the greatness of their numbers. One locust swarm reported in 1889 covered over 2,000 square miles. The image here is of an innumerable host of demons being allowed to ascend out of Hell onto the earth. There are a couple of reasons why I say that these are not real locusts.

1. v. 4 They do not harm plant life, but they torment humans.
2. v. 11 They have a king. **Pro. 30:25** tells us that locusts in the insect world have no king.)
- A. v. 3-4 **The Power They Possess** – These demons are described as locusts, but unlike locusts they will not harm the vegetation. A literal locust swarm will leave a green landscape looking like a desert in a short time. Locusts devour the leaf, the grain and the stalk. These locusts do not come for the plant life but for human life.

They will have the power to sting like a scorpion. Scorpion stings are known to be very painful. They cause swelling and numbness, but they are rarely fatal in humans.

So, these demonic beings are allowed out of Hell, they have the power to cause great pain to people. But, their targets are limited. They will only sting those who unsaved. The 144,000 and other believers are protected from the attacks of this great horde of Hell.

- B. v. 5-6 **The Pain They Produce** – When this attack comes, people will not be killed, but they will be tormented for five months. Five months, May to September, is the typical lifespan of a locust. These hellish locusts will torment men for five months.

The pain inflicted upon men will be unimaginable. Every moment of every day that demon will be there, tormenting, stinging, causing pain and suffering. There will be no escape!

Men will seek every way they can to escape the torment of these demons, but nothing will help them. No pills, no potions, no poultices will work. Alcohol and drugs will not deaden the pain. For five long months they will suffer and they will find no relief from their suffering.

In our day, people flee death. They do everything they can to stave off his coming. Doctors are consulted, pills are consumed, and everything that can be done is done to extend life for a moment more. But in that day men will pursue death in an effort to be free from their pain. People will leap from buildings, crushing their bodies upon the ground and still not be able to die. People will drink deadly poisons and ravage their vital organs and not be able to escape. Others will place guns to their temples and attempt to kill themselves, but they will only succeed in adding more misery to their torment. People may try to kill their loved ones to help them escape, but to no avail. For five months there will be no funerals on earth. Death will take a holiday while men endure the pain and suffering inflicted on them by this demonic invasion.

Some may say, ***“Preacher, I don’t think it will happen like that.”*** Read it again! ***“In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.”*** If you are not saved today, please come to Jesus and avoid this terrible time. It breaks my heart to have to preach these things, but they are real. They are true and they will be your future if you refuse to come to Jesus for salvation!

- C. v. 7-11 **The Picture They Paint** – Beginning in verse 6, these demons are described for us. Let’s take a few minutes to consider the vivid description John gives to this demonic army.
1. v. 7 **Horses prepared to battle** – They resemble mighty war horses, prepared for battle, straining at the bit.
 2. v. 7 **Golden crowns on their heads** – They come to the earth as conquerors. No medicine or act of science that conquer them. For five long, awful months, these demons reign on the earth.
 3. v. 7 **Faces like those of men** – This speaks of their intelligence. The human face is so expressive. It reveals the emotions buried beneath the surface. These beings are intelligent.
 4. v. 8 **Hair like a woman** – They are attractive to people. It may be that they have some seductive charm by which they lure their victims to them. People have always been attracted to the occult. Just look at the popularity of so called psychics, the current fascination with angels, etc.
 5. v. 8 **Teeth like a lion** – Their bite is infectious and painful. A lion’s bite never really heals. There is so much infection and bacteria in the bite of a lion that the wound will rarely heal completely.
 6. v. 9 **Breastplates of iron** – They are invulnerable to attack and they are insensitive to the sufferings of humans. Men will try to kill these demons, but that will be impossible. Men will scream in their pain and will beg for mercy, but their pleas will not touch the hearts of their tormenters.

7. v. 9 **Wings that sound like chariots** – This implies swiftness. They will be able to surround and capture their prey with ease. Men will attempt to run, but there can be no escape.
8. v. 10 **Stings in their tails** – We have already touched on their capability to inflict pain. It is mentioned here to emphasize the fact that the pain and torment of men is their sole objective.
9. v. 11 **They have a king over them** – They will be organized and united in their attacks upon humanity. The fact that this king's name is given in Hebrew and Greek shows us that all unbelievers, both Jew and Gentile, will be targeted by this demonic invasion.

(III. What would it be like to awaken one morning to find this creature waiting for you? That day will come for multiplied millions of lost people. Don't be one of them.)

Conclusion: People hear this talk about demons and they laugh it off and say, “**How old-fashioned! No one believes in demons anymore!**” Oh really? It would seem from reading this passage that God does! Just because you can't see them does not mean they are not real.

When the bubonic plague was ravaging Europe during the Middle Ages, men tried every way they could think of to cure the disease. They came to believe that the plague was caused by clean, fresh air, so they plugged up their chimneys, burned disgusting things in their fireplaces, sat in smoke-filled houses, believing they were going to be all right. Whole cities were clothed in foul-smelling, putrid smoke. They would fire their cannons regularly to blow away the fresh air. If you had walked into one of those towns and told the people that the plague was being caused by an invisible organism transmitted by tiny fleas, they would have laughed you out of town. We now know that what they couldn't see was killing them.

Modern man has adopted the same attitude regarding the spiritual realm. He can't see demons, so they must not be real. Well, they are! Jesus believed in them and He even had confrontations with them in the Gospels. Paul had a run in or two with demons in Acts. They are real and they are coming to this earth.

You do not have to be here for the day when Hell invades the earth. If you will come to Jesus, He will save your soul and take you to a wonderful place called Heaven. If you are saved, you will miss the violence and torment of the Tribulation. You can miss out on this terrible time, if you will come to Jesus Christ. There is a way out! Don't wait until **Hell Comes To Your House** to cry out for mercy. Cry out to God today and be saved by His grace!



Picture of the
Scorpion from
the Bottomless
Pit

A World At War

Revelation 9:13-21

Introduction: The images depicted in this chapter make it one of the most disturbing passages in the entire Bible. In **verses 1-12**, we studied a description of a swarm of demons. These demons came to the earth to torment all those who refused to bow to God. They tormented men for five long months and brought terrible suffering to the unsaved. The only grace in those verses is the fact that those who know the Lord Jesus as their Savior will be spared from that attack. It is also a blessing to know that those who are saved today will miss that terrible time because they are safe, at home in Heaven, with the Lord Jesus.

As we continue to look at the events of **chapter 9**, we come to the sixth trumpet judgment. When that trumpet sounds a voice is heard to speak from between the horns of the golden altar. The mention of this altar reminds us of the golden altar of incense that was in the tabernacle and the temple. The golden altar was where incense was burned as an offering to God. It was the place of prayer, the place of intercession. It was a place of mercy, where prayers could be offered to the Lord.

In these verses, the place of mercy has become a place of judgment. When people reject the grace, mercy and love of God, they are left with nothing but His wrath and judgment. That is what we are going to see in these verses. The world has rejected grace and they are given judgment.

Let's take some time to look into the events of the latter part of **Revelation 9**. We are given a picture here of **The World At War**. Let me share some facts about that period of time.

I. v. 14-15 **A TIME OF DEMONIC ACTIVITY**

(III. The voice from the altar commands the release of four fallen angels that have been kept chained in the Euphrates River. We do not know why these angels were chained to begin with. We do not know how long they have been chained. But, we know that when they are let loose on the world, terrible death and destruction follows with them. We are not given much information about these angels, but there are a few truths mentioned here that need to be addressed.)

A. v. 14 **A Place Is Mentioned** – We are told that they are bound in the “**River Euphrates**”. This river is one of the most prominent in the Word of God. It was here that God planted the Garden of Eden, **Gen. 2:14**. It was here that God made mankind. The Euphrates River has been the scene of many of the firsts of humanity. The first sin; the first apostasy; the first murder; and the first rebellion against the Word of God all occurred here.

The ancient city of Babylon sprang to life along the banks of this river. Babylon was the birthplace of false religion, of demon worship and of idolatry. Many of the false religions practiced in our world today can trace their origins all the way to Babylon. This area was the home of Nimrod, **Gen. 10:8-10**. He was the father of many vile, ungodly worship practices. Some of which still exist to this day!

It was here, along the banks of this great river that all of the great cultural, religious and political systems of the world came to life. This river was said to be the eastern boundary of the land promised to Abraham, **Gen. 15:18**. It is this river that forms the dividing line between the Middle East and the Far East. The attention of the world is focused on this area today; and this area will continue to be the focus of the world's attention until Jesus comes in glory.

- B. v. 15 **A Plan Is Mentioned** – These angels have been kept bound until a specific period of time. God is going to use them for His Own purposes as He judges the earth. The words, “***were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year***”, tells us that God has a plan! As we read this book, it may appear that things are spinning out of control. But the opposite is true! God is in control and He is working out His will according to a highly detailed, specific timetable. He knows what He is doing and He can be trusted to do right, **Gen. 18:25**.

(**Note:** By the way, He knows what He is doing in your life as well. It may not always seem like it, but God has a plan. It is a good plan. It is the best plan, and He will bring His perfect will to pass in His time.)

- C. v. 15 **A Purpose Is Mentioned** – This verse is very graphic. It tells us that these demonic spirits are released for the sole purpose of destroying one-third of the human race. Consider this, **Rev. 6:8** says that 25% of the earth's population is killed there. **Rev. 8:11** says that many die from drinking poisoned waters. If the population of the earth is about 6 billion when the Tribulation begins, it will have been cut in half by the time the sixth trumpet judgment is carried out and another one-third of humanity is slaughtered. Imagine, in the space of a few short years 50%, one out of every two people living on the earth, are dead and gone! In the United States it would be the equivalent of 150 million people dead in a very short period of time. Yes, according to **Rev. 9:5-6**, dead will take a five-month holiday; but it will come back with a vengeance and billions will die at the hand of these four fallen angels!

(**Note:** People read this and they look at it with doubt. They make fun of the notion of fallen angels, bound in a river, released on the earth, bring with them untold death and suffering. Men may deny the truth of these verses, but that does not diminish their reality.

Angels have power and fallen angels have power as well. Daniel found this out when he prayed to the Lord and the answer to his prayer was delayed three weeks by demonic activity, **Dan. 10:12-13**.

We cannot see it, but there is a struggle going on around us right now, **Eph. 6:12**. Angels and demons are at war all around us. One day, the reality of spiritual battle will be made real to humanity. Four demons will be released on this earth and one-third of the remaining human population will die!)

I. A Time Of Demonic Activity

II. v. 16-19 A TIME OF DESTRUCTIVE ACTIVITY

(III. These four demons will be released with the mission of killing one-third of humanity. They will use their power to energize a vast human army. They will use this demonically inspired force to accomplish their mission. Let's talk about this army.)

A. v. 16 **The Size Of This Army** – We are told that this army will number “**two hundred thousand thousand**”. A little math reveals that we are talking about an army of 200,000,000 men! We are talking about an army of immense proportions! Someone has calculated that an army that large could line up in a formation 1 mile wide and 87 miles long! Just a few generations ago an army of that size was almost incomprehensible. Today, it is not just a possibility; it is a stark reality.

Communist China has had the ability since 1964 to raise a fighting force of over 200,000,000 men. In the year 2,000 China had 363,050,980 available men between the ages of 15 and 49. Of that number some 199,178,361 men were fit for military service. Each year another 10,839,039 men reach fighting age in China.^[1]

I share these figures to teach us that the Bible is accurate, even though men want to make light of its prophecies. Such an army is possible in our day.

B. v. 17-19 **The Symbolism Of This Army** – As we read this description of this vast army, one of the questions that arises is whether this army is human or demonic. I believe that we are looking at a human army that is demonically controlled and energized. They are men, but they are men who march under the banner of Hell. They are humans, but they are humans under the control and direction of Satan and His demons. Let's look at what John tells us about this army.

Something that strikes me is the language used to describe these soldiers. ***It is the language of symbolism and it is, first of all, language that is descriptive of Hell.*** The men have breastplates of fire, jacinth and brimstone, or sulphur. These are the colors, red, blue and yellow. These are all the colors of fire. These are colors associated with the torments of Hell itself. Their horses breathe fire, smoke and brimstone. Again, these bring to mind images of Hell and its torments. Hell will be a place of smoke, of fire and of brimstone. These soldiers come with the colors of Hell; the smell of Hell; the weapons of Hell and the energy of Hell. It is a picture of an army controlled by Hell.

People always want to know what we Christians believe about Hell. Do we believe that Hell is real, or just a symbol? I always tell people that they had better hope it is real. A symbol is always a weak attempt to describe something that is very real. If the language in the Bible regarding Hell is symbolic, then Hell is far worse than anything we have ever heard or read.

There is also language that is used to describe things that are indescribable. John is trying to use First Century language to describe a Twenty-First Century army. As we look at the descriptions John gives us of these men, their horses and their methods of killing, it seems to me that he is trying to describe a scene for which he did not have the right vocabulary.

1. **Faces like Lions** – This may indicate that their horses, or whatever vehicles they ride, are fierce looking.
2. **Men are killed by the smoke, fire and brimstone that issue from the mouths of these beasts** – Could this be a description of tanks, rockets, machine guns, etc?
3. **These beasts are said to have power in their heads and in their tails to kill and do damage** – This brings to mind images of helicopters, missiles, warheads, etc.

Imagine a man from the 1800's plucked out of his time period and placed in our day. Now, imagine that same man being taken back to his time period. Now, imagine him trying to describe what he saw in our day to people in his day using the vocabulary he possessed.

(Note: It would be foolish to be too dogmatic and say that these verses can only describe a modern army and its equipment. We must, however, consider that possibility.

Regardless of how you interpret these words, one thing is clear. It will be a terrible time of destruction, death and demonic activity. I praise the Lord for the fact that I will not be here when these events come to pass!)

I. **A Time Of Demonic Activity**

II. **A Time Of Destructive Activity**

III. v. 20-21 **A TIME OF DEPRAVED ACTIVITY**

(III. We are told very clearly that these demons unleash a vast army upon the earth. One-third of all the people living on the earth will be killed. You would think that death and destruction on that scale would cause mankind to look within his heart, acknowledge his sins and turn in repentance toward God.

Those who survive the carnage continue on in the sins, refusing to repent. These verses are a clear X-Ray of the condition of the human heart. We can long to find good in man if we wish, but man is totally depraved. He is a hopeless sinner and, apart from the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, there is not good in man at all, **Rom. 3:10-23**. Every human carries within his heart the seeds of evil and he or she is capable of committing any sin that can be imagined. Lest we think better of ourselves than we should, the same capacity to plumb the depths of evil dwells in our hearts as well!)

A. v. 20 **Man Is Depraved In His Worship** – Given all the sin and chaos during the Tribulation, one might think that it would be a time empty of religious activity. As we will learn from this verse, and from future studies, the Tribulation will be a time marked by intense religious activity. But, as you know, no religion can save. It takes faith in the shed blood of Jesus to accomplish that!

Man is a religious creature. Regardless of where you go in this world you will find people engaged in worship. From the darkest jungles of Africa and South America, to the highest mountains in Asia, to the great cities of Europe, and America, you will find people engaged in worship. Every culture, whether it is primitive or advanced, has some involvement with worship. Even the atheist worships. He merely directs his worship toward himself.

1. This verse tells us that religion in the Tribulation Period will be marked by the worship of demons and by the worship of material things. Men will be caught up in the worship of the occult. There is an increase in our day in the interest in the occult. Movies, music and other popular media provide an opportunity for many to learn more about the devil, demons and Satanism. Witchcraft is becoming more popular than ever, and the numbers of practicing witches is increasing at an astonishing rate. All of this is leading toward the day when mankind will worship demons. You see, involvement with the occult begins with **entertainment**. People learn about it and begin to dabble in it. Then, it moves into the arena of **enlightenment**. People then begin to seek answers and help for their problems in the world of the occult. It then moves into the area of **enslavement**. People get trapped in the system and are unable to get free. America, and the rest of the world, is headed in that direction today! If you reject God and His Son Jesus, then you have nothing left but Satan!

2. Man will also give his worship to gods of his own creation. He will worship “**idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk**”. This may either mean that man will make gods that he will bow down to and worship. Or, it could mean that he will give his worship to the material possessions of life. Man will worship his money, his car, his home, and his possessions. Even though he will give his love, his adoration and his worship to these things, they are not gods at all. They cannot see him, hear him or move to help him. His worship of these things will not benefit him at all!

(**Note:** There is a thought here that should not be missed. Every person should look at the God he or she worships. Look at that person or thing that has your love, adoration and worship. Can your God hear you when you pray? Can your God see you when you have a need? Can your God move to do something about your problem? If not, then you need a God Who can! Ill. Many are worshipping gods like those of ancient Israel, **Psa. 115:1-8; Jer. 10:3-6.**)

- B. v. 21 **Man Is Depraved In His Works** – It seems that there will be a significant increase in wickedness in that day. John uses four words to describe the moral condition of the sinners living during the Tribulation. Let’s consider those four words briefly.

1. **Murders** – It is hard to imagine a civilization being more murderous than our own. Hardly a day goes by without us hearing about several murders here in America. Large towns and small, no place is immune from the blight of murder. People kill others out of hatred or lust every day.

There are hit men who will kill someone they do not even know, if the money is right. They don’t kill for hate; they kill for profit.

Then there are serial killers. People who roam the country killing total strangers for their own perverted reasons. They kill for thrills.

Then there are the abortionists. These people commit murder every day and they are protected by the laws of America! More babies have been sacrificed on the altar of convenience and personal rights than the total number of people killed in all the concentration camps of Nazi Germany!

Why are things this way? We have taught a generation that man descended from apes. We have taught a generation that there is no God to be accountable. We have taught a generation that every person has the ability to determine what is right and wrong for himself. Our children are raised up on a steady diet of godless humanism and they have no thought for the rights and property of others. Just look at how rude and violent people have become!

This verse teaches us that the Tribulation will be marked by murders. Apparently, the violence of mankind will increase after the removal of the church.

2. **Sorceries** – The word “**sorceries**” comes from the word “**pharmakeia**”. You recognize that word; we get the modern word “**pharmacy**” from it. There are two possible interpretations for the use of this word in this verse. First, as we have already seen, the Tribulation will see a marked increase in satanic worship. Second, there will also be a rise in drug abuse. We are seeing this take place right before our eyes. The marijuana of the 1960’s and 70’s has been replaced with the crack and meth of this generation. Hardly a week passes without our hearing of a drug bust or a drug related arrest. Our world is busy seeking an escape hatch from its problems through the use of mind-altering drugs. This trend will increase as we move through these last days. It will reach pandemic proportions during the Tribulation. It is even possible that the government will resort to drugs to control an increasingly violent population.
3. **Fornication** – This is translated from the Greek word “**porneia**”. It gives us our modern word “**pornography**”. It is a word that was used in that day to refer to every kind of illicit, sexual sin. It covers every type of sexual activity that mankind can be engaged in. Our country has already seen the “**free love**” movement and the “**love ins**” of the hippies. We have been through the “**sexual revolution**”. We have witnessed the day when things that were not even discussed in public are as common on our television screens as a Coca-Cola commercial. Cable, satellite and the Internet pipe endless streams of pornographic fare into our homes, and network television is just as bad. Children who are allowed to watch television without adult supervision know more about sex by the age of seven than most of us knew when we got married! Our society is saturated by sex. Man has taken a beautiful gift from God and perverted it.

I'm going to say this again. I know that I am old-fashioned, but I am biblical! God designed sex to be exercised within the framework of the marriage relationship. Any sexual expression that takes place outside a marriage relationship involving one man and one woman is a sin and it will be judged by God!

Sexual perversion will increase as we move into the last days. Other parts of the world are confronted with even more perversions than we are here. It will increase as the days go by.

4. **Thefts** – The personal rights and property of others will have no meaning at all. We are already seeing this trend in our society, as a segment of our population believes that it is their right to take what they want when they want from whomever they can get it from. This attitude will become increasingly evident in the last days and will reach terrible proportions during the Tribulation. As food, water, medicine clothing and shelter become increasingly scarce; men will take what they want.

Conclusion: The Bible paints a bleak picture of the events of the Tribulation Period. There will be death and violence on an unprecedented level throughout the world. Yet, in the midst of it all, men will continue to harden their hearts to the Gospel of Christ and will continue their headlong plunge into the fires of Hell.

That is why we should do everything in our power to reach them with the Gospel. No sacrifice is too great; no distance too vast; no expense too steep and effort is wasted in the work of reaching men for Jesus.

As I close this message let me leave you with this invitation. First, if you have never been saved, this could be your future. Come to Jesus and be saved. Then you can miss the Tribulation and make Heaven your home. Second, if you are saved, but you haven't been living like you should, this is the day to get things settled between you and the Lord. Third, if you would like to do more and be used more to reach people for Him - He is looking for laborers for His harvest. Come and be involved today. Fourth, if you know people who will be left here and you want to come and pray for them, this altar is open.

The Lull Before The Final Storm

Revelation 10:1-11

Introduction: We are in another one of the parenthetical passages in Revelation. If you will remember, we encountered one of these between the six and the seventh seals. Now, we encounter one between the sixth and the seventh trumpets. There are several reasons why the Lord gives us these pauses in the action. One reason is to give the reader a break. We have been studying terrible scenes of tragedy and death. He gives us these pauses to allow us to regroup and gather our emotions. These pauses allow the Lord to give us words of encouragement and comfort.

Another reason He does this is to show everyone Who is truly in control As you read about the horrors of the Tribulation Period, you might conclude that sin and Satan are in control. But, God steps in to remind us that He is still the Sovereign God of the universe! God wants us to know that regardless of how dark the hour becomes and in spite of what the devil and his crowd might do, God is still on His throne and He is still in control of all things!

These pauses also serve to focus our attention on the blessed Lamb of God. In the midst of His wrath, we desperately need to be reminded of His great power.

You see, there is one fundamental problem with the world today; the world leaves Jesus out of its calculations and plans. In ancient times, astronomers like Aristotle and Ptolemy believed that the earth was the center of the universe. It wasn't until Nicholas Copernicus and Johannes Kepler discovered that the sun was the center of the solar system and all other things revolved around it, that everything fell into place and began to make sense.

This world has cut Jesus, the Son, out of the picture and they have replaced Him with the United Nations and other faulty man made institutions. The result has been total chaos. When Jesus is restored as the focal point of mankind's attention, then all things will make sense and fall into place. That is what God is up to here. (Ill. That will work in an individual's life as well!)

This passage introduces the middle of the tribulation period. It also serves to place Jesus back on center stage. Let's notice what is taking place upon the earth as we see ***The Lull Before The Final Storm***.

I. v. 1-3a

THE VISION JOHN SAW

(Ill. In this passage, John sees a "***mighty angel***" descending from Heaven. We are not given the identity of this angel. Some people believe it could be Gabriel the archangel. Others vote for Michael. We simply do not know. However, if you allow me, I am going to suggest that this angel is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. I will give you several reasons in a moment.

As you may remember, Jesus showed up in the Old Testament all the time. These pre-Bethlehem appearances are called “**Theophanies or Christophanies**”. Jesus appeared to Abraham at his tent door. Jesus appeared to Samson’s mother and father. Jesus appeared to Joshua outside Jericho. Jesus met with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the furnace. Jesus helped Daniel in the Lion’s den. If He could show up then, there is no reason to believe that He could not do the same thing in these verses. In fact, as these verses are studied, all the evidence points to the fact that this is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. Let’s examine the evidence together.)

A. v. 1a **We Are Told Of His Dwelling Place** – This angel comes down from the very place Jesus Christ dwells. **John 3:13**, “***And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.***” Jesus Christ is in Heaven today, seated at the Father’s Right hand, making intercession for you and me, **Heb. 1:3; 10:12**.

B. v. 1b – 2a **We Are Told Of His Description** – Several key descriptive phrases are used to illustrate this angel’s appearance.

1. **He Is Clothed With A Cloud** – The cloud is garment of deity, **Psa. 104:3**, “***Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind!***”

In the Old Testament, during the wilderness wanderings, the Lord Himself led His people with a glory cloud through the trackless desert, **Ex. 16**. He was with them to guide them and guard them then. Here in the darkest days the earth will ever see, He is still with His people to protect them and lead them.

Dark clouds covered Sinai when Moses received the Law, **Ex. 19**. God clothed Himself in a glory cloud when He met Moses on the mountain, **Ex. 24, 34**.

When Jesus ascended back to Heaven, a cloud received Him, **Acts 1:9**. When He returns, He will do so on the clouds, **1 Thes. 4:16-17; Rev. 1:7**. He is clothed with a cloud!

2. **He Has A Rainbow Upon His Head** – The rainbow is a symbol of the mercy and faithfulness of God. It first appeared in **Gen. 9** after the flood to guarantee the Lord’s promise that He would never destroy the earth with water again. It is a symbol of His faithfulness.

It also appears in **Rev. 4**, where the throne of God is surrounded with an emerald rainbow. Here, it is a symbol of His mercy.

So, the Lord comes as the faithful One and as the merciful One. What a blessing it is to know that even in the midst of wrath, the Lord remembers mercy, **Hab. 3:2**.

3. **His Face Shines Like The Sun** – This a description of His glory! When Jesus walked the dusty roads of this world, He appeared to be an ordinary man. So ordinary that He did not stand out as anyone special by His appearance alone, **Isa. 53:2-3**. He concealed His heavenly fame within His earthly frame, **Phil. 2:5-8**.

However, there was one occasion when His glory came out, **Matt. 17:1-8**. One that the glory that was on the inside became visible on the outside and Matthew tells us that Jesus outshone the sun! When Saul of Tarsus met Him on the road to Damascus, Jesus was brighter than the noonday sun, **Acts 9**. By the way, men love darkness, but when the Light shines on their sins, they are brought to their knees before the glorious Lamb of God.

4. **His Feet Are Like Pillars Of Fire** – This is a picture of His judgment. When Jesus comes, He is not coming as the Savior. He is coming back as the Sovereign Lord of the universe. He is coming to execute judgment on all those who have rejected Him!

The word “***pillars***” also brings to mind images of firmness, stability, and strength. We are looking at a God Who is rock steady and able to carry through with His mission. He is going to judge this world, the sinners in the world and Satan himself, and no being will be able to prevent Him from doing what He intends to do!

- C. v. 2b-3a **We Are Told Of His Dominion** – Here is a wonderful picture of our Lord. He is standing with one foot on the land, one foot on the sea and He has a little book in His hand. This is a picture of His dominion over the entire world.

In ancient time, when a person was going to take dominion over a place or a person, he put his foot on it. When God gave Canaan to Israel, He said, “***Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses***”, **Joshua 1:3**. When one king would conquer another king, he would place his foot on the defeated king’s neck as a symbol of total domination.

We are also told that He “***cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth***”. It is said that the roaring of a lion can strike fear into the bravest heart. An adult male lion’s roar can be heard as far as five miles away. Lion’s usually roar just after sunset. They do so to proclaim a place as their territory. That is what we are seeing in these verses. The Lord is staking His claim and He is saying, “I am the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. This world is my world. Keep your hands off what belongs to me!”

That is what we see here. We see the victorious Jesus laying claim to the planet earth. He holds in His hand the book, which is the title deed to the planet. He stands with one foot on the dry land and another on the sea. Jesus has come to take control of this world. He has come to take over!

Let the world and the devil do what the will, our Lord reigns today and He will forever. This truth will become increasingly clearer as the end draws near.

I. The Vision John Saw

II. v. 3b-7 THE VOICES JOHN HEARD

- A. v. 3b-4 **There Were Voices Of Mystery** – John hears seven thunders speaking. Apparently they spoke a language John could understand and he got ready to write down what they were saying. But, the Lord stopped him and told John to seal up those things which he heard the thunders say.

So, what did they say? I do not know! Neither does anyone else! Why write about it if we are not told what they say? God has some things that He wants to keep concealed for the time being. Paul writes of a time when he was caught up into the third Heaven. He was taken into very presence of God and He was not allowed to write about it, **2 Cor. 12:4**.

The reason God puts this here is very simple I think. He wants to teach us a very valuable lesson. He wants us to know that there are just some things in life that are going to remain a mystery! Look at **Deut. 29:29**. That verse says, “***The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.***”

There are thousands of questions in life for which you and do not have answers. Why do good people suffer? Why do babies get sick and die? Why is there so much evil in our world? Why is living holy so hard? We will never have the answers to these and ten thousand other questions this side of Heaven. The best thing we can do is to leave the mysteries with the Lord and trust Him to do right, III. **Gen. 18:25; Rom. 8:28; 2 Cor 4:17**.

Right no, we are looking at the carpet of life from the bottom and it looks like a tangled mess of threads. One day, we will be allowed to look at the carpet from the top. It will make sense then! Paul says, “***For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known,***” **1 Cor. 13:12**.

- B. v. 5-7 **There Were Voices Of Manifestation** – While the voices of the thunders remain a mystery, the next voice John hears brings a message that is crystal clear. The Person John saw lifts His holy hands and makes a tremendous promise. He tells John that the days of waiting are finished. God is preparing to consummate His work and complete His Word. God is preparing to bring His work of judgment and redemption to an end.

In case you have forgotten, God does not operate like we do. His timetable is vastly different from ours. We think we are in a period of delay. We think things are moving so slowly. We think God will never fulfill all the promises He has made. Well, we are wrong! God wears a different kind of timepiece than we do, **2 Pet. 3:8**.

You see, it appears that sin and Satan are willing the battle. The truth is far different. III. I heard about these boys one time who were out playing baseball. A fellow was riding by and stopped and to watch the fellows play for a little bit.

He looked over there and he said to one of the little fellows, he said, "**Son, how's your team doing?**"

And he said, "**Well, we're not doing so good.**"

He said, "**Well what's the score, son?**"

He said, "**They're beating us 23 to nothing.**"

He said, "**Boy, that is bad, son, that's just real bad.**"

He said, "**Aw, yes sir, but it's not too bad, we ain't got in to bat yet.**"

Listen, the devil is up to bat right now but one of these days God's half of the inning is going to come up and there'll be no more delay. Look at **Heb. 10:37**, "**For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.**"

I like that! According to God's calendar, Jesus has only been gone two days. Soon, God is going to turn the page, tell Gabriel to blow his trumpet and Jesus will return for His church. Then, God will judge the earth, sin and the devil and usher in eternity. It won't be long now! Hallelujah!

I. The Vision John Saw

II. The Voices John Heard

III. v. 8-11 THE VOLUME JOHN TOOK

(III. John is told to take the little book out of the hand of the Angel. He is told to eat it, but he is warned that the book will be sweet in his mouth and bitter in his stomach. John does as he is told and finds that the words of the Angel are true. The book was sweet as honey to his taste; but it was bitter in his belly. Then John is told that he is to take the message he has taken is and share it with others who need to hear.

This is a strange little section of Scripture. It does, however, teach a couple of lessons about the Word of God that we need to hear today.

- A. **The Word Of God Is To Be Swallowed** – The Bible is spiritual food. Jesus said, “***But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,***” **Matthew 4:4**. Jeremiah said, “***Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts,***” **Jer. 15:16**. Job said, “***I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food,***” **Job 23:12**. Peter said, “***As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby,***” **1 Pet. 1:22**.

There is something special about this Book! It is food for the hungry soul. It is a balm for the hurting soul. It is meat for the growing soul. If we are be all that God wants us to be, and then we are to get into the book and feed. We are to linger there and graze there. We are to drink deeply of its words so that our souls can grow strong in the things of the Lord. We must get into the Bible, for ourselves, every day! Are you feeding in the green pastures of this Word as you should? Remember, you are what you eat!

(Note: When John swallowed the Book, he found that it was both a blessing and burden. It was sweet and it was bitter at the same time.

The sweetness of this Book can be found in its passages about the grace, love and mercy of our God. When we read of Jesus dying for our sins and rising from the dead it is so very sweet. When we read of Heaven; it is so sweet. When we read that He will meet our needs; never leave us; and come to take us home some day that is also so sweet! When the sinner reads that Jesus will save him if he will only come to Jesus by faith that is sweeter than words can describe. This is a book filled with sweetness!

But, it is also a Book filled with bitterness. This Book tells us about a Hell that awaits all the lost. It is this Book that the Spirit of God uses to convict the hearts of saints and sinners alike of sin. This Book tells of judgment, wrath and damnation. It is a bitter book too.

Sometimes I read my Bible and I am thrilled and blessed and helped. Other times I read it and I am brought to tears over something it has revealed in my life. It is a bittersweet Book!

Be that as it may, when we take the whole Book, the bitter and the sweet, the blessings and the burdens, we are able to say that it fits together so well. It reveals our problems, but it always points us to the right solution. Praise the Lord for the Word of God!

- B. **The Word Of God Is To Be Shared** – John was told to share the message of the Book with others. The same burden has been placed on our shoulders today. We are to take this Book with both its blessings and its burdens and we are to share its message with a lost and dying world, **Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15**. God did not give us His Word for our benefit only; He gave us His Word to share with the world. Let us go forth with the Word of God in our hearts and one our lips and tell a lost world that “***Jesus Saved; Jesus Saves***”!

Conclusion: When we leave this chapter behind, we are going to enter a time of tragedy like we have never seen before. Thank God that He has given us this fresh glimpse of His Son. Thank God that He has reminded us that He is in control. Thank God that He has reminded us of the importance of His Word.

Are there needs today? Do you need to be saved? Do you need to come home to the Father? Do you need to come and commit to reading your Bible and sharing the message of Jesus like you should? If there are needs, this altar is open.

The Tribulation Temple

Revelation 11:1-2

Introduction: We are still in the midst of a parenthetical passage that began in **chapter 10**. We are in the midst of a pause in the actions and activities of the Tribulation Period judgments. As we come to **Revelation 11**, we have arrived at one of the most difficult passages in the book of the Revelation. It is hard to understand, but keeping two thoughts in mind will help us as we study these verses.

1. **We are on Jewish ground** – The images and terminology are Jewish in nature. These verses deal with the future of the people of Israel.
2. **We are dealing with future events** – Some theologians take these verses and try to make them fit the past. Some even try to make them fit into the present. It seems to me that they will only fit into the future.

What we are going to study today is a prophecy concerning the future Temple in Jerusalem. I thought it would be good if we just took our time in this chapter and considered these matters in some detail. So, with that in mind, let's examine John's words concerning the future Temple. I want you to see that this prophecy contains some very specific visions of the future of the Jewish people. So, let's study together ***The Tribulation Temple***.

I. v. 1

A VISION OF PROMISE

(III. When John mentions the Temple, he is referring to place dedicated to Jewish worship. The Jews have been without a Temple for nearly 2,000 years now. This verse makes it crystal clear that a new Temple will be built there in Jerusalem. A brief study of matters related to the Jewish Temple might be in order here.)

- A. **The Past History Of The Temple** – For some 500 years, from the time of Moses to David, the people of Israel worshiped God at the Tabernacle. It was there that sacrifices were carried out. It was there that the priests made intercession for the sins of the people. It was there that Israel sought their God.

Before David died, he expressed a desire to build a permanent house of God, a Temple, where God's presence could dwell, **2 Sam. 7:1-4**. God, however, refused to allow David to build the Temple, because he was a man of war, **1 Chron. 28:3**. The privilege of building the Temple fell to David's son, Solomon, **2 Sam. 7:12-13**. David was not allowed to build the Temple, but he began to accumulate the building materials that would be necessary for its construction, **1 Chron. 22:1-5; 13-16**. Before David died, he charged Solomon to build the Temple, **1 Chron. 22:6-19**.

Solomon built the Temple as he was commanded by David, **1 Kings 6:1**. It took seven years to complete the building, **1 Kings 6:38**. When it was finished, it was dedicated to the Lord with a lavish sacrifice. **1 Kings 8:63** says that twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep were offered to the Lord at the Temple dedication. At this dedication, when the Ark of the Covenant was brought from the Tabernacle into the Temple, God demonstrated His approval of this house of worship by filling it with His Shekinah glory, **2 Chron. 7:1-3**.

This magnificent Temple cost an enormous amount of money to build. The Illinois Society of Architects estimated, in 1925, that it would have cost \$87 billion dollars! If that Temple were built in our day, its cost would approach \$500 billion dollars.

This Temple building dominated the Jerusalem skyline until it was destroyed by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC. The Jews were taken into captivity into Babylon. Some were allowed to return to Jerusalem, and in 536 BC, the Temple was rebuilt by Zerubbabel. However, this Temple was not as elaborate or as beautiful as the first Temple had been. The prophet Haggai writes, ***“Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?” Hag. 2:3.*** **Ezra 3:12** adds this insight regarding the rebuilt Temple, ***“But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy.”***

This Temple was also destroyed in 168 BC by Antiochus Epiphanes who desecrated the Temple by slaughtering a pig on the altar and demanding that he be worshiped as god. Antiochus Epiphanes dismantled the Temple. Later, Herod the Great, in an effort to gain the support of the Jews, rebuilt this Temple around 6 BC. Herod's Temple took some 46 years to build, (**John 2:20**), and it was far grander than the second Temple had been. This would have been Herod's Temple where the Lord Jesus worshiped and preached.

This Temple was also slated for destruction. In **Matthew 24:1-2**, Jesus prophesied that the Temple would be destroyed. This took place in 70 AD, when Titus the Roman general besieged Jerusalem. During that siege, which lasted from 66 AD to 70 AD, some one million Jews were slain. It is said that Titus crucified so many Jewish men during the siege that he ran out of wood to make new crosses. The roads were literally lined with crosses occupied by the rotting remains of the Roman victims.

When Jerusalem fell in 70 AD, the city was destroyed. The Temple was utterly demolished. All that remains of the ancient Temple is the Western Wailing Wall. Orthodox Jews go there to pray every day. They believe that all prayers ascend to Heaven by means of Jerusalem. So, they write their prayers on paper and stuff them in the cracks of the wall. Jews from around the world can E-mail their prayers to Jerusalem. These prayers are printed and taken to the Wailing Wall. See: english.thekotel.org

Currently, the Jews have no Temple, but that will change in the near future.

- B. **The Present Preparations For The Temple** – When John mentions a Temple in **verse 1**, he is letting us in on the truth that a new Temple must be built in Jerusalem. It might surprise you to learn that some people are already making preparations for such an event. Let's take a quick look at what the Jews are doing to get ready.

One problem that has always stood between the Jews and a new Temple is the Mosque of Omar, or the Dome of the Rock. This is the third holiest site for Muslims. It was completed in 691 AD. Inside the dome is a great rock. Muslims believe that that Mohammad ascended into Heaven from this rock, conferred with Moses, and returned to earth with the prayers that all Muslims are supposed to pray. For many centuries, it was believed that the Dome of the Rock was built on the site of the original Temple. It was believed that the Dome of the Rock would have to be demolished before a new Temple could be rebuilt. However, recent excavations revealed that the ancient Temple was actually about 100 yards north of the Dome of the Rock site. This, a new Temple could be built without disturbing the Muslim holy place.

By the way, the problems in the Middle East today are not political problems; they are religious problems. Every group involved in the turmoil in Israel wants control of the ancient city of Jerusalem. It is the most contested ground in the world. For the Jews, their struggle is one of survival. For the Arabs and Muslims, their goal is the annihilation of Israel. It will all be settled one day!

It is interesting to read that preparations orthodox Jews are making for the rebuilding of their Temple. One group, known as The Temple Institute, is dedicated to the ideal of rebuilding the Jewish Temple. They have been working to prepare for the day when the Temple is a reality. They have already prepared many of the items they will need to resume Temple worship. A visit to their website at <http://www.templeinstitute.org> is very enlightening! The Temple Institute has already built the Golden Altar of Incense; the Menorah; and the Table of Shewbread. They have reconstructed most of the garments worn by the High Priest. They have also produced many of the instruments used by the Levites in Temple worship. The day is coming and the Jews are getting ready. They know that a new Temple will indeed stand in Jerusalem someday soon.

All the Jews need are the ashes of the Red Heifer so they can consecrate a priest. They are doing their best to breed an acceptable animal as we speak. They are also trying to find the Ark of the Covenant. They may succeed some day!

At any rate, much more could be said about Jewish preparations for the rebuilding of the Temple. But, just this small amount is exciting news! It makes me want to look up!

- C. **The Powerful Message Of The Temple** – The message delivered by this promise of a new Temple in Jerusalem is that God is not through with the Jewish people. They are still His chosen ones and He still has a plan for them. He has already returned them to their homeland. On May 14, 1948, a nation that had been extinct from nearly 1,900 years was raised from the ashes. Israel became a nation and was restored to her former lands. The Jews began to return to Israel. Our generation has seen God's hand of protection upon the people of Israel during the wars they fought and won against overwhelming odds. And, God isn't through yet! He will continue to use them and will save a remnant of the Jewish people in the end. The promise of a new Temple is simply God's way of saying, "***I am not finished with Israel!***"

I. A Vision Of Promise

II. v. 1 **A VISION OF PRESERVATION**

(III. John is told to take a reed and measure the Temple, the altar, and the worshipers. This reed refers to a plant that grows in the Jordan valley. These reeds grow to a height of 15 to 20 feet. They are hollow and lightweight, yet they are exceedingly strong. They are used for walking sticks, **Eze. 29:6**. They are cut down and sharpened and used as writing tools too. **3 John 13**. They were also used in ancient times as measuring sticks. A "***rod***" is about six cubits, or nine feet. John is told to take the measuring rod and measure the Temple. This is symbolic of two things.)

- A. **A Symbol Of Full Preservation** – The act of measuring speaks of possession. God is claiming the Temple, the altar, and the worshipers as His Own. This is just another reminder that God is not through with the Jewish people, III. **Rom. 11:1-5, 26!**
- B. **A Symbol Of Faithful Preservation** – God will keep every promise He has ever made to the nation of Israel. He has set them aside for a time because of their unbelief. In the end, however, Israel will be saved! God will continue to work in and through Israel until a remnant is saved, **Zech. 12:10-13:1; 8-9**.

(Note: Some in our day are attempting to replace Israel with the church. They claim that Israel has been forever set aside and the church has inherited the promises God made to Israel. Folks, we do not want the promises God made to Israel! The promises that we have as the church are far superior to those given to Abraham and his descendants. They will inherit the earth; we will inherit a home in glory! There is a difference between Israel and the church and that difference must always be kept in mind when studying the Bible.)

I. A Vision Of Promise

II. A Vision Of Preservation

III. v. 2 **A VISION OF PUNISHMENT**

(III. While this measuring of the Temple is in one sense a blessing for the nation of Israel, it also brings to mind images of judgment. The rod is mentioned four times in the book of Revelation. One is in these verses. The three other times are in connection with the Lord Jesus and they tell us that He will rule this world with a “**rod of iron**”, **Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15**. So, while there is a vision of Promise and Preservation, there is also a vision of Punishment.)

A. **The Realities Of This Punishment** – John is told not to measure the outer court of the Temple. It is to be given to the Gentiles and they will occupy the city for three and one-half years. These are the days of the second half of the Tribulation Period. This verse brings out some thoughts that need to be considered.

The Temple will be rebuilt sometime during the early days of the Tribulation. No doubt, one of the first accomplishments of the Antichrist will be to arrange a peace treaty between Israel and her enemies. He will do what no other diplomat has ever been able to do. Even today, diplomats and world leaders are trying to secure peace in Jerusalem. They will all fail! The Antichrist will bring a temporary, pseudo peace. When Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace comes, He will bring permanent peace to Israel.

This peace treaty will give the Jews the right to build their new house of worship, **Dan. 9:27**. The Jews will rebuild their Temple and will begin their sacrificial system of worship. Once again the Jews will slaughter animals in their attempt to keep the Law of God.

Things will go well for a while, but somewhere around the mid-point of the Tribulation, the Antichrist will enter the Holy of Holies in the Temple and he will enthrone himself as god, **Matt. 24:15; 2 Thes. 2:3-4**. this event will mark the beginning of the most intense time of persecution Israel will have ever experienced, **Matt. 24:16-22**. The Jews will lose their Temple and they will be

driven from their lands. They will be hunted down and killed by the forces of the Antichrist and by the rest of their enemies.

- B. **The Reasons For This Punishment** – Israel will be shown in the most vivid manner possible that animal sacrifice cannot take away sin and bring peace with God. God will allow them to build their Temple, and He will allow them to sacrifice again. However, their new Temple is nothing more than further rejection of their Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Their sacrifices repudiate the Gospel and reject the cross and the blood of Jesus. (III. The blood of Jesus Christ did what the blood of animals has never been able to do or will ever be able to do, **Heb. 9:11-15; 10:10-14.**) Their refusal to accept the preaching of the cross by the 144,000 Jewish preachers will not go unpunished.

Because they have rejected the Gospel, the Jews must pay a price. They will be persecuted and pursued by their enemies. This process will serve to purify the Jewish nation and prepare them for the return of the Lord Jesus. When He comes, the remnant of the Jewish nation that is left will turn to Him and receive them as their Messiah, **Zech. 12:10-13:1; 8-9.**

There is only one plan of salvation for all people (Jew and Gentile) and His name is Jesus Christ, **Acts 4:12; John 14:6.** The Jews have rejected Jesus and they will be punished as a result. Those who believe will be saved, **John 1:11-12.**

Conclusion: I hope you can see from these verses that God still has a plan for Israel and for the future. I also hope you can see from current events that everything is lining up to ensure that God's plans will be brought to pass.

Israel is preparing to build their Temple. They are looking for their Messiah to come and save them. Well, He is coming! But, I would like to be able to tell them that He has already been here. He has shed His blood. He has paid for sin and He will save all who will call on Him by faith.

I hope you are ready to meet Jesus! He is coming and His coming will be very soon. If you are not saved, you can be by coming to Jesus by faith today. If you are saved and want to thank Him for it, you can do that today. If you are not walking as close to Him as you should be, then you can come home today.

Folks, this thing is winding up. People need to make their preparations to leave this world. Listen to what Jesus said, in **Luke 21:28-32**.

28 And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

29 And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;

30 When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand.

31 So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

32 Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all be fulfilled.

Revelation 11:3-14

The Two Witnesses From Another World

Introduction: We are still in a parenthesis of Scripture. God is describing a break in the action of the Tribulation as He takes care of some heavenly business. As I mentioned in our last study, this is one of the most difficult passages in the Revelation to interpret.

There are two facts to keep in mind as we study these verses.

1. **We are on Jewish ground** – The images and words used are Jewish in nature.
2. **We are dealing with events related to the future** – The book of Revelation details future events. Any other interpretation destroys its meaning and purpose.

In **verses 1-2** we discovered that a new Jewish temple will be built in Jerusalem. The Jews will consecrate a priesthood and they will offer animal sacrifices as prescribed in the Law of Moses. They will worship God under the old covenant, not recognizing the fact that Jesus shed His precious blood once for all to save the souls of humanity.

The next vision we are given is of two special witnesses. God sends two ambassadors from Heaven to preach His Gospel message to the people in Jerusalem. It is these men and their ministry that we want to consider today. I would like to share the insights this passage gives us concerning these ***Two Witnesses From Another World***.

I. v. 3-7 **THE MINISTRY OF THE TWO WITNESSES**

- A. v. 3-4 **How Their Ministry Is Designed** – These two men are raised up for a special purpose. These two verses tell us much about these men and what they are sent to do.

1. **They are called witnesses** – This word translates the word that gives us our English word “**Martyr**”. The word originally referred to someone who gave testimony about something; a witness. However, as so many Christians began to give their lives for the cause of Christ, the word came to be associated with those who gave their lives for their faith. These two men have come to witness to God’s truth and, as we shall see, they will give their lives for Him too.
2. **They are sent as a team** – God always has His witnesses! In the days before the flood, God had His Noah. In the dark days of idolatry in Israel, the prophet Elijah complained to the Lord that he was all alone in the fight against sin. God told Elijah that there were over 7,000 that had not bowed their knee to Baal, **1 Kings 19:14; 18**. God has always had His witness teams: Moses and Aaron; Joshua and Caleb; and Paul and Silas. God sends two witnesses because He wants the truth to be established. The Law stipulated that matters had to be established by the word of two witnesses, **Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16**.

3. **They are sent to prophesy.** What will be the content of their message? No one knows for sure, but I think they will stand outside the newly completed Temple and preach Jesus to the Jews in Jerusalem. They will talk about how Jesus Christ has fulfilled all the type and symbols. They will tell of His death, His resurrection and of His return. They will prove from the Word of God that the Temple and its worship are vain. They will preach the Gospel of grace and salvation through Jesus Christ. They will tell the people that Antichrist will desecrate the Temple. These men will be hated by Jew and Gentile because of the message they will preach.
 4. **They will be clothed in sackcloth** – Sackcloth is a symbol of mourning. These men will not come with a message of peace, comfort, and hope. They will bring a message of condemnation and judgment to a wayward people.
 5. **Their ministry will last for three and one-half years** – While we cannot be too sure of when their ministry will begin, we can safely say that they will commence their preaching sometime after the Temple is built there in Jerusalem.
 6. **They are described as “olive trees” and “candlesticks”** – This is symbolic of God’s hand on their ministry. The olive tree is the source of olive oil. It is often a type of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. These men are anointed by the Spirit of God for their particular ministry. The “**olive tree**” speaks of their **unction**. The “**candlestick**” speaks of their **function**. They will come to bring the light of God’s message to a darkened world.
- B. v. 5 **How Their Ministry Is Defended** – These two men will be extremely unpopular because of the message they have been sent to deliver. As a result, many will try to kill them. But, these men are under divine protection. Everyone who tries to kill them will be killed by them. They will have the power to destroy their attackers with fire from their mouths.
- (**Note:** As long as you are in the Lord’s will, you are invincible! He will keep His hedge of protection about you and keep you safe until it is time for Him to take you home to glory. Until the Lord gets finished with you, no man or no devil can harm you!)
- C. v. 6 **How Their Ministry Is Described** – These two men will be able to use miraculous signs to prove the authenticity of their message. They will be able to shut up the heavens as Elijah did. They will be able to turn water to blood and call down plagues from Heaven as Moses did. They will have immense power at their disposal and they will be able to use it whenever they wish.

(Note: There are many modern preachers who claim to have the ability to perform miracles. The only problem with them is that they are liars! They are not healing, raising the dead, etc. they are charlatans and hucksters, who only care about getting their hands of the money of those deluded people who fall for their lies. These two witnesses, on the other hands, will be the real deal! They will preach God's message and validate it with wonders and miracles!)

(Note): Before we move deeper in this passage, let's take a minute to talk about who these men might be. First, let me say that no one knows for sure. The Bible does not identify them and no one can say with absolute certainty just who they are.

There are a couple of guesses and I will share those with you and the reasons why certain men are mentioned.

1. **Moses and Elijah** – According to **Mal. 4:5**, Elijah will return before Jesus comes. John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy according to Jesus, **Matt. 11:14; 17:10-13**. However, Malachi says that Elijah would come “***Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse,***” **Malachi 4:5-6**.

Also, consider the fact that Elijah never died in light of **Heb. 9:27**. And consider the fact that one of the miracles the two witnesses will perform will be the stopping of the rain. This was one of Elijah's miracles, **1 Kings 17:1**.

As for Moses, he is mentioned in **Malachi 4:4** just before Elijah is mentioned in **verse 5**. The miracles performed by the two witnesses are reminiscent of those performed by Moses in Exodus. And, it was Moses and Elijah who appeared with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration.

2. **Enoch** – Some people believe that it will be Enoch with either Moses or Elijah. Enoch was a preacher of righteousness, **Jude 1:14**. And, Enoch never tasted of death, **Gen. 5:24**.
3. We won't know who they are until they come. All that we really need to know is that God always has His witnesses!

I. The Ministry Of The Two Witnesses

II. v. 7-10 THE MASSACRE OF THE TWO WITNESSES

- A. v. 7 The Reason For Their Deaths – When they have finished their appointed ministry, Antichrist will be allowed to kill them. Until that moment, they are protected by the hand of God and cannot be killed. We are told that they are killed by “***the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit***”. This is a reference to the Antichrist. He is called “***the beast***” 38 times in the Revelation. He ascends out of Hell itself letting us know that he is demonically charged and controlled. He will make war against the witnesses and he will be allowed to overcome them and kill them. We will learn more about him in coming weeks.

(**Note:** There is a blessed nugget here for every saint of God. Death is not in the hands of a man or of a devil. Death is in the hands of God Almighty. He decides when people leave this world and you cannot die until He says it is time. So many people live their lives in fear of death. They fail to grasp the truth that death is powerless against them until God severs the golden cord of life and allows death to claim the soul. There is, therefore, no need to fear men, armies, or devils. You will not die until He says it is time and you will not live a second longer when He says it is time to go! III. **Isa. 54:17.**)

- B. v. 8-10 The Reaction To Their Deaths – The bodies of these men will be left in the very streets where they were killed. They will lay there in Jerusalem and no one will remove their bodies or attempt to bury them. Verse 9 tells us that all the people of the earth will see this sight. Fifty years ago it was a mystery how this could happen. In our day, we see live events from around the world twenty-four hours a day. Satellite technology has made it possible for us to see what is happening on the other side of the world with less than 8 seconds delay in time. The cable news channels like Fox News, CNN, MSNBC, etc. will broadcast the images of these dead prophets around the clock.

Verse 10 tells us that the people of the earth will rejoice because these two men are dead. For three and one-half years these men have preached the Gospel and caused plagues to be poured out on men. Now they are dead and the world celebrates. They act as if it were Christmas time. They celebrate, they party and they exchange gifts because these men are dead.

Why do they do this? The preaching of these two witnesses drove them crazy. We are talking about a world that rejected Jesus Christ and His blood. They have turned a deaf ear to Bible preaching. They have given their allegiance to the devil and they do not want to hear about God. These men have been preaching the truth and their message of judgment and condemnation got under people's skin. Now they are dead and the world throws a party! By the way, this is the only scene of joy on the earth during the whole Tribulation. And there are happy because God's men are dead and God's message is silent. What a tragedy!

(Note: Just for the record, the world will rejoice when old time Bible preaching is finally silenced. Now, they love the preaching of this crowd that exalts the flesh. They like that namby-pamby, milquetoast preaching that tells people they are okay. This world hates preaching that exalts Christ and demands holiness. This world hates preaching that stands on the Bible and says, "**there is no other way.**" This world cannot stand preaching that closes the door of salvation to homosexuals, abortionists, murders, and other sinners who won't repent of their sins and turn to Jesus by faith. This world hates preaching that magnifies Jesus as the only way to get to God. They will rejoice when it is gone. Then, they can settle in and listen to the prophets of love and acceptance that flood the airwaves and be happy as they plug headlong into Hell. That is where we are today and things are just going to get worse as we approach the end of this thing!)

I. The Ministry Of The Two Witnesses

II. The Massacre Of The Two Witnesses

III. v. 11-14 THE MIRACLE OF THE TWO WITNESSES

- A. v. 11 **The Miracle Of Their Awakening** – The bodies of these men are allowed to lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and one-half days. The world has watched as their bodies turn blue, pass through the various stages of rigor mortis, and begin to bloat. Then, a strange thing happens, those bodies begin to stir! The two witnesses stand to their feet and the world trembles in fear. Why does the world react in fear? The fact that these men are alive again after being dead for three days proves that they are the real deal. People know that they are men of God and that the message they have been preaching is true. Perhaps they understand that this is the work of God. Perhaps they have a brief moment in time when they understand that they are headed for judgment!

(Note: Do you remember what you felt when you watched those airplanes slam into the World Trade Center? Do you remember the anguish, the fear, and the worry? Do you remember feeling as though your world had just been upended? Imagine what those people will feel. There in the midst of their celebration, they are interrupted by a resurrection. They will watch it on live television. They will see it for themselves. They are interrupted by proof positive that God, not man, not Satan, not Antichrist, is really in control.)

- B. v. 12 **The Miracle Of Their Ascension** – Then, while the world watches, the Lord God will reenact the Rapture, **Rev. 4:1**, and the two witnesses will rise up into Heaven. The world will see what it missed out on when Jesus came. Maybe they will comprehend in that moment of time what happened when millions of people disappeared in the Rapture of the church.

The world will be given a clear testimony of the power of God Almighty! Satan, Antichrist, and lost man will be reminded that God is in control of the world and all that happens in it. They will be helpless to stop this resurrection and rapture of the two witnesses.

- C. v. 13-14 **The Miracle Of Their Avengement** – Before the world can catch its collective breath, a great earthquake will hit Jerusalem. God judges the city which has denied Him and His Christ. A tenth part of the city will crumble to the ground and seven thousand people will die. We are told that “***the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven***”. This probably refers to a remnant of the Jews. They see these events, repent of their sins, and call on Christ for salvation. God will use even these events to bring glory to His name!

Conclusion: In **verse 14** we are told, “***The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.***” More horrors are on the way! The worst is yet to come and we are going to look into far more horrible things in coming weeks.

Let me close with this thought: We think our world is in bad shape, and it is! We talk about the wickedness of men, the hardness of human hearts, and the evil that flourishes all around us. But, think about this: We are living in a world that is inhabited by the redeemed people of God; the Bible is here and it is preached around the world; the Holy Spirit is here suppressing evil and hindering its spread in the world. In the Tribulation Period, the church is gone, so no one is praying for the world. The Bible will probably be taken out of circulation. You can almost guarantee the fact that it won't be preached in power and authority. The Spirit of God will leave when the church leaves. A world like that will grow more evil than you and I can comprehend. I am glad that I am saved and that I will not be here for those awful days.

What about you? Are you saved? Are you trusting Jesus as your personal Savior today? If not, you can be! If you have strayed away from Him, you can come home today. If you have loved ones and acquaintances who will be left here for the horrors of the Tribulation, you can at least pray for them today.

At the very least, we need to call on the Lord and ask Him to send us one more revival before the end comes. There is a multitude that needs to be saved. Let's ask Him to use us to reach them before it is too late.

Revelation 11:15-19

HEAVENLY REJOICING ON THE EDGE OF ETERNITY

Introduction: We have spent a lot of time together in the book of Revelation. I don't know about you, but this book has been speaking to my heart and I am enjoying our study. This message brings us to the half way point of the book of Revelation. It also brings us to the end of a very long section that began back in **Rev. 10:1**. In this passage, the seventh trumpet, which was announced in **Rev. 10:7**, is about to sound. When it is sounded, this trumpet will unleash God's final acts of judgments upon the earth.

The seventh trumpet will bring about a devastating wave of judgment. It will fulfill the ancient prophecies of **Joel 2:1-2**, "**Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; (2) A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.**" When it is sounds, the seven bowl judgments are revealed. These bowls contain the final, awesome, awful judgments of God, **Rev. 15:1**. The sound of the seventh trumpet alerts the world that King Jesus is about to reclaim everything that belongs to Him.

Now, the seventh trumpet is sounded here in **Rev. 11:1**, but the events it brings to pass are not recorded until we get to **Rev 15**. **Chapters 12-14** are a retelling of the Tribulation story from a different perspective. In **Rev. 6-11**, the focus has been on the Lord Jesus. We have learned about the process He uses to take possession of this earth. **Rev. 12-14** takes the focus off the Lord and places in on the Antichrist. We have been observing the Tribulation from God's perspective. For the next few chapters we will observe that awful period of time from Satan's perspective.

This passage takes us forward in time to the very edge of eternity. We are transported ahead to the end of the age to a time when Jesus has taken possession of the world and judged sin and sinners. As we look ahead to that blessed day, we find Heaven in a state of rejoicing.

Today, we want to look into these verses, and by virtue into Heaven itself. In doing so, we are allowed to witness Heaven's reaction to the reign of the Lord Jesus. I want to show you the great **reasons** why we see worship, praise, and excitement in Heaven as time comes to an end. The words "great voices" translate the Greek words "**mega**" and "**phonay**". We get the word "**megaphone**" from these words. It refers to shouting and loud speech. This is a picture of loud, vigorous praise in glory, **v. 15-16**! I want to preach on this thought: **Heavenly Rejoicing On The Edge Of Eternity**.

I. v. 16-17

THERE IS REJOICING OVER A RULER

(Heaven rejoices because God and His Son Jesus have taken possession of a world that was lost to sin and Satan thousands of years ago.)

- A. v. 15 **The Scope Of His Kingdom** – “*kingdoms of this world*” – In the Greek, the word “*kingdoms*” is singular. There are many rulers, leaders, kings, and presidents in this world, but there is but one true kingdom. Men think they rule, in reality, Satan rules this world today. Satan is called “*the god of this world*” in **2 Cor. 4:4**. The Lord Jesus called him “*the prince of this world*” three times in John’s Gospel, **John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11**.

The truth of Satan’s rule can be seen in the hatred that is being leveled against Jesus Christ and His Gospel in this world. People have no reason to hate Jesus. They do so because they are led to by the devil! He is the ruler of this world today.

I praise the Lord that the devil’s kingdom is to be short-lived. Jesus Christ will come in glory and power and assume His rightful place as King, Lord and God of this world! There is just one rightful King and one day, the whole world will bow at His feet and worship Him, **Phil. 2:9-11!**

- B. v. 15 **The Span Of His Kingdom** – “*He shall reign for ever and ever*” – Jesus will not be like a human ruler. All human rulers eventually reach the end of their reign. They die or are deposed and replaced by another. Not Jesus! He will reign eternally, “*Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations,*” **Psalms 145:13**.

(III. The Republicans have held the reins of power in Congress and in the Oval Office until recently. There are a lot of sad people after the election because their side lost. Those who give their allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ need never fear that He will be overthrown! He is and ever will be the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!)

- C. v. 17 **The Strength Of His Kingdom** – God is called “*Almighty*”, “*Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and Thou hast reigned.*” Every human kingdom fails because it is built on the limited power of men. Saddam Hussein ruled by the power of fear, but he was overthrown. Kim Jung rules by intimidation and ruthlessness, he will be defeated.

God’s kingdom is established on One Who holds all power, **Matt. 28:18**. He will never be overcome by any enemy, for He has placed all His foes under His feet, **Heb. 2:8**. He will never be deposed by any rival, for He has no rivals, **Psa. 86:10**.

- D. **The Stability Of His Kingdom** – “*Which art, and wast and art to come*” – God’s kingdom is an everlasting kingdom! He has always reigned! It may look like Satan

has his hands on the wheel in this world today. It may look like he is in control. Even Satan is the servant of Almighty God and he operates within a limited sphere of activity. He does only that which God allows him to do. His activity is limited by the providence, sovereignty, purposes, and power of God. (III. Satan had to get permission to attack Job – **Job 1-2**.) Satan is a finite, limited, created being. He must always yield to the One Who has reigned by eternity past; the One Who will always reign!

III. Heaven rejoices in this truth. If we really believed it, we would rejoice as well. We would know, without a doubt, that our God reigns and that He is in absolute control of everything in His universe! (III. **Col. 1:16-17**) (III. **Psa. 93:1-5**)

E. **The Surety Of His Kingdom** – The verb phrase “are become” is in the “**proleptic aorist**” tense. This tense is used to describe future events that are so certain; they can be spoken of as they had already happened. This tense is used in **Isa. 53:3-9**. Though he ministered 700 years before Jesus, he writes of the sufferings of Jesus as though they had already happened!

(III. People can believe what they will, one day the kingdom of this world will be given over to the Lord Jesus. He will rule and reign on the throne of this earth forever. Praise God! No wonder Heaven rejoices. I thank God that I will be there when Heaven bubbles over with praise. But, I thank Him that I can praise Him today! You see, He may not be recognized as the King of the world yet, but He is the King of my heart!)

II. v. 18 **THERE IS REJOICING OVER A REWARD**

A. **The Sinners Will Be Rewarded** – This world hates Jesus and demonstrates that hatred against Him when He comes to reign. This verse looks ahead to that day when the armies of the world will gather themselves together to fight against the Lord Jesus Christ at His coming, **Rev. 16:14**.

The hatred of the world is clear to see in our day. Everywhere you look; this world is trying to eradicate the name of Jesus and anything to do with Him from the public arena. They will not bow to Him! Their hatred is expressed in **Psalms 2:1-3**. There, we see that they will rise up against Him and attempt to conquer the Lord. But, **Psalms 2:4-9** tell us that God will have the final say in the matter.

In the end, lost sinners will be rewarded for their rejection of Jesus by having to face Him in judgment, **Rev. 20:11-15, v. 18b**. God will have the final word and all lost sinners will receive the due reward of their sins, **Rom. 6:23**. What a tragedy, since they could be saved if they would only come to Him!

(Note: We may wonder about the saints in Heaven rejoicing over the punishment of sinners. It bothers us when we see scenes like that. After all, we do not want to see anyone go to Hell. We want to see people saved. All I can say is that when we arrive in Heaven, we will possess a mind like that of the Lord Jesus. We will think like He thinks and we will agree with His plan to judge all those who reject Him! When He pronounces their sentence, we will say “**Amen!**”)

- B. **The Saints Will Be Rewarded** – While the lost sinners will face the Lord in judgment, faithful believers will be honored for their devotion to Him. He will reward His servants (“**prophets**”). Those who have faithfully preached His Word will be rewarded by the Lord one day. He will also reward His saints (“**them that fear thy name, great and small**”). One day, every act of devotion to Jesus will be rewarded by Him. Nothing was so small that He missed it. He saw every sacrifice, every labor of love, every gift, every deed, which was done in His Name, and He will reward all those who faithfully serve Him! (III. Even something so small as a cup of cold water given in His name will be rewarded someday, **Mark 9:41.**)

III. v. 19 **THERE IS REJOICING OVER A REALITY**

(III. This verse almost seems out of place in this chapter. It just doesn't seem to fit in with the seen of rejoicing in Heaven. But, this verse is important. The mention of the Temple places us back on Jewish ground. You see, the church does not have a Temple, we are the Temple! This verse contains two great realities that I want to touch on for just a moment.)

- A. **The Reality Of Access** – The open Temple and the vision of the Ark serve to remind us that in Heaven, we will have access to the Lord. We will see Him and be able to worship Him. There will be no veil to separate us from Him. There will be no flesh to separate us from Him. There will be nothing to keep us away from Him in that day! We will have free, unfettered access to the God of glory, **Rev. 22:3-4!**
- B. **The Reality Of Affirmation** – The mention of the Ark places us squarely on Jewish ground. You see, for the Jew, the Ark of the Covenant represented the presence of God, the communion of God and the redemption of God. Here, the Jews are reminded that God is not finished with them. He will complete His plan for Israel and He will keep His covenants with the seed of Abraham!

(Note: In the Bible, there are five different names for the Ark of the Covenant mentioned. These five names reveal what God is doing in these verses.

1. **The Ark of the Covenant – Num. 10:33** – The ancient Ark contained the Law. In these verses we see a world that has transgressed God's Law. The world has angered the Lord and He has come down to judge them!

2. **The Ark of the Testimony – Ex. 25:22** – The Ark testified to God’s holiness and man’s sinfulness. God is still holy and man is still a sinner. As a sinner, man will be judged by a holy God.
3. **The Ark of God – 1 Sam. 3:3** – The Ark was the only visible throne of God on the earth. This vision of the Ark reminds everyone that God is still on His throne!
4. **The Ark of Strength – Psa. 132:8** – It was called this because of the miracles and great works associated with it. We are reminded here that God is still Almighty God and He still reigns in power.
5. **The Holy Ark – 2 Chron. 35:3** – It was called the Holy Ark because it is where God dwelt! This vision of the Ark reminds us that God is still alive and well!

Conclusion: **Verse 19** closes with premonitions of impending disasters. More horrors, worse horrors, than those we have seen thus far, are on the horizon. We are at the half-way point of the book and of the Tribulation. We have seen things from God’s perspective, now we will see things from Satan’s perspective.

These verses have literally taken us to the very edge of eternity. The question that must be faced today is this: Which group mentioned in **verse 18** are you a part of?

Are you a part of that group that will be doomed and damned to Hell? Are you lost today? If you are, you need to know that the wrath of God already abides on your life, **John 3:36; 3:18; Eph. 2:3; Rom. 1:18**. You also need to know that you do not have to stay in that condition for another minute! If you will come to Jesus, He will save you by His grace! Come now, if He is calling you to come to Him.

If you are part of that group that will be rewarded and rejoicing one day, then praise the Lord! You ought to bow before Him and tell Him how thankful you are that He has saved you.

If you are lost today, you may be here for the Tribulation and you may not. But think about this: You are one heartbeat away from eternity. Have you ever thought about that? All that has to happen for your heart to stop and the moment it stops and your spirit will leave your body you will be in eternity. Up in Washington, D.C., at a certain historical depot there is a strange mark on a wall. That mark is there because many years ago President James Garfield was in that depot. An assassin walked in, saw the President, and fired a shot. The shot went through President Garfield, killing him, and the bullet hit the wall and left a mark, and mark is still there. It identifies the place where President Garfield stepped from time into eternity.

And dear friend, for every one of us, somewhere on this earth there is a mark. It may be on a death bed in a hospital somewhere. It may be on an interstate highway where an accident will occur. There is some point in time where your time will cease and your eternity will begin.

If you came to the place where your mark is located today, how would it be with your soul? Are you saved? Do you know that you know you're saved? Let's mind Him today!

Great Wonders In Heaven Revelation 12:1-6

Introduction: We are moving into the second half of the book of Revelation. This second portion opens with an amazing vision of some great wonders on the heavens.

What is said in **chapter 12** is essential to a proper understanding of what is going to be said in the rest of the book. If we misinterpret things here, we are going to be off tract the rest of the way through Revelation.

So, let's look into these six important verses. And see the truths that are revealed here. I want to preach on the subject: **Great Wonders In Heaven**. The primary characters of this passage are a woman and a red dragon. Let's see what we can learn about them.

I. v. 1-2 **THE PERSONALITY OF THIS WOMAN**

(Illustration): The identity of this woman has been the subject of debate and false doctrine for centuries. Let me share a few of those with you.

1.) Roman Catholics have said that this woman is Mary. There are several reasons why this cannot be true: Mary never ascended in Heaven; Mary gave birth on earth and not in Heaven; Mary cannot be wedged into **verse 6**.

2.) Some believe the woman is the church. However, it was Christ, the man-child that gave birth to the church and not the other way around.

3.) A woman by the name of Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy claimed that she was the woman and the religion she gave birth to in 1879, Christian Science, was the man-child. For sake of time, let me just say, it ain't her either!

So, who is this mysterious woman? The clues given in the text tell us all we need to know about her identity.)

A. v. 1 **Her Description** – The woman is “**clothed with the sun**”. This speaks of heavenly glory. The “**Moon**” is “**under her feet**”. This speaks of dominion and power. She wears “**a crown**”. This speaks of royalty. The “**twelve stars**” speak of the twelve tribes of Israel.

I believe this woman is none other than the nation of Israel. I think this is borne out by a couple of Old Testament passages. The first tells of a dream that Joseph had thousands of years ago, **Gen. 37:9-11**. It is obvious from Jacob's reaction to Joseph's dream that the sun, moon, and stars represent the nation of Israel. The second passage is **Gen. 15:5**. There, the seed of Abraham is compared to “**stars**”.

This verse reminds us of what we already know to be true. God is not finished with Israel! He chose them out of the nations of the earth for His purposes and He has not written them off forever. They will once again be clothed with glory and have dominion over the earth.

- B. v. 2 **Her Destiny** – The woman here is in the throes of childbirth. She is in great travail as she tried to bring her child into the world.

We are told in **verse 5** that her son is to be the ruler of the world. This is a reference to the Messiah, to the Lord Jesus Christ. We will say more about Him in a moment. For now, our focus is on the woman.

This picture of Israel in childbirth reminds us that it was nation of Israel God used to bring His Savior into the world. Jesus Christ is Jewish. In **Matthew 1:11** He is called both “***the Son of David***” and the “***Son of Abraham***”. When God gave the great prophecy of **Gen. 3:15**, He said, “***And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.***” The woman is Israel and the seed of the woman is the Lord Jesus.

Again, **Romans 9:4-5** says, “***Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; (5) Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.***”

So, it was the nation of Israel that God chose to be the womb through which He sent His Son into the world. Did you notice that this woman was in travail? She is in labor and she brings forth this Son with pain and suffering. This calls to mind all the pains and persecutions suffered by Israel as Satan tried his best to short circuit the plan of God. In fact, when Jesus was born, the nation of Israel was writhing under the iron heel of the Roman Empire.

So, this expectant woman is Israel who brought the Messiah into the world. She paid a price for that privilege. That was her destiny!

I. The Personality Of This Woman

II. v. 3-4 THE PERSECUTOR OF THIS WOMAN

- A. v. 3 The Personality Of The Dragon – The next vision is of a “**great red dragon**” who has “**seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.**” Let’s take this description of the dragon and break it down symbol by symbol,
1. **Red** – The color of war and bloodshed. It brings to mind the red horse of **Rev. 6:4**. This dragon is a killer. He brings death, war, and bloodshed with him when he comes.
 2. **Dragon** – A dragon is a winged serpent. There is no such thing in our natural world. It is a picture of the devil. In fact, we are very safe in identifying the dragon and the devil because of what **Rev. 12:9**.
 3. **Seven heads** – Speak of vast intelligence. We are dealing with a brilliant and wise creature: **Eze. 28:12**, “**thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.**”
 4. **Ten horns** – Horns are a symbol of power. Satan is not all-powerful, but his power is cast. The number ten may refer to a ten nation kingdom that will figure greatly during the last days.
 5. **Seven crowns** – Crowns are a symbol of authority. Satan is still “**the god of this world**”, **2 Cor. 4:4**.
- B. v. 4a The Pollution Of The Dragon – The reference to the “**stars of heaven**” being “**cast down to the earth**” by the tail of the dragon refer us back to the fall of Satan. He has not always been an evil creature. In the beginning, he was the ranking angel in Heaven, **Eze. 28:12-15**. But pride was found in Lucifer’s heart and he tried to take God’s throne. He tried to over throw the Lord, **Isa. 14:12-14**. Lucifer sinned and became Satan. He was cast out of Heaven, **Isa. 14:15**; **Eze. 28:16-18**. When Lucifer fell, he drew one-third of the angels of Heaven into his rebellion. They were cast out of Heaven as well. We call these fallen angels demons. They are part of Satan’s kingdom and do his bidding, **Eph. 6:12**.
- C. v. 4b The Plans Of The Dragon – Satan is pictured as standing before Israel waiting for the birth of her child. His intention is to destroy the seed of the woman as soon as He is born.

Satan had worked from the beginning of time in order to prevent the birth of the Promised Seed of the woman.

Satan moved Cain to kill Abel, thinking he could stop God's plan. He did not know that God would send Seth.

- He tried to corrupt the human blood line by having the godly line of Seth intermarry with the evil line of Cain. He did not know about Noah and the Ark.
- He aroused Esau to anger so that Jacob might be killed. He did not know God would help Jacob escape.
- He tried to kill off the Jews in Egypt by having Pharaoh slay all the little boys. He did not know that God would save a little boy named Moses who would lead the people out of Egypt.
- He tried to lead Israel away into idolatry thinking God would destroy the nation. He did not see God sending them into captivity, where He would forever rid them of their idols.

He failed in every attempt to stop the birth of Christ. And, when the time came for Jesus to enter the world, Satan did everything in his power to slay the Christ child when He was an infant. He moved Herod to destroy all the babies in Bethlehem under the age of two, **Matt. 2:16-18**.

I. The Personality Of This Woman

II. The Persecutor Of This Woman

III. v. 5 THE PROGENY OF THIS WOMAN

(Illustration): This verse speaks of the Seed of the Woman.

- A. **His Description** – He is called a “*man child*”. The Seed of the Woman came into the world like every other baby. He came from the womb of His mother; but this child unlike any other child that had ever, or would ever, be born.

You see, this Seed of the Woman was born without a human father, **Matt. 1:20**. His mother was a virgin, **Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:34**. And He was and is God in human flesh, **John 1:1; 14; Phil 2:5-8**! It is clear that the Seed of the Woman is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ.

- B. **His Destiny** – His destiny is “***to rule the nations with a rod of iron***”. This man child would come into the world and He would one day rule the world. We see this prophecy fulfilled in **Rev. 19:15**. He will rule for several reasons. First, He will rule because He created this universe and it is His, **Col. 1:16-17**. Second, He will rule because He purchased this world with His Own blood when He died in the cross, **Rev. 5:9**. Third, He will rule because He alone is worthy to rule and reign, **Rev. 4:11**.
- C. **His Deliverance** – The man child is pictured being caught up to God and to the throne of God. Here is the good news of the Gospel contained in this verse. Jesus Christ died for our sins on the cross. But, He did not stay dead! He arose from the dead three days later, **Rev. 1:18**. After He arose from the dead, He ascended back to Heaven, **Acts 1:9-11**. He sat down at the right hand of His Father in Heaven, **Heb. 1:3; 10:12**. He will not stay there forever! He is returning for His bride real soon, **1 Thes. 4:16-18**. Then, He will come to defeat His enemies and assume His rightful place as “***King of Kings and Lord of Lords***”.

I. The Personality Of This Woman

II. The Persecutor Of This Woman

III. The Progeny Of This Woman

IV. v. 6 **THE PROTECTION OF THIS WOMAN**

- A. **Her Distress** – The Woman flees from the Dragon and she goes away into the wilderness to hide. We are reminded here that Satan hates the nation of Israel. He has tried to defeat her and destroy her since she first appeared. I have already touched on this. No other nation on the face of the earth has suffered as much as Israel. No other race has been persecuted as have the Jews.

The history of the Old Testament is filled with story after story of nations coming against Israel to destroy it. The pages of history are filled with hatred, persecution, racism, and murder, all aimed at the Jew. Just a generation ago a man name Adolph Hitler did his best to destroy the Jew in what he called “***The Final Solution***”. He did not destroy them, but he did manage to murder over 6 million in the death camps of Nazi Germany. Josef Stalin killed millions in the gulags of the Soviet Union.

The Jew had suffered, but the Jew has survived! They have survived because of the providence of God. He is not through with Israel. Ill. **Jer. 31:35-36!** The only way to get rid of the Jew is to drag the sun, moon, and stars from their places in Heaven!

The hatred against the Jew is growing stronger in our day as the Muslim nations of the Middle East cry for the destruction of Israel. This hatred will continue to grow into the Tribulation Period. During that Time, the Antichrist will bring persecution upon the nation of Israel and the Jewish people like nothing they have ever experienced. When that persecution arises, Israel will seek refuge. This was prophesied by the Lord Jesus in **Matt. 24:15-22**. Yet, they will survive that too, for God has a plan for them!

(Illustration): Satan hates Israel for two reasons. He hates Israel because she is a constant reminder to him that his power is limited. He attempts to destroy Israel and time and again she is delivered by the power of God. Satan hates that!

He also hates her because she is a constant reminder to him of the glory he used to wear. The glory of Heaven rests on Israel just as it used to rest upon him.)

- B. **Her Deliverance** – Israel will find refuge in a wilderness place. Some believe this will be in the ancient Edomite city of Petra. The city is surrounded by towering hills of rust-colored sandstone which gave the city some natural protection against invaders. The entrance into Petra is through what is called the Sig, a ravine enclosed by immense walls that reach hundreds of feet at places. Its layout makes for a good place to hide and seek shelter.

Back in the 1920's, there was a man in US, known as W. E. Blackstone. This man was so certain that Petra would be the secret hideout of Jews during the tribulation, that he invested \$8,000.00 to place boxes of Bibles in all of the caves in Petra, so that the Jews would have some interesting reading when they were hiding from the ravages of war.

We do not know if it be the place they will seek shelter or not, but there will be a place prepared for them by God that will give them protection from the anti-Christ and his armies, all energized by Satan and his hatred for Christ and the people from whom He came.

We are told that in this wilderness refuge the people of Israel will be taken care of. We do not know who the “**they**” are who will feed the Jews, but we do know that for the last half of the Tribulation Period, 1,260 days, Israel will be cared for. In spite of the sin, the hatred and the evil of those days, God will see to the needs of His people. He will either use friendly nations or supernatural means, but when the Tribulation ends and Jesus returns, there will be a remnant of the nation of Israel left. These faithful Jews will embrace the Lord Jesus and they will worship Him as their Messiah.

Conclusion: The Jews are waiting for the coming of the Messiah. According to the Jewish Talmud, Jews are obligated not only to believe in the Messiah, but to yearn for his arrival. Many traditional Jews recite a creed that concludes with this statement: “***I believe with perfect faith in the advent of the messiah, and though he may tarry, I will await his arrival every day.***”

During the Jewish Passover Seder, the Passover meal, there is the tradition of opening the door for Elijah, who will precede the coming of the Messiah.

What they don’t understand is that Messiah has already come and His name is Jesus. The nation of Israel gave birth to their long awaited Messiah, yet they failed to recognize Him. John said in **John 1:10-11**, “***He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. [11] He came unto his own, and his own received him not.***”

The Messiah died on Calvary’s cross, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day and was caught up to heaven where He awaits the hour when He will come back to rule and reign upon the earth.

That is the truth these verses emphasize. God has a plan for the ages and that plan will be worked out in His way in His time.

Are you part of God’s plan? Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? Have your sins been washed away by the blood of the crucified and risen Lord? Are you saved? Are you living for Him as you should? Are you thankful that He saved your soul?

You might want to talk to Him about your relationship with Him. You might want to thank Him for saving you. You might want to come pray for the peace of Jerusalem, **Psalms 122:6**. If there are needs, you come!

The Great Dragon Is Cast Out Revelation 12:7-17

Introduction: The chapter we are studying here in Revelation is a chapter wrapped in conflict. In our last study we witnessed war between the nation of Israel, symbolized by pregnant woman, and Satan, symbolized by a great red dragon. As we read our text today, you may have noticed that these verses continue the image of conflict. In fact, verse 7 is quite a shock to the system.

When we read of war in Heaven it kind of takes us back. We do not think of Heaven as being a place where wars are fought. If the Bible announced a war on earth, we would not be shocked. Our world has a long history of bloody warfare.

According to one statistician, in the 5,560 years of recorded human history there have been some 14,531 wars. Many of history's wars were conflicts between two nations, or two factions within a nation. But, in World War II war was taken to new and devastating heights. By the time the war reached its zenith only twelve nations were not involved in the conflict on at least some level. In the year 2,000 there were at least forty armed conflicts being fought on the soil of thirty-six different nations.' Our world is a world of warfare!

Yet, when we read of warfare in Heaven, we are taken aback. This war will settle a conflict that has been raging since before there was a world. As we discovered in our last study, Lucifer, who seems to have been the chief among God's angels sinned against God. He led one-third of the angels of Heaven away from God in this rebellion and he and they were removed from God's presence. Lucifer became Satan and he has done everything in his power to disrupt the eternal plan of God to redeem His elect people and His ruined creation. Since that time, as we will discover, Satan has had limited access to Heaven. This chapter tells us about the final battle in this ages old war. In this battle, Satan, the great dragon, is forever cast out of Heaven.

While there are details here that are confusing, these verses are a blessing to the children of God. They tell us of a day when Satan will finally and eternally be cast out of Heaven. Let's look at these verses and examine a few more of the participants of the Tribulation Period. I want to preach on that time when ***The Dragon Is Cast Out***.

I. **THE REVEALING OF THE DRAGON**

(III. There are several passages that talk about the devil, his origin and his activities, **Isa. 14:12-20; Eze. 28:12-19; 1 Pet. 5:8**. This passage seems to reveal the devil far more clearly than any other passage in the Bible. So, let's learn a little more about the dragon today.)

A. v. 9 **His Names** — A quick look at the names given to this creature reveals more about him than he wants people to know.

1. **Dragon** — A winged, mythical creature that resembles a serpent with four legs. Dragons are usually associated with fierceness, brutality, violence, and destruction. Superstitious people in the dark ages lived in fear of fire-breathing dragons.

This image is fitting for Satan. He is a violent character, bent on the total destruction of God and His creation. He is responsible for countless deaths and wars.

2. **Old Serpent** — This immediately calls us back to the first appearance of Satan in the Bible, **Gen. 3:1ff**. In that passage Satan appears to Eve in the form of a serpent and entices her to commit sin. The image of a serpent is an image of something that is evil, contemptible, detestable, deceitful, underhanded, and sly. What a perfect depiction of the devil! He spends his time attempting to deceive everyone he encounters.
 3. **Devil** — The word devil comes from the word "**diabolos**". It refers to one who is a "**slanderer, a false accuser**". It pictures him as a creature who stands before God accusing the saints of God. This is just what the Bible says he does in **Job 1-2**. When we fail, he accuses us before the throne of God. He slanders our name and he slanders our Savior too.
 4. **Satan** — This word means "**adversary**" or "**one who stands opposed**". This is what Satan is all about. He opposes everything that has to do with God. He opposes everything God is trying to do. He opposes the people of God, the House of God, the Word of God, and the plan of God. He stands in open opposition to everything that is decent, holy, and right. He is an adversary!
- B. v. 9-10 **His Nature** - This passage not only reveals Satan through his names, but also through his nature. This passage reveals the two most common activities of the devil.
1. v. 9 **Revealed By His Earthly Deceptions** — We are told that it is he "**which deceiveth the whole earth**". The word "**deceiveth**" means "**to seduce, to lead astray, to lead out of the right way**". That is Satan's mission! When he appeared before the Lord in **Job 1:7; 2:2**, he was asked about his activities. He replied that he had come "**from going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it**." He was on the prowl for souls to deceive. That is what Peter says about him in **1 Pet. 1:5**. The word "**seeking**" in that verse means "**to crave, to reason, to plot**". Satan is always plotting someone's fall. He craves the souls of men. He reasons out ways to turn people away from God and from Christ. And, he is very good at what he does! He can come into our midst and not even be recognized, **2 Cor. 11:13-14**. Satan is a deceiver and he always has been. When he came to Eve in Eden he is called "**subtil**". That word means "**crafty and shrewd**". Satan deceived Eve and he has been deceiving people ever since. He will continue to weave his web of lies and half-truths until he is cast into the Lake of Fire.
 2. v. 10 **Revealed By Some Heavenly Declarations** — Satan is described by the host of Heaven as "**the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night**". The word "**accuser**" means "**to make an accusation**". It speaks of "**a plaintiff who brings up another person on charges**". That is Satan's business! It seems from **Job 1:6** and **2:1** that Satan still has some limited access to the throne of God. When he appears there, he does so to condemn the saints of God. He did this to Job and to Joshua, **Zech. 3:1**. He stands before God and points out our sins and our failures. He does not have to lie about us, because we have enough failure and sin in our lives that he has a ready supply of accusations to make. Yet, when he opens his mouth and declares his case, the saints of God have a Man on the inside! We have a lawyer in Heaven, **1 John 2:1; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25**! The word "**Advocate**" in **1 John 2:2** means "**one who pleads another's cause before a judge**". Jesus Christ, our Advocate stands up to declare us just and justified. He pleads our case by showing the nail prints in His hands and feet. He pleads the

blood He shed on the cross as the perfect, eternal payment for all our sins. The Father cries "**Case dismissed!**" Hallelujah!

I. The Revealing Of The Dragon

II. THE REMOVAL OF THE DRAGON

- A. v. 7-9 **He Is Defeated By A Heavenly Warrior** — We do not know who initiates this war in Heaven, but we know who wins it. The angelic hosts of Heaven are led in this conflict by an angel named Michael. His name means "**Who is like God?**" He is a special angel. He is called and "**archangel**" in **Jude 1:9**. In **Daniel 10:13** he is called "**one of the chief princes**." In **Daniel 12:1** he is called "**the great prince**". Michael opposes the onslaught of Satan and his demonic army. He leads the heavenly angels in permanently ousting Satan and His demons from Heaven. **Verse 8** tells us "**neither was their place found anymore in heaven**". And **verse 9** tells us that he and his angels were "**cast out into the earth**". The words "**cast out**" mean "**to let go of a thing without caring where it falls**". Satan is forever driven from Heaven!
- B. v. 10-11 **He Is Defeated By Holy Witnesses** — When Satan is cast out of Heaven, the glory spills out of the cup and overflows the saucer. Heaven literally explodes in praise and thanksgiving. The tormentor, the accuser of the brethren, the archenemy of God, and the most feared and hated being in the universe has been forever expelled from Heaven! So, the citizens of Heaven praise God and the Lamb for their power and glory in overcoming the devil!

Then, praise is rendered on behalf of the Tribulation saints who were martyred for their faith. While Michael was able to expel him from Heaven, these Christian martyrs are called overcomers as well. They used three weapons to defeat the devil.

1. **They used the blood of the Lamb** — They did not fall for Satan's lies that religion would be good enough. They did not fall for the lie that they were good enough. When they saw their condition, they turned to Jesus by faith and they were washed in the blood of the Lamb. Once they were hidden behind the fortress of the blood of Jesus, they were safe from all attacks by Satan against their souls. He might kill their bodies, but he could not touch their souls! They had been redeemed and they and obtained eternal victory! (Have you been washed in the blood?)
2. **They used the word of their testimony** — They stuck to their guns! They would not renounce their faith in Jesus. The word "**testimony**" means "**report**". They claimed to be redeemed followers of Jesus and they never backed down from that claim. Their steadfastness helped them achieve victory over Satan. He may have killed their bodies, but they died with their testimonies fresh in their lips! His defeat was sealed with every death!

3. **They used their supreme love for Jesus** — Even when they were threatened with death they would not back down. They loved their Redeemer more than they loved their own lives. They would sooner die for Him Who died for them than deny Him. They stood their ground and courageously faced a martyr's death, knowing that when life left the body here, it would continue forever in His blessed presence!

I. The Revealing Of The Dragon

II. The Removal Of The Dragon

III. THE RAMPAGE OF THE DRAGON

(III. Satan does not take being cast out of Heaven very well. He now turns his wrath to the only place he can still operate: earth.)

- A. v. 12 **The Fury Of The Dragon's Attack** — This pronounces a divine woe upon the "***the inhabitants of the earth***" because they are about to feel the unfiltered fury of an angry Devil. He knows that he only has a limited time before the eternal plan of the Lord is finished. He knows that he is facing certain judgment. Since he cannot vent his anger toward Heaven and God any longer, he turns his hatred earthward and attacks the people living upon the earth.
- B. v. 13-17 **The Focus Of The Dragon's Attack** — The primary object of Satan's wrath becomes the chosen people of God, the nation of Israel. As we saw in **verses 1-6**, Satan hates Israel and does everything in his power to destroy that nation. In these verses, we are given a few more details of that terrible time.

We are told that Satan "***persecuted***" the woman. The word "***persecuted***" means "***to chase or to pursue***". It refers to a hostile pursuit. Satan goes after Israel with a vengeance. He pursues them with violent destruction on his mind!

But, we are told again that they are divinely protected. The image of eagle's wings is symbolic of God's personal protection of His chosen people, **Ex. 19:4**, "***Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself.***" God brings Israel into a place of safety that He has prepared for them. There, He will feed them and care for them for three and one-half years. Satan will be prevented from totally destroying the nation of Israel!

Verse 15 depicts the attacks of Satan being like a great flood of water. He will pull out all the stops and try everything at his disposal to destroy Israel. But, even the earth gets involved. We are told in **verse 16** that the "***the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood***". This may mean that some friendly nations of the earth, Gentile people, will reach out to Israel and take them in and give to their need during those dark days. Or, it may mean that the earth will absorb the blows Satan intended for Israel. Whatever these images mean, one thing is clear; God has a plan for Israel and Satan will not thwart that

plan! God is sovereign and He will do as He has said He will do concerning all things, especially the nation of Israel!

Verse 17 teaches us that there will be a faithful remnant of Israel during the dark days of the Tribulation. There will be a multitude of Jews saved through the preaching of the 144,000 Jewish preachers and the two witnesses who will preach in Jerusalem. These redeemed Jews will embrace the Messiah and they will come back to the Word of God. They will be persecuted for their faith, but a remnant will be saved, **Matt. 24:1-22**! God will have the final say. And He says that Satan loses and God's people win! Hallelujah!

Conclusion: As I have studied and preached these messages, I have seen, studied and preached some horrible things. Yet, every now and then we are allowed to find a cause for rejoicing even in this dark, mysterious book. In this passage we learn that the devil, that evil being who has fought against God, His plan and His people for thousands of years will be defeated. We learn that the one who has accused us when we fail and has condemned us by name in Heaven will one day be cast out of that city. We will learn later that his path will end in the flame of the Lake of Fire. I'd say that any word that talks about the devil getting what is coming to him is a good word!

Illustration: Sometimes a wicked person is condemned to death. Many people rejoice in that verdict. I do not find a cause for rejoicing in the death of another human being. Now, don't get me wrong, I am in favor of the death penalty and I believe it should be administered more swiftly than it is, but I still do not find pleasure in the death of a condemned man or woman. But, I do find pleasure in knowing that our adversary is going to be cast into Hell some day! I praise the Lord for that. It is a reason to clear off a spot and shout!

There may be some here today that have never been saved. This is your day. You come to Jesus and He will forgive you and save you. Others may need to talk to the Lord. Let's just mind Him!

The Beast From Out Of The Sea

Revelation 13:1-10

Introduction: In our last study we met the Antichrist. We tried to consider what the Bible says about this coming world ruler who is called the "**Man of Sin**"; the "Son of Perdition". The Antichrist gives us an opportunity to see how Satan operates. The devil is an imitator. He takes what God does and he tries to duplicate it.

You see, Jesus, the real Christ, is a revelation of God the Father. In **John 1**, there are three verses that are worthy of note, **John 1:1, 14, 18**. These verses teach us the truth that Jesus is a living, breathing revelation of God the Father. The **verse 18**, the word "**declared**" translates the Greek word that gives us our English word "**exegesis**". The word means "**to narrate, to explain, to lead out, to draw out**". It speaks of "**an explanation, or a narration**".

In preaching, we use exegesis to "**lead out and explain**" the truths contained in the text. When Jesus came, He came to "**explain, to lead out, to narrate**" God. In other words, Jesus Christ was and is God in the flesh. He was able to say, "**I and my Father are one**," **John 10:30**. He was also able to say, "**he that hath seen me hath seen the Father**," **John 14:9**. Jesus is God incarnate; He is God in the flesh!

In the Antichrist, Satan attempts to duplicate this relationship between Jesus Christ and God the Father. The Antichrist will be a living, breathing revelation of the devil. He will be the devil incarnate; he will be the devil in the flesh.

We know that our God is a triune Being. He is one God Who manifests Himself in the Persons. He is Father, Son and Holy Ghost. All three are One God, yet each is an individual Person. They come together to make up the Holy Trinity.

In **Revelation 12-13**, we are introduced to the Satanic Trinity. Satan imitates God the Father. The Antichrist imitates God the Son. The False Prophet, who we will meet in our next study, imitates God the Holy Spirit.

Let's give our attention once again to this man who will be known as the Antichrist. These verses give us some important details concerning his mission, his methods, and his miracles. Let's consider these first ten verses of **Revelation 13** and talk about **The Beast From Out Of The Sea**.

I. v. 1-2

THE APPEARANCE OF THE BEAST

- A. v. 1 **How He Originates** – As John stands on a sea shore, a mysterious "**beast**" rises from out of the sea. This is symbolic language. The "**sea**" in the Bible represents the masses of humanity. This individual will come from among men. In other words, while he may possess power that surpasses all the other great rulers of men, he will be nothing more than a man!

The Antichrist will be empowered by Satan and he will wield tremendous power and authority. But, unlike Jesus Christ, he will have a human mother and father. He will not be a God-man like Jesus. He will be a man who receives his kingdom and his power from Satan himself.

Where will he come from and what will be his nationality? No one knows! People have suggested who the Antichrist is for many years. They have assigned a numerical value to each of the letters in these names and claim they equal 666. According to the Bible, and we will see this in a minute, he will lead a ten nation confederacy that resembles the revived Roman Empire. Therefore, he may be European by birth. Of course, **Daniel 11:37** tells us that he "**will not regard the God of his fathers.**" This verse leads many to speculate that he will be Jewish by birth. The fact is, no one knows and anyone who claims to is way off base.

- B. v. 1 b-2a **How He Operates** – These verses give us a little insight into this man called Antichrist. The symbolic language tells us something about what kind of man he is and also something about the nature of the kingdom he will rule.
1. **Seven Heads** – The explanation for this is given in **Rev. 17:9**, "**The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.**" **Revelation 17** is a passage about "**The Great Harlot**", or the apostate church that will dominate world religion during the Tribulation Period. We are told that the "**Harlot**" sits on "**seven hills**". There is only one city in the world that is built on seven hills: the city of Rome.
 2. **Ten Horns** – Horns are a symbol of power and authority. Again, these horns are explained by **Rev. 17:12**. We are told that the ten horns are "**ten kings**": Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Lombards, Vandals, Angles, Saxons, Franks, Heruli, Suevi: and others formed what was once the Roman Empire.
 3. **Ten Crowns** – These ten kings have great authority and power. The Antichrist will arise from among this confederation of ten powerful kings.
 4. **The Names Of Blaspheme** – These world leaders will stand in open defiance of all that is holy or that has to do with God.

(Note: Many believe that what we are seeing here is a revival of the ancient Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was never really defeated. It just kind of dissolved into separate kingdoms. There have been many attempts to revive it down through the centuries. Charlemagne, Napoleon, and Hitler tried, but they all failed. Apparently, the Roman Empire will be revived again, and the Antichrist will dominate this confederation of nations.

We are already seeing this process come to pass in the European Union. This union is comprised of twenty-five European nations with five more who are candidates for admission. The land area occupied by these nations covers much of the land area occupied by the old Roman Empire. I think we will see this body produce the Antichrist and provide the ten kings who will rule the world at the beginning of the Tribulation Period.)

(Note: To understand the description given of this beast in these verses, you have to go back to **Daniel 7:3-8**. In Daniel's vision, he describes the great world empires that will follow one after another until the end of the world.

Daniel speaks of a "**lion**", **verse 4**. This beast pictures the Babylonian Empire. Like a lion, ancient Babylon was powerful, fearsome and had a ravenous appetite for domination. The "**bear**" in **verse 5** speaks of the Medo-Persian Empire. Like a bear it possessed incredible power to crush its enemies. The "leopard" in **verse 6** speaks of the Greek Empire. It is called a leopard because the Greeks were quick to dominate the world. The fourth beast in **verse 7** is the Roman Empire. With teeth of iron they dominated the ancient world.

The Bible is teaching us that the Antichrist will possess the power and the personality of all these ancient empires. He will combine all their strengths and possess none of their weaknesses.

4. **Body Like A Leopard** – His rise to power will be swift.
 5. **Feet Like A Bear** – He will crush his opponents.
 6. **Mouth Like A Lion** – Like a lion he will devour all who dare stand in his way.
 7. **Called A Beast** – The word "**beast**" refers to "**a wild animal**". It is used as a metaphor of a man who is "**brutal, savage, and ferocious**". Like a wild animal, Antichrist will attack the kingdoms of the world and he will destroy all who get in his path. He will be a fearsome, powerful man.
- C. v. 2b **How He Officiates** – We are told that the Antichrist rules the world, but not by his own power. He is Satan's Superman. He is energized by the Dark Prince. We are told that Satan gives him three things. 1. His Power – This word refers to "**strength, power and ability**". 2. His Seat – This is his "**throne**". He rules because Satan has given him dominion. 3. Great Authority – This word refers to the "**ability to do as one pleases**". The Antichrist will do as he pleases on this earth for a time and no one will be able to stop him.

The Antichrist will accept the offer Jesus refused in **Matthew 4**. When Jesus was on the Mount of Temptation Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would bow down and worship the devil, **Matt. 4:8-9**. Jesus refused Satan's ridiculous offer. It appears, however, that Antichrist will accept and Antichrist will rule the world. Satan will control this future world ruler.

(Note: There is an interesting parallel that I want to point out today. The human heart was made to be occupied. When you are lost, the heart is occupied and controlled by Satan, **Eph. 2:1-3**. When a person is saved, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your heart and assumes control of your life. If you have never received Jesus as your Savior, then Satan is your lord and your master, **John 8:44**.)

I. The Appearance Of The Beast

II. v. 3-4 **THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BEAST**

- A. v. 3 **He Receives The World's Wonder** — At some point during the Antichrist's reign he will die. It may be an assassination or some other form of upheaval, but he will be killed. As the world watches and mourns the death of this very popular man, a miraculous thing happens; this dead man comes back from the dead. He experiences a resurrection.

Remember, I told you that Satan is an imitator. In this verse we are told that Satan seeks to duplicate the resurrection. God's Son died on the cross and rose from the dead and the world, for the most part, ignores Him. This man will die and rise again and the world will wonder after him. He has the world right where he wants it; eating out of the palm of his hand.

- B. v. 4 **He Receives The World's Worship** — Whether this resurrection is real or just a bit of satanic sleight of hand we do not know. Yet, the citizens of the world will be taken in. they will be so caught up in the power, the glory and wonder of the Antichrist that they will actually give him their worship! The world will bow before this hellish king and give him what they have steadfastly refused to give God.

Just as God receives the worship of man through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ; Satan will receive the worship of men through the Antichrist. He will be getting what he has always wanted. Men will worship the Beast and the devil. What a tragedy! While Heaven rejoices over the fact that Satan has been cast out of Heaven, **Rev. 12:10**, the "**earth dwellers**" give their worship to the devil.

(Note: The world will declare the Antichrist to be undefeatable. What they fail to understand is that there will come a day when Antichrist will be defeated and cast into Hell, **Rev. 19:20; 20:10**. Yes, Jesus Christ will be able to defeat the devil's superman with no problem. But, may I also point out the truth that God's people living during the Tribulation can defeat him as well, **Rev. 12:11**. Satan has power and the Antichrist will have power. But, they will face on Who has all, power, **Matt. 28:18**. He will defeat them, destroy them, and judge them!)

I. The Appearance Of The Beast

II. The Achievements Of The Beast

III. v. 5-8

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE BEAST

(III. The Antichrist will use his newfound power over men to further Satan's agenda. These verses tell us what kind of man the Antichrist will be.

- A. v. 5-6 **He Defies God** — The Antichrist will be a man of great oratorical ability. He will be able to move the masses with the power of his tongue. If you have ever seen films of Adolph Hitler, you have seen a man who understood the power of the tongue. By his words, he stirred up a nation and convinced them that they could rule the world. He convinced the German people that they were superior to all others. Hitler's words brought about unbelievable suffering and innumerable deaths. Hitler once said, "***You say something long enough and loud enough and people will eventually believe you.***"

When the Antichrist comes, his power with words will make Hitler seem like a babbling idiot! He will galvanize the nations of the world with the power of his words. He will speak "***great things***" and they will believe him. He will speak blasphemes against the God of Heaven and they will worship him. He will use his words to attack everything that has to do with God and the world will hang on every word. He will do everything in his power to turn humanity against God. He will even declare himself to be God!

- B. v. 7a **He Destroys The Saints** — Antichrist will make it his mission to seek out and destroy anyone who still worships God. There will be people saved during the Tribulation. These people will become the focus of the Antichrist's intense hatred of God. He will not be able to defeat the 144,000 Jewish preachers as they travel the world preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. He will not be able to defeat the two witnesses who stand in Jerusalem and preach the Gospel of the Kingdom. He will not be able to stop them until their time is finished, and then he will be allowed to kill them too. But, anyone else on this earth who refuses to bow to him in worship will be put to a martyr's death!
- C. v. 7b **He Dominates The Nations** — The Antichrist will rule the world! Every nation will come under his power and domination. He will be the ultimate world ruler. He will be the king of the world!
- D. v. 8 **He Deceives The Masses** — This verse is crystal clear! Every person who is not saved by God's grace will eventually bow in worship if Satan and his superman.

Notice that these worshipers are called "***all that dwell upon the earth***". The word "***dwell***" means "***to settle down***". This phrase refers to people who have chosen to make this world their home. They have decided that they aren't interested in Heaven or in anything God can offer them. They have staked all their hopes and their futures in this world. God abandons them to their choice! They want the world and He lets them have it, with all the consequences that come with such a decision.

These "***earth dwellers***" have refused God and His Messiah and they have chosen Satan and his false messiah. He gives them up and lets them go after the world and the god they have chosen, **2 Thes. 2:11-12**.

(Note: Which world have you chosen? The Lord will allow you to have the Christ you want. You can have the Lord Jesus Christ if you will receive Him. If not, you may live in this world long enough to worship the Antichrist.)

Conclusion: The final two verses of our text have a special message for us today. **Verse 9** says, **"If any man have an ear, let him hear"**. Do you recognize that statement? We have seen a statement like it several times before, **Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22**. If you go and read these verses you will find that they say, **"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches"**. Do you see what is missing? Two things are missing here, the **"Spirit"** and the **"churches"**. Both the Spirit and the church were removed from the world at the Rapture. The age of grace has ended and the world is in the grip of the Great Tribulation. When God speaks here, He does not warn His people, He warns the earth dwellers, but it is too late for them to repent. They are locked in to their choice and they will worship the Beast and hey will die and go to Hell.

Verse 10 drives this point home. The whole point of **verse 10** is that people reap what they sow, **Gal. 6:7**. If you live for the devil, you will reap the devil. If you reject Jesus, you will be rejected by Jesus. The time to make a choice is today! There will come a day when it will be too late.

When will that day be? No one knows but the Lord! It could be today, tonight, or tomorrow. There will come a day when God will stop calling you and He will abandon you to your choice. If you are not saved, you need to come to Jesus today.

If you are saved, **verse 10** had a word of hope. The **"patience and faith of the saints"** is the knowledge that in the end, Satan and Antichrist will be defeated. In that day, God and righteousness will reign.

The main thing today is for each person in this room to be sure which world they are hooked into. Are you an **"earth dweller"**? Are all your hopes and dreams locked up in this world? Or, are you a citizen of Heaven? Have you received Jesus as your Savior? If so, you will not face the Antichrist or the horrors of the Tribulation.

Do you know where you are going? Would you like to be saved? If He has spoken to your heart, you mind Him today!

The Beast From The Earth (False Prophet) Revelation 13:11-15

Introduction: For the past few weeks we have been treading unholy ground. We have spent a lot of time talking about the devil and his activities during the Tribulation. I would just remind you today that Satan is an imitator. He hasn't had an original thought in over six thousand years.

As we all know, there is a Holy Trinity. The Holy Trinity is comprised of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is these three individuals Who are one God. Satan has a trinity too. His trinity, however, is anything but holy.

The unholy trinity is composed of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. Each member of the Holy Trinity has a specific purpose. God the Father receives the worship of His people through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the facilitator of this holy worship. He stirs up the heart of the believer and causes him or her to worship God.

Remember, Satan is an imitator. His trinity functions exactly the same way. In Satan's unholy trinity, Satan receives the worship through the person of the Antichrist and the False Prophet facilitates this worship.

We have already considered the first two members of the unholy trinity. We have looked extensively at Satan and at the Antichrist. In this message we will look at these verses and get a glimpse of the False Prophet. He is the person who will guide the world's religion during the Tribulation Period. Let's look into these verses together and notice the insights the Bible gives us concerning ***The Beast From The Earth (False Prophet)***.

I. v. 11 **THE PERSONALITY OF THIS BEAST**

- A. **What He Displays** — This second beast is a man just as the first beast was. The word "***another***" translates the Greek word "***allos***". It means "***another of the same kind and quality***." The figure described here is a man. This is also proven by his fate, **Rev. 19:20**.

This beast has horns, which are a symbol of power. He has "***two horns***". Two is a number that symbolized "***testimony***". While the first beast had power because of the territory he ruled, this beast will have power because of the testimony he gives.

The first beast had "***ten horns***" this beast had "***two horns***". The first beast had "***ten crowns***". This beast has no crowns. The first beast is described in terrifying language, as a leopard, a lion, and a bear. This beast is called "***a lamb***". The first beast comes as a powerful world ruler. This beast appears as a mean, gentleman of faith.

This individual will appear on the world stage as a gentle, meek, loving and kind religious leader. He will have the charisma and gentle nature of a Joel Osteen or a Robert Shuler. He will possess the religious power of the Pope. While the Antichrist will rule the world with brute force; this man will attract the world through his pleasant personality and pleasing words.

- B. **What He Declares** — As the old saying goes: "***You can't judge a book by the cover.***" With this man everything is not as it appears. He has all the outward appearances and trappings of a man of faith, but when he speaks, he speaks the words of the dragon. He is the mouthpiece of Satan himself. He will be a religious man, but the religion he is promoting is the worship of Satan! His true nature will be revealed by the words which he will speak, III. **Matt. 12:34.**

(Note: It does take long to learn what a group or a preacher believes. You only need to attend this church a few times to know what we believe. Come to Sunday School, preaching and youth meeting. Come to a revival meeting. Come a few times and you will know where we stand. That is how it should be!

By the way, it doesn't take too long to figure out what a preacher or a church believes. Just listen to their words and they will reveal their hearts in short order. Take some of these TV preachers for instance. One of the most popular never mentions the name of Jesus, nor does he mention sin. He just tells a few stories and builds everyone up. Others are always talking about money and prosperity. It doesn't take long to separate the wheat from the chaff, if you know a little bit about the Word of God!)

I. The Personality Of This Beast

II. v. 12 **THE POWER OF THIS BEAST**

- A. **The Source Of His Power** — "***He exerciseth all the power of the first beast***". This individual will receive his power from the same source that the Antichrist will receive his power: the devil, **v. 2**. The world will accept this man as a "***man of God***". He will be hailed around the world as the greatest religious leader the world had ever seen. The world will be deceived and will not grasp the truth that he is the agent of Satan until it is too late.
- B. **The Scope Of His Power** — The man will be the facilitator of a vast worldwide religion. He will be able to unite all the religions of the world under one banner. He will convince the world that the Antichrist is a god and that he alone is to be worshiped. Men and women from every conceivable religion will bow down in worship of the Antichrist as the leadership of this False Prophet.

This man will solve the problems between the religions of the world. Take the situation in the Middle East. The problems there are not political, they are religious. The problems in that part of the world predate the forming of Islam. The Jews and the Arabs have been bitter enemies since the days of Moses and Joshua. Now, the Muslims hate the Jews and they are bent on the destruction of the nation of Israel. No one can seem to solve their differences today, but this False Prophet will during the Tribulation. He will find the common ground that will allow all the religions of the world to exist under one umbrella.

In our day, when there is news of a religious nature, the world looks to the Pope to see what he has to say about the matter. In that world, the eyes and ears of the world will rest on the False Prophet.

(Note: Why will the world worship the Antichrist? As we learned last time, the Antichrist will be wounded and die and he will rise again from the dead, **v. 3-4**. The world will fall at his feet in stupefied wonder and worship.

At some point, the Antichrist will enter the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. He will go in to the Holy of Holies and he will place his throne there. He will declare himself to be God and he will demand to be worshiped as God, **2 Thes. 2:4**. The False Prophet will support the claims of the Antichrist and will lead the world to worship this Man of Sin. The phrase "**before him**" in **verse 12** means "**in his presence**". The two men, the Antichrist and the False Prophet are the devil's duo. They will work hand in hand to accomplish the devil's will here on earth during the dark days of the Tribulation Period.

Remember, Satan is an imitator! We are told that the Holy Spirit will magnify Jesus, **John 16:13-14**. Satan's anti-spirit will spend his time magnifying the Antichrist and he will lead the world to worship the Beast!)

I. The Personality Of This Beast

II. The Power Of This Beast

III. v. 13-15 **THE PERFORMANCE OF THIS BEAST**

- A. v. 13-15 **His Miracles** — We are told that the False Prophet will be a man of miracles. He will duplicate the miracles of the Two Witnesses, **Rev. 11:5**. He will duplicate the miracle of Elijah in **1 Kings 18**. When Elijah called fire down from Heaven, men fell to their faces and worshiped Jehovah. When the False Prophet calls down fire from the sky, men will fall on their faces and worship the devil!

This False Prophet will lead the world to build an idol, an image of the Antichrist. He will cause this image to come to life. This image will speak to the people. They will be deceived by his power and his miracles and they will fall down in worship of the beast and his image. The ministry of the False Prophet will be marked by exciting and powerful miracles. His miracles will deceive the world.

(Note: In Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas there are three great fountains inside a part of the building known as The Forum Shops. This shopping complex has been designed to give the illusion that you are walking down an ancient Roman street. There is even a sky with clouds over head. At the top of every hour two of these fountains come to life. The statues in the fountains begin to move and talk to one another and to the people watching. One of the fountains tells and acts out the story of the fall of Atlantis.

I said that to say this: if man in his ingenuity can make statues that will come to life, surely the devil can do that and greater. This image of the Antichrist will live and it will deceive the world!)

(Note: We read this and we have trouble believing it. We are living in a world where most people worship nothing but themselves. It is hard to imagine people the world over bowing down to worship an image. In our day of advanced technology, and sophisticated people it is hard to see the world falling down before a statue to worship the devil. But, try to put yourself in that time period!

Millions have gone missing in the Rapture. The world is falling apart at the seams as war rumbles from country to country. Disease, war, starvation, and other plagues have claimed nearly one-half the world's population. Men in that day will be looking for something to believe in. they will be looking for someone who has the answers.

Then, the Antichrist will appear. He will have the solution to the problems of the world! He will have the solution to war, to hunger, and to every problem know to humanity. He will die at the height of his power and the world will mourn his passing. Then, miracle of miracles, he will rise from the dead! The world will see it live and in living color on their television sets.

The False Prophet will speak and he will set the world at ease. He will declare the Antichrist to be the world's savior and they will bow at his feet and worship him. It will be a time of mass deception on a world-wide scale!)

(Note: If you want to draw a crowd, just start advertising miracles and the people will come. It doesn't matter how strange or outlandish the claims, people will flock to see what they think is a miracle.

One fellow claimed to see the face of Jesus in a tortilla in 1977 in New Mexico. He built a shrine and thousands have gone there to pray before the tortilla. Someone saw the image of the Virgin Mary on the side of their house and turned it into a shrine. Thousands have gone there to pray to Mary. When the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 occurred, someone took a photo of a cloud that was supposed to look like the devil. People believe that kind of junk!

I guess it never occurred to anyone that no one knows what Jesus, Mary or the devil look like! This stuff just proves my point: The world is being prepared for mass delusion, **2 Thes. 2:11.**)

B. v. 15-15: **A New Religion**

Sociologist Philip Rieff describes the era when the Christian movement began as the “first culture.” It was dominated by a pantheon of gods whose followers were content with their religion and not missionary toward the larger world. According to Rieff, the Christian movement sparked a monotheistic and evangelistic “second culture” which swept away the “first culture.”

Now we are in what Rieff calls the “third culture,” which Australian pastor Stephen McAlpine describes as “hermetically sealed off from anything transcendent.” It “recognizes only horizontal identity constructions, not vertical ones. Here is where meaning is determined, and here is where authority lies. It is ours to construct—and deconstruct.”

McAlpine adds: “This third culture is highly evangelistic and actively hostile to second-culture values.” For example, it considers sexual “freedom” and “authenticity” to be vital to personal and social flourishing. Biblical morality is therefore seen as dangerous to society and potentially deadly to LGBTQ individuals. The same vitriolic stance is taken with regard to abortion, euthanasia, or any other personal “freedoms” that are “threatened” by biblical faith.

According to McAlpine, this is a “new religion” and rival gospel “the church has not encountered before.” It seeks nothing less than to replace Christianity with its secular vision for a better future.

C. v. 14-15 **His Motive** — The False Prophet does all of this stuff for the sole purpose of getting the world to worship the Antichrist. The world will fall for this deception and they will worship the Antichrist. Those who refuse, orthodox Jews and those who have been saved during the Tribulation, will be hunted down, and destroyed.

Today, you can worship any god you please to worship, or you can worship no god at all, if that is your choice. In that day, you will either worship the Antichrist or you will pay for your disobedience with your life.

The world will come together one day. It will not be the United Nations that will bring about that unity. It will be the work of Satan and he uses the Antichrist and the False Prophet to accomplish his goals in the world.

Conclusion: Our world is heading for some very dark days. The time to escape the coming nightmare is now! If you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior, I challenge you to come to Him for your salvation. Come to Him and be saved today!

If you are saved, you can praise the Lord because you will miss these things. But, you and I have family and friends who will be here. We are living in a world filled with people who will be here. We should seek the Lord on their behalf. If He would have you do that you come and call on Him as He leads.

The Mark of the Beast Revelation 13:16-18

Introduction: We have arrived at a passage of Scripture that has caused more speculation than possibly any other. For centuries people have been trying to decipher the Mark of the Beast. People actually fear the number 666.

The work of God to redeem men and to establish the kingdom of Christ has not been easy. In fact, it's always been a battle. And the reason for the battle is because Satan and his hosts of demons have fought God all along the way. The most dominant aspect of Satan's war, the major weapon in Satan's arsenal against God, and God's purpose, can be summed up in one word. That word is "deception."

He is a liar and the father of lies. He is a deceiver. He is disguised as an angel of light, and his messengers are also disguised as angels of light though they are the demons of darkness. Satan is always trying to confuse people by covering up the truth of the saving gospel, the truth of the Word of God with lies that are masquerading as if they were the truth. Satan has, from the very beginning of God's enterprise, attempted to barrage the world with demon doctrines, coming from seducing spirits through false teachers and false prophets. If, then, the major enterprise of Satan, in endeavoring to fight against God, is deception, then the major agents of Satan are deceivers, be they demons or be they men.

There is a lot of speculation concerning what the Mark of the Beast is all about. There is much misinformation concerning this subject as well. These verses give us some of the information we need to understand just what the Mark of the Beast is. We won't learn everything we would like to know, but we will learn enough to know that no Christian in this room needs to be afraid of the Mark of the Beast.

So, let's look at these three verses today. Let's see if we can dispel some of the mystery surrounding the Mark of the Beast. There are some characteristics of the Mark of the Beast that I want to point out to you today as I preach about ***The Mark Of The Beast***.

I. v. 16 IT IS A MARK OF IDENTIFICATION

(Illustration): There has been much speculation concerning what the Mark of the Beast might be. Some believe that it might be some sort of a barcode system that is tattooed into the skin. People would then have to scan their code to access their money to buy and sell. Laser tattoos can be produced that are invisible to the naked eye, but which show up under ultraviolet light. (III. If you have been to Carowinds or Six Flags and left the park they stamped your hand with an invisible stamp. When you came back in, you passed your hand under an ultraviolet lamp and the mark became visible.)

Scientists have developed tiny microchips the size of grains of rice. These chips can carry all of your medical and financial information and they can be read with a simple scanner. These chips are already being used in pets, and there is talk of placing

these microchips in babies to prevent kidnappings and mistakes at the hospitals. It is possible that technology of this nature could be used to fulfill this passage. It is also possible to place GPS transmitters in chips the size of jelly beans. With these transmitters, people can be tracked regardless of where they are in the world.

Of course, technology has advanced to the place where people can be identified instantly by scanning their fingerprints, (Illustration: My computer), and the retinas of their eyes. DNA technology is advancing at such a rate that simple genetic testing will soon be possible almost instantly. Who knows what the devil will use? There are certainly enough resources available to him in these days.

As you know, the use of plastic currency is quickly replacing cash as the standard in business transactions. It has been suggested that the Mark of the Beast will actually be a credit card system of some sort. This is already being used in many cases for food stamps and other government services. Whether we like it or not, we are headed toward a cashless society. It makes sense! Without cash, crooks and drug dealers have a more difficult time. Without cash, there is less likelihood that people could hide their income from the IRS. We are moving in that direction.

Again, whether we like it or not, we have already been reduced to a number. Everywhere you go you need your Social Security number and your driver's license number. It's already this way in Sweden and Israel. Everyone has a number! Computers like numbers better than names, and you can be sure that computers will be involved with whatever system the Antichrist devises. The stage is set and the minds of people are prepared for some system of public identification.

We are on the verge of seeing a national identification card for citizens of our country. Given all the problems we are having with illegal immigration, there is a rising cry for some sort of identification card or system that can identify who is and who isn't an American citizen.

While we cannot know for sure what the Mark of the Beast is, we can learn something about how it will be utilized in that day.)

- A. **The Scope Of This Mark** – “*causeth...all*” – The word “*causeth*”, means “*to force*”. We are told that all people of all classes will be required to wear this mark in the bodies. Everyone, from the most common of men to the most famous of celebrities, will bear this mark in their bodies. It will be a universal mark. For once in this world there will be no favoritism and no discrimination. Every person from the savage in the darkest corner of the world to the executive living in the New York penthouse will receive the Mark of the Beast.
- B. **The Situation Of This Mark** – “*in the right hands, or in their foreheads*” – This mark will apparently be placed either in the hand or in the forehead. The word “*mark*” comes from a word that means “*a stamp, an imprint, something carved*”. Whatever this mark is, it will reside in the flesh, and it will be permanent. People

will not be able to alter it or counterfeit it. It will be placed where it can be easily seen.

- C. **The Source Of The Mark** – The “**he**” in **verse 17** refers to the False Prophet. If you remember, he is the one who causes the world to worship the Antichrist. He is the one who causes the image of the Antichrist to move and speak. He is the leader of the one world religion that will dominate the world during the Tribulation. He will devise this marking system and he will see that it is carried out.

Illustration: It might help us to understand this if we consider what was happening in the Roman world during John’s day. In the Roman world, there were millions of slaves. A slave would be marked by his master with either a brand or a tattoo of a symbol or a number. It was Roman law in those days for people to worship the emperor. The Roman emperors had declared themselves deity and they demanded the worship of their subjects. This emperor worship involved the Roman citizen going into a temple set apart for emperor worship. The citizen would take a pinch of incense, place it on a flaming altar and say, “**Caesar is god!**” the worshiper would then receive a mark (or “libellus”), signifying that he had fulfilled his duty to the emperor.

This is exactly what we see in this passage. The world will worship the Antichrist, **Rev. 13:4, 15**. When they do, they will receive his mark. It will be a statement of their allegiance to him and to his government. They will be identified as his servants.

I. **A Mark Of Identification**

II. v. 17 **IT IS A MARK OF ISOLATION**

- A. **The Power Of This Isolation** – The mark will be tied to the economy. People will be required to produce the Mark of the Beast in order to be able to buy or sell. This, in itself, will be a great enticement for people to receive the Mark of the Beast. In order to hold a job, to get credit, to access bank accounts, or to do something so mundane as buy a loaf of bread, will require a person to have the Mark of the Beast.

(Illustration): Imagine what this might involve – A young mother goes to the store to buy formula for her baby. She lacks the Mark of the Beast and she is not allowed to purchase her products. A man stops for gas at the gas station. He does not have the mark and he is not allowed to buy. A family shivers in the dark and the cold because they cannot buy utilities without the Mark of the Beast.)

This mark will instantly divide the world into two camps. The Mark of the Beast will declare who worships the Antichrist and who does not. It will prove to be a mark of isolation.

- B. **The Purpose Of This Isolation** – The Antichrist will use the Mark of the Beast to control the world. Everything in the world during the Tribulation will be controlled. Food, housing, medicine and medical care will all be dispensed only to those who have the Mark of the Beast. This mark will give the Antichrist instant power over every person everywhere in the world.

Illustration: A man who had lived under Bulgaria's communist regime remarked: ***"You cannot understand and you cannot know that the most terrible instrument of persecution ever devised is an innocent ration card. You cannot buy and you cannot sell except according to that little, innocent card. If they please, you can be starved to death, and if they please, you can be dispossessed of everything you have; for you cannot trade, and you cannot buy and you cannot sell, without permission."*** (Cited in W. A. Criswell, Expository Sermons on Revelation [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969], 4:120–21).

- C. **The Persecution Of This Isolation** – There will be many who will refuse to accept the Mark of the Beast. The 144,000 Jewish evangelists will not take the mark. Their converts will refuse to take the mark. There will be literally millions of people around the world who will refuse to bow to the Beast or to his image. They will reject the ministry of the False Prophet. These people will suffer greatly for their decision.

They will not be able to buy food, clothing or medicine. They will be refused medical treatment. Many, no doubt, will starve to death in order that they might not dishonor the name of the Lord Jesus. These people will be hunted down and persecuted to the death because of their defiance, **13:15; 6:9**. These people will pay a terrible price for their faith in Jesus, but they will be rewarded greatly when they leave this world, **Rev. 7:9-17!**

(Note: We are not being persecuted for our faith in Jesus today, but we are a marked people. The world is ramping up its hatred of the Lord Jesus and of those who follow Him. We can expect to see this kind of hatred intensify as we move closer to the end.

Believers in this day need to continue to take a stand for Jesus in spite of what they might face for doing so. We need to be faithful to Him, even unto death, if necessary.)

I. A Mark Of Identification

II. A Mark Of Isolation

III. v. 17-18 **IT IS A MARK OF INFORMATION**

- A. **It Reveals The Name Of The Beast** – We are told that the mark is tied to a number and that this number is tied to the name of the Beast. This has led to some wild speculation over the years. In ancient times, number values were attached to Greek and Hebrew letters. Using what is known as “***gematria***”, which is an ancient form of numerology, a number is assigned to each letter in the alphabet. These numbers are then used to seek hidden meaning in words. The people who believe in such things believe that numerical equivalents in names and words are not coincidental, but providential. The Beast’s name, when it is known, will yield the number “**666**”.

People have used this system to propose many different possibilities as to who the Antichrist might be. They have taken the letters in people’s name added up the numerical value and declared that this person or that person had to be the Antichrist. They have suggested Adolph Hitler, Napoleon Bonaparte, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. Back in the 1980’s some people believed that Gorbachev was the Antichrist because that huge birthmark he had on his head.

The fact is - we do not know who the Antichrist is. We can do all sorts of numerical gymnastics, but we will still be in the dark concerning his identity. But, when he appears, the people living in that day will have all the information they will need to be able to identify the Antichrist.

- B. **It Reveals The Nature Of The Beast** – We are told that the Beast’s number is “***the number of a man***”. His number is “**666**”. Six in the Bible is the number of man. Man was created on the sixth day. This number is just short of the number of completion or perfection, the number 7. The number six is seen several times in the Bible. When it is in view, it always comes up short.

When Nebuchadnezzar made his idol in **Daniel 3:1**, it was 60 cubits by 6 cubits. When Goliath came out to meet David, **1 Sam. 17**, he was six cubits and a span tall and carried a spear whose head weighed 600 shekels.

The Antichrist will be the pinnacle of human achievement. He will be the brightest, most powerful human the world has ever seen, outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will be a remarkable man, but he will still fall short of completion and perfection. His number declares his deficiency.

Man is represented by the number six. God is represented by the number seven. Seven speaks of completion and perfection. God is perfect and complete, whether you are speaking of the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit. He is a “**777**”. Satan and his unholy trinity can never compete with God. They will give it their best, but they will still be just “**666**”. They will never be complete and perfect because they lack God!

(Note: Why would anyone choose this number? We have to assume that if the Antichrist is the ruler of the world, he must be able to choose his own number. Why 666? He may do it to stand in defiance to God. After all, the Lord has declared that the devil's superman will wear this number and be defeated. He may do it out of pure rebellion.

Of course, this number might just be for God's people to be able to recognize him when he comes. Either way, this number will declare his name and his nature. When he comes, the people of God will be able to identify him and thus refuse his mark.)

Conclusion: One of the practical lessons we can take away from this passage is this truth: Satan always marks his people. He marks their bodies, their souls and their minds, (Illustration): The truth of this - He marks his people. On the other hand, God seals His own, **2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30; Rev. 7:2-8**. Satan marks those who give themselves to him. God seals those who come to Him through Jesus. He seals them for Himself and He seals them for all eternity!

There are some terrible days coming on this earth! Satan is going to have free reign down here for several years and billions will be brought under his grip for time and eternity. Every one of these people who take the Mark of the Beast are destined for damnation for eternity, **Rev. 14:9-12**. They cannot take the Mark of the Beast, worship Satan and then be saved. If they bow to him, they are lost forever! That is a terrible truth! Do not let that happen to you! Come to Jesus while there is time to be saved. If you are left here after the Rapture and you survive the wars, the famines, the death and disease, you will take the Mark of the Beast and you will go to Hell. It does not have to be that way!

To Satan, you are nothing but a number. If you will come to God, He will call you by your name, **Rev. 2:17; 3:5**. Illustration: A census worker came to the door of a home and asked the lady of the house about the number of her children. She had several and she began the name them out loud, ***"Let see, there's Billy, Jimmy, and Sally. There's Sue..."*** He interrupted her and said, ***"Ma'am I don't care about their names I just want to know their number."*** She said, ***"Sir, my children do not have numbers. They have names!"***

You can have a name or you can have a number. If you have a name you will have a place in Heaven when you leave this world. If you receive a number, you will go to Hell forever. Which do you want today?

After The Storms Have Passed

Revelation 14:1-5

Introduction: If you have been studying along with us as we have moved through this amazing book, you know that the last two chapters have been dark, depressing and discouraging. We have been talking about the devil, the Antichrist and the False Prophet. We have witnessed the depths of depravity as man abandons his Creator to worship the devil through his false Christ.

Now, the scene changes! **Chapter 14** is like a glorious rainbow after and fierce storm. God takes the brush of His grace and repaints the landscape of the Revelation. He gives us a breath of heavenly air in these verses. Only God can do that! Only God can take that which is horrible beyond words and turn it into a thing of glory. That is just what He does in these verses.

In this passage we are allowed to get a little glimpse of heavenly glory. We are allowed to see the Lamb of God. He is the theme of the book and He is center stage in these verses. It would be a blessing if we could figure out how to keep Jesus at the center of everything we do in our lives as individuals and in the life of the church.

In these verses we meet again the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who were selected and sealed in **chapter 7**. These men have preached the Gospel of the Kingdom during the darkest days of the Tribulation. They were persecuted by the Antichrist, but they were preserved by God. At some point during the Tribulation, when they have served their purpose, God will allow the 144,000 to be killed by Antichrist. These men will then join their Redeemer, the Lamb of God, in His glory in Heaven.

That is the scene we are going to investigate today. These men have weathered a terrible storm here on the earth. Now, for them at least, the storm is over and they are home with the Lamb. I want to show you the facts revealed in these verses concerning the 144,000. I want to preach on the though After ***The Storms Have Passed***.

I. v. 1 **THEY ARE A RESCUED ARMY**

- A. **They Are Protected By God** – When we first met this group of men, it was in **Rev. 7:3-4**. There the Bible says, ***“Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.”***

These men have been sealed by God and have been protected by Him through the darkest days of the Tribulation. Hundreds of millions, perhaps even billions of people have died, but these men have been protected through it all because they have been sealed by God. The earth will be stained red with the blood of holy martyrs, but these men will be protected through it all! Satan will hunt

them and harass them, but he will be powerless to kill them because they have been sealed by God. They have His Name in their foreheads and they are untouchable! Satan marked His people and they are headed to Hell, God sealed His servants and they are bound for glory!

(Note: I would just remind you that Satan marks his people, **Rev. 13:16**. In the Tribulation he will mark them with the Mark of the Beast. Today, he marks their bodies, their hearts and their minds with the scars of their sins. Satan marks all those who follow him.

God, on the other hand, seals His people. He places His seal upon them and labels them as His Own possession, **Titus 2:14; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30**. The Spirit of God took up residence in our hearts and He sealed Himself in and He sealed Satan out!)

- B. **They Are Preserved By God** – When these men arrive on Mount Zion there are just as many there as when they were sealed back in **chapter 7**. God sealed 144,000 and now 144,000 stand with the Lamb in glory. There are not 143,999; there are 144,000. He brought in just as many as He called out!

(Note: The same is true for all of God's saints! According to His Word, we have been "***sealed unto the day of redemption***", **Eph. 4:30**. We are also told that Jesus will not lose a single one of those given to Him by His Father, **John 6:37-40**. Those who are saved are as sure for Heaven as if they were already there, **Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 2:6**. Jesus gives eternal life and to every single person who trusts Him for their salvation. The only way a person can lose their salvation is to decide to turn from the Lord and go back into sin.

When the roll is called in glory, not a single person will be missing. When the family gathers for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, there will not be an empty seat at the table! God will bring **ALL** His children home who have remained faithful!)

- C. **They Are Presented To God** – We are told that these men meet the Lamb on "***Mt. Zion***". This is an ancient name for the city of Jerusalem, **2 Sam. 5:7; Psalm 48:2**. Jerusalem is referred to as Mount Zion at least 21 times in the Word of God.

Some commentators believe that John is referring to the earthly city of Jerusalem. They think we are seeing a vision of the coming Millennium, when Jesus will rule on the earth for 1,000 years.

I just happen to believe that we are seeing a heavenly scene! These men have served their time. They have fulfilled their mission and they have been brought in the presence of the Almighty. **Verse 3** talks about heavenly singing. **Verse 5** shows them standing before the throne of God in glory. These men have been rescued out of a world gone mad and they are home in the presence of the Father and the Lamb of God.

(**Note:** I praise the Lord that there is a better place waiting on the people of God! If this world was Heaven as some groups claim, I would want not it. No, there is a better place waiting on the children of God when we leave this world! Jesus told us a little bit about it, **John 14:1-3**. John told us a lot about it, **Rev. 21-22**. My mind has tried to think about that place. But, one day, these eyes will see its glory! These feet will walk its endless streets. These ears will hear the sweet songs of Zion and they will hear the sweetest sound to ever fall upon them. They will hear the Savior say, “**Enter thou in to the joy of thy Lord!**” Praise God! One day, we are going home!)

I. They Are A Rescued Army

II. v. 2-3 **THEY ARE A REJOICING ARMY**

- A. v. 2 **A New Setting** – These men have been rescued from the terrors of the Tribulation. They have witnessed death and destruction on an unprecedented level. They have watched the world turn its back on God and embrace the devil as their new god. They have seen this world fall at the feet of the Antichrist and worship him as god. They have seen things more horrible than anything you and I could ever imagine. But, this verse finds them home, in Heaven, in the presence of the Lord Jesus. They are home! And Heaven is filled with the sounds of their worship and their praises. Heaven is filled with joy because of the presence of the Lamb.

(**Note:** What a contrast there is between this world and Heaven. This world is a world filled with pain sorrow and tears; none of those things will be allowed over there, **Rev. 21:4**. This world is marred by disease and death; they will not be found over there. This world is in the grip of sin and Satan; both will be banned in Heaven, **Rev. 21:28**. This world is perishing; that world will endure for all eternity!

There is rejoicing in Heaven today. We will join them one day soon! One day, we will take our last steps in this wicked, harsh world. We will leave here and we will fly away to be with the One Who died for us on Calvary's cross. We will see the One Who took loved in spite of our sins. We will see Jesus and the will be Heaven! We are headed to a city, and one day we will be home!)

- B. v. 3 **A New Song** – The 144,000 are overcome with joy because they are in the presence of God and the Lamb. They are overwhelmed and they burst into song. They sing a song that is unique to them. It is a new song and no one is qualified to sing it but them! The word “**learn**” means “**to understand**”. No one can understand their song because no one has had their experiences.

(Note: A new song is mentioned some seven times in the Old Testament. It is always used as a means to praise the Lord for some great, amazing thing He has done, III. **Psa. 98:1.**

III. There was a day when the Lord saved my soul. When He did, He placed a “**new song**” within my heart! The only songs my soul knew were the songs of the world. All my soul knew were the laments and dirges of a life of sin and sorrow. But, when He saved me, He gave me a brand new song, **Psa. 40:1-3.** If you are saved, you know what I am talking about!

I went down that day singing the song of the broken hearted lost sinner. I came up singing “**Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I’m found, was blind but now I see.**” Since that glorious day, God has been adding verses to my song of praise! That day, I knew that He had saved me and that was about all. Now, I can sing of His faithfulness, His blessings, His glory, His goodness, His grace, His presence, and His provisions. I can sing because He has changed my life and given me a new song. He has given me a song that is as unique as I am. If you are saved, He has done the same for you!

I can’t put every word of my song into verse down here, but when I get home to glory, I will sing the new, new song with glory in my soul. I will have the vocabulary and the means with which to praise Him in glory!

While I may not be able to sing the whole song now, I do want to lift my voice and share the parts I can put into words. I want to praise Him for saving my soul! He is worthy of our love and praise!)

I. **They Are A Rescued Army**

II. **They Are a Rejoicing Army**

III. v. 4-5 **THEY ARE A REDEEMED ARMY**

(III. These 144,000 are a special group of people. They represent the choicest of God’s servants down through the ages. There have been many men and women who have made their mark for Jesus, but these men stand a little taller than the rest.

These next two verses describe these men. What the Bible says about them should be true of every saint of God. These men have not even been saved yet, but their dedication to the Lord Jesus already serves as a model for every believer.)

- A. v. 4a **They Are Spotless** – We are told that these men have maintained their physical purity. They have not fallen prey to the sins of the flesh that will mark the last days.

Beyond that, they have not succumbed to the spiritual fornication that will run rampant in the world during the Tribulation days. The world will go after the “**great whore**”, **Rev. 14:8**; **Rev. 17:1**, but these men will stay separated and holy during an apostate age.

(**Note**: God expects the same from His children in all ages. His command is for us to stay separate from this wicked world, **2 Cor. 6:17**. We are to hate “**even the garment spotted by the flesh**”, **Jude 23**.)

- B. v. 4b **They Are Surrendered** – These 144,000 preachers had followed the Lord Jesus wherever He led them. They did not turn back through fear. They did not turn away from their task, even though it was dangerous and costly. They stayed the course. They followed the Lamb. The word “**follow**” means “**to be in the same way as**”. These men walked in the ways of the Lord. They made His way their way and they stayed the course for the glory of God.

(**Note**: Again, this is just what God expects from each one of us. He saved us to walk in His will and to follow His ways. He wants us to be obedient, surrendered followers. He wants us to make His way our way! Of course, this means that we have to see things the way He sees them and do things the way He does them, **Ill. Amos 3:3**. The Lord wants us to follow Him wherever He leads us with no regrets, no refusals and no reservation. He is looking for obedient servants!)

(**Ill.** William Borden was born into wealth as an heir to the Borden dairy fortune, but he soon recognized true wealth was to be found in a different inheritance—being a child of God and an heir with Christ. Borden lived a short but high-impact life. He graduated high school at age 16 and quickly decided to become a missionary after seeing the global need for Christ on a trip through Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. He memorialized this decision by writing “**no reserves**” in the back of his Bible.

After revolutionizing the campus of Yale University by starting a weekly prayer and Bible study group attended by three-fourths of the student body, Borden could have started his career with any corporation he desired. Rather, he stood firm in his decision to become a missionary and enrolled at Princeton Seminary. Once again, he made a record of his decision in the back of his Bible: “**no retreats**” was his entry.

After finishing Princeton Seminary, Borden studied Arabic in Egypt to reach Muslims in China. He died from spinal meningitis shortly thereafter. Though he never reached his intended mission field, Borden impacted many people during his life. The last entry in the back of his Bible was “**no regrets**.”

God wants all of His children to live lives of great impact, and He gave us the example of William Borden as inspiration.

No reserves—Sacrifice yourself, **Rom. 12:1**. Offer your entire being (body, mind, and soul) to God as a living sacrifice. Allow Him to use you as He desires, and discover His perfect will for your life.

No retreats—Press on **Phil. 3:14**. After totally surrendering to God, you will face distraction and discouragement that will make you want to revoke your sacrifice and not follow God's will. Stay focused on God and rely on His resurrection power to reach forward for what lies ahead.

No regrets—Finish the course **2 Tim. 4:7**. Offering yourself unreservedly and unrelentingly requires great faith. But God honors your faith, and He will help you fight the good fight so that you can live without regrets and hear Him say: "**Well done, thou good and faithful servant**", **Matt. 25:21**.^[1])

- C. v 4c **They Are Symbolic** – These 144,000 were chosen, saved and sealed at the beginning of the Tribulation. They went out and preached the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Just as the first sheaves of grain were taken into the Temple and waved before the Lord as a symbol of the harvest that was to follow, these men are symbolic of all those who will be saved through their ministry, **Lev. 23:10-11**. They were the first, and they were the guarantee of more to follow! (III. **Rev. 7:9-17**.)

I cannot imagine how hard the ministry of these men is going to be. It is hard in these days, but it will be far harder then. What a comfort it is to know that God is going to use them to reap a vast harvest of souls during the Tribulation. Only in Heaven will they know the impact of their ministry.

(**Note**: By the way, the same is true of us! We will not know until we arrive home in glory just how the Lord has used our lives. Therefore, let us stay the course for His glory and allow Him to use us when and where He sees fit. Until He calls us home, may we "**do the will of God from the heart**", **Eph. 6:6**.)

- D. v. 5 **They Are Sanctified** – These men stand in the presence of God complete and perfect. The Bible says that there was no "**guile**" found in them. The word "**guile**" means "**deceit**". The word was used to speak of something that was "**a decoy**". Something that gave the appearance of being real but wasn't. These men claimed to be the servants of Almighty God and their walk matched their words. They were not fakes; they were the real deal!

The word "**fault**" means "**blemish**". These men had no flaws in their lives that could be pointed out by men. Now, even in the presence of God, they are declared faultless by Him!

(Note: Again, there is a word here for saints living in this day and age. Like the 144,000 our walk is to match our words. We should live out before men what we claim to be before God, **1 John 2:6**. We should live lives that are without blemish so that we might stand in His presence with confidence one day, **1 John 2:28**.

You and I are faulty at best. We all fail and fall short of the glory of God down here. There is coming a day when this evil flesh will drop away forever and we will stand perfect and without fault in His presence! What a day that will be!)

Conclusion: Let us remain faithful to the Lord:

“No Reserves”,

“No Retreats” and

“No Regrets”

WHEN THE END COMES – PART 1: WHAT THE END HOLDS FOR THE SINNER

Revelation 14:6-11

Introduction: Revelation chapter 14 is an interesting chapter. In its verses, God takes care of some Tribulation housekeeping. In **verses 1-5** the Lord shows us the fate of the 144,000. If you will remember, the 144,000 are saved Jewish preachers who travel the world preaching the Gospel of grace. These men are divinely sealed and protected as they carry out their ministry. When their time is completed, the Antichrist is allowed to take their lives and **verses 1-5** picture them home, in Heaven, in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, we are going to focus our attention on **verses 6-11**. This passage speaks about the future that awaits two distinct classes of people. Note that **Verses 6-11** deal with the future of the lost sinner, while **verses 12-13** speak to the future of the faithful saint. **Verses 14-20** speak about the horrific battle of Armageddon that will occur at the end of the Tribulation.

While these verses speak about future events, they are still relevant to us today. Every person in this room will reach the end of your earthly journey someday. There will be an end of the road for each of us! We do not like to think about it, but we need to know what is coming so that we can be properly prepared for that hour. When the end comes, you and I need to be ready! When the end comes, there will be no more time to prepare. When the end comes, how we leave this world will be how we enter eternity. In **Ecclesiastes 11:3**, Solomon said, “**...if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.**” The same is true about your life and mine. However the end finds us, whether saved or lost, is how eternity will preserve us. We must be ready!

Today, let's consider these verses which clearly declare what the end holds for both the Tribulation sinner and the Tribulation saint. I want to preach on the thought ***When The End Comes***.

I. v. 6-7 A FINAL PROCLAMATION

- A. These verses depict an angelic messenger flying above the earth, proclaiming “***the everlasting Gospel***”. This angel declares the same message preached by Paul, Peter, John and the rest of the Apostles. It is the same message preached by the true church for the last 2,000 years. The message this angel delivers is the message of salvation through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Here is the Gospel – **1 Cor. 15:3-4**. It is the “***power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth***”, **Rom. 1:16**. It is a simple message, **Rom. 10:9**. It is an available message, **Rom. 10:13**. It is a message of love, **John 3:16**; of hope, **John 6:37**; of eternal salvation, **John 6:47**; **John 10:28**; and of peace with God, **Rom. 5:10**. It is the same message that was proclaimed in Eden, **Gen.**

3:21; pictured in the Law; and purchased on Calvary, **John 19:30**. It is a message as fresh as the need of today; yet it is older than creation, **1 Pet. 1:18-20**; **Rev. 13:8**. It is the only message that will save the human soul from the wrath of God and an eternity in Hell, **John 14:1-6**; **Acts 4:12**.

Yet, it is a message that has been, is, and will be rejected by sinners until the end of time! This message has been preached for 2,000 years. It has been ignored by most of those that have heard it. It is still being ignored in this day. It will be ignored during the dark days of the Tribulation. Many people will be saved, thank God for that, but many, many more will be lost. The people in the Tribulation will refuse to hear the 144,000 evangelists. They will refuse the preaching of the two witnesses, **Rev. 11**. The world will even rejoice when they are dead and gone. The world will refuse the steadfast, faithful testimony of the Tribulations saints. The world will be unmoved by their love for Jesus, their testimony and even by their blood when they are martyred for their failure to worship the Beast.

The world will turn a deaf ear to all human efforts to bring them to Jesus. In a final effort to reach them, God will entrust the Gospel to an angel. He will preach the message to a universal audience. He will call all people, everywhere, to flee the wrath to come. He will invite all people to come to Jesus for salvation. He will call them to refuse the Antichrist and to embrace the true Christ.

- C. It will be a powerful proclamation by a powerful preacher. But, the world will remain defiant in their rejection of the Gospel! The salvation offered through the blood of Jesus is humanity's only hope. If Jesus is rejected, "***there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin***", **Heb. 10:26**.

When the end comes, it will be too late to believe the Gospel. Today is the day of salvation, **2 Cor. 6:2**. If you have never believed the Gospel and received Jesus as your Savior, you need to do that today. One day it will be forever too late.

I. A Final Proclamation

II. v. 8 **A FATAL PRONOUNCEMENT**

- A. A second angel appears and pronounces God's final judgment on Babylon. You may notice that the angel says "***is fallen***" twice. This indicates that Babylon's judgment is absolutely certain! We will consider Babylon in greater detail when we come to **Rev. 17-18**. Today, we will try to understand why this city, above all others, is singled out for a special pronouncement of judgment.
- B. Babylon is more than a city; Babylon is a philosophy! Babylon represents everything the world is. Babylon represents everything that stands opposed to God and His perfect will. Babylon represents a system of unbelief.

In **Genesis 10:8-10**, we are introduced to the descendants of a man named Cush. One of his sons was named Nimrod. Nimrod founded the city of Babel, **v. 10**. It was here that mankind rebelled against the Lord and attempted to build the Tower of Babel, **Gen. 11**. This tower was a place dedicated to the worship of the zodiac and the heavenly bodies. Babel was one of the first centers of false, idolatrous worship in this world and Nimrod was the ringleader. He is called “**a mighty hunter**” in **Gen. 10:9**. The phrase “**mighty hunter**” has been interpreted by some as “**a mighty hunter of souls**”. In other words, many scholars believe that Nimrod was the father of a religious system that was designed to seduce men and turn them away from the One True God. Thus, when they build their tower dedicated to the worship of idols and heavenly bodies, God intervened and confused their languages. But, that did not destroy the seeds of false religion that had been planted in the hearts of men. People left Babel and carried their false doctrines with them around the world. Babel later became Babylon. It was a city that was the capital of false religion and idolatry. It represents everything in this world that stands opposed to God. In the Tribulation, it speaks of the economic and religious kingdom of the Antichrist.

- C. In this verse, Babylon is pictured as a harlot. She is seen seducing the foolish sinners of this world. She has lead them away from God with her lies and she is about to pay a terrible price. The judgment of God is coming upon her and her heresies and none can stay His hand of judgment. The philosophy behind all of mankind’s religious heresies and rebellion against God will be destroyed. Their foundation will be shattered by the wrath of God.

I. A Final Proclamation

II. A Fatal Pronouncement

III. v. 9-11 **A FEARFUL PORTRAYAL**

- A. A third angel appears. He preaches a message of judgment to all those who receive the mark of the Beast and who worship the Beast. This angel reveals what will happen to all those who refuse to receive the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. This angel preaches a fearful message, but it is one that we need to take note of today.
- B. We are told in **verse 10** that “***The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:***” What a horrible picture! Let’s dissect that verse a phrase at a time.

1. ***“The wine of the wrath of God”*** – The word **“wrath”** translates the word **“thumos”**. It is a word that pictures **“an explosion of wrath; a sudden outburst; a passionate display of anger.”** When God’s wrath is poured out on this world, it will be a time of sudden judgment from which there will be no escape.
2. ***“Poured without mixture”*** – When the wrath of God comes on this world, it will be pure and undiluted. Sinners and Satan have never experienced the undiluted fury of an offended God, but they will one day, Ill. **Heb. 10:31; 12:29.**
3. ***“The cup of His indignation”*** – The word **“indignation”** translates the other New Testament word that is often translated **“wrath”**. It is the word **“orge”**. The word speaks of a **“slow rising anger”**. It was used to refer to the sap rising in a tree. It is the picture of water rising behind a dam, until the pressure of the water becomes too great and the dam bursts. It is the image of a person holding back their anger, becoming red-faced, until they finally explode in wrath. One day the dam of God’s wrath will burst and all those who are outside of a relationship with Jesus are going to be doomed!
4. ***“In the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb”*** – The heavenly host and the Lamb of God will stand as a constant reminder to the lost sinner that they did not have to arrive at this horrible place. They would have been saved if they would have turned to Jesus Christ by faith.

Most horribly of all, we are given a glimpse of the horrors that await the lost sinner in the flames of Hell. **Verse 11** is very clear; Hell is a place of unending, unimaginable torment for the lost sinner. When they die without Jesus, they will go to Hell. Once there, they will never know a second of rest or relief. They will go to a place where they will never die! They will suffer throughout eternity as they endure the wrath of God in Hell.

- C. It did not have to end this way for these people. It does not have to end that way for you! When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He bore our sins in His body, **1 Pet. 2:24**. Somehow, in the economy of God, Jesus literally became our sins on the cross, **2 Cor. 5:21**. During that time on the cross, God judged Jesus as if He were you or me. He poured out His wrath upon the body of His Son. The judgment was so complete that Jesus even cried out in His anguish that He had been forsaken by the Lord, **Matt. 27:46**.

Jesus has already experienced the undiluted wrath of God on the cross. He suffered on that tree because you and I are sinners. He took our place on the cross and suffered the wrath of God so that we would not have to, **Isa. 53:4-6**. Now, the only hope of salvation is Jesus Christ. Those who believe on Him by faith will be saved and they will spend eternity in Heaven. Those who reject Him will spend eternity in Hell. **Verse 11** will be their future. Where will you be five

seconds after death? It all depends on what you do with Jesus, **John 3:18, 36; 1 John 5:12**).

Conclusion: Lost friend, you need to know that you are walking a very dangerous path today. You are playing Russian roulette with a fully loaded gun and one day you are going to lose everything. The only reason you are not in Hell today in the good grace of a merciful God. At any moment, He could sever the golden thread of life and you would plunge into a Christ-less eternity, where you would be lost forever. Do not let that happen! Here again the promise and the call of the Gospel, **John 3:16; John 7:37; John 11:28**. Come to Jesus and be saved! Come before it is too late, for one day it will be too late, **Pro. 29:1; Gen. 6:3**.

WHEN THE END COMES – PART 2: WHAT THE END HOLDS FOR THE SAINT

Revelation 14:12-13

Introduction: As we studied **verses 6-11**, we listened as angels announced the fact that God had pronounced a sentence of damnation on this world system and all those who refuse to believe the Gospel message. Those verses tell us about a horrible place called Hell where the lost will suffer in the flames of God's wrath for all eternity. That is a sad, horrible picture of the future that awaits every person who lives and dies outside of a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. If you are not saved today, I challenge you to examine your life and where you are headed. Do you really want to go to Hell? Do you really want to spend eternity separated from God and from everything of beauty, purity and spirituality? You do not have to go to Hell! You can be saved if you will come to Jesus and call on Him by faith, **Rom. 10:9, Acts 16:31**.

What a contrast there is when we comes to **verse 12**! We leave the wrath and judgment of **verses 6-11** and we are exposed to the sweet fragrance of God's grace. Having declared His judgment against the wicked, God now demonstrates His grace toward the righteous. Having shown us the wicked, God now casts the spotlight on His faithful remnant. He says, "***You have seen the wicked ones, now take a look at my children!***"

These verses show us what will happen to the saints of God when they leave this world. We have seen the hellish side of death; now let's examine the heavenly side of death. What waits on the sinner is ghoulish; what waits on the saint is glorious. Let's look at the truths in these two verses as we consider the thought ***What The End Holds For The Saint***.

I. v.12a THE PROCLAMATION OF THEIR FAITHFULNESS

- A. The word "***patience***" literally means "***steadfast endurance***". It is the picture of a person who cannot be swayed from his simple faith in and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. In spite of the horrors of the Tribulations Period and the threats of the Antichrist, these believers have remained faithful to their Lord. They refused to bow to this world. They refused to give their worship to the Devil. They have endured every attack and every affliction with the confident knowledge that their God was executing an eternal plan. They were faithful even unto the death, knowing that, in the end, their faith would be vindicated and Satan and his kingdom would be judged.

- C. These people knew that they were part of the victorious people God, even while they suffered! That is a lesson that we would do well to learn in our day. This world and the devil are always trying to get us to compromise. There is a constant barrage designed to cause us to abandon God and the way of righteousness. The devil would love nothing better than for us to get our eyes off Jesus and His will for our lives and our church. He would love for us to lower our standards, relax our hold on our convictions and abandon the way of righteousness in these days.

After all, it would be easier! It would cause the church to be more accepted in the community. It would take some of the pressure off. The only problem is that it would offend God! It would cause Him to remove His power from our midst. It would cause Him to write "***Ichabod***" above our door, like He has in countless other churches and places.

- D. The best course of action in this day is the same course of action chosen by the saints in these verses. It is the course of action articulated by the Apostle Paul in **1 Cor. 15:58**, "***Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.***" We are to stay the course for the glory of God!
- E. The world might not appreciate your efforts for the Lord; but God does! He sees every sacrifice for His name and He will reward His people in due time, **Matt. 10:41-42; 1 Cor. 3:10-15**. (Illustration): The principles to be gleaned from the Judgment of the Nations – **Matt. 25:34-40**.

I. The Proclamation Of Their Faithfulness

II. v. 12b **THE PROOF OF THEIR FAITHFULNESS**

- A. These people demonstrated their faithfulness to the Lord in two ways. They kept His commandments and they kept the faith. When we do as He tells us in His Word, we prove that we love Him, **John 14:15**. Our obedience to the Lord is irrefutable evidence that we have experienced the new birth, **1 John 2:3-5**.
- B. By keeping the faith, these people had refused to deny Jesus. They had maintained their faith in Him even when doing so was costly. Many in the Tribulation will go to their deaths rather than deny the Lord Jesus. How much easier would it be for them to deny Him with their lips, even as they embrace Him in their hearts? But, they are not hypocrites! They will not deny Him even though it will cost them everything. By refusing to worship Antichrist, they will suffer greatly. They will not be able to buy or sell. They will be hunted and hounded and executed for their allegiance to Jesus. Still, they will remain faithful!

- C. These suffering saints set a sterling example for those of us living in these days! As we know, the trend in churches and among church people in our day is to become more like the world. That is the easy path to follow. It gains you favor with the world and it helps you grow in numbers.

However, when you compromise the Word of God and water down the Gospel message, you forfeit the presence and power of God. You might have a full house, huge crowds and mountains of cash, but if there is no power and touch of God, those things amount to less than nothing! (Illustration): ***"I'd Rather Have Jesus!"***)

I. The Proclamation Of Their Faithfulness

II. The Proof Of Their Faithfulness

III. v. 13 THE PROFIT OF THEIR FAITHFULNESS

- A. From a worldly point of view these people gave up a lot for their faith in Jesus Christ. They suffered, they starved, and they endured hardships that we cannot even begin to imagine. Men watched their wives and children starve to death. Mothers watched their children suffer. What did it profit them? What payoff was there in such suffering and pain? This verse tells us about their future. If you are saved it tells about your future too!
- B. First, we are told that these people who will die in and for Jesus are ***"blessed"***. This word has the idea of being ***"happy."*** It means to be ***"supremely blessed; fortunate; well off"***. The idea here is that those who die in the Lord leave a harsh, unfriendly world for a better place.
- C. We have often heard it said, when a believer dies, ***"Well, they are better off."*** It is so true! Paul knew this truth, **Phil. 1:23; 2 Tim. 4:6**. Death, for the child of God is not the horrible monster we have made it out to be! It is nothing more than a doorway that allows us to step out of time and into eternity! It is a portal that allows us to leave this land of death and step into that land of life. Death, for the child of God, is not a grinning devil; it is a smiling friend that comes to usher us home into the waiting arms of our Savior!

(Illustration): Henry Van Dyke wrote a special poem that reveals death for what it is for the child of God. It is called “**Gone From My Sight**”.

I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.

Then someone at my side says: “There, she is gone!”

“Gone where?”

Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says: “There, she is gone!” there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices are ready to take up the glad shout: “Here she comes!”

And that is dying.)

D. There is no comparison between what we have in this world and what will be ours when we get home to glory! This verse touches on two of the blessings that will hold special importance for those saints living through the horrors of the Tribulation.)

1. **They Will Rest From Their Labors** – These people have labored for Jesus in a difficult day, now they are going home to rest. The word “**labour**” does not refer to the act of working, but to the weariness that comes from working. The word literally means “**a beating; grief; sorrow; trouble**”. It can be used to speak of “**beating the breast out of sorrow**”. The idea here is of the soldier who has fought in the campaigns and battles and has grown weary. He needs some R&R. It pictures the sailor who has helped guide the ship through many terrible storms. He needs to have a shore leave.

These saints gave their all for Jesus here on the earth and all they got in return was weariness of the flesh, grief and sorrow. Now, they can go into the presence of the Lord to rest. (Illustration): Heaven – **Rev. 21:1-6; 21:10-22:5.**)

The word “**rest**” means “**to cease from labor to in order to recover and collect strength**”. It speaks of being in a state of “**refreshment**”. There is weariness in the work of God! God’s faithful servants get tired, but there is coming a day of rest and refreshment!

(Note: Many of you are weary in the battle today. It gets hard to live for Jesus in a world that does not care about Him! It is hard to be holy in a godless world. It makes you weary. Let me encourage you, precious saint of God, there is coming a day of rest! One day, we will step out of this world and we will enter His presence. When we arrive there, we will have laid aside the burdens, cares and labor of this life. We will be able to find refreshment in His presence.

By the way, He knows how to refresh us here too! He can give you strength sufficient for your days, **Deut. 33:25**. Therefore, let us carry on in spite of the weariness we feel from time to time. Let us not come to that place where we throw up our hands and say, “**What’s the use?**” God help us to look beyond this hard hour and see a day when we will stand complete in His presence!

2. **They Will Be Rewarded For Their Labors** – We are told that “***their works do follow them.***” In other words, their labor for the Lord in that dark day was not in vain! God saw everything they did for His glory and He rewards them for it all. That is how it will be for the children of God one day! We will stand in His presence and He will reward us for the things He allowed us to do for His glory, **1 Cor. 3:10-15**. He saved us by His grace. He gave us His Spirit. Anything we have ever done for Him has been because He enabled us to do it. Yet, He is going to reward us! Isn’t that amazing! But, I know what we will do with those rewards. We will cast them at His feet and we will praise Him for His grace in salvation and in service, **Rev. 4:9-11**. We sing “***What A Day That Will Be***”, and it will be a glorious day when we leave this world to go to our reward!

Conclusion: The contrast in the destinations of the lost and the saved could not be more different! Those who reject Jesus Christ will spend eternity apart from His presence in Hell. Those who receive Him will enjoy an eternity spent in His presence in Heaven.

Five seconds after you die you will already be where you are going to spend eternity. Look at your heart right now. Where would you go if you died within the hour? Would you go to Heaven? Would you go to Hell? Are you content with the place you are headed right now?

Would you like to be saved? You can be if you will come to Jesus. Here is His promise to you – **John 6:47**. If you will come to Him, He will amaze you at what He will do in you and for you both here, **1 Cor. 2:9**, and there, **Jer. 33:3**.

Are you saved? If so, you should praise Him for what you have here and for what you will enjoy there.

Are you faithfully serving Jesus today? Or, have you allowed coldness and compromise to enter your heart?

Has He spoken to you through this message? If so, you come as He calls.

When The Judge Calls His Court To Order

Revelation 14:14-20

Introduction:

In our study of this book, we have arrived to the verses that close out the pause in the action we have been in since **chapter 12 verse 1**. When this chapter ends, we are going to be thrown back into the heat and the horrors of the final days of the Tribulation. Before we deal with those things, John gives us a vision of our Lord when He comes again in power and glory.

When Jesus came the first time, He came as a Savior. He came to give His life on the cross so that sin might be paid for and sinners might be set free. When He comes the second time, He is coming as a Judge. He is coming to destroy sin, Satan and all those who stand in defiance to God. When Jesus returns, He will come in power, glory and judgment and none will be able to withstand Him! There will be no cross for Jesus the next time He comes. There will be a crown! There will be no tree for Him to hang upon; but there will be a throne for Him to sit upon.

Let's move through these verses and catch the vision John shares of the Lord Jesus Christ and the coming days of His terrible judgment. I want to preach on the subject: ***When The Judge Calls His Court To Order***. As I do, I want to show you the ***parts*** of John's vision.

I. v. 14 THE LORD AND HIS RETURNING

(Illustration): The first image we are given is of the Lord Himself, sitting upon a cloud, wearing a crown with a sickle in His hand. Let's examine this image in more detail.)

- A. **His Person** – There is no doubt about Whom John is writing. He is writing about “***The Son of Man***”. As you may remember, this was one of the titles given to the Lord Jesus when He came to this earth the first time. Jesus used this title to refer to Himself some 84 times in the Gospels. It was the way He most often referred to Himself. This title identifies Jesus with mankind. It is His human title. It speaks to His sufferings, His service and His sacrifice. When John sees the Son of Man in the clouds, he is seeing the One Who came to this earth and gave His life as a ransom for sin. John is seeing Jesus Christ.

Of course, we are promised that Jesus Christ will come in this fashion, **Rev. 1:7; Luke 21:27**. John is giving us a preview of that glorious day when Jesus Christ will return in glory and power!

- B. **His Position** – When John sees Jesus, he sees Him wearing a “***golden crown***”. The word “***crown***” translates the word for “***a victor's crown***”. It refers to the laurel wreaths that were given out to victors in the ancient Olympic Games. The fact that this crown is “***golden***” identifies the wearer as a King.

When John sees Jesus Christ this time, he does not see a carpenter. He does not see a humble Jewish rabbi. He does not see Jesus of Nazareth. He does not see the son of Mary. When John sees Jesus here, He sees the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He sees the One Who invaded Satan's territory and carries off a great victory, he sees the One Who walked valiantly into the jaws of death, shedding His blood on the cross to defeat sin and Satan and liberate sinners. He sees the One Who walked victoriously out of that tomb on the third day. John sees the King Who has come to take possession of His domain.

When Jesus comes back, there will be no debate. The United Nations will not convene to see whether He can reign or not. When He comes, He will be wearing the golden crown of the victor. This just means that all the battles have already been fought and He is the winner! Jesus will not rule by the leave of men. He will rule by His right as Creator, Lord, Savior and King!

- C. **His Power** – When John sees the King, He has “a sharp sickle in his hand”. A sickle is an instrument used to harvest wheat. When Jesus returns, He is coming to both gather His people into His barn as a farmer gathers his wheat; and He is coming to cut down the wicked like a farmer cuts down his wheat. We will see this truth unfold in the next few verses.

For now, it needs to be said that Jesus can either be your Savior or He can be your Judge. If you will receive Him in these days of grace, He will save you and take you to Heaven. If you reject Him, He will stand in judgment of your life one day. He will either be your Savior, or He will be your Judge. The choice is yours!

I. The Lord And His Returning

II. v. 15-19 **THE LORD AND HIS REAPING**

(Illustration): These next four verses unfold our Lord's plan to bring judgment to this earth. When He came the first time, He came as the Sower. He moved through this world sowing the seeds of the Gospel of grace. When He returns, He will come as the Reaper. He will separate the saint from the sinner. He will take the saints home to Heaven and the sinner will be cast into hell.

There are two harvests described in these verses. Harvest time in the Bible is often used as a picture of souls coming to God for salvation, **John 4:34-35**. In these verses, the harvest is used as a picture of judgment. Let's see what these verses have to say about the harvests the Lord is going to reap someday.)

- A. v. 15-16 **The Reaping Of The Grain** – These two verses describe the Lord Jesus is shown thrusting in His sickle to reap the earth. The world is pictured as a field of wheat that is ready to be harvested. The Lord takes His sickle and He reaps the field.

What we are seeing in these verses share the fulfillment of a parable Jesus told in the Gospels. In **Matthew 13:24-30**, Jesus told the parable of “**The Wheat and the Tares**”. It is a story of a farmer who sowed a wheat field expecting to reap a bountiful harvest. But, his enemy came and sowed tares among his wheat. The servants wanted to pull up the tares, but the farmer knew that doing so would destroy the wheat. His council was for both to grow together until the time of the harvest, then the tares could be gathered and burned and the wheat could be gathered and placed in the farmer’s barn.

In the same chapter, **Matthew 13:36-43**, Jesus told His disciples what this parable meant. The good seed represented genuine believers while the tares represented false believers. The good seed represents the saved and the tares represent the lost.

The problem with the wheat and the tares is that the two cannot be told apart while they are growing. The tares, which is a plant called the Bearded Darnel, look just like wheat as it matures. The difference between the two plants becomes clear when they near harvest time. The head, or top, of the tare turns black and stands up straight. It is filled with tiny black seeds that can cause nausea, or even death. It is a natural emetic and when tares are harvested with the wheat, every kernel must be inspected. The wheat, on the other hand, has a head filled with heavy kernels of wheat. These kernels cause the head of the wheat plant to bend toward the earth. (III. **The obvious contrast between the saved and the lost.**)

One day Jesus will gather His wheat, the genuine believers, unto Himself. The wicked will be cut down and “**cast into a furnace of fire**”. The judgment of the Lord is coming and “**the Lord knoweth them that are his,**” 2 Tim. 2:19.

(**Note:** The word “**ripe**” is an interesting word. It means “**to be dry or withered**”. It speaks of a crop that is “**overripe**”. What a picture of the grace and longsuffering of God! The harvest of sin has been ripe since the first sin was committed in Eden. Yet, God in His grace, love and mercy as withheld judgment, giving lost men and women ample time to repent. One day His patience will be exhausted and His judgment will come on sinners. You need to search your heart and “**give diligence to make your calling and election sure,**” 2 Peter 1:10.)

- B. v. 17-19 **The Reaping Of The Grapes** – Now the scene changes and we move from the field to the vineyard. The lost are compared to a field of grapes that is “**ripe to the bursting**”. They are ready to be harvested.

When grapes are harvested, they are placed in a “**winepress**”. In those days, grapes were processed by placing them in a winepress. A winepress usually consisted of two vats connected by a channel. The grapes were placed in the upper chamber and people would climb into the winepress and use their feet to crush the grapes, extracting their juice. The juice would run out of the upper vat through the channel and into the lower vat where it would be collected for winemaking.

Again, we are given a picture of a world slated for judgment! This world has rejected Jesus the True Vine, **John 15:1-8**. They have attached themselves to the vine of this world, and they have drunk deeply of the wine of sin and have rejection of the God of glory. This world has rejected God and His Son Jesus, but one day, He will come and they will face Him in judgment. He will crush this world system, and all those who hold to it, under His feet like a man crushes a grape. This is the very image Isaiah paints of the coming King in **Isa. 63:1-6**. Jesus is coming in wrath and judgment and there will be no escape! The enemies of God will be thrown into “***the winepress of the wrath of God***” and they will be judged!

I. **The Lord And His Returning**

II. **The Lord And His Reaping**

III. v. 20 **THE LORD AND HIS RECKONING**

(III. **Verse 20** concludes John’s vision. It gives us some insight into the where this great judgment will take place. There is coming a day of reckoning and this verse gives some much needed insight into that horrible event.)

- A. **The Place Of His Reckoning** – This verse tells us that “the winepress was trodden without the city”. This does not tell us where this event will take place. However, what we are seeing in these verses are a vision of a coming battle called “***Armageddon***”. According to **Rev. 16:16**, a terrible battle will take place here. I believe it is this battle that is being pictured in our text.

Armageddon means “***the hill or city of Megiddo***”. Megiddo is located in the “***Plain of Esdraelon***”. This location is the site of some famous biblical battles. It was here that Barak and Deborah defeated the Canaanites, **Jud. 4-5**. It was here that Gideon defeated the Midianites, **Jud. 6-8**. This same valley is the place that both King Saul and his son Jonathan were killed in battle, **1 Sam. 31**. King Josiah also met his death in the valley of Megiddo, **2 Chron. 35**.

It is in the same valley where the armies of the earth will come together to destroy the King of Kings. It is here in this place that Napoleon described as “***a natural battlefield***” that the final battle of the earth will be fought.

- B. **The Pain Of His Reckoning** – We are told that the winepress will be “***trodden***”. This word means “***to crush with the feet***”. This is a very vivid description of what Jesus will do to those who have despised and rejected Him. Like a man crushing grapes in a winepress, He will crush the enemies of God under His feet. This is the promise of the Word of God, **1 Cor. 15:24-28; Heb. 10:12-13**.

A person can either be crushed under His feet, or be held in His arms. The sinner can either be the focus of God's wrath or of God's grace. If I were you, I would be certain that I was saved so that I might miss out on this terrible time of judgment.

- C. **The Permanence Of His Reckoning** – What we are witnessing here is total destruction of the enemies of the Lord. This is not a probation period. This is not a judgment that will be lifted after a while. This is total annihilation as far the physical man is concerned.

The image here is one of violence and death. We are told that the blood will run as high as the horses' bridles. This is between four and five feet deep. It will flow in a river some 1,600 furlongs long. This is about 200 miles. Can you imagine such carnage? Our minds cannot conceive of this amount of blood. It was said by Josephus that so much blood flowed through the streets of Jerusalem when Titus sacked the city that many of the fires that had been set to destroy Jerusalem were actually put out by the blood that poured from the bodies of the slain Jews.

The armies of the world will gather in a final attempt to defy God. Jesus will return and by His word He will destroy the enemies of God and tread them down in the winepress of His wrath! Hundreds of millions of soldiers will die in this catastrophic battle, **Rev. 19:11-21**. The blood of the fallen will fill the valley of Megiddo from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south. Men have rejected the precious, saving, life-changing blood of Jesus, now they will wallow in their own blood!

Conclusion: We read of these events as we cannot comprehend such total devastation. Yet, the Bible says it is coming! In fact, some of the Old Testament prophets wrote about these very events, **Zech. 14:1-4; Joel 3:11-14**. This battle will take place and God will be victorious.

I don't know whether any person in this room will be on the earth when this battle takes place. I hope not! But, I do know this, some in this room may be where Joel spoke of in **Joel 3:14**. You may be in the "**valley of decision**". You need to decide whether you will claim the blood of Jesus and the salvation it supplies; or whether you will face Him someday to shed the blood of destruction. His blood saves; your blood condemns you to judgment and Hell!

Thousands of years ago in Egypt, God saved His people by the blood of a lamb. They killed that lamb, placed its blood on the doorposts of their houses and went in. when they did, they were saved, safe and secure. They were under the blood. When the death angel passed through that night, they were spared because they were under the blood.

What about you? Are you under the blood today? Has the blood of Jesus been applied to the doorposts and lintels of your heart? Have you trusted Jesus as your Savior? I hope so, for if you haven't, you will face Him as your Judge one day.

If you are in the valley of decision, come to Jesus right now! One day Jesus will call His court to order; you need to be sure that you are saved before that day comes!

The Preparation for the Bowl Judgments Revelation 15:1-8

Introduction: The book of the Revelation is a book of contrasts. As we move through the book, we are taken back and forth between Heaven and the earth. We are allowed to witness scenes of joy in the heavens and we are confronted with scenes of judgment on the earth. In the heavens you see scenes of worship. On the earth, you see scenes of wrath.

In this chapter we are once again taken into Heaven. In these eight verses, which comprise the shortest chapter in the Revelation, we are allowed to see a vision of Heaven as God prepares for His final judgment of the tribulation earth. There has already been great suffering as the judgment of God has been unleashed on the earth. When these judgments are poured out on the earth, they serve to increase the agony of the wicked.

We want to examine John's vision today. We are given a glimpse of Heaven as it prepares for final judgment. Up to this point, God has mingled mercy and judgment. Up to this point God has been leaving the door to repentance ajar. Now humanity has made its final choice. The world has chosen Satan over God and judgment is coming. There will be no mercy. There will be no more opportunity. There will be no longsuffering or grace. There will only be judgment and the wrath of God for all those who have rejected Jesus Christ. Let's join John as he looks in on this scene of heavenly preparations. I want to preach on the subject: ***The Preparation For The Bowl Judgments.***

I. v. 1, 7 **A VISION OF JUDGMENT**

(Illustration): John tells us that he saw "***another sign***". The word "***sign***" is the same word translated "***wonder***" in **Rev. 12:1 and 3**. In **Rev. 12:1**, saw a "***woman***" representing the nation of Israel. In **Rev. 12:3**, John saw a "***great red dragon***" representing Satan. In these verses, John sees "***seven angels***" who will be God's instruments of final judgment upon the earth.

John tells us that this vision is both "***great and marvelous***". The word "***great***" speaks of something that is "***important and astonishing***." The word "marvelous" has the idea of "***something to be wondered at***". John is calling our attention to this vision because what is happening here is something important and amazing.

You saw in the last chapter the horrifying judgments of God as they were visited on earth. Here, we are allowed to see the judgment from Heaven's perspective as it prepares for judgment.)

- A. v. 1 **It Is A Scene Of Final Judgment** – John sees seven angels and these angels have “***the seven last plagues***”. The word “***plague***” means “***a hitting, or a wound***”. What we see here is God’s hitting the earth and wounding it in judgment. The lashes of God’s whip of judgment and begun to fall on this world system and there is nothing that can stop the damage that is about to be inflicted on those who have rejected the Gospel of grace.

When these seven judgments are poured out on the earth, they will complete the judgments of the Tribulation Period. **Verse 1** says that through these judgments the wrath of God is “***filled up***”. This phrase translates the Greek verb “***telos***”. This is the same word used by Jesus when He was dying on the cross. Just before He died He cried, “***It is finished***”, **John 19:30**.

The word is very expressive and it was used in many ways in that society.

- Servants used it when they had completed an assignment.
- Priests used it when they had located a worthy animal to be used as a sacrifice.
- Farmers used this word when a perfect specimen had been born into their flock.
- Artists used it when they had put the finishing touches on a work or art.
- Merchants used it when a deal had been struck. Often your receipt would contain this word. It meant that the debt had been paid in full.
- Soldiers used it when they placed their foot on the neck of a vanquished foe.
- Homeowners used it when they had paid the last payment on their mortgage. They would often inscribe the word on a plaque and nail it to the front of the house, revealing to all that the final payment had been paid.

Jesus used this word on Calvary to let everyone know that He had finished the Father’s work and that redemption’s price has been fully and finally paid. Praise God, salvation is finished!

It is used here to signify completion as well. When these seven last plagues are poured out, God’s judgment on this world will be finished.

- B. **It Is A Scene Of Full Judgment** – The seven angels are given seven “**vials**” or “**bowls**”. These bowls are said to be “**full of the wrath of God**”. The word “**full**” means “**to be swelled**”. It was used in that day of a ship that was filled with cargo. Here, it refers to the wrath of God that reached the busting point. Up until now the wrath of God has been like water flowing over a dam. The damage has been severe, but the dam has held back the worst part. In these verses, the dam of God’s wrath is about to break and the waters of judgment are going to drown both sin and sinner. As **Rev. 14:10** says, “***The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation...***” Judgment is coming and there will be no escape.

(Illustration): In 1899, Johnstown, PA was a growing steel town located on the Little Conemaugh and Stony Creek Rivers. It had a population of some 30,000 people. On May 31, 1899, at 4:07 PM, after a night of heavy rains, the South Fork Dam burst. When it did, 20 million tons of water came crashing down the narrow valley. Boiling with huge chunks of debris, the wall of flood water grew at times to 60 feet high, tearing downhill at 40 miles per hour, leveling everything in its path.

When the dam broke and the water came hurtling toward Johnstown, the people heard the roar and understood what had happened. Thousands tried to escape, but were soon overtaken by the waters. When the next day dawned, over 2,200 people were dead. Some of the bodies were not uncovered until years after the flood. There was no time to escape and there was no means of escape. Johnstown was destroyed without mercy in a matter of minutes.

That is but glimpse of the horror that is coming on this world when God’s wrath is poured out. The dam will break and judgment will fall. You need to be sure that you are in Jesus and secure from the wave of wrath that will soon come upon this lost world.)

I. A Vision Of Judgment

II. v. 2-4 **A VISION OF JUBILATION**

(Illustration): Even as Heaven prepares to unleash judgment upon the earth, there is rejoicing in Heaven. I praise the Lord that there is a land that is free from the cares, sins and sufferings of this world. Every time we are privileged to look into Heaven, we see the same thing. We see the saints of God rejoicing in the presence of their Redeemer. This vision is no different.)

- A. v. 2a **The Setting Of This Jubilation** – These saints are standing on a “***sea of glass***” “***mingled with fire***”. This glassy sea speaks of God’s judgment as being firm and fixed. On this earth, there is nothing more constantly changing than the ocean. The sea is never still and it is never the same. This sea is solid and unmoving! Judgment is fixed and it cannot be altered! It is “***mingled with fire***” to remind us that God is a God of wrath Who is in the process of judging this world.

If you will remember, there was a “***sea of brass***” called “***the laver***” outside the tent of the Tabernacle. Before the priests entered the tent they were required to wash in the laver. It symbolized cleansing and forgiveness of sin. How many times have I stopped at the laver of **1 John 1:9** and washed my sins and my stains away? I thank God that there is a place of forgiveness and restoration today.

In Heaven, that sea of brass that was outside the tent of the Tabernacle, has become a sea of glass in heaven. There will be no more need for the saints to come to God for cleansing. We will never fail Him again! That will be a blessing.

But, for the lost sinner, this sea reminds us that it has become too late for repentance. Judgment is set and fixed. Man has reached his limit and God is about to pour out His wrath on a lost and sinful world. What a horror awaits the “***earth dwellers***”!

- B. v. 2b **The Source Of This Jubilation** – These Heaven dwellers are rejoicing, and with good reason! These are the Tribulation saints that we met way back in **Rev. 7:9-17**. These are people who heard the Gospel when it was preached during the Tribulation. They heard the call of God and they repented of their sins and they were saved. Many of them were called upon to give their lives for Jesus. This they did, dying horrible deaths at the hand of the Antichrist. Now, they are home in Heaven, safe, secure and saved. And they rejoice in the victory they have been given. While those who dwell on the earth writhe under the lashes of God’s whip of wrath, these saints of God stand perfect and saved in the presence of God and they praise Him for His grace in salvation! (Illustration): Just a reminder: Heaven will be a place of praise and glory to the Lord! I look forward to being in a place where praise is welcomed and encouraged. I look forward to having a body that can offer unhindered praise to our worthy Savior!
- C. v. 3-4 **The Song Of This Jubilation** – These Tribulation saints lift their voices in song to praise the God Who redeemed their souls. We are told that they sing two songs. They sing the “***Song of Moses***” and they sing “***Song of the Lamb***.” The Song of Moses is found in **Ex. 15**. It is the first song in the Bible. The Song of the Lamb is the last song recorded in the Bible. The Song of Moses was sung by the children of Israel when they had been delivered from Egypt and Pharaoh. The Song of the Lamb is sung by the saints of God when they are delivered from Antichrist. The Song of Moses was sung by the Red Sea. The Song of the Lamb is sung on the glassy sea. The Song of Moses was to praise God for bringing His people out. The Song of the Lamb is sung to praise God for bring His people in. Both songs are songs of redemption and praise

for the God Who excels in delivering His people from sin and sinners. Let's take a moment to examine this song.

1. v. 3 **They Sing Of His Works** – They sing of the God Who works in power and moves in glory.
2. v. 3 **They Sing Of His Ways** – They sing of the God Who's ways are always right and just.
3. v. 4 **They Sing Of His Wonder** – They exalt His greatness and magnify the God Who alone is worthy to be praised!
4. v. 4 **They Sing Of His Worship** – They sing of the God Who is worthy to receive and will receive the worship of all mankind.
5. v. 4 **They Sing Of His Wrath** – They sing of the God Who alone is worthy to judge sin and sinners because He alone is holy and just.

These saints have been through a terrible time, but they found God to be a faithful God. He saved them. He kept them. He carried them home to glory. And, they stand in His presence and lift their voices in song to the God of their salvation.

(Illustration): Just as surely as Heaven will be a place of praise, it will be a place filled with singing. I like “**good**” singing here. It really can set the mood for the service. But, in Heaven, our songs of praise will be lifted to a new level. We will sing in perfect pitch and harmony and we will sing songs of praise to the God Who saved us from our sins and from His wrath!)

I. A Vision Of Judgment

II. A Vision Of Jubilation

III. v. 5-8 **A VISION OF JUSTICE**

(Illustration): The scene changes and our attention is focused on the Tabernacle in Heaven. What John sees here is the original Tabernacle. The one Moses built in the wilderness was patterned after this heavenly place of worship. It is from this Tabernacle that God's judgment issues forth onto the earth.)

- A. v. 5 **Justice Is Decreed** – This place John sees is called “*the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony*.” The word “*testimony*” refers to the Law that was handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai. The ancient Law set God's standard for living. Through the Law God manifested His glory and His holiness. The Law also showcased the sinfulness of man. The Law was given so that men might understand the holiness of God and what He expected from people. The tables of the Law were placed in the Ark of the Covenant as a permanent witness to Israel of the holy demands of a righteous God.

Here in Heaven John sees that the Law is still in force! The Law of God has always served as God's standard of righteousness. And it always will! Man has tried to alter the standards of God, but they are carved in stone and they are unchanging. Men have broken the Law of God and the Law demands that men be judged. God will defend His righteousness and judge all those who violate His Law. That is what is about to take place in the next chapter.

By the way, Jesus came to fulfill the Law for all those who will put their faith in Him. He has not abolished the Law, but He has fulfilled it for those who are saved, **Col. 2:13-14**. When a person's faith rests in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are not required to keep the Law (as in the Old Testament) to please the Lord. They are, however, expected to live holy lives for the glory of God! The Law no longer stands in judgment over the redeemed saints of God, for in Jesus, we are seen as righteous!

- B. v. 6-7 **Justice Is Delivered** – Seven angels appear out of the Temple in Heaven. They are clothed in “*pure and white linen*”. This signifies their holiness and it reflects the holiness of the One they serve. They wear “*golden girdles*” around their chests. This speaks of the majesty and glory of the God they serve. These angels have in their hands the seven last plagues that will be poured out on the earth. These plagues are given to the seven angels by one of the four beasts we met in **Rev. 4:4-8**. They exist to glorify the God of all creation. These beasts give the angels seven bowls filled with God's wrath. This signifies the fact that the plagues of the Tribulation will be carried out because of God's wrath and anger against sin and sinners.

God's wrath had been building against sin ever since Adam and Eve sinned in Eden. One day the wrath of God will boil over and absolute judgment will be the end result. The only refuge a sinner has, whether it is now or in that future day, is the blood of Jesus Christ.

- C. v. 8 **Justice Is Dispensed** – The Temple that was standing open has been closed. No one is allowed to enter because it is filled with the glory and presence of Almighty God. This image indicates that the day of mercy is passed. The door will be opened again during the Millennium, but it has been closed for the duration of the Tribulation and will not be opened! Man's access into grace and salvation has been forever cut off. The door has been closed and God is going to judge sinners and there is nothing they can do to stop Him. It is too late to pray. It is too late to repent. It is too late to change. It is too late! There is no more hope, no more grace and no more opportunity. The door is shut and it will not be opened again!

Conclusion: In **Matt. 25:1-10**, Jesus tells a parable about 10 virgins. Five are wise and five are foolish. The five wise virgins were ready when the Bridegroom came and they entered in with Him and His Bride. The five foolish virgins were not ready. They had no oil in their lamps and while they were gone to get their oil, the door was closed and they were shut out of the wedding chamber.

That parable will be a reality in many people's lives one day. Do not let it be true in your life! You need to be sure that you know Him! You need to be sure that you are saved. Today, God is offering salvation to whosoever will come to Jesus. In that day, He will offer salvation to no one. All He will give then is judgment, wrath and damnation. Get in while the door is still open!

Final Judgment Commences Revelation 16:1-9

Introduction: There is no denying the fact that the book of Revelation is a book of judgment. It was written to people in the first century who were smiting under the angry whip of Roman persecution. It was given to them to let them know that God has a plan for the judgment of all those who have rejected Him.

While there are passages that allow for rejoicing in the chapters of this book, it is, for the most part, a chronicle of God's final judgment of sin, sinners and Satan. In Revelation there is a series of three judgments which are executed in seven stages each. There are the seven seal judgments, the seven trumpet judgments and finally the seven bowl judgments. As the judgments progress, the intensity and severity of the judgments increase.

We have arrived at the final set of judgments. In **Rev. 15:7** shows one of the four beasts giving to seven angels seven bowls "**full**" of the wrath of God. Just as a reminder, the word "**full**" means "**to swell**". It is the image of a dam, under pressure, nearing its bursting point. This is a good description of the wrath of God.

Ever since Adam sinned in Eden, the wrath of God against sin and sinners has been building. The grace and mercy of God have served as a powerful dam, which has held that wrath in check. In the judgments of the Revelation, the dam of God's wrath bursts and a Christ rejecting world is swept away in the wave of judgment that issues forth.

Up to this point, God has always tempered His wrath. God has been faithful to honor the request of the prophet Habakkuk. In **Hab. 3:2**, the prophet prayed, "**in wrath remember mercy.**" But, now the time for judgment has come. There will be no mercy any longer. The wrath of God is about to be poured out. God is preparing to commence His final judgment of the earth.

In **Rev. 14:10**, John writes, "**The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation.**" In these verses, the world is about to experience the undiluted wrath of an offended God.

In **verse 1** God issues the command for the angels to begin pouring out the bowls filled with His wrath upon the earth. This message and the next will consider the seven bowl judgments in detail. Let's examine these verses together as I preach on the subject "**Final Judgment Commences**".

I. v. 2 **PLAGUES IN THE SINNER**

- A. When the first bowl is poured out, all those who have worshiped the beast and who have received his mark are afflicted with sores in the bodies. The word “**sore**” literally means “**an ulcer**”. It has the idea of an open, running, ulcerated place on the skin. It probably refers to an oozing boil.

These sores are called “**noisome**”. This word means “**of a bad nature, troublesome, injurious**”. They are also described as “**grievous**”. This word refers to something that is “**annoying, painful, or bad**”. These two words reveal that these sores will be extremely painful, festering and incurable.

No doubt the greatest medical minds of the age will do their best to find a cure, but they will fail. There will be no cream, no poultice, or no drug that will bring relief to the people suffering from these boils.

- B. A sore on the outside is a sign of rottenness on the inside. God is clearly revealing the condition of these lost sinners. He is putting on display the corruption of their hearts through the corruption in the bodies.

These people have rejected God and His Christ. And they must face Him in judgment!

- C. These festering ulcers bring to mind the ancient plagues in Egypt. The sixth of those plagues is found in **Ex. 9:8-12**. In that plague, the people of Egypt suffered from incurable, painful boils all over their bodies. This seems to be the same kind of physical problem Job experienced, **Job 2:7**.
- D. Just as it was in ancient Egypt, these boils only afflict the enemies of God. Those who are trusting the Lord are spared this judgment.

I. v. 2 **PLAGUES IN THE SINNER**

II. v. 3 **PLAGUES IN THE SEA**

- A. When the second bowl is poured out, the waters of earth's oceans are corrupted and become like the putrid, fetid blood of a corpse. Back in **Rev. 8:8-9**, when the second trumpet judgment was administered, one-third of the ocean was affected. Here, the cataclysm is worldwide.

When this plague is poured out, every creature in the sea will die. The seas will become vast cemeteries. Beaches will no longer attract the sun worshipers and the pleasure seekers. The beaches will reek with the stench of death. Instead of being thronged with crowds of sunbathers, the world's beaches will be choked with the rotting carcasses of billions of dead sea creatures.

(Illustration): This kind of plague has been seen in miniature in our world. Occasionally, something call a "**red tide**" will occur. John Phillips vividly describes this phenomenon in his commentary on the Revelation. "From time to time, off the coast of California and elsewhere, a phenomenon known as "the red tide" occurs. These red tides kill millions of fish and poison those who eat contaminated shellfish. In 1949, one of these red tides hit the coast of Florida. First the water turned yellow, but by midsummer it was thick and viscous with countless billions of dinoflagellates, tiny one-celled organisms. Sixty-mile windrows of stinking fish fouled the beaches. Much marine life was wiped out, even bait used by fishermen died upon the hooks. Eventually the red tide subsided, only to appear again the following year. Eating fish contaminated by the tide produced severe symptoms caused by a potent nerve poison, a few grams of which, distributed aright, could easily kill everyone in the world. An unchecked population explosion of toxic dinoflagellates would kill all the fish in the sea. (*Exploring Revelation*, rev. ed. [Chicago: Moody, 1987; reprint, Neptune, N.J.: Loizeaux, 1991], 190–91)

Only when this occurs, the entire world will be affected. When you consider the fact that 70% of the surface of this planet is covered in ocean, you can see how great of a plague this will be.)

- B. Imagine the impact this will have on the environment. Most of the rain water the earth receives comes from moisture that evaporates from the oceans of the world. No more evaporation means greatly diminished rainfall on the earth. This will cause a drought of worldwide proportions.

Consider the fact that this world is largely dependent on the oceans for its food supply. Billions of people receive the abundance their daily food supply the ocean. Without this source of food, millions will face starvation.

Not only will food supplies be drastically affected, but so will commerce and shipping. The socio-economic impact of this plague will devastate the earth.

- C. One by one, God is tearing down all the things men take for granted. First, their health is destroyed. Then, the oceans are destroyed. The coastal regions of every nation in the world will become abandoned wastelands as the oceans are transformed into vast seas of death.

I. Plagues In The Sinner

II. Plagues In The Sea

III. v. 4-7 PLAGUES IN THE STREAMS

- A. When the third bowl is poured out, the fresh water sources of this world are stricken. Again, we saw this in miniature back in **Rev. 8:10-11**, when one-third of the world's fresh water supplies were poisoned when a comet, a meteor, or some other heavenly body fell in to them.

Here, they are turned to blood. By the time this plague is poured out on the earth, the world has become absolutely blood thirsty. Millions of martyrs have been slain by the Antichrist and his forces. Millions of saints have had their blood shed by the enemies of God. He honors their desire for blood by giving them blood to drink. When Jesus was here, His first miracle was to turn water into wine. That miracle was designed to draw men to Him. Here He turns the water into blood to remind men of Him. One by one, the Lord is removing every prop, every comfort, everything mankind leans on for support and takes for granted.

- B. This plague reminds us of the first of the ten plagues in Egypt. In **Ex. 7:20-24**, the fresh water in the land of Egypt was turned to blood and men searched in vain for water to quench their thirst.
- C. In this judgment, every source of fresh water in the world is turned to blood. Whether it is a spring, a well or a municipal water system, the world's fresh water supply will be taken away.

Our bodies can survive several weeks without food, but only about three days without water. Imagine a world with no water! A faucet is turned and instead of cool, clean, thirst-quenching water, out pours putrid, foul, deadly blood. No doubt death from disease and thirst will skyrocket during these horrible, evil days.

(**Note:** When this plague comes, the angels praise God for His wisdom in sending this judgment. The world is merely reaping what it has sown. (III. **Gal. 6:7-9**) The world has been guilty of murdering God's people and God's preachers and they are given blood to drink in return.

Another angel declares the righteous nature of God's judgments. Our human minds cannot comprehend the judgments of these verses. We shrink back from them and think that they are horrible. We recoil when we think about people having to suffer like people will suffer during the Tribulation.

One day, when we are home in glory, and our minds have been transformed and glorified, we will see things from God's perspective. Then we will understand just how hateful and horrible sin truly is. We will feel as God feels; we will think as He thinks, and we will understand. In fact, I am 100% sure that we will voice our own "**Amens**" as He judges the world that has denied Him and defiled His creation.

We will understand that the time for judgment has come. We will know that the only thing that has held judgment off for this long has been the pure grace of God.

When judgment comes, we can rest assured that God will judge the right individuals in the right amount in the right way. He can do nothing but the right thing. As **Genesis 18:25** says, "***That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?***")

I. Plagues In The Sinner

II. Plagues In The Sea

III. Plagues In The Streams

IV. v. 8-9 **PLAGUES IN THE SUN**

- A. The fourth plague touches the sun. Its heat is allowed to burn the bodies of men. The word "**scorch**" means "***to be burned with heat; to be tortured with intense heat.***" By some means, God will allow the heat of the sun to be intensified and the bodies of men will be burned.

- B. This universe is an amazing place. God created everything and placed it exactly where it needed to be. The sun is some 93 million miles away from the earth. It sits at exactly the precise distance to allow life to exist on this planet. If the sun were any closer, we would be burned up. If the sun were any farther away, we would freeze to death. God placed it exactly where it needs to be.

The sun is a giant nuclear reactor. It is so large that 1.3 million of our earths could fit inside of it. It is hot too. The surface of the sun is nearly 10,000 degrees. If that heat were to hit the earth full force, the planet would burn up instantly. Surrounding the earth is a band of radiation called the magnetosphere. This radiation band filters out the rays of the sun, allowing exactly the right amount of heat and light to enter our atmosphere.

During this plague, God will either turn up the heat of the sun or allow more of its heat to enter the earth's atmosphere. As a result, men will experience intense burns in the bodies.

(Illustration): The pain of sunburn is an intense, nagging pain. Imagine having that pain intensified many times over. Imagine the agony that will result from this plague.)

- C. Another of mankind's crutches is kicked out from under him. Since the dawn of time the sun has risen every morning and sat every evening. It has yielded life-giving, dependable heat and light for thousands of years. One day, mankind will awaken to a sun that will blaze down in flaming heat. It will scorch their bodies. But, it will be nothing compared to the pain they will feel when they are cast into Hell's fire. This is just a warning of something far more terrible and final!

Conclusion: We read the Bible and we understand that these plagues are God's judgment on sinners who refuse to come to Him for salvation. These plagues are designed to judge those who have defied a holy God at every turn. We read it and we understand the source and the solution.

What strikes me as amazing is the fact that these people understand what is happening too. They understand that God is behind these plagues. Instead of repenting in the face of His wrath, they stand in continued defiance to Him and His will. The Bible tells us in **verse 9** that they "**blaspheme**" the name of God. That word means "**to revile; to speak evil of**". They shake their puny fists toward God and revile His holy name!

They have the audacity to blame Him for their troubles and suffering. Of course, that has been the human way since the dawn of time. Even in Eden, Adam and Eve sought to blame their problems on others, **Gen. 3:11-13**. That trend continues today.

Grown men and women are running around blaming their parents for the problems they have in life. If they are angry; if they are substance abusers; if they have other problems in their adult lives, they lay the blame at their parent's feet. Homosexuals blame God for their perversion. They claim God made them the way they are. That is foolish!

Homosexuals are not born! That lifestyle is a choice! Husbands blame wives; wives blame husbands; and everybody blames everybody else for their problems. Even under judgment men will blame God for what they are suffering.

But the problem is not with God. The problem is clearly stated in **verse 9**, “***and they repented not to give him glory.***” They refused to repent of their sins to the glory of God and they are paying a heavy price for their choice. They have no one to blame but themselves!

If you fool around and die and go to Hell, you will have no one to blame but yourself. You could stop anywhere and call on the name of God and trust Him for salvation, if you would. If you do not, you will have nothing but judgment to look forward to!

The time for repentance is now. If you are not saved, you need to come to Jesus today. You need to be saved today! If you carry a burden for those who are headed to this horrible time called the Tribulation, the time to pray for them, the time to tell them is now. If you are saved and want to praise Him for delivering your soul from death, Hell and judgment, today would be a good time to do just that. Listen to His voice and come as He calls you.

Final Judgment Concludes

Revelation 16:10-21

Introduction: In **Revelation chapter 5** the Lamb of God took a seven sealed book from the hand of His Father. This book represented the title deed to planet earth. Jesus owns this world because He created it out of nothing. He owns this world because He redeemed it when He died on the cross. When Jesus took that seven sealed book, He began to open the seals. When He did, the Tribulation Period began on the earth.

By the time we reach these verses, the world has been smiting under the wrath of a holy God for seven years. Now, the Tribulation is about to come to an end. As the final three seals are opened, God prepares to conclude His judgment of this world and its inhabitants.

When the events of these final three judgments are concluded, Jesus Christ, the King of Kings will return to the earth in glory and power. He will take possession of the throne of this world and He will rule in righteousness. These three last plagues set the stage and prepare the way for the coming of the Lord.

When Jesus returns, He will finally receive the glory and honor that He deserves. Here is what the Bible says about it, **Phil. 2:5-11**. Today, the Lord Jesus is rejected, maligned, and hated by the world. That hatred is only going to intensify as the days go by and grow more and more evil.

In these verses the Lord God begins the process of final judgment upon the earth. In our last study we watched as **Final Judgment Commenced**. Today we will watch as **Final Judgment Concludes**. Let's consider the final three vial judgments and the lessons they teach.

I. v. 10-11 **THE BEAST IS PLAGUED**

- A. v. 10a **The Locality Discussed** – Up until now the Beast has been somewhat sheltered from direct attack. When this fifth bowl is poured out, it is directed at the very seat of his power. Like Pharaoh in ancient Egypt, the Antichrist, with all his power is helpless against the judgment of God Almighty. This plague begins at the very throne room of the Antichrist and then spreads to cover his entire kingdom. He may be a powerful ruler, energized and supported by Satan, but he is helpless to defend himself against the God of Heaven!
- B. v. 10b **The Light Darkened** – When the fifth bowl judgment is unleashed upon the world, the world is suddenly engulfed in darkness. This darkness is not the darkness we normally think of; it is absolute, inky blackness. The darkness will be so complete that nothing can penetrate it. Surely this darkness represents some change in the way light reaches the planet. It also suggests that the power grids

that we use to light the earth will be done away with. Whatever causes this darkness, it will be severe and it will be complete.

This supernaturally imposed darkness is a tangible representation of the darkness that has already engulfed the world. The world has already rejected the Light of the World, the Lord Jesus, because they loved darkness rather than light, **John 3:19**. This world chose moral, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional darkness over the light that was available in the person of Jesus Christ and in the Word of God. They favored darkness over light and God gives them more darkness than they ever bargained for!

We are also told that when this darkness descends, men will literally chew their tongues because their pain is so great. The combined misery of the sores in their bodies; starvation from the ruined oceans; the lack of drinkable water and terrible burns they have suffered from the intense heat of the sun, all combine to cause the inhabitants of the earth to writhe in pain.

What we see here is a tiny glimpse of Hell. God is letting the Antichrist and his followers know what is waiting on them because they have rejected Jesus. Once, when speaking of Hell, Jesus said this, ***“And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,”*** **Matt. 25:30**. What we see here is a small glimpse of what those who reject Jesus will face when they go to Hell.

If you have never been saved, you need to pay attention to what the Bible is saying! There is a real place called Hell and real people spend a real eternity in real judgment there. Do not turn your back on the Light! Come to Jesus and be saved or one day you will find yourself in a horrible place called Hell!

- C. v. 11 **The Lesson Declared** – When the plagues come; when the pains come; you would think that people would have enough sense to repent of their sins and turn to God. Not these people! They shake their puny fists in the face of God and they curse Him and blaspheme Him! What a tragedy! But, what a window into the human heart!

There are those who tell us that mankind is bad, but that there is a spark of the divine within him. They believe that man fell when Adam sinned, but that his fall was not complete. The fact is: man is totally depraved! This does not mean that He is as bad as he can be at all times. It does mean that there is no spiritual good in mankind at all, **Rom. 3:10-23**. Man, left to himself, will only grow more and more corrupt, **Eph. 4:22**.

If this judgment proves anything, it proves the absolute sinfulness of humanity! It proves that man is an incorrigible sinner and that salvation is totally the work of grace! It proves that even when man is confronted with the power and judgment of God he will not repent of his sins. It proves that ***“salvation is of the Lord,”*** **Jonah**

2:9, and that people don't just "**get religion**" or "**turn to Jesus**". It proves that salvation requires direct, divine intervention. If God did not come to us on a personal basis, convict us of our sins, quicken our dead spirit, and save us by His grace, **Eph. 2:1-10**, we would all go to Hell. You see, the same rebellion and hatred of God would be revealed in you and me were it not for the grace of God!

When people do die and go to Hell, we have the image of them trying to get saved, as they confess their sins and cry out to Jesus. I do not believe it will be that way! Look at the Rich Man in **Luke 16:19-31**. There is no hint of remorse over the life he lived. There is only sorrow over the sentence He received! When people go to Hell, they will lift their voices in blasphemy against God. They will curse Him and even His judgment will not bring them to a place of repentance! May God help this sin-cursed, fallen world!

II. v. 12-16 **A BATTLE IS PLANNED**

(III. The sixth bowl is poured out on the earth and it sets the stage for the battle of Armageddon. When this angel pours out his bowl, we are told that the Euphrates River will dry up. The Euphrates begins in Turkey at Mount Ararat and flows south, through Iraq, and into the Persian Gulf. This river, which is over 1,700 miles long and 3,600 feet wide at places, has been for centuries, the dividing line between the east and the west. As we know, no river really poses a problem for a modern mechanized army, but God will remove every obstacle and prepare the way for a massive invasion of Middle East.

How will the river be dried up? Considering the fact that the oceans and all fresh waters have been turned to blood, the amount of rainfall the earth has received has been dramatically reduced; some have speculated that water levels would be far lower than normal anyway. Add to this the fact that many dams have been built along the river, it would be very easy for human engineers to cut off the water. However, the fourth bowl intensified the heat of the sun. This would cause the snow and the ice cap on Mount Ararat to melt, causing the Euphrates to overflow its banks. Either way, it will be the result of divine intervention. God will speak and the waters of the Euphrates will cease to flow so that a massive army can pass.)

A. v. 12 **An Army** – We are told that a vast eastern army will use the highway created by the drying up of the Euphrates River to move toward Israel. The intention of this army is the total destruction of Israel. The phrase "**kings of the east**" literally means "**the kings of the rising sun**." This reference has caused many to speculate that China and her allies will be the source of this army. Back in **Rev. 9:16**, the Bible speaks of an army that numbers some 200 million. Only one nation on earth could raise an army of that size: China.

However, I would like to propose a different interpretation. The way things are shaping up in our world, we are headed toward a showdown between the Islam and the Jews. Ever since the United Nations took Palestinian lands and gave it to the Jews, there has been conflict in that region, The Arab nations that surround Israel have repeatedly tried to oust the Jews from Palestine; they have failed in every attempt. Though outnumbered some seven to one, the Israelis have defeated their Arab enemies every time they met on the field of battle. This has created great hostility in the hearts of the Arab nations.

Imagine returning home to land that had been in your family for centuries only to find someone else living there and you and your family evicted with no place to go. The Arabs hate the Jews and they long for the total destruction of the nation of Israel. I think that is what we are seeing in these verses.

While Islam paints itself in colors of peace and love, the religion also calls for the deaths of all Jews and Christians. Anyone who is not a Muslim is an infidel in their eyes, and infidels must either repent or die! Dr. Ken Trivette, in a sermon on these verses, shares the following quotations from the Qur'an.

- ***Qur'an 59:14 "The Jews are devoid of sense. There is a grievous punishment awaiting them. Satan tells them not to believe so they will end up in Hell."***
- ***Qur'an 4:55 "Sufficient for the Jew is the Flaming Fire!"***
- ***Qur'an 88:1 "Has the narration reached you of the overwhelming (calamity)? Some faces (all disbelievers, Jews, and Christians) that Day, will be humiliated, downcast, scorched by the burning fire, while they are made to drink from a boiling hot spring."***

It would be for radical Islam to field a massive army bent on the annihilation of the Jews and their state. It may be Islam that leads a final, fatal Jihad against the nation of Israel.

- B. v. 13-14 **The Antagonists** – When this judgment is poured out, three frogs are seen coming out of the mouths of the dragon, the Beast, and the false prophet. Frogs are unclean creatures and are used here to refer to evil spirits, or demons. The mouth is the source of influence. So, it seems that Satan will inspire the worlds of these hellish world leaders and they will whip their followers into a frenzy for a final assault against Israel. They are able to form a coalition between the world's armies. This final war will be satanically inspired and energized.

- C. v. 15 **An Announcement** – On the heels of this judgment a heavenly announcement is made. Ever since Jesus ascended back into Heaven, it has been prophesied that He would return, **Acts 1:9-11**. Seven years prior to these events, Christ did return and He received His bride into Heaven. That was the Rapture. This verse is referring to the Second Coming. Jesus is telling His precious people to hang on for just a little longer. His coming that has been imminent has become immediate! He is at the door! The saints of God are encouraged to keep the faith for a few more days, the Lord is coming! He is coming like a thief. The world will not see the signs, but He will come in an instant and bring judgment with Him. Jesus lets His people know, however, that their waiting is over.
- D. v. 16 **Armageddon** – This army has been assembled by Satan to destroy the people of God. The devil still thinks that he is in control! A quick glance at the Scripture paints a different picture altogether. **Verse 14** tells us that this army is being gathered “**to the battle of that great day of God Almighty**”. Then, **verse 16** says, “**He gathered them together...**” Satan may think that he is in control of these events, but the real Ringmaster is God Himself. He gathers the nations of the world in the valley of Megiddo so that He might engage them and destroy them in one moment of time.

We have already considered the Valley of Megiddo in a previous message. But, a little refresher never hurt anyone. Armageddon means “**the hill or city of Megiddo**.” Megiddo is located in the “**Plain of Esdraelon**.” This location is the site of some famous biblical battles. It was here that Barak and Deborah defeated the Canaanites, **Jud. 4-5**. It was here that Gideon defeated the Midianites, **Jud. 6-8**. This same valley is the place that both King Saul and his son Jonathan were killed in battle, **1 Sam. 31**. King Josiah also met his death in the valley of Megiddo, **2 Chron. 35**.

In this valley the armies of the earth will come together to destroy the King of Kings. It is here in this place that Napoleon Bonaparte described as “**a natural battlefield**” that the final battle of the earth will be fought. We will consider this battle in detail when we come to **chapter 19**.

III. v. 17-21 **BABYLON IS PLUNDERED**

(III. The seventh bowl is poured out. When it is, the awful wrath of God and His judgments against the earth are ended. Also, in this final judgment, this world system is destroyed. Since the dawn of time man has moved in rebellion to God. He has rebelled in his personal life, his public life, his political life, and his productive life. In these verses, that entire world system is brought crashing down and man is left with nothing! Let's look in as Babylon is plundered.)

- A. v. 17 **A Sentence Is Rendered** – As this bowl is poured out, a voice from the throne says, “***It is done!***” This statement signals the fact that judgment has reached an end. The Lord Jesus is on His way. He is prepared to take back everything Adam lost in the fall. He is preparing to claim everything He purchased at the cross. Jesus is about to receive the glory He is due. When Jesus was on the cross, He cried, “***It is finished!***” There He announced His victory. Here, He cries, “***It is done!***” Here He announces His verdict. There He cried out in joy; here He cries out in judgment. He is letting us know that we have reached the end of judgment; glory is just around the corner.
- B. v. 18-21a **A System Is Ruined** – God has been in the process of judging the earth all the way through the Tribulation. Wave after wave of divine wrath has washed over this world and its inhabitants and still this world system stands in continued defiance to the will of God in Heaven. Here, in one final stroke, God destroys the last vestiges of human power. In one final judgment, God removes the last of man’s props. God destroys everything that man has built and glories in. In a moment of time, the world is brought to its knees. Let’s take a minute to unpack these verses.

- A Great Earthquake Devastates The World – v. 16** – Earthquakes have always been a part of living in this world. Earthquakes happen around the world on a daily basis. Most, thankfully, occur unnoticed by the inhabitants of the world. Some, however, have brought profound loss of life and severe damage. We all remember the earthquake in December 2004 that triggered a tsunami that devastated the South Pacific.

Description	Richter Magnitudes	Earthquake Effects	Frequency of Occurrence
Micro	Less than 2.0	Micro earthquakes, not felt.	About 8,000 per day
Very minor	2.0-2.9	Generally not felt, but recorded.	About 1,000 per day
Minor	3.0-3.9	Often felt, but rarely causes damage.	49,000 per year (est.)
Light	4.0-4.9	Noticeable shaking of indoor items, rattling noises. Significant damage unlikely.	6,200 per year (est.)
Moderate	5.0-5.9	Can cause major damage to poorly constructed buildings over small regions. At most slight damage to well-designed buildings.	800 per year
Strong	6.0-6.9	Can be destructive in areas up to about 100 miles across in populated areas.	120 per year (1994 Northridge quake, San Francisco, CA, 6.5; 5.6 megatons)
Major	7.0-7.9	Can cause serious damage over larger areas.	18 per year
Great	8.0-8.9	Can cause serious damage in areas several hundred miles across.	1 per year (1906 San Francisco, 8.0; 1 gigaton)
Rarely, great	9.0 or greater	Devastating in areas several thousand miles across.	1 per 20 years (1964 Alaska 9.0; 5.6 gigatons) (2004 Indian Ocean Earthquake, 9.3; 32 gigatons)

(III. To get an idea of how powerful this earthquake was, consider the fact that all the atomic and nuclear tests throughout history only equal 510.4 megatons. The South Pacific quake was 64 times larger than all nuclear explosions combined!)

Dr. Ken Trivette writes, “The earthquake and tsunami that hit Seward, Alaska in 1964 was so massive it deposited a cargo ship on the top of a mountain several thousand feet inland. Fourth Avenue, the main street in Anchorage at the time, dropped 15 feet, swallowing whole cars into a crevasse. The entire Anchorage neighborhood of Turnagain slid into the Cook Arm of Prince William Sound.” And that was only a 9.0 quake!

This quake will transcend the power of any quake ever measured. The devastation will be immense!

- **The Cities Of The Earth Are Affected – v. 19 – “*The Great City*”** probably refers to Jerusalem. That ancient city suffers terrible damage. The Old Testament speaks of great geological changes in and around Jerusalem.

The rest of the cities of the earth are devastated. Washington, New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo, London, Moscow, Paris, Rome, all the cities of the earth are destroyed in one fell swoop. All the centers of pleasure, economics and power are taken away in a moment of time.

- **Babylon Is Judged – v. 19** – We will see this fleshed out in greater detail in **chapters 17-18**, but for now we need to understand that the seat of the Antichrist’s power, and the seat of the False Prophet’s power, will be destroyed. This city, and the system behind it, will suffer more than the rest of the world.
- **The Islands And Mountains Are Destroyed – v. 20** – The entire topography of the world will change. The continents will shift; islands will be swallowed up in massive tsunamis; the mountains will crumble and disappear. The world will be retorted to what it was like before the flood of Noah. The Lord is preparing the world for His millennial reign!
- **Gigantic Hailstones Will Fall On Men – v. 21a** – A talent was the amount of weight that a full-grown man could reasonably lift. A talent weighs somewhere between 100 and 125 pounds.

Can you imagine 125-pound balls of ice raining down from the sky? Everything that is left behind from the devastating earthquake will be pulverized and the earth will be covered with shards of ice. Any crops that are in the fields will be destroyed. Cars, houses, everything of value will be totally wiped out by this terrifying plague.

- C. v. 21b **All Sinners Are Revealed** – Even after all they have been through, the inhabitants of the world refuse to repent. They continue to blaspheme God. It is hard to imagine that the human heart can be so hard. Yet, the condition of sinners under judgment proves that lost people are totally depraved and will not repent!

I praise the Lord that He came to me in grace and called me to Him! What love! What grace! What a Savior that would condescend to love sinners like me! He was good to me even when I was in rebellion to Him. It was goodness that won my heart and yours, **Rom. 2:4**.

Conclusion: I call your attention back to **verse 15**. Jesus is coming! His counsel is for people to be ready. We do not know when He will come. He may come today in the Rapture. He may come for you today in death. If He were to come for you, would you be ready? Or would you be caught unprepared?

If you need to be saved, you can get that taken care of today. If you have strayed away from the Lord, you need to remember where you were headed before He saved you by His grace, and you need to get ready to leave this world. If the Lord has saved your soul and you know that to be so, the best thing you could do is bow before Him in humble thanksgiving right now. I praise His name that I am ready to go. How about you?

The Fall of the Babylonian Harlot

Revelation 17:1-18

Introduction: In **chapter 16** we witnessed the final judgment of God against this world. We saw God destroy this world through a series of powerful plagues. We also witnessed the defiance of fallen man. Even in the face of judgment, man refused to repent.

Of course, this shouldn't surprise us; man refused to repent in the face of Law and man has refused to repent in this age of grace. Man is an incorrigible sinner, and apart, from the grace of God, mankind is hopelessly lost!

The last plague in **Rev. 16:17-21** brought about a great earthquake that destroyed the cities of the world. This final, great quake devastated all the places that man had created. This earthquake destroyed everything that represented the greatest accomplishments of humanity. All of mankind's centers of pleasure and profit are wiped out.

Since the dawn of time man has been in the business of trying to get by without God. Man, rests on his power, his accomplishments, his ability to produce and his ability to enjoy pleasure. In that last great judgment, everything man trusts is taken away.

We are also told that “**great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath,**” **Rev. 16:19**. Babylon is a city, but it is also a system. Babylon represents everything mankind has accomplished apart from God. This system is judged in the seventh bowl judgment.

What we have in **chapters 17 and 18** is another parenthetical passage. These two chapters give us the details of the destruction of the Babylonian system. In **chapter 17** we will see the destruction of religious Babylon. In **chapter 18** we will see the destruction of economic Babylon.

Let's walk through these verses today and seek to gain some insight into them. I want to preach from this chapter on **The Judgment Of The Babylonian Harlot**. Notice the **facts** this passage reveals.

I. v. 1-6 **THE BABYLONIAN HARLOT DESCRIBED**

(III. The first verse tells us that we are going to witness “***the judgment of the great whore.***” The word “***whore***” is a word that we do not use in decent company. But it is a word used by the Bible, so we must deal with it. It translates the Greek word “***pornay***,” which refers to “***a woman who sells her body for sexual uses; a harlot; a prostitute.***” It is also used to refer to a woman who is an “***idolatress.***” In this passage the word refers to the whole system of false religion embraced by this world. These verses teach us about this system of false religion and how it will be judged someday.)

- A. v. 1 **The Scope Of This System** – We are told that the harlot “***sitteth upon many waters.***” **Verse 15** gives us the commentary on this verse. What we see here is a one world religious system.

Right now, there are thousands of religions on this planet, and there is little agreement between them. The primary religions recognized by most people are Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. Most of the world’s population observes one of these religions.

There will come a day when all the religions of the world will be brought together under one banner. The Antichrist, or the False Prophet, will have a plan that will iron out all the difference between these systems of belief. One day there will be a one world religion.

There is already a great push in that direction now. There is an ecumenical movement working in our day that is seeking to bring all the religions of the world together.

Christianity is different from all other religions on the earth because it is not really a religion, it is a faith. When the Rapture occurs, all true Christians will be removed from this world. What will be left will be those who “***have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof.***” Those people will be easy prey for the devil and demonic religion.

- B. v. 2 **The Seduction Of This System** – According to **verse 2** the entire world will come under the spell of this great end-time religion. Kings and world leaders will be a part of the movement. The whole world will be intoxicated by the teaching of this false system of belief. Like a slick seductress, this great harlot will seduce the world with her promises and her power.

- C. v. 3 **The Supporters Of This System** – This harlot is supported by the Antichrist. The Antichrist is the “**beast**” and he carries this religious system to great power in the world.

The phrase “**full of names of blaspheme**” reminds us that Antichrist will set himself up as God. He will enter the Jewish Temple and he will demand that the world worship him, **2 Thes. 2:3-4**. He will demand worship and a deluded world will give him what he desires, **2 Thes. 2:11**. He will give this religion its power.

According to **verse 9**, this system sits on “**seven hills**”. This could be a reference to ancient Rome which was built on seven hills. Some people think that this reference ties this system in with Roman Catholicism. However, the seven hills could be a reference to the seven continents, which would indicate that this system is worldwide in nature.

III. There is a tendency to try and figure out which religion this passage is referring to. I believe that it will contain Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Muslims, Presbyterians, Methodists, Church of God, and yes, even Baptists. I believe the final construction of this end-of-time religion is best left in the hands of the Lord!

- D. v. 4 **The Success Of This System** – Just as a prostitute usually dresses provocatively to draw attention to herself, so does this false religious system. This religion wears the colors “**purple and scarlet**.” These are the colors of royalty and nobility. She is “**decked with gold and precious stones and pearls**.” This speaks to her wealth and prosperity. This system will be wealthy beyond words. (III. This is true of many of the “**great religious systems**” of our day. There is big money on religion! Some people grow very wealthy at the expense of others!)

The Bible tells us that this system is well connected and prosperous, but it is all a pretense. This harlot holds in her hands “**a golden cup full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications**.” While this religion appears healthy, good, and prosperous on the outside, it is really filled with corruption. It is an abomination to God! (III. There is a danger as any church or denomination grows that it will thrive on its prosperity and forget its allegiance to the Lord. There is a subtle seduction in money and power that can easily lead a system of the course of holiness and godliness. Many movements that begin well have gone away from God, having been seduced by power, popularity, and prosperity! There is a tendency to change so that the trends may continue!)

- E. v. 5 **The Spirit Of This System** – In ancient times, it was common for prostitutes to wear identification so that prospective customers could recognize them. This system is identified by God as “***the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.***”

When we speak of Babylon, many people immediately think of a city. And it is a city located in the country of Iraq. Babylon, the city was once the grandest capital of the most powerful nation in the world. Today, it is abandoned by everyone by archaeologists and historians. But Babylon is also a system. Babylon is described as the system from which every false religious system in the world originated. That is what the title “***mother***” implies.

This Babylonian system first appears in **Genesis 11:1-9**. The city was called Babel then and was founded by a very wicked man named Nimrod. The people of Babel decided to build themselves a tower so that they could leave their mark on the world, **Gen. 11:3-4**. The flood was fresh in their minds and they wanted to leave their mark on the world. This tower was not designed to reach into Heaven as some think. It was designed as a temple of Heaven. The constellations were placed on the top of this tower and men climbed it to worship the heavenly bodies, **Gen. 11:4**. This tower, and the religion it represented, is the first of many false religions started by man. They were the first false religionists, but they would not be the last. However, the same seeds of humanism and pride that are found in their attempt at forming their own religion can be found in every religion founded by man!

God judged these people for their rebellion and for their foolish worship. Just as He judged them, He will one day judge all the false religions of the world. That is what we see here in **Revelation 17**. This chapter clearly reveals what will happen to the false religions of this world at the end of the Tribulation Period.

III. Many of our common religious practices have their root in ancient Babylonian worship rituals. Things like Easter eggs, unicorns, the circle of life, yin yang, Christmas trees, etc. have their origins in ancient Babylon.

- F. v. 6 **The Slaughter Of This System** – This system of belief is responsible for the deaths of every saint of God who has ever died at the hands of false religion. From the death of Abel, to the prophets, to the early Christian martyrs, to the martyrs of the inquisition, all the way to the millions of martyrs of the Tribulation; every single death can lay at the feet of the Babylonian harlot. She is responsible for the deaths of God’s children and she will be judged for her blood thirsty ways!

I. The Babylonian Harlot Described

II. v. 7-15 THE BABYLONIAN SYSTEM DEMYSTIFIED

(III. The verses we are about to consider are among the most confusing to me in the entire book of Revelation. I do not claim to have all the answers, but I hope that I can help them make a little more sense to us today.)

- A. v. 7-11 The Beast Demystified – As I said, these are confusing verses. **Verse 8** refers to the miracle of the Antichrist's death and resurrection, **Rev. 13:3, 14**. Whether his death and resurrection is real or faked, it doesn't matter. The result will be the same. Most of the lost people of the world will believe the miracle and will follow the Antichrist.

Verse 10 refers to the seven great world kingdoms. Five were already passed in John's day, (Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia; and Greece). One was ruling Rome. The one to come is the kingdom of the Antichrist.

Verse 11 refers to the reign of the Antichrist. He will be a world leader, but after the miracle of his death and resurrection, he will become the ruler of the world. But his judgment is set in stone. Even with all his power and popularity, the Antichrist is headed to perdition! The word "**perdition**" means "**utter destruction**."

- B. v. 12-13 The Benefactors Demystified – These two verses refer to ten kings who will give their allegiance and power to the Antichrist. In return, he gives them great power and authority. These kings are wholly committed to the reign of the Antichrist. They are given a kingdom, but their reign is short lived, III. "**one hour**."
- C. v. 14 The Battle Demystified – As we mentioned in our last study, the nations of the world under the direction the Antichrist and his kings will gather to do battle with Jesus Christ at Armageddon. They are fighting a losing battle because they are foolish enough to attack the Lamb. The Lamb they attack is the "**king of Kings and the Lord of Lords**." He will destroy them with the word of His mouth, **Rev. 19:11-21**. We will get to that in a few weeks!

This verse also refers to those who are with the Lamb when He does battle with the world. These people who are "**called, and chosen and faithful**" refer to the Bride of Christ. This, my friends, is us! When He comes, we are coming with Him! We will watch the Lamb do battle and shout for Him as He claims victory over all His enemies! What a day that will be!

I. The Babylonian Harlot Described

II. The Babylonian Harlot Demystified

III. v. 16-17 **THE BABYLONIAN HARLOT DESTROYED**

- A. v. 16 **The Reality Of The Harlot's Destruction** – After the Antichrist and his minions use the harlot to achieve power, they will turn on her. When they have reached the pinnacle of success, they have no more need of a religious system. They turn on the Harlot and they totally destroy her.
- B. v. 17 **The Reason For The Harlot's Destruction** – Antichrist and his followers do not know it, but they are merely doing the will of the Lord. He is the One Who puts it into their hearts to destroy the Babylonian religious system. God uses these wicked men to carry out His will against false religion.

God hates false religion! In the end of the world, He will use the ungodly to destroy the ungodly. Ill. Organized religion is a disgrace to God! When ritual, tradition and the doctrines of men take prominence over the Lord God, it is false worship. It does not matter what name they have over the door. It does not matter what they claim to be. When anything or anyone but Jesus Christ is the center of attention, it is a false religion and it will be destroyed by God one day!

When the Tribulation Period ends, all false religion will have been destroyed. This will pave the way for the Millennial reign of Jesus. He will usher in a one-thousand-year period of time when people will worship no one but Him, at least openly!

Conclusion: Did you know that man is a religious creature? That's right, all people worship something. Everyone believes something. Even the person who claims to be an atheist believes in his unbelief. When it is all said and done this thing comes down to two simple choices: Jesus Christ or false religion!

Every belief system in the world that does not center on the Lord Jesus is a false system of belief; it is a false religion. How can I say that? Listen to what Jesus said, **John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."** Listen again, **Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."** Listen to one more, **John 8:24, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."**

That is not my word; that is His Word! So, what is it with you? Is it Jesus, or is it religion? Do not be satisfied to join a church or be baptized. Do not be satisfied to get your name on the role of some religious organization. Do not be satisfied with anything less than believing on Jesus Christ, and Him alone, for your salvation! Anything else is just religion. Anything less than Jesus is a prescription for Hell.

One day God will judge and do away with false religion. Be sure that you are in Jesus Christ! Are you?

The Destruction of Economic Babylon

Revelation 18:1-24

Introduction: In our last study, we considered the destruction of religious Babylon. The Bible paints a horrific picture of the end of all false religion. One day, every belief system in the world that bypasses the Lord Jesus Christ will be utterly destroyed and will cease to exist. That will be a devastating day for the devil and his followers, but it will be a glorious day for the God of Heaven and for His Son Jesus.

While **chapter 17** reveals the demise of ecumenical Babylon, this chapter reveals the doom of economic Babylon. In **verses 1-2a**, a mighty angel, shining with the glory of Heaven, appears on the scene. This angel comes to announce the condition and the condemnation of this world's economic system. Mankind will not only be deprived of the religion he created; he will also suffer the loss of the wealth he craves.

Nothing seems to devastate people more than destitution. Take away a man's money and often you have taken away his reason for living. This was the case in 1929 when the stock market crashes. October 29, 1929, became known as "**Black Tuesday**". When the stock market crashed, the world was plunged into "**The Great Depression**." Over the next few years, the economic structure of the U.S. economy was nearly destroyed. Over 9,000 banks closed their doors between 1930 and 1933. Production in U.S. manufacturing plants ground to a halt, leaving millions unemployed. Many thousands lost their homes to foreclosure; many others lost their health to malnutrition. All across this nation, people waited in soup lines for their meals. All across this nation, "**hobo jungles**" and "**Hoovervilles**" sprang up. The "**hobo jungles**" were places near train yards where the hobos who travelled the country on freight cars set up camp. "**Hoovervilles**" were shanty towns filled with shacks made from crates and other cheap materials. They were named after President Hoover, who received much of the blame for the economic conditions of the times. People who lived through those dark and difficult days were changed forever by the hardships they suffered.

These verses tell us of an economic collapse that will make the stock market crash of 1929 seem like nothing! This economic disaster will be worldwide in its scope and it will take away mankind's favorite god: money! Our money has the words "**In God We Trust**" printed or stamped on every piece. For far too many, the "**god**" they trust is that piece of money they hold in their hands. We have already considered the destruction of the one world religious system that will dominate the end times. In this study, we will consider the demise of the one world economic system that will dominate the world in those days. By the way, whether we realize it or not, the world's economy is already headed toward being one vast system. Just a few weeks ago, a sharp decline in China's stock market impacted stock markets all around the world. It even caused a 400-point drop in our own stock market. People lost billions of dollars in an instant. These verses talk about a time when the entire economic structure of the world will come crashing down in a moment of time.

Let's consider the facts in this chapter that are revealed as God judges the economic system of this world. I want to take these verses and preach on ***The Destruction Of Economic Babylon***.

I. v. 2b-8

A SYSTEM CORRUPTED

- A. v. 2b **The Spirit Of This System** – The angel tells us about the spirit behind the system. It will be a system energized and controlled by demons and evil spirits. It will be utterly vile and corrupt. We look at our world today and think that it can't get much worse. What this verse describes is a world that has literally gone to the devil. Things can get worse and they will!
- B. v. 3 **The Seduction Of This System** – This Babylonian system will seduce the entire world. Kings and merchants will all tie their futures to what happens in this economic boom. Billions of dollars will be made as the wealthy people of the earth give everything, they have to get their hands on all they can get. (Ill., We live in a world obsessed with money. How many of us have sat around and imagined what we would do if we had millions of dollars? How many are spending money they don't have buying lottery tickets to try and get rich quick? How many always have some scheme cooking in their head that they think will make them rich? The love of money is the greatest corrupter of mankind ever conceived, **1 Tim. 6:10**. Money in and of itself is not evil. But, when a person loves money to the point that it controls their life and lifestyle, it becomes evil.)
- C. v. 4-8 **The Sentence Of This System** – The angel is preparing to pronounce God's judgment upon this corrupt system. Before he does, he calls for God's people to avoid being caught up in the wickedness of that hour. The angel calls for the people of God to reject this system and the sins of this system. God expects His people to come out of this world's system and to be different, **2 Cor. 6:17**. He expects us to be motivated by a different set of values.

We will never win the world by being like them! We will impact the world the most when we separate from their ways and allow them to see Jesus living through our lives!

Let's listen in as the Lord's sentence is passed on the Babylonian economic system.

- 1. v. 5 **Her Deeds** – The sins of this system have "***reached unto heaven***". The word "***reached***" means "***to glue, to cement, to fasten together***." The ancient tower of Babel failed to reach the heavens, but the sins of this system have succeeded in reaching the throne of God. God, in His patience, has held back His judgment. Now, the sins of Babylon come up in the remembrance of God and the day of His judgment has arrived.

I praise the Lord that those who are in Jesus do not have to worry about their sins being remembered. Consider the wonderful promise of **Isaiah 43:25**, ***“I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.”***

2. v. 6 **Her Doom** – The word “**reward**” here means “**to pay a debt; to give back that which is due**”. Babylon has sin much and she is about to be punished much! Her sins have been doubled and her punishment will be doubled too!

You never get away with sin! **Gal. 6:7** tells us that we always reap what we sow. The problem with this sowing and reaping business is that we always reap more than we sow and later than we sow. Many people think they are getting away with sin, but they aren't! There will come a reaping day and the reaping will far exceed the sowing!

3. v. 7 **Her Deception** – This system glorifies itself. It thinks it is so powerful and so glorious that it is above sorrow and judgment. The Babylonian system is about to learn a harsh lesson.

Lots of people have this same attitude about their lives. They think that they are safe and that they will never be judged. God has a word for people with that attitude, **1 Thes. 5:3**, ***“For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.”***

4. v. 8a **Her Destruction** – Her power, her glory and her pride will not stave off the judgment of the Lord. Her destruction will be swift and sure. In one day all that man has built over thousands of years will be brought to nothing! Judgment will come and there will be no escape. It is settled!
5. v. 8b **Her Destroyer** – God makes promises and not threats. This system has defied His Word and defiled His ways. He will come in judgment and none will be able to stay His hand or stop His purposes. He is able to judge the world and none can stop Him!

I. A System Corrupted

II. v. 9-20

A SYSTEM CONSIDERED

(III. When the Babylonian economic system is judged, the entire world is plunged into grief. The world cries “**Alas, Alas**” as they realize that their wealth and power is gone. Notice how the different groups react to the fall of Babylon.)

- A. v. 9-10 **The Monarchs Of The Earth Consider Her** – All the leaders of the nations of the earth who have risen to power and prosperity on the back of this system now mourn over her destruction. Every economy of every nation on the

earth will crash to the ground in a moment of time. The crash of this system will be accompanied by the wailing and weeping of the rulers of the world.

- B. v. 11-17a **The Merchants Of The Earth Consider Her** – These merchants are the business men and CEO's of the great businesses of the world. In an instant their financial empires are brought to desolation. They weep and mourn because no one has any money with which to buy their goods, v. 12. All of a sudden, all their goods, which were worth so much, v. 13-14, are worth nothing! **Verse 12** tells us that the luxuries of life are out of reach. Houses, cars, jewelry, and other fine things of life will be unobtainable. **Verse 13** tells us that the basic necessities of life will be impossible to obtain. Spices, bread, meat, and others foods will be out of the reach of every man. **Verse 14** tells us that the exotic things that men long for will be taken away too. (III. Notice this list. The first item is "**gold**," **verse 12**. The last item is "**the souls of men**," v. 13. This reveals where this world system places its priorities. It elevates profits over people. This system has built its power and gained its prosperity through oppression and enslavement of the common man. Those days are over!)

Verse 15-17a shows the formerly wealthy merchants weeping over the destruction of the city. They have witnessed the devastation of the world's economic system and they are shattered by what they have seen.

We live in an hour when anything we want is readily available, and most people in our society are able to afford about anything they want. People talk about the economic downturn in our area, but you can't prove it by the parking lot at Wal-Mart! People still have plenty of money. That will change one day! The money of the world will be worth nothing. Good's will cease to be available. The world will be brought to its knees by the destruction of economic Babylon.

- C. v. 17b-19 **The Mariners Of The Earth Consider Her** – All the people who made a fortune carrying the goods produced by this system mourn when they see its destruction. Their source of wealth is taken away and they are left destitute. All hope of profit and prosperity are taken away in an instant.
- D. v. 20 **The Multitudes Of Heaven Consider Her** – While earth weeps over the fall of Babylon, Heaven worships! This system has been responsible for the death and destruction of many of God's people. Now, this system is judged and Heaven is filled with joy. It is interesting to observe Heaven's perspective concerning the events of earth. What brings sadness to the hearts of earthly men brings shouting to the hearts of heavenly men. One day we will have a heavenly perspective, we should pray that God will give us some of that today!

I. **A System Corrupted**

II. **A System Considered**

III. v. 21-24 **A SYSTEM CONDEMNED**

(III. These last few verses bring the judgment of economic Babylon to a conclusion. Let's consider how this evil system will be condemned.)

- A. v. 21 **Her Condemnation Characterized** – A mighty angel casts a millstone into the sea. A millstone was a huge, round stone used to grind grain. A typical millstone was around four to five feet in diameter and about a foot thick. A stone of that nature would sink to the bottom of the sea and it would not float back to the surface.

This stone is used to illustrate the judgment that is coming upon Babylon. Babylon will be destroyed and it will not rise to power ever again. This is what Jeremiah prophesied many years ago. **Jeremiah 51:64**, ***“And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.”*** The judgment of Babylon will be sudden, swift, and sure. It is also a judgment that is forever settled!

- B. v. 22-23a **Her Condemnation Completed** – When Babylon is judged and ceases to exist, her passing will also signal the passing of life as the world knows it.

There will be no more music, **verse 22**. Music has always been associated with happiness and joy. There will be no more reason for rejoicing. Music will cease.

There will be no more manufacturing, **verse 22**. People have always been industrious. Man has always found a way to work with his hands and provide for his family. Man works because he has hope for the future. When Babylon falls, all hope for the future vanishes with her.

There will be no more merriment, **verse 23**. The ***“light of a candle”*** speaks of habitation and home. A light in the window of a home suggest happiness, hope, family and home. All these are taken away when Babylon falls. The homes of the world will be plunged into darkness and despair!

There will be no more marriages, **verse 23**. No longer will love bring a hopeful couple to an altar to exchange their vow. There will be no more beautiful brides in their white dresses. There will be no more nervous grooms in their tuxedos. There will be no flower girls, ring bearers and wedding bells. Weddings are times filled with hope and happiness. A couple meets at the altar with their hearts full of love and hope for the future. They begin their relationship with great expectations.

When Babylon falls, there will be no more love, no more marriages and no more hope for the future!

- C. v. 23b-24 **Her Condemnation Contemplated** – This system is judged because she stood for everything God was against. This system was ***domineering***. A few got rich while the rest suffered, **v. 23b**.

This system was ***deceptive***, **v. 23b**. People were led to believe that salvation was in achieving riches and success. That is the lie of the devil! It is better to have none of this world's goods, than for this world's goods to have you. Listen to the Word of God: **Pro. 11:4**, "***Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.***" **Pro. 11:28**, "***He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.***"

This system was ***deadly***, **v. 24**. The Babylonian system has been responsible for the deaths of many of God's precious people down through the ages. In fact, most of the faithful martyrs that have been killed have been sacrificed on the altar of power and profit.

Conclusion: This world economic system that has caused so much pain is going to be destroyed one day. My advice to you is to be sure that your treasure is in the right place. **Matt. 6:19-21**, "***Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.***" If you place the eggs of your life in the basket of this world, they will all be broken one day!

Are you saved today? If the Lord Jesus were to return for His church this day, would you be taken in the Rapture or would you be left here? If you are left behind, you need to know that you will be left to endure the Tribulation Period. You will suffer hardships like you cannot imagine, and, eventually, you will die and go to Hell. That does not have to be your future. You can be saved and made ready for Heaven right now. If you will come to Jesus, He will save your soul. He died to redeem you and if you will come to Him, He will not turn you away.

If you are too tied to this world and its pursuit of wealth, God can set you free. If there are needs, you mind Him!

A Marriage Made In Heaven

Revelation 19:1-10

Introduction: We all know that weddings can be spectacular. Thousands of dollars are spent trying to produce a perfect moment in time that will join a couple together in marital bliss. Typically, the church is decorated to the hilt; the bride is resplendent in her pure white wedding dress; and the groom stands nervously at the front of the church. It is a special moment in the lives of those two individuals and for the people who know and love them. Weddings, here on earth, are a special thing!

Sometimes, weddings can simply be a spectacle! I could tell you some horror stories about some of the weddings I have seen. And, who can forget the twisted tale of Jennifer Wilbanks, the runaway bride from Duluth, GA. She faked a kidnapping and was found in Albuquerque, NM. Thankfully, most weddings turn out better than that!

Everyone who has a wedding is looking for one thing: a marriage made in heaven! I just want you to know that while some marriages may have been made in heaven, they still have to be lived out here on earth. That tends to make most of them less than perfect. (Ill. Not ours dear!)

We have arrived at an exciting portion of the Bible. After the dark, dreary passages we have been enduring these verses gleam with the glory of Heaven. We are going to talk about a wedding today. Not just any wedding, but the marriage super of the Lamb. This wedding will be a time of great joy for all the redeemed people of God!

You see, for the church, the end times shape up like this: In the Rapture, we will be **Caught Up**; at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will be **Cleaned Up**; and at the marriage supper of the Lamb, we will be **Cheered Up**! It is this event that we want to park on for a while today. I want to preach about **A Marriage Made In Heaven**.

If you are saved I want you to know that there are some blessed days ahead for you. If you are lost, I want you to know that you need to get ready to meet the Lord. He is coming and He is coming for His people. The rest will be left behind to endure the Tribulation and face the fires of Hell.

Let's take a journey to glory today and look in on our future. I want to point out the **blessings** contained in this passage as I try to preach on **A Marriage Made In Heaven**.

I. V. 1-6 **THE EXALTATION OF THE SAVIOR**

(III. Typically, a wedding is followed by celebration. The time before a wedding is usually filled with tremendous stress and many hours of preparation time. While it is a happy time for those involved, it is anything but a time of celebration. In Heaven, things are different! It seems from this passage that Heaven rejoices before and after the wedding. I like that! The cause of all this rejoicing is mentioned in **verse 7**. It seems that the marriage of the Lord Jesus is the catalyst for Heaven's anthems of praise. Those in Heaven lift their voices in four "**Hallelujah's**" that fill the heavens with praise.)

- A. V. 1 **The Hallelujah Of God's Salvation** - Heaven praises the Lord for all He has done for them, (The cross, the blood, the empty grave, etc.) They are saved, they are in Heaven and they have a reason to shout!

(III. Years ago, in Wales, there lived a man by the name of Billy Bray. He was an old time shouter! Many of the people who heard him shout used to rebuke him for praising the Lord so loudly and so often. Whenever they would try to stop him, old Billy would respond by saying, "***I can't help it! God has been so good to me! With every step I take I remember His glory!***" He said, "***I put my right foot down and it says 'Hallelujah'. I put my left foot down and it says, 'Amen'.***" With that, Billy Bray would march off shouting "**Hallelujah**" and "**Amen**" with every step he took. Billy Bray knew that God deserved praise for the salvation He so freely gives!)

- B. V. 2-3 **The Hallelujah Of God's Sentence** - The residents of Heaven praise the Lord for executing His judgment upon a lost, sinful and rebellious world! They know that His judgments are fair, they are right and they are perfect. Therefore, they praise His name!

(III. Lest we forget, we are serving a God Who has already won the war with evil! Thank God, the Lord, and as a result, His people come out on top of this thing! That is enough to shout about now!)

- C. V. 4-5 **The Hallelujah Of God's Sovereignty** - If you take the time to look at the book of Revelation, these 24 elders who are mentioned show up about 6 times, (**4:10; 5:8; 5:14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4**), and, every time they do, they are doing the same thing: falling on their faces and worshiping the Lord! Just to let you in on a secret, those 24 elders represent the redeemed of God. If you are saved, they picture YOU! Well, why are they praising the Lord so much? Because in Heaven, they are finally free from the limitations of the flesh and they can see God like He really is! They are no longer afraid or ashamed to worship Him, but now they are ready, willing and able to fall down before the Lamb of God and shout His praises!

(III. If it ever dawned on us the reality of all God is, of all He has done for us and of all that is ours as His children, there isn't a saved person in this world who wouldn't shout himself hoarse today! One day we will, but we won't get hoarse!)

- D. V. 6 **The Hallelujah Of God's Supremacy** - Then, they praise the Lord for His reign. They glorify the Lord that, at last, He is honored, exalted and worshiped by all His creation! Thank God, there is coming a day when the Lord will have the glory and honor He deserves all the time. I look forward to being in that number when we stand around the throne and lift our "**Hallelujahs**" to the glory of God!

(III. I want to call your attention to **verse 4!** There are two heavenly words mentioned hear that you and I need to look at just for a moment. They are: "**Amen**" and "**Hallelujah**."

The word "**Amen**" is a word "**signifying agreement with and approval of the Word of God.**" When "**Amen**" appears at the beginning of a sentence, it means "**truly**". This word was used by Jesus on many occasions. When it is spoken concerning the words uttered by another, it means "**I agree**" or "**so be it**". "**Amen**" is said to be the most widely known word in the world!

The word "**Hallelujah**" is a Hebrew word meaning "**Praise the Lord**". It is used only one time in the New Testament and that was to give honor and glory to the Lamb. It is heaven's praise word!

I just want to say that if you and I intend to be in tune with Heaven, then we need to learn to use a little heavenly language. Therefore, learn to say "**Amen!**" and "**Hallelujah!**" It is all right to praise the Lord! If something blesses your heart, just try "**Amen!**" If the Lord is moving in your soul, just try "**Hallelujah!**" I will guarantee you one thing. It won't hurt you!

I realize that we live in a day when people frown on old time worship of the Lord. I mean, it's all right for people to sing The Hallelujah Chorus, but if they shout, they are considered nuts and fanatics! I just want you to know that old fashioned praising and glorifying God never goes out of style!)

II. V. 7-8 **THE EXCITEMENT OF THE SUPPER**

(III. This marriage made in Heaven will be the consummation of some very important and powerful events.)

- A. V. 7a **The Excitement Of A Completed Plan** - Notice the words “***is come***”. These words imply a sense of relief that a long anticipated event has finally arrived. Nothing could be truer!

At this moment, God’s plan for the ages is finally complete. Since man sinned in the Garden of Eden, God has been working to bring man back into fellowship with Him. This was accomplished when Jesus died on the cross for the sins of humanity. Now, all those who place their faith in Jesus are saved by the grace of God and brought nigh unto Him! While many may be saved, they are still not in the very presence of God in Heaven. On this day, that will change! This is the moment when Jesus gets to receive His Bride unto Himself. This will be the most special moment in all the history of creation! It will be the moment when the Lamb of God takes His Bride unto Himself!

(III. By the way, did you notice that at this wedding, the groom, and not the bride, is the center of attention? Down here, everything is on hold until they start playing the wedding march and the bride, the center of attention, makes her way down the aisle. In heaven, things are just a little different! It’s not the bride, but it is the groom, the Lord Jesus Who is the center of attention! If that happened here, there would be some angry women! However, over there, it won’t matter in the least! In fact, I think it will be the bride herself who gives Him the most attention!)

- B. V. 7-8 **The Excitement Of A Completed Presentation** - It might help us to understand a little of the background for weddings of this type. In oriental weddings, there were typically three stages. There was the Betrothal Stage, the Presentation Stage and the Celebration Stage.

1. **The Betrothal Stage** - This was something like what we know in the west as an engagement. However, the major difference lies in the fact that this was a binding agreement! When a couple was betrothed, they were considered married! There was no getting out of it, except through a divorce or death! Even though the couple did not dwell together, or share the marriage bed, they were, nonetheless, married! Another difference was that the marriage partners and the marriages themselves were usually arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. You didn’t even get to pick your mate! Love was not usually the basis for marriages. You didn’t marry for love, you loved who you married! Many could learn a lesson from that today! (III. I can see great danger in that!)

The bride of Christ is in the midst of this betrothal period right now! We have been picked by the Heavenly Father and we are married to Jesus right now! We are just waiting to go to Him.

2. **The Presentation Stage** - When the time of the wedding arrived, the Father of the groom would send the bridegroom and his friends to the bride's home. They would get her and bring her back to the groom's house, which he had prepared for her, with great celebration and joy. There, gifts would be exchanged, the marriage would be consummated and the couple would begin their lives together.

That is what we are waiting on today! We are married, we are just waiting on the Bridegroom to come and call His bride to come meet Him. Friend, that day is coming! Are you ready to meet Him when He comes?

3. **The Festival Stage** - Following the wedding, the couple, their friends and their families would enter a time of celebration. We will deal with that thought in a little more depth in a few moments.

- C. V. 7b-8 **The Excitement Of A Completed Preparation** - Notice that the text says, "*his wife hath made herself ready*." Typically, oriental brides prepared their own wedding garments. It could be as elaborate or as simple as they chose to make it. Usually, it consisted of two pieces. One, an inner garment called a tunic and two, the outer garment called a toga. It was the bride's responsibility to get herself ready for the wedding!

(III. You and I need to understand that we are to prepare ourselves for that day that is coming as well! You see, **verse 8** says that the Bride of Christ will be clothed in white linen and that this linen is the righteousness of the saints! I take that to imply that how simply or how elaborately we are dressed may depend on the kind of life we lived while we were in this world!

Let me illustrate. There are three kinds of righteousness that a person can have.

1. **Personal Righteousness** - This is the righteousness you can produce all by yourself. It is basically evil and no good at all can come from it - **Isa. 64:6**. In our own righteousness, we are literally dressed in rags before the Lord.
2. **Provided Righteousness** - This is the righteousness we are given when we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior - **2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 3:21-22**. This refers to that tunic, or inner garment. We have been provided with a spotless inner garment of righteousness!
3. **Practical Righteousness** - This is the righteousness we live out each day we are in this world. It refers to how we conduct ourselves. How well we submit to authority. And. How we use the opportunities, gifts, responsibilities and privileges we are given as children of God. This speaks of the outer garment,

or the toga, that the world sees. It is pure speculation, but how well we are dressed at the Wedding may depend on how we live here! It may be that the wedding garments will be handed out at the Judgment Seat of Christ, **Matt. 22:1-12**, and that they will reflect how we lived life here below! It is something worth thinking about!)

(III. Whatever the scenario that is played out here, the fact remains that the bride has made the proper preparations and she is ready for the wedding! This means that the faith she place in Jesus was not misplaced. It means that all her trials and struggles are behind her. It means that she has trusted the Lord to save her and He has! She is home! She is loved! And, she is ready to enter into the joy of her Lord! What a day that will be!)

III. V. 9-10 **THE EXPECTATION OF THE SAINTS**

(III. This wedding doesn't end with the couple coming together to live. But, this wedding will continue with a celebration like nothing this universe has ever seen! Let me just suggest a few brief thoughts!)

- A. **The Guests At The Wedding Supper** - there will be guests at this heavenly wedding. Who? Well, it will be the Old Testament saints and the Tribulation saints. It will be a group made up of all Jews and Gentiles who were saved before Pentecost and after the Rapture! That will be quite an assembly!
- B. **The Glory Of The Wedding Supper** - After an oriental wedding, there was always a celebration. The length and the opulence all depended on the wealth of the Bridegroom. When rich men married, their wedding celebrations might last up to 7 days!

The Lord Jesus is going to present His Bride with a celebration that will last 1,000 years! After the wedding, we will return with Him to this earth. He will put down His enemies and establish His throne on this earth. Then, He and His bride will reign together, during the millennium, for 1,000 years!)

(III. Many of you can remember the 1981 wedding of Charles, The Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer. It was a spectacle of enormous cost and billions of people watched that royal wedding. However, that wedding was doomed! Later, the world got to watch that same wedding collapse as publicly as it had begun.

Friend, I am trying to tell you about a real royal wedding! It is a wedding that will be attended by more people than any other in history. It is a wedding that will be more extravagant than any in history. It is a wedding that will produce a marriage that will last longer than any in history! It will be a real Royal Wedding!)

- C. **The Groom At The Wedding Supper** - In a typical oriental wedding celebration, the groom would mingle with the guests to be sure that everyone had every need met.

Imagine what it will be to be in the presence of the Lord Jesus and have Him be occupied with seeing that our joy is full! Jesus will actually serve His people in that day, **Luke 12:37!** My, that is almost beyond the grasp of my mind!

Conclusion: I can imagine the society page in The New Jerusalem Times the next day! It might read something like this:

“Yesterday, the Lamb of God took His bride unto Himself in a service presided over by the Heavenly Father. The bride was dressed in garments of glorious white and she spotless and without blemish. The Groom was clothed in glory as is His custom!”

The angelic hosts lifted their voices together and praised the name of the Most High God, while the cherubim and seraphim hovered overhead crying ‘Holy, holy, holy!’

After the service, the couple left Heaven to return to the earth for a 1,000 year honeymoon. When they return, they plan to spend eternity together in the palaces of Heaven.”

My friends, are you ready for that wedding in the sky? There will be a marriage made in Heaven someday, but only the redeemed are invited. Does that include you? If not it can! Please come to Jesus and be saved today.

For those who are going, consider for a moment how you are preparing for that day! What kind of garments will you be wearing when you stand there at that Royal Wedding? The time to prepare is today! The place to prepare is here! The person to prepare is you. Will you come and let the Lord work in your heart and life?

The King Is Coming

Revelation 19:11-21

Introduction: The opening chapter of Revelation sets the tone for everything else that will happen in the book. **Rev. 1:1** tells us that this book is “*The revelation of Jesus Christ.*” **Rev. 1:7-8** says, “*Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.*” This book is about Jesus and about His return to this earth to rule and reign.

Revelation **chapter 5** takes us into Heaven. God is shown holding a book that is sealed with seven seals, **5:1**. A search is made in heaven and in earth to find someone worthy to open the book, but no one is found, **5:2-3**. John weeps at this news, because he desperately wants to know what is written in the book, **5:4**. John is told not to weep because the Lamb of God is worthy to take the book, **Rev. 5:5-7**. When the Lord takes the book from the hand of God, Heaven erupts into praise and worship because the Lord Jesus has been found worthy to take the book and to open the seals, **Rev. 5:8**.

When we studied that chapter we discovered that the seven sealed book was the title deed of the planet earth. You see, Satan is called “*the god of this world*”, **2 Cor. 4:4**. He may be the “*little g*” god of this world today, but he is not worthy to retain his grip on the world. This world belongs to Jesus, and to Jesus alone! The day will come when He will take possession of this world away from Satan.

This world is belongs to Jesus because of three great truths.

- ***It is His by right of Creation – He made it!***
- ***It is His by right of Calvary – He redeemed it!***
- ***It is His by right of Conquest – He will retake it!***

The entire book of Revelation has been leading us to this great moment we will consider together today. The whole purpose of the Tribulation Period, **chapters 6-18**, is to prepare the world for the coming of the King. The passage we are about to study today speaks of that great moment in the future when Jesus will return to this earth is power and glory to claim what is rightfully His. The first time Jesus came to this world, He came as a **Redeemer**. The next time He comes, He is coming as a **Ruler**! The first time He faced a **Cross**; the next time, He will wear a **Crown**. The first time He came there was a **Tomb**; the next time He comes there will be a **Throne**.

Let’s study these verses together as I preach on this thought: ***The King Is Coming!*** Let’s notice **truths** contained in these verses. I don’t mind telling you that these verses excite me greatly! I am tired of hearing the name of Jesus treated like a byword. I am tired of seeing His Gospel treated like a lie. I am tired of watching Satan and lost sinners live as though the Lord Jesus doesn’t exist. I am looking forward to that day when Jesus

Christ will return to this world in power and glory. On that day, He will destroy His enemies and rule on this earth in righteousness. Let's study that great day together because ***The King Is Coming!***

I. v. 11-14

THE COMING OF THE KING

(III. This is the second time a door has been opened in Heaven in the book of Revelation. The first time the door in Heaven was opened, it was opened so that the church, the Bride of Christ, could join the Lord in Heaven, **Rev. 4:1**. When this door is opened it allows the Lord to ride out of Heaven to return to this earth. That first door speaks of the Rapture of the Church. This second open door in Heaven speaks of the Return of the Christ.)

A. v. 11-13 **The King's Appearance** – These verses tell us how the King will appear when He returns to the earth.

1. His Nature

- a. **He Is Full of glory** – When Jesus came to this earth the first time, He concealed His heavenly glory beneath the flesh of His body, **Phil. 2:5-8**. Those who saw Him saw a common, ordinary Jew, **Isa. 53:2**. Even though He was the Creator of the universe in human flesh, He didn't even have a place to lay His head, **Matt. 8:20**.

The next time He comes things will be different. He will come on a "**white horse**". Ancient Roman generals often rode white horses in their triumphal processions. John sees Jesus returning as a Conqueror. The last time the world saw Jesus, they saw Him dead on a cross. The world looked at Jesus as a **victim**. This time, they will see Him as a **Victor**! He is not coming the second time to die, He is coming to reign!

Verse 12 describes Jesus as having eyes "**as a flame of fire**". This speaks of His omniscience and His right to judge sinners. Jesus is coming as One Who sees all, knows all and controls all. He is returning not as a Savior, but as a Judge!

- b. **He is Faithful and true** - Modern politicians rarely speak the truth. They usually tell us what they think we want to hear. They lie to keep their jobs and to fulfill their agendas. Jesus is not like those men! He always tells the truth and he will do everything He says He will do. (III. I am glad that we can depend on the promises of the Lord! Men will fail us, but He will always do what He has promised, **2 Cor. 1:20**.)

- c. **He Fights in righteousness** – Most of this world's wars have been fought over false pretenses and foolish objectives! Some would question our nation's motives for being in Iraq today. But, our Lord's cause is just and holy! He fights for the honor of His Father's Name and glory! He fights against unrighteousness and evil. He wages war for the glory of God alone! (III. The Lord is a man of war - **Ex. 15:3**)

2. His Name

- a. v. 12 **It Is The Name Of Mystery** – What is this mysterious name? No one knows but Him. You can study all the names of Jesus given in the Bible, (III. Some of His Names), but He will still be more than our mortal, finite minds can comprehend! He may let us in on the mystery someday. He may let us comprehend Him fully someday.

But, here is the point; mankind has refused to know Jesus. They would not use His name except as a by-word; as a slang word; as a curse word. Now the day of grace has forever passed! Now they cannot know Him even if they desired to.

- b. v. 13 **It Is The Name Of Ministry** – He is called "**The Word of God**". The first time Jesus came He came as God in human flesh, **John 1:1, 14**. He is the Word of God. He came to fulfill the promises and prophecies of the Word. He came to go to the cross and pay the cost for sin and sinners.

The next time He comes, He is coming to fulfill the rest of the Word of God. Jesus is the "**author and finisher**" of our faith, **Heb. 12:2**.

- c. v. 16 **It Is The Name Of Majesty** – His Name is written on His thigh. The thigh symbolizes strength, stability and power. When Jacob wrestled with the angel, the angel touched Jacob's thigh and his power to resist was broken - **Gen. 32.**)

When Jesus comes the next time, He is not coming as the lowly Nazarene. He will not be the butt of cruel joking and mockery! He will not be mocked, stripped, beaten, spit upon and crucified. He will come the next time as "**the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!**"

His name is also written on His vesture. His garment is a symbol of His position. When Jacob gave Joseph that coat of many colors, Jacob was telling everyone who his favorite son was. Joseph's brothers saw that coat and knew that Joseph was the apple of his daddy's eye! Jesus is the ultimate ruler! His very garments prove that He is worthy of faith and worship!

- B. v. 13 **The King's Apparel** - His garments are stained with the blood of His enemies, III. **Isa. 63:1-6**. What a day it will be when the eastern sky rips asunder and King Jesus in all of His glory and power rides forth in awesome and absolute victory.
- C. v. 14 **The King's Army** – I have never thought of myself, or of most Christians that I know, as being members of a mighty army, but here we are! This verse tells us that Jesus will be accompanied by the redeemed saints of God when He returns in glory. How do we know these are the saints? Look at their apparel. They are **“clothed in fine linen, white and clean”**. This is the same wording used to describe the appearance of the Bride of Christ in **verse 8**. III. When horses see me coming they say, **“Nay! Nay!”** But, on that day I will saddle up and ride back with my Redeemer when He comes in glory! (III. We are **“saints”** – **verse 8!**)
- D. v. 15 **The King's Armament** – When He comes, Jesus will need no carnal weapons. He will open His mouth and unleash the power of His Word. There is power in His Word! He created this universe and everything contained within it with the Word of His mouth! His word has the power to bring light out of darkness and life out of death! He speaks and it happens! His Word is a living thing, **Heb. 4:12**. It is an extension of Himself. It has the power to heal and give life, and it has the power to destroy and kill - **Isa. 11:4**. Jesus spoke and the waves lay at His feet like gentle puppies. He spoke and a fig tree withered. He spoke and a dead man named Lazarus walked out of his tomb. He spoke and the scales fell from my eyes. In the depths of my sin and my deadness, I heard His voice when He called me to come to Him. His Word came and brought light and life. There is power in His Word! (III. The power of His Word is put on display in **John 18:6**. Jesus spoke and the soldiers were knocked off their feet!)

I. The Coming Of The King

II. v. 17-18

THE COMMAND OF THE KING

- A. V. 17 **He Commands The Fowls To Come** - God is about to prepare a feast for the fowls of the air. They will feast on the flesh of His enemies! (III. There has been a sharp decline in the populations of the various scavenger birds around the world. In Africa, Asia and the Middle East, scavenger bird populations are at dangerously low levels. That fact shouldn't bother us! When this day comes, the Lord will call these birds to gather from around the world. They will come at His command. Just as they came when Noah built the ark, they will come for the great feast the Lord is about to place before them!)

- B. v. 18 **He Commands The Flesh To Be Consumed** - In life these men had been separated by rank, title and power. In death they are all made equal! What a lesson!

Death is the great leveler! You may be somebody in this life, but when death comes calling, you will find that you re nobody without Jesus!

Notice that the word “**flesh**” is found in this verse 5 times. Some people want to blame all evil on the devil. Others want to blame everything that is wrong on the world. The devil and the world are terrible enemies, but there is a third enemy: the flesh. Satan may tempt us to do evil, but it is our stinking flesh that follows Satan into sin. The word is filled with allurements and attractions that the flesh longs to indulge in. If it weren't for the flesh, Satan and the world would have no power over man at all.

Chances are you have been fighting some battles with your flesh. Chances are, you have also been battling with the world and the devil. Well, I have some good news for you! The book of Revelation talks about the judgment and destruction of all three of our enemies. The world is destroyed in **Rev. 18**. The devil is destroyed in **Rev. 20**. And, the flesh is taken care of here in **Rev. 19**. I praise the Lord that there is a day coming when my flesh will be changed and will cease to be a problem in my life. I praise the Lord that there is a day coming when the Lord of glory will destroy the power of the flesh forever!

I. The Coming Of The King

II. The Command Of The King

III. v. 19-21 **THE CONQUEST OF THE KING**

- A. v. 19 **He Draws The Armies To Armageddon** – We have looked at the battle of Armageddon several times already in our study of this book. That great and terrible day has finally arrived. All the armies of the world, many of whom are enemies today, will join forces to try and defeat the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Their mission will be to put an end to God, the saints of God and even the mention of the Name of God. Their plans will all fail!

Man thinks that he is in control of his own destiny. He thinks that his decisions, his plans and his desires make some kind of difference. God is sovereign and not man! God determines destinies and not man! God rules and not man! The very fact that the armies of the world gather themselves together in the Valley of Megiddo at this very moment in time proves that God, and not man is in control!

These puny humans think they are going to defeat the Lord and His people. They think they are doing what they please. In reality, they are carrying out the perfect will of a sovereign God. He is pulling all the strings, calling all the shots and directing every step to ensure that His plan for the ages is perfectly and completely fulfilled! (III. **Psa. 115:3; Psa. 135:6; Isa. 46:10; Eph. 1:11**)

- B. v. 20-21 **He Destroys The Armies At Armageddon** – Not only does the Lord have the power to draw the armies of the world to Armageddon, He also has the power to defeat them once they are there!

1. v. 20 **The Devil's Men Are Destroyed** - The Antichrist and the False Prophet are thrown alive into the Lake of Fire! The two demonically inspired individuals will be taken by the power of a sovereign God and cast alive into the Lake of Fire. These two minions of Satan will not experience physical death. They will be taken alive and sent immediately to their eternal doom! Hell is waiting with an open mouth to receive these two pretenders!

Imagine the shock of this world when, right before their very eyes, their leaders are taken and cast into Hell! In one instant the world will see their allegiance and their faith has been misplaced. They will see that they were fools. It may even dawn on them in that moment that they are lost, doomed and destined to Hell!

2. v. 21 **The Deceived Multitudes Are Destroyed** - The assembled armies of the world are defeated in a single moment by the power of the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ. They will die at His Word and their blood will flow to the horse's bridles - **Rev. 14:20**. Their souls drop off into Hell to await judgment at the Great White Throne and their flesh is consumed by the fowls of the air!

That is a terrible scene, but it will literally be played out some day. The world has rejected the Lord Jesus as its Savior, now it must face Him as its Judge! There is a truth here that we must not miss today. The very Word of God that tells you about a Savior Who loves you and will save you, is the same Word that tells you about a Judge Who will judge you if you reject Him. The same Bible that preaches a saving Gospel to the repenting sinner today will be the means of slaughter in that awful day.

Here is what God says about that terrible day, **Psa. 2:1-5**. What would you rather hear? The voice of God as He says, "***Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord?***" or "***Depart from me, I never knew you!***" would you rather hear Him speak peace or judgment to your soul? You can have either one you want!

Conclusion: Jesus is coming! That is a fact! Many do not believe it, but it is true nonetheless. The Second Coming of Jesus is one of the major themes of the Word of God. There are 1,845 references to it in the Old Testament, and a total of seventeen Old Testament books give it prominence. Of the 260 chapters in the entire New Testament, there are 318 references to the Second Coming, or 1 out of every 30 verses. 23 of the 27 New Testament books refer to this great event. For every prophecy on the First Coming of Christ, there are 8 on Christ's Second Coming.

Jesus is coming! There is an old legend about a man who made a covenant with Death. The contract stated that Death would not come to him unannounced and without warning. The years went by, and at last, Death appeared before the man. The old man said, "**Death, you have not been true to your promise. You have not kept your covenant. You promised you would not come unannounced. You never gave me any warning.**" Death replied, "**Not so! Every gray hair in your head is a warning. Every one of your lost teeth is a warning. Your eyes growing dim and your natural power and vigor abated is a warning. Oh yes, I have warned you and warned you continually.**" With those words Death swept the man into eternity.

Jesus is coming! You have been warned! Are you ready to meet Him? Are you saved by His grace? Is everything as it should be between your soul and the Lord? If there are needs, you come to Him and get them met today!

1000 Years of Heaven on Earth

Revelation 20:1-10

Introduction: This chapter is surrounded by controversy. The controversy swirls around the use of the words “*thousand years*” in **verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7**. The controversy concerns the 1,000-year period we call the Millennium.

There are three dominant views concerning the nature of the Millennium.

- 1.) **Postmillennialism** - This view says that the world will get better and better and when the world has reached the proper stage of perfection, Jesus will return and establish His kingdom on earth. This was a very popular view prior to World War II. Nearly anyone can look at this world and all the wickedness and evil and see that the world is getting worse and not better. This is a false view of the Millennium.
- 2.) **Amillennialism** – There are several variations of this view. The primary version says that there is no literal millennial kingdom. The kingdom of God is spiritual in nature and we are really in the kingdom age right now. Many who hold this view believe that Satan is bound right now. The Amillennial view spiritualizes these verses. This is also a false view of the Millennium. (III. A branch of Amillennialism known as Preterism believes the Tribulation has already occurred and that Jesus has already returned. The Preterist believes that Jesus returned in 70 AD and established His kingdom then. Their belief system is far more complex than that, but that is the gist of it.)
- 3.) **Premillennialism** - This view holds that humanity will continue to degenerate; the world will go through a literal Tribulation; Jesus will return and defeat the Antichrist and establish a literal kingdom on the earth and reign here for 1,000 years. This is the only view that takes these verses literally. It is my opinion that this is the only true view of the millennium.

It is my belief that these verses comprise the fulfillment of many great Old and New Testament promises and prophecies. It is my belief that these verses tell us about a literal 1,000 kingdom that will exist on this earth. It is my belief that these verses describe the final kingdom that will exist in time.

Why is there even a need for the millennium? Why not just wind it all up, judge sin and sinners and let the redeemed enter into eternity? The millennium will allow the Lord to accomplish some much-needed goals. Among other things, the millennium will allow the Lord to:

- To fulfill His Old Testament promises of a kingdom to Israel.
- To put Jesus, in all His glory, on public display.
- To answer the prayer, “*Thy Kingdom come.*”
- To fulfill the promise that the saints will reign.

- To bring about the complete redemption of nature.
- To give man one final test under the sovereign rule of the Lord Jesus Christ.

While there are many great truths associated with the millennial kingdom, too many to share in one message, let me share a few of the things that will be a reality then.

- **Peace** – All wars will cease. (Isa.2:4; 9:4-7; 32:17-18; 33:5-6; 55:12; 60:18; Eze.28:26; 34:25, 28; Hos.2:18; Micah 4:2-3; Zech.9:10)
- **Joy** – The King's subjects will be happy. (Isa.12:3-6; 14:7-8; 25:8-9; 61:7,10; 65:18-19; 66:10-14; Jer.31:18-19; Zeph.3:14-17; Zech.10:6-7)
- **Holiness** - This kingdom will be a holy kingdom. There will be rebellion, but King Jesus will rule with a rod of iron, **Rev. 19:15**. Capital punishment will be enforced. (Isa. 31:6-7; 35:8-9; 60:21; 61:10; Eze.36:24-31; 37:23-24; Zech.8:3; 14:20-21)
- **Glory** - This kingdom will be a glorious kingdom, with the glory of God in full display. All the citizens of the world will be able to travel to Jerusalem and see the glorified Savior face to face! (Isa. 4:2; 35:2; 40:5; 60:1-9)
- **Comfort** - Jesus will fully minister to every need, so that there will be no want anywhere on the earth. (Isa 12:1-2; 30:26; 40:1-2; 49:13; 51:3; 66:21-23; Jer.31:23-25; Zeph.3:18-20)
- **Justice** - Perfect justice will be administered to every individual. (Isa. 9:7; 32:16; 42:1-4; 65:21-23; Jer.23:5.)
- **Fullness Of Knowledge** - An increase in the teaching ministry of the Holy Ghost will result in enhanced mental capabilities. (Isa. 11:1-2, 9; Isa. 41:19-20; *54:13*; Hab.2:14)
- **Instruction** – King Jesus will instruct His people in the ways of God. (Isa. 2:2-3; 29:17-24; 32:3-4; Jer.3:14-15; Micah 4:2)
- **The Removal of the Curse** - In **Gen. 3:17-19**, God placed a curse upon the earth. This curse will be removed; resulting in an increase in the productivity of the earth, and in wild animals will losing their ferocity and ability to injure or kill. (Isa 11:6-9; 65:25).
- **Sickness Removed** - The King will be a healer, so that sickness and death will vanish from the earth. Death will only exist as a punishment for extreme sin. (Isa 33:24; Jer.30:17; 33:6)

- **Healing of the deformed** - All deformity will be healed. (**Isa.29:17-19; 35:3-6**)
- **Protection** - There will be a supernatural preservation of life during the millennium. (**Isa.41:8-14; 62:8-9; Jer. 23:6; Joel 3:16-17; Amos 9:15; Zech.9:8; 14:10-11**)
- **No Oppression** - There will be no social, political, racial, or religious oppression in that day. (**Isa.14:3-6; 42:6-7; 49:8-9; Zech.9:11-12**)
- **No Immaturity** - It seems that there will be no mental retardation or dwarfed bodies, extreme longevity will also be restored. (**Isa.65:20**)
- **Reproduction by the Living People** - The living Tribulation saints and believing Jews who enter the millennium will reproduce. The population of the earth will soar. Yet, all children will be born with a sin nature, and will therefore need salvation. (**Jer.30:20; 31:29; Eze.47:22**)
- **Labor** - A perfect economic system, in which all needs will be met by the labor of men under direction of the King. It will be a fully industrialized world. (**Isa. 62:8-9; 65:21-23; Jer.31:5**)
- **Economic Prosperity** - The perfect labor situation will produce economic abundance, so that there will be no want. (**Isa.35:1-2, 7; 30:23-25; Jer.31:5; 12; Eze 34:26; 36:29-30; *Joel 2:21-27* *Amos 9:13-14*; Zech.8:11-12**)
- **Increase of Light** - There will be an increase in solar and lunar light, this will produce longer growing seasons, accounting for the increase in productivity. (**Isa.30:26**)
- **Unified Language** - All language barriers will be removed. (**Zeph.3:9**)
- **Unified Worship** - The entire world will worship God through the Lord Jesus Christ. (**Isa.45:23; 66:17-23; Zeph.3:9; Zech.14:16; 8:23; Mal.1:11**)
- **The fullness of the Spirit** - All who are subject to the King will experience divine enablement and presence. (**Isa.44:3; Eze.36:26-27; 37:14; Joel 2:28-29**)

Those are just a few of the glories of that future kingdom. Let's take a few minutes to study these verses today. They tell us about a time we will call **1,000 Years Of Heaven On Earth**.

I. v. 1-3 **A PROPHECY INVOLVING SATAN**

- A. v. 1-2 **A Heavenly Intervention** – a strong angel descends from Heaven and “***laid hold on***” the devil. That phrase means “***to have power over; to be one’s master.***” This angel is empowered by heaven to be the devil’s master. He grabs Satan and binds him with a strong chain that will remain on him for 1,000 years. There is no disputing who the Bible is speaking about in these verses. He is called “***the dragon;***” “***that old serpent;***” “***the devil***” and “***Satan***”. Those names reveal all we need to know about his character. As a dragon Satan is looking for those he might ***devour***. As a serpent he is ever seeking those he might ***deceive***. As the devil is the false accuser, always looking for someone to ***defame***. As Satan, the adversary, he is always seeking someone to ***defeat***. One day, he will get what is coming to him!

From all appearances it seems that the devil is willing the war between good and evil. But, as they say, “***appearances can be deceiving.***” God will have the last word in this matter. Satan is powerful, but he isn’t all-powerful! Only God can lay claim to that title!

- B. v. 3 **A Heavenly Incarceration** – This angel removes the devil from the earth for 1,000 years. Imagine a world with no devil! It will be almost like Heaven! There will be no one to tempt people to evil. No one will whisper lies into the ears of our minds. No one will remind us of how wicked we were and are. No one will set traps for us to fall into. A world without the devil will be a wonderful place! Without a devil peace, prosperity, joy, holiness, and blessing will be the order of the day!

While the earth will rejoice in his absence, the devil will be getting a small taste of what awaits him in eternity. We are told that he will go to the “***bottomless pit.***” This term translates the word “***abyss.***” This seems to be an ancient prison where certain demon spirits are incarcerated by the Lord, **Jude 6**. We saw this abyss opened in **Rev. 9:1-12**. When the pit was opened, terrible demons issued forth to torment people on the earth. Satan will be confined to this prison for 1,000 years!

What will Satan do for 1,000 years? He will bide his time because he knows that he will be released for “***a short season.***” We will talk about all that in a few minutes. For now, we should rejoice in the truth that Satan will be bound one of these days! Hallelujah!

I. **A Prophecy Involving Satan**

II. v. 4-6 **A PROPHECY INVOLVING SAINTS**

- A. v. 4a **The Saints And His Reign** – This verse tells us that there is coming a day when the saints of God will rule with their Redeemer. Here's a reminder of the events leading up to this moment for the saints of God.

Jesus will return in the clouds above this earth in the Rapture. He will take His Bride home to Heaven. We will face Him at The Judgment Seat of Christ, and then we will join Him for the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Jesus will return to this earth in power and glory, bring His people back with Him. He will defeat all His enemies, establish His kingdom on earth and allow us the privilege of reigning with Him for 1,000 years, **2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10**. (Ill. I wonder where I will be posted.)

- B. v. 4b **The Saints And His Reward** – This next part of **verse 4** seems to introduce another set of saints. It speaks of those who endured the horrors of the Tribulation Period without tarnishing their testimonies or denying their faith.

Some of these saints died during the Tribulation, but they have been resurrected. Others made it alive to the end of the Tribulation Period. They are allowed to enter the Millennium. All of these Tribulation saints join with the Bride of Christ and we reign with Jesus for 1,000 years. And, according to **Dan. 7:27** also promises that the Old Testament saints will reign during this time period as well.

Imagine a world where there is no devil. Imagine a world filled with the redeemed saints of God from Pentecost to the Rapture. Imagine a world where the brave saints of the Tribulation will be living. Imagine a world where you might walk down the street and bump into Adam, Abraham, David, Moses, or Elijah! That world will exist one day!

- C. v. 5-6 **The Saints And His Resurrection** – These verses reveal that there are two resurrections. Some people believe in a general resurrection. They believe that all the dead will be raised at one time and the sheep, which represent the saved, will be sent to Heaven while the goats, which represent the lost, will be sent to Hell. The Bible teaches very clearly that there will be two resurrections. (Ill. **Luke 14:14; John 5:29; ***Phil. 3:10-14 – v. 11** – Paul adds a preposition making the word mean “**out resurrection from the dead**”; **1 Cor. 15:23 – “own order” – “battalion**”. Jesus led the victory march and we will all follow Him, each in our own place!)

The first resurrection occurs at the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus and includes the saints raised at the Rapture as well as all those resurrected at the end of the Tribulation. The Bible says that those who have a part in this resurrection are “**blessed**.” Why? They will not have to endure “**the second death**.” However, all those who have rejected Jesus as their Savior, from the time of Adam all the way to the end of the Millennium, will be raised in the second resurrection. The poor, unfortunate souls will all face Jesus at the Great White Throne and they will spend eternity in the

Lake of Fire. If I were you, I would do everything in my power to see to it that I was part of the first resurrection.

I. **A Prophecy Involving Satan**

II. **A Prophecy Involving Saints**

III. v. 7-10 **A PROPHECY INVOLVING SINNERS**

- A. v. 7 **Satan And His Freedom** – After being bound in the bottomless pit for 1,000 years, Satan is turned loose. Why? Someone asked Dr. Frances Schaeffer why and his answer was as follows: ***“If you can tell me why he was released the first time I will tell you why he was released the second time.”***

There must be a reason because **verse 3** says **“he must be loosed”**. I am certain that we will never fully understand all the reasons why, but I will offer one or two for you to consider.

First, this event proves that the devil is incorrigible and unrepentant. Even after God has proven to the devil countless times that He is stronger, Satan still continues in his stubborn rebellion against God. God has thwarted every plan launched by the devil. And still Satan stands in defiance and open rebellion to the Lord.

Second, this event will prove the total inability of man to save himself, even in a perfect world. It also proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that lost man is totally depraved. There is no good in him, and left to himself, he will always go away from God, **Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 3:10-23**.

- B. v. 8-9a **Satan And His Forces** – Where will the devil find this vast army? After all, the world is perfect! There is no poverty, no disease, and no war. It is a perfect world! Why would anyone fall for the devil's lies and rebel against God?

Remember, millions of people entered the Millennium in flesh and blood bodies. Some were believing Jews; others were Tribulation saints. These people married and had children. In fact, because of perfect health and perfect living conditions, the population of the earth will explode. People will live to be 1,000 years old again! The children born during the Millennium will be raised in a perfect environment and still they will rebel against God.

Every one of those little children was born into this world with a sin nature. Every one of them would still need to be saved from their sins by faith in the finished work of Christ at Calvary. In a world where they will travel to Jerusalem and see King Jesus in Person, they will still refuse to bow to Him in faith and repentance. In a world inhabited by the characters from the Bible; the glorified saints of God and by those who endured the Tribulation Period, many millions will not be saved. They will keep the rules because they will be forced to. But, in their hearts, they are still rebels in need of a Redeemer. They are still sinners in need of a Savior!

- C. v. 9b-10 **Satan And His Finale** – Satan raises his vast army and leads them in one final assault against King Jesus in Jerusalem. They do not stand a chance! God Himself ends the battle by raining fire down from Heaven. The rebels are destroyed in a moment of time and they all drop off into Hell to await judgment.

Satan himself is cast into the Lake of Fire, where he will spend eternity being tormented along with the Antichrist and the False Prophet. I say, “**Hallelujah!**” When the smoke clears and dust settles, the Lord God Almighty will have the last say in this matter! God wins, end of story!

Conclusion: This thing all boils down to one simple question: Who’s side are you on? Have you joined forces with the devil? Or have you enlisted in the Lord’s army?

Right now, it appears that the devil is winning the battle. It’s kind of like that little league game I heard about. A little boy was sitting in the dugout and a man walked by and said, “**Hey son, what’s the score.**”

The little boy said, “**They’re beating us 25 to 0.**”

The man responded, “**Isn’t that a little depressing?**”

The boy answered, “**Naw, mister, we ain’t even got up to bat yet!**”

That’s where this thing stands today. If you look at all the score cards, it appears that we are entering the fifteenth round and that the devil’s won the other fourteen. It just looks that way! When the bell rings and the final round begins, King Jesus is going to deliver the knockout punch!

If I were you, I would be sure that I was on the right side of this thing!

The Great White Throne Judgment

Revelation 20:11-15

Introduction: Some time ago there was a young foreign student who flunked out at the University of Michigan. In shame he decided to disappear. For the next four years he hid in the unused attic of an Ann Arbor church. Taking great pains to conceal himself, he quietly prowled around only at night, living off food and water from the kitchen. He never left the building or spoke to a soul. No one ever suspected he was there. Then one day a slight mistake gave him away. Accidentally the young recluse made some noise, the police were called, and he was finally discovered.

How foolish this young man was to try to hide from his failure. Still, he is not as foolish as that person who thinks they can hide from God! The world is filled with people who live as though they have no sin. They live as though God did not exist. They live as though they will never face God in judgment.

What they hope for will never come to pass. These verses tell us about judgment day. They speak about that terrible day when every lost sinner will face the Lord in judgment. There will be nowhere to hide on that day. No one will hide behind excuses, ignorance, false professions, etc. Everyone will face Jesus Christ as Lord and Judge and they will all receive a just sentence for their sins.

Today, I want to examine the facts concerning an event that is known as ***The Great White Throne Judgment***. Before I begin, I want you to know that there will not be one single born again individual that will stand in judgment here. This is a judgment seat for the lost. Let's notice the facts surrounding this judgment as I preach on ***The Great White Throne Judgment***.

I. V. 11 THE JUDGE AND THE GREAT WHITE THRONE

A. **The Picture In This Throne** - There are two adjectives used to describe this throne.

1. **It is called Great** - This word refers to "***its power***". This is the highest court in the universe! This is no small claims court! When judgment is rendered from this throne, there is no appeal to a higher court, for there is no higher court! This is the place of highest authority and final judgment. We can best understand this court by comparing it to our Supreme Court. There is no higher court in the land. All judgments rendered here will be final!
2. **It is called White** - This speaks of "***the purity***" of this court. All human courts are tainted by sin, prejudice, and fallibility. This court, on the other hand, is absolutely perfect and the judgment rendered here will be perfectly fair and righteous. The Judge who occupies this bench is infallible. He cannot be tainted by sin or prejudice, but He renders judgment in perfect righteousness and fairness.

Not a single person judged here will cry “**unfair**” when their sentence is handed down. Every sinner judged and sentenced will know that they have received perfect and fair judgment.

B. **The Person On This Throne** - The Bible tells us that this throne is occupied by a Person. However, His identity is not revealed here. The Bible tells us in other places just Who is on this throne.

1. **His Name** - The man on this throne is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, **John 5:22, 27, 30; Acts 10:40-42; 2 Tim. 4:1**. The **Savior** will be the **Sentencer** in that day!
2. **His Nature** - This is no lowly Nazarene Who occupies this throne. This is not a poor, humble carpenter. This is a resurrected conqueror. This is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. His appearance is described for us by the prophet Daniel, **Dan. 7:9-10**.

His presence is so terrible and powerful that even the heavens and the earth flee from before Him. Nature has the good sense to bow before this judge! Why is it that sinners have such a difficult time doing the same?

It is also worthy to note that this is where the earth is purified by fire, **2 Pet. 3:10-13; Rev. 21:1**. God destroys this ruined creation and remakes the universe as it was before sin invaded and devastated it.

(III. I just want to remind you that we still live in the day of grace. During this time in history, a sinner can come before God and cry out for forgiveness and the Lord will receive them and save them by His grace. Today is the day of grace. Today is the day of forgiveness. Today is the day of repentance. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day of mercy. There will be none of those things given out in that day! Only judgment, swift and sure, will issue from this great white throne and from the Lord Jesus Christ!)

C. **The Perception Of This Throne** - The Bible tells us here that there was found no place for the heavens and the earth to hide from the gaze of the One on the throne. It needs to be remembered that this righteous Judge sees all and He knows all. There is no sin hidden from Him and no thought has ever been concealed. There will be no pretending and no pretense on that great judgment day, but only a sure recounting of every sinful deed and every sinful thought, **Luke 8:17; Eccl. 12:14**. Nothing will be hidden!

(III. Some think they are getting away with things now, but the truth is, God knows all about you and what you have been doing and thinking. He knows everything there is to know about you! III. **Psa. 33:13-15; Psa. 44:21; Pro. 5:21; Pro. 15:3; Pro. 21:2; Heb. 4:13**. You haven't hidden a single thing from God! And, you can be sure, one day, those sins will come back to haunt you - **Num. 32:23; Gal. 6:9**.)

You will not hide from this righteous Judge! He will know all there is to know about you before you appear in His presence. He knows you intimately!

II. V. 12-13 **JUSTICE AND THE GREAT WHITE THRONE**

- A. **The Defendants Appearing At The Throne** - Here we are told that those appearing before the throne are the “**dead**.” This proves that there will not be a single born again believer in the group. Why? The Bible tells us that we who have trusted Jesus as our Saviour have “**passed from death unto life**,” **John 5:24**. We have been given eternal, abundant life through the blood of the Lamb and can never lose that or be dead again for ever.

This can only mean one thing: this mass of humanity will be made up completely of those who are spiritually dead, **Eph. 2:1**. Note also that this group includes all the spiritually dead! God raises their dead bodies from their tombs. He knows where every particle of human dust is located and He is well able to bring it together and raise it to life. He calls their bodies from the ground and their souls from Hell. He reunites them in a pitiful procession of anguish and hopelessness.

None is left out! The king, the pauper, the general, the foot soldier, the master, the slave, the borrower, and the lender will all stand before God. None will escape and none will hide, but all will face the Righteous Judge in judgment that day! Preachers, deacons, church members, popes, priests, nuns, choir members, drunks, whores, drug addicts, pimps, pushers, grandmothers, grandfathers, teenagers, moms and dads, will all stand together with Cain, Judas, Hitler, and every other person who chose wickedness over righteousness, before the throne to face their judgment! There will be no escape and there will be no exceptions.

Every person who has ever died without Jesus Christ will face Him in this Judgment on that day! Ill **verse 13**, it reminds us that all who died, regardless of where they died will appear before Jesus in judgment. Even those who are in Hell will be brought out for this judgment. Every lost sinner from Cain to the last sinner slain in the Millennium will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ! (***Will you be in that number?***)

This horrible assembly stands trembling before the Lamb of God. They are forced to look on the face of the One they spit upon. They can see the nail prints in His hands. They can see where the thorns pierced His brow. They can see the awful things He suffered to atone for sin. They see Him as He is and they are filled with fear!

- B. **The Documents Used At The Throne** - The Bible tells us here that the “**books**” will be opened. Only one of these books is named and it is called the “**book of life**.” I don’t know all the books that will be used that day, but I am sure of a few that will be opened. Allow me to share them with you for a moment.

1. **The Bible** - Jesus Himself reminded us that we would be judged out of His Word - **John 12:48**. This Bible that sinners mock and refuse to heed will be used to render judgment upon their lives that day. Better to believe it now and go to Heaven than reject it and then face it in judgment and go to Hell!
2. **The Book Of Deeds** - In Heaven, a record is being maintained of the deeds of all men. One day, every lost person will stand before the Lord and hear the record of his life read from the throne. Every deed, both good and evil, will be mentioned. Every sin will be read aloud: Sins of commission, sins of omission, flagrant sins, secret sins, sins of the heart and sins of the mind. All will be brought out into the open on that day. **Verse 12** makes it clear that the lost will be judged according to their works.

(III. A man can either choose to stand on his own record and face God in his sins, or he can come to Jesus and have his record expunged. Faith in Christ wipes our record clean. It replaces the record of our sins with the record of His righteousness. When our book is opened all, it says is “**See Calvary and an empty tomb - This man’s record is clear!**”)

3. **The Book Of Life** - This is just **Theology** so you can take it for what it is worth, but I am of the opinion that there is a **book of life**, or a **book of the living**.

Every name of every person who would ever be born was in this book, **Rev. 3:5; Rev. 17:8**. When a sinner dies without trusting Christ as his Savior, their name is removed from this book. While your name remains, there is hope for you, but when you die, or you reject Jesus for the last time, you are numbered with the eternally dead and there is no more opportunity for you to be saved.

4. **The Lamb’s Book Of Life** - This book contains the names of those who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. When a sinner repents, their name is written in this book. This is the reason Jesus told His disciples to rejoice, **Luke 10:20**. This book records who has and who has not accepted Jesus as their Savior. When the Great White Throne Judgment comes about, both this book and the book of life will match perfectly!

(III. Imagine the horror of standing there that day and hearing your sins recounted. Imagine being forced to admit your sins and the fact that you are a sinner. Then imagine Jesus opening the book of life and showing you where your name was removed. Then imagine Him opening the Lamb’s book of life and showing you that every slot in that book is filled and that your name does not appear!

Is this fantasy? I don’t think so! It is a time of such horror that nothing in life can compare with it! You need to be sure you are saved today! You need to be sure that your name is written in the Lamb’s book of Life. If I were you, I wouldn’t wait for the invitation. If there was a doubt, I would get in this altar and get it settled right now!)

- C. **The Decision Made At The Throne** - The last phrase in **verse 13** tells it all. When these books are opened, judgment is rendered based on the evidence found in the books. You can be sure that the evidence is accurate, and that the record is complete.

(III. It is worthy of noting that every person will stand on his own! Regardless of the excuse you use to justify not coming to Jesus today, in that day you will stand under judgment by yourself! It won't make any difference who hurt you, who stood in your way, what hypocrite you looked at, or whatever. It will come down to you and Jesus. How much better is it to come to Jesus in this day when there is still hope for salvation, than in that day when there is hope for nothing but judgment! Be saved! Be sure!)

III. V. 14-15 **JUDGMENT AND THE GREAT WHITE THRONE**

- A. **A Fearful Judgment** - The sentence rendered from this bench is "**Death.**" Not just physical death, but the second death which is eternal separation from God in the fires of the Lake of Fire, **2 Thes. 1:9-10**. This death involves no dying! There will be no end to the torment, to the hell, to the awful nature of what the sinner will face. It will be an eternal state of dying apart from the presence of God or anything good! It will be Hell! It is the "**death**" Paul refers to in **Rom. 6:23** as the "**wages of sin.**"

Imagine the horror of hearing Jesus say the words that will condemn you to eternal torment! Imagine hearing Him say, "**Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels**", **Matt. 25:41**. Imagine living your life the way you wanted, without regard for God or His will and then having to hear the Lord Who loved you enough to die in your place speak those awful words. There could be nothing so terrible! (III. Some of those who will hear Him say, "**I never knew you. There is no record of your birth. Depart from me!**" Agrippa, Felix. Judas, Rich Young Ruler, etc.)

Perhaps the only thing that equals that would be for you to be a religious person, a church member, a regular attendee of the Lord's worship services, and have to stand before Him and here Him pass judgment on your life. This very scene is spoken of in **Matt. 7:21-23**. Don't let this happen to you! Come to Jesus while there is time. Come to Jesus while there is grace. Come to Jesus while there is hope! Come to Jesus now!

- B. **A Final Judgment** - There will be no appeals; all judgments rendered from this bench will be final and they will be binding. This will be the last day any of these sinners ever see. This will be the end of the road for them, for they are forever consigned to the Lake of Fire to suffer torment for eternity! (III. The difference between Hell and the Lake of Fire. – III. Hades and Gehenna.)

(III. Many don't believe this is true. They deny the reality of Hell and claim that such a notion is old-fashioned and out of date. The Bible tells us that Hell is real and that lost sinners do indeed go there to spend eternity. **Psa. 9:17; Luke 16:19-31.**)

- C. **A Foolish Judgment** - It is foolish only in the sense that it did not have to happen! Any sinner, who is willing to repent and turn to Jesus alone, by faith alone, can be eternally saved. The precious blood Jesus shed on Calvary is sufficient to the saving of any sinner who calls upon Him, **Rom. 10:13**. The grace of God is sufficient for every sinner who will come, regardless of the depths of their sins, **Rom. 5:20**. The love of God for the Lord is sufficient to receive all who will come by faith, **John 6:37**. Please don't do a foolish thing and die without Jesus! Come to Him while the door is open!

Conclusion: This is the most horrible scene mentioned in the Bible. I think the concept of people perishing forever is terrible beyond description. However, as horrible as it is, it is true nonetheless!

If you have never been saved, you need to come to Jesus. You need to be saved today! If you will just trust Jesus by faith, He will save you and spare you from this terrible time of judgment that is coming upon all the lost. Won't you come?

To those of us who are saved, this passage reminds us of the terrible need of the world around us. If nothing else, it ought to move us to come before the Lord and cry out for the souls of our friends, neighbors and loved ones who need Jesus. It ought to stir our hearts so that we will not rest until we have tried to tell every lost person we know that salvation is available to them if they will come to Jesus! Surely, we've not become so hardened that the thought of Hell no longer moves us. Won't you come?

Arnold Lewis worked as a supervisor in a shipyard. His work took him from one ship to another all day long. One day an inspector who needed to consult with Arnold about company matters had to search several ships to find him. And of course, he was impatient and frustrated by the time he found Arnold. Here's the conversation that occurred.

The inspector said, "***I've been looking all over hell for you.***"

"That's one place you will never find me," was the calm reply. ***"I'll never be in hell because I've been saved from hell by the blood of the Lord Jesus."***

No more was said on the subject, and the two men got their business settled. But at the end of the work day, just before the whistle blew, the inspector again came looking for Arnold.

"I've been thinking all day about what you said today," he said. ***"I wish that I, too, could know that I am saved from hell."***

"You can know," Arnold assured him. With verses from his pocket New Testament, he explained God's plan of salvation, and standing there on the deck of that unfinished ship, the inspector prayed to receive Christ.

That can be your testimony today! Wouldn't like to be able to say about Hell, ***"That's one place you'll never find me!"*** You can come to Jesus right now!

You Might Trouble Me Here, But You Can't Follow Me Home

Revelation 21:1-8

Introduction: Ernie just wanted to go home. Nobody knows why Ernie abandoned his family in the first place. Chris and Jennifer Trevino were cruising down a Texas highway at 60 miles-per-hour, out in some of the most barren territory on earth, when Ernie bailed out of the family truck without anybody knowing he was gone.

Did the black-and-white tomcat lean the wrong way on a corner somewhere out there in the desert 600 miles west of his Victoria home? Possibly. Did he instinctively lunge at a passing insect without realizing that he would come down beyond the bed of Trevino's moving truck? It's anybody's guess.

By the time Ernie's owners missed him, they were many miles down the road. "We ought to go back and look for him," they said, but it was dark by then, and they didn't know where to start looking, anyway.

Imagine their astonishment when a week later the errant Ernie showed up at their Victoria home all bloody and scratched and footsore. Just how Ernie navigated that far through unfamiliar terrain, only God knows. Ernie's worn claws and the sores on his feet convinced his veterinarian that the plucky cat had covered lots of rough real estate. Like everybody else who heard of Ernie's trek, the vet was amazed that a cat could cover so much distance in so short a time. "But," he said, "I wouldn't put anything past cats." With so many questions unanswered, one thing is clear: Ernie wanted to go home. And, so do we!

There's no telling what old Ernie went through as he tried to find his way home. I am sure that danger after danger dogged his steps. But, when he finally arrived home, he found love, peace, safety, and a bowl of warm milk. You see, the things that had troubled Ernie along the way home could not follow him there!

According to God's Word every person who is saved is a "*pilgrim and a stranger*" in this world, **1 Pet. 2:11**. As we make our way through this world, we are headed home, **John 14:1-3**. But, along the way, there are many elements of this life that trouble us and hinder our progress. Evil bullies like death, disease, discouragement, depression, and the devil make our journey home treacherous and difficult. But, when I read a passage like **Revelation 21:1-8**, I am reminded that every one of the things that trouble us here will not be allowed to follow us home.

Like Ernie, there will come a day when the journey will be over and we will be safely at home in Father's house. We will be in a place of peace, safety, and perfection. While I travel, I am troubled; but I want to say to those things that trouble you and me this morning: "***You Might Trouble Me Here, But You Can't Follow Me Home!***"

Now, I know that some of you are defeated, discouraged, and disillusioned today. I want you to know that what you are going through will end some day and you will be home! The Bible tells us that it will be better then, **Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17**.

Today, I want to take this passage and I want to show you some of life's bullies that will not follow us home to glory. I want to preach for a few minutes on this thought: ***You Might Trouble Me Here, But You Can't Follow Me Home!***

I. v. 4 **SORROW, YOU CAN'T FOLLOW ME HOME**

- A. There is no denying that this life is a life of trouble, trials, and tragedies. Every day we hear accounts of diseases, distresses, discouragements, and deaths. But this is how the Bible said it would be, **Job 14:1, Job 5:7; John 16:33**. (Ill. **1 Peter 4:12**).
- B. There isn't a person in this room who has come this far in the journey unscathed by the troubles of life. In fact, many, if not all of you, bear the scars of your journey on your heart, in your mind and in your body. Many things in your life have not gone as you planned them and you know what sorrow is all about! That is the lot of every human being who has ever lived or will ever live on this earth!
- C. According to **verse 4**, the troubles and trials of this life cannot follow us home! When we leave this world, whether it be by the rapture or the graveyard, there are just some things that cannot go with us! Think about it! In heaven, there will be no more:
1. **Death** – In heaven, no one will ever die and no graves will be dug. Never again will grief stricken loved ones stand beside the body of a departed loved one. (Ill. **1 Cor. 15:53-56**)
 2. **Sorrow** – This word refers “**to sorrow or grief of any kind.**” It speaks of the all the pains, troubles, and heartaches we experience in this life. Disappointments, trials, problems, loss of friends and property, death of loved ones, persecutions, our own failures, all are in view here. Truly this life is a life of heartache and sorrow, but not one of the things that trouble us here will follow us there.
 3. **Crying** – This word has the idea of “**an outburst or an outcry.**” It refers to those times when we are absolutely overwhelmed and broken by the events of life. It speaks about those times when we are at the very end of our ropes and do not know what to do! Friend that will never happen in glory! Life may trouble you here, but it cannot follow you home!
 4. **Pain** – This word refers to “**labor, toil or great trouble.**” It refers to all the diseases, disappointments, and disasters we encounter as we move through this world. Well, the good news is that none of these things will ever follow us home! No hospitals, no broken homes, no broken hearts, no trials, and no tribulation will go with us to glory!
 5. **Tears** – This is the sum of our blessed, promised state in Heaven. All the things that drive us to weeping and sorrow here will not be found over there!

(Ill. Sorrow follows us today, but I want it to know this: “**Sorrow, you might trouble me here; but you can't follow me home.**”)

II. v. 8 **SATAN, YOU CAN'T FOLLOW ME HOME**

- A. While it is true that much of what happens in this life is just part of living in a sin-cursed world; it is also true that a being called "***the devil***" causes the saints of God much grief. Satan's desire is to defeat and destroy you, **1 Pet. 5:8**, and he will stop at nothing to see you fall and fail.
- B. His names reveal his nature and his desires toward you and me. He is called:
1. **The Accuser of the brethren – Rev. 12:10 (III. Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5)**
 2. **The Adversary – 1 Pet. 5:8**
 3. **The Devil – Matt. 4:11**
 4. **The Murder – John 8:44**
 5. **The god of this world – 2 Cor. 4:4**
 6. **The Tempter – Matt. 4:3**
 7. **The Ruler of Darkness – Eph. 6:12**
 8. **The Serpent – Gen. 3:4**
 9. **The Wicked One – Matt. 13:19**
- C. He has many other names and they all tell us how evil he is. But, the saints of God can just call him "***Gone***" some day, because as evil as he is, he cannot follow us home! (III. **Rev. 20:1-3; 10; Rev. 21:27**)

(III. I just want to tell old slewfoot today: "***You might trouble me here; but you can't follow me home!***")

III. v. 2, 8 **SIN, YOU CAN'T FOLLOW ME HOME**

- A. **Verse 2** tells us about the city of God, the New Jerusalem. **Verse 9-11** tells us that this city is the Bride of the Lamb. As far as I can tell, the church is the Bride of Christ, **2 Cor. 11:2**. Here, the city is associated with the inhabitants. Here, the Bride of Jesus is pictured as a glorious, spotless, and sinless Bride, III. **Rev. 19:7-8**. This means that one of these days, we are going to be changed. This vile flesh will drop away and there will be no more appetite or ability to sin!
- B. Let's face it, everyone in this room; even those of us who are saved have trouble with this flesh we carry about. This was the experience of Paul, **Rom. 7:14-25**; and it is our experience as well.

You see, when the Lord saved us, He saved us from the **Penalty of sin, John 5:24; Rom. 8:1**. He also saved us from the **Power of sin, Rom. 6:14**. We have also been saved from the Presence of Sin, but that great blessing will not be realized as long as we live in this world.

- C. According to the Bible, there will come a changing day for the saints of God, **1 Cor. 15:48-54**. One glorious day, this flesh with all its appetites, affections and allurements will drop away forever. When that day comes, all the saints of God will be forever delivered from the presence of sin and will be in bodies that cannot possibly sin! We will be in a body and a land that is free from the blight and temptation of sin! We will be free! Free to worship. Free to praise! Free to live perfectly for the glory of God!

(III. I just want to remind this old flesh: "**You might trouble me here, but you can't follow me home!**")

IV. v. 8 **SINNER, YOU CAN'T FOLLOW ME HOME**

- A. All of the things I have told you about today are wonderful and glorious for those who are saved. But, there is a sad note to this message. **Verse 8** tells us that those who die in their sins will not be allowed inside that city. That bothers me, but that is the price of refusing to believe on Jesus.
- B. Notice the fifth word of **verse 8**. It is the word "**unbelieving**." This word refers to those "**without faith, to those without trust in God**." It speaks about those who have never been saved through a personal relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said that those who would not believe in Him would not be saved, **John 8:24**.
- C. Friend, you may have listened as I tried to preach about Heaven and about some of the things that will not follow us to that perfect land. You might have thought, "**That's a place I too would like to go to when I leave this world**." I just want you to know that unless you come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, you will never go to Heaven! You will instead go to Hell, **Psa. 9:17; 2 Thes. 1:8-9!**
- D. Friend, it does not have to end up that way for you! You can be saved and you can be saved today. You can leave this building as sure for heaven and all its glories as if you were already there. If that is what you want, then here is how to get it.

1. **Recognize that you are a lost sinner – Rom. 3:10-23**
2. **Understand that there is a tragic and terrible penalty on your sins – Rom. 6:23; Rom. 5:12.**
3. **Realize that God loves you and that His Son Jesus died to save you from your sins – Rom. 5:8.**
4. **Be willing to come before the Lord, confessing all this to Him – Rom. 10:9; 10:13.**

5. This is the only plan of salvation God knows anything about and it will fit you for Heaven. Nothing and I mean nothing else can or will save your soul, **Acts. 4:12; John 6:14!**

Conclusion: Samuel Morrison was a faithful missionary who served twenty-five years in Africa. In failing health, Morrison returned to the United States. Also traveling home on the same ocean liner was President Teddy Roosevelt who had been in Africa for a three-week hunting expedition. As the large ship pulled into New York harbor, it looked as though the entire city had come out to welcome the President. Music filled the air, banners wafted in the wind, balloons flew to the sky, flashbulbs were popping, and confetti streamed down like snow. As Roosevelt stepped into sight, the crowd exploded in applause and cheers. It was truly a reception fit for a king. While all of the eyes were on the President, Morrison quietly disembarked and slipped through the crowd. None of the applause was for him and nobody was there to welcome him home.

His heart began to ache as he prayed, ***“Lord, the President has been in Africa for three weeks, killing animals, and the whole world turns out to welcome him home. I’ve given twenty-five years of my life in Africa, serving you, and no one has greeted me or even knows I’m here.”*** He then felt the gentle touch of God and sensed the Spirit say, ***“But my dear child, you are not home yet!”*** What a joyous thought to realize presidential receptions pale in comparison to the heavenly homecoming that awaits every child of God.

My friends, you might be troubled by many things today, but if you are saved, do not worry! We are not home yet! None of the things that hinder and haunt our steps here can follow us home!

Do you need to come and talk to the Lord about some of the pressures and problems of your life? Do you need to talk to Him about your relationship with Him? Maybe you are struggling because you are not living as close to Him as you should. He can fix that! Do you need to come and be saved? He can fix that too!

A WONDERFUL PLACE CALLED HEAVEN Revelation 21:9-27

Introduction: I believe the Bible. I believe in taking this book literally. Therefore, I believe in a literal place called Hell. We talked about that place last Sunday. I also believe in a literal place called Heaven. Some people think we are foolish to believe in some city far above the earth, where people are happy, holy, and home. I may be foolish for believing that, but I am in good company! Jesus believed it. Paul, John, and the rest of the disciples believed it. Countless millions of precious saints have entered death longing to go to that city. You might want to get the net, but I still believe in Heaven.

D.L. Moody said, ***"The thought of Heaven has cheered the soul of many believers. Some say that we are fools to believe in Heaven. But, to deny Heaven is to deny Jesus, for He came from Heaven, it is to place our departed loved ones in the cold dark grave, it is to deprive millions of Christians of the greatest hope they have. To deny Heaven is equal to murder for it kills hope, to thievery for it robs joy, to slander because it calls God a liar."***

Just as we looked at a horrible place called Hell last week; I want to preach today about **A Wonderful Place Called Heaven**. Now, I am not so foolish to believe that I can do adequate justice to that place, but I want to give it a noble effort. Let's consider some **aspects** of **A Wonderful Place Called Heaven**.

I. LET'S TALK ABOUT THE CITY

(What Do We Know About That Place?)

A. **It Is A Prepared Place** – John 14:2 – III. Creation, John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17, and the fact that it is marred by sin. Imagine what Heaven will be like. (III. **"Prepare"** – Speaks of the man who went before the king to make sure the way was clear. III. A bridegroom making everything ready for his bride. Jesus Has cleared the way and made ready the place.)

B. **It Is A Perfect Place** – Rev. 21:4; 9-21 – None of the things that hinder here will enter there. (**Sea**, v. 1; **Tears**, v. 4; **Pain**, v. 4; **Sorrow**, v. 4; **Crying**, v. 4; **Sin**, v. 8, 27; **Satan**, v. 8, 27; **Temple**, v. 22; **Sun**, v. 23; **Night**, v. 25; **Curse**, v. 22:3.) (III. Heaven will be glorious! Not just for all that is there, but for what isn't!) (III. The sorrows of this life.)

C. **It Is A Pleasant Place** – Rev. 21:22-27 – III. The size, the appearance and all that will be missing in glory. (III. 1500 miles on each side! Walls 216 feet high. Gates of pearl. Walls of jasper. Foundations of twelve precious stones. Streets of pure gold.) (III. John is attempting to describe the indescribable.)

D. **It Is A Permanent Place** – 1 Pet. 1:4 – Everything in this world is fading away. That world is free from decay, destruction, and degeneration. The Bible uses four phrases here to describe Heaven. It is “***incorruptible***.” It will never be invaded by enemies, **Matt. 6:19-20**. It is “***undefiled***.” It cannot be “***soiled or stained***.” It is free from the taint of sin and corruption of sin. It is a place that “***fadeth not away***.” Unlike any place or thing in this world, Heaven cannot decay or wear away. It is “***reserved***.” It is guarded and kept under lock and key for us! Heaven is there to stay, **Psa. 145:13**.

(III. While I do not claim to know much about Heaven, I do know this: The One Who died for me on the cross will be there and I will see Him when I get there and that is enough for me! III. ***The dying man who asked his Christian doctor to tell him something about Heaven.***)

II. **LET’S TALK ABOUT THE CITIZENS**

(What Do We Know About The Population?)

A. **They Are A Redeemed People** – Rev. 21:24; Psalm 107:2; Eph. 1:6-7; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 5:9 – Heaven will be populated only by those who have been to Jesus for the cleansing power.

B. **They Are A Resurrected People** – 1 Thes. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:42-56 – Heaven will be populated by those who have been delivered from the grip of death and the grave. (II. The souls of the departed ones are there today. But no one in Heaven is in their final form. One day, the souls in glory will receive their glorified bodies!)

C. **They Are A Rescued People** – John 14:3; 1 Thes. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52 – Heaven will be filled with people who never had to go through the doorway of death.

D. **They Are A Resting People** – Rev. 14:13 – Free from the burdens, care, and labors of this life.

E. **They Are A Rejoicing People** – Rev. 4:1-11; 5:11-14; 7:9-17 – Every glimpse into Heaven reveals the same thing: rejoicing!

III. **LET'S TALK ABOUT THE COURSE**

(What Do We Know About The Path To That City?)

A. **It Is A Plain Path** – John 14:6; Acts 16:31; 1 John 5:12; John 8:24 – The Bible is clear about the road to glory. There are only two ways in life, **Matt. 7:13-14**, and you are on one path or the other!

B. **It Is A Peculiar Path** – John 10:9; Acts 4:12; John 14:6b – There are not many roads to that city. There is only one, and His name is Jesus. That may sound narrow, but it is still the truth!

C. **It Is A Personal Path** – Rom. 10:9, 13; Luke 13:3; Pro. 9:12 – No one can walk that path for you. You must take the step of faith for yourself. I would of it for you if I could, but I can't. I took that step one day and so should you!

Conclusion: III. ***The lady who wanted to be buried with her fork. She knew "The best was yet to come."*** We heard the story of the lady who requested to be buried with a fork in the pocket of her gown. She always said that at church dinners, when people came around to collect the plates, they always said, "Now, keep your fork." She'd asked, "Why?" Because the best is yet to come... dessert!

How about you? When death comes for you, will you be ready to go to Heaven? Have you made your preparations to enter that city? Have you left the wide road and entered the narrow way through Jesus Christ? If you haven't, you can and you can do it today. If you have, then hang on saints of God, the best is yet to come!

Do you have your ticket? Ready to travel? He's coming to get His Bride!

The Appointments of Heaven: Revelation 22:1-5: vs. 1-5

1. v.1 The Crystal River - (Ill. No pollutants; No fishing either!)
2. v.2 12 Healing Trees - (Ill. No disease in eternity!) This is an eternal medicine.
3. v.3a No more Curse - (Ill. All that this involves!) (Especially no more sin!)
4. v.3b The Service - Probably people from off the earth, possibly the saints.
5. v.4 The Wonder - Men will finally see the face of God! (Ill. Moses!)
6. v.5a The Lighting - God will light the place.
7. v.5b The Glory - The Bride will reign with her husband the Lord Jesus.

The Conclusion of the Book: Revelation 22:6-21

Introduction: Our study of the book of the Revelation has taken us from the days of the early church in the past all the way into eternity in the future. John has been faithfully fulfilling the divine purpose he shared in the first verse of the book, “***The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John,***” Rev. 1:1.

John has been used of the Lord to reveal to God’s people the God’s plan for the future. We have seen the words of **Rev. 1:19**, where it says, “***Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter,***” fulfilled in the pages of this amazing book.

The Lord has shown us how the church age will end. It will end with the church in apostasy, cold and dead, with Jesus on the outside. We are steadily moving in that direction today.

He has shown us what will follow after the church is removed from the world. There will be a terrible tribulation period that will engulf the world. Billions will die from war, disease, and the tragedy of divine judgment. This age will also end with the Antichrist and Satan judged and sentenced to an eternity in the Lake of Fire.

We have even been given a glimpse of our own future. We have seen a place called Heaven, where death, disease, sin, and Satan will be prohibited. We have been given a small foretaste of that wonderful place we will call home someday.

In our text today, we have arrived at the end of the book. The verses we have read today serve as the Lord’s conclusion to the book of Revelation. So, let’s move through these verses together and bring to a close our study of the book of Revelation.

As the Lord closes out this book, He has a few final **statements** to make. I want to examine these statements and try to preach on ***The Conclusion Of The Book.***

I. v. 6-10 **A CONCLUDING WORD ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES**

- A. v. 6 The **Scriptures Are Accurate** – John is assured that everything he has seen is both “***faithful and true***”. There has not been a single exaggeration, nor has there been a single falsehood. Every prophecy made in this book will come to pass in the Lord’s time.

One of the names given to Jesus in the book of Revelation is “***Faithful and True***,” **Rev. 3:14; 19:11**. That name declares Him to be trustworthy and worthy of faith. The Lord can be trusted! When He makes a statement, it is truth. When He makes a promise, it will come to pass. When He issues a prophecy, it will be fulfilled. God has tied the truth of His Scriptures to the integrity of His Name, **Psa. 138:2!**

You can believe the words of your Bibles! When God speaks, He speaks the truth! Every word in this book is “***God-breathed***,” **2 Tim. 3:16**. You can trust your Bible!

- B. v. 7-9 The **Scriptures Are Authoritative** – With the statement, “***Behold, I come quickly***”, the Lord declares His authority! Man can say what he wishes about the Bible and about God’s promises and prophecies, but God will have the final say!

The Lord also reaffirms His promise to bless those who “***keepeth***” the words of the Revelation. That word has the idea of “***guarding, protecting, and attending to carefully***.” The Lord will bless the people who read, believe, and live out the words of this book. That was His promise at the beginning, **Rev. 1:3**, and it is His promise at the end.

The Bible was not given to us so that we would have something to lay on the coffee table or in the rear deck of the car. The Bible was given to us to read, believe and live out. The Word of God has authority over our lives and we are to heed its words, **John 14:15; James 1:22-23**.

(**Note:** When John hears the promises of God given to him through the angel, he gets caught up in the moment and he falls down to worship the angel. The angel rebukes John, reminding him that he is a servant too. Then, John is given advice that we all need to hear. He is told to “***Worship God!***” God and God alone is worthy and deserving of our worship!

It is easy to become like the world and become guilty of worshipping this person or that thing. The only Person Who is worthy to be worshipped is the Lord God Almighty! (Ill. **Matt. 4:8-10; Deut. 10:20**)

- C. v. 10 The **Scriptures Are Accessible** – John is commanded to “***seal not***” the book he has written. The word “***seal***” means “***to conceal, or to keep secret.***” Many years earlier, the prophet Daniel was commanded to seal up a book he had written, **Dan. 12:4**. The time for the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy had not arrived and it was not time to share it with the world.

John, on the other hand, is not to hide these things away and keep them secret. He is to publish them so that the world may hear the news that Jesus is coming and judgment is about to fall on this world.

The Bible we hold in our hands is a living witness to the God of Heaven. It reveals Him in all His glory, His power, and His wrath. The Bible is not a closed book, but it is open and its message is available to all who will pick it up and read with an honest and obedient heart! If this book is closed, it is closed to those who refuse to know the Lord and to those who have been blinded by the devil, **2 Cor. 4:3-4**.

One day, this book that is so hated by those who deny the Lord, will be the standard of judgment, **John 12:48**. If I were you, I would read this book and heed this book! After all, it is the Word of God, and it will stand for all eternity, **Matt. 24:35**.

I. A Concluding Word About The Scriptures

II. v. 11-16, 20-21 A CONCLUDING WORD ABOUT THE SAVIOR

- A. v. 12, 20-21 A **Word About His Advent** – Again, we have the Lord’s promise that He is coming again! That was His promise before He left this world, **John 14:1-3**, and that is His promise now. He is coming!

We know that the Lord’s return will happen in two stages. First, He will return in the clouds above the earth to claim His redeemed Bride and take her home to Heaven, **1 Thes. 4:16-18**. Then, He will return in power and glory to claim this earth for Himself. He will defeat all His enemies, establish His kingdom and rule in righteousness in this world.

For the saints of God, the thought of our Lord’s return offers peace and hope. Just the thought that we might be able to cheat death and leave here in the Rapture is a wonderful thought. It is no wonder that John prayed for the Lord to come, **Rev. 22:20**. Every child of God who loves the Lord and believes the Bible is looking forward to leaving this world in the Rapture.

- B. v. 11-12, 14-15 A **Word About His Awards** – According to **verse 12**, the return of Jesus will be a mixed blessing. He is going to reward every man according to “**his works**.” That is, those who have received Him as their Savior will enjoy a time of blessing when He returns. He will reward them for their works and bless them for their service. Many faithful saints of God will hear Him say, “***Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.***” What a day that will be!

However, those who do not know Jesus will discover that the day of His return will spell their eternal doom. That is what He means in **verse 11**. When Jesus returns to this world, there will be no time to “**get ready**.” When He comes, how He finds the souls is how that soul will remain throughout eternity. If I were you, I would be sure that I was saved and ready to meet Jesus when He comes!

He pronounces a blessing on those who obey the Gospel in **verse 14**. He pronounces a curse on those who reject the Gospel in **verse 15**. Those who receive Him will enjoy the blessings of Heaven and of everlasting life, **v. 14**. While those who choose sin over a relationship with Jesus will be shut out of Heaven, **v. 15**.

The question you need to consider today is this: where would you be if Jesus was to return today? Are you saved? Are you ready to meet Him? Has your soul been made fit for Heaven by the blood of the Lamb? Is your name in the Lamb’s book of life? Jesus is coming! For some it will be a time of rejoicing. For many more it will be a time of horrible rejection and retribution.

- C. v. 13, 16 A **Word About His Authority** – In these two verses, Jesus declares His ability to make these statements and to bring them to pass. He reminds us that He was here when everything began and that He will still be here when all things wind up, **v. 13**.

He reminds us that He is the King of Kings, **v. 16**. He is the “**root**” of David. That is, He is David’s ancestor. He is the “**offspring**” of David too. He is David’s descendent. Jesus is the ultimate authority! He founded the throne and He will occupy the throne.

He is the “**bright and morning star**.” To be called a “**star**” in that culture was to be “**elevated**.” The “**morning star**” signaled the advent of a new day. Jesus is reminding us that He, Who is greater than all, will return to destroy the darkness of this world forever. The light of His glory will fill both heaven and earth when He comes again!

Jesus can make the promises He made because He has the power and the authority to bring them to pass. He is coming and He will rule and reign in righteousness and power some day!

I. **A Concluding Word About The Scriptures**

II. **A Concluding Word About The Savior**

III. v. 17-19 **A CONCLUDING WORD ABOUT THE SPIRIT**

- A. v. 17a There Is An Appeal To Appear – Here we find the “**Spirit**” and the “**Bride**” inviting the Lord Jesus to “**come**”.

The Spirit of God desires nothing more than the glory of the Son of God, **John 16:14**. The Spirit of God longs for the Savior to return so that He might defeat His enemies and occupy His rightful place on the throne of the universe. The Spirit desires the glory of the Son of God. Therefore, the Spirit says, “**Come!**”

The Bride of Christ echoes the invitation of the Spirit. There is a longing in the heart of the redeemed for the advent of the Redeemer. How many here can identify with that desire? There are times when the burdens of life press us down and we long for Jesus to come. There are times when sin and Satan harass us and they seem so strong, and we long for Jesus to come. There are times when this world seems like a foreign place, and we long for Jesus to return. Well, hang on a little longer sweet Bride of Christ; your Redeemer is coming again to take you unto Himself.

- B. v. 17b **There Is An Appeal To Accept** – Here on the last page of the last chapter in the last book of the Bible the Spirit of God offers one last invitation to lost sinners to come to Jesus for salvation. Anyone who sees their need of a Savior and understands that Jesus Christ can save their soul can be saved. They can drink the water of life and “**pass from death unto life**”, **John 5:24**. Even as the Lord brings things to a close, people are still being inviting to come to Him for their soul’s salvation.

Have you ever trusted Jesus as your Savior? If you haven’t, let me invite you again to come to Jesus and trust Him to save your soul! If you will come to Him, He will save you and prepare you for an eternity in Heaven, **John 6:37-40**.

- C. v. 18-19 **There Is An Admonition To Avoid** – People are warned not to tamper with the words of this book. The Lord pronounces a curse on those who would add to or take away from the words of the Bible. This is not a new warning, but it is a warning that runs like a thread through the pages of Scripture, **Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:5-6**. In fact, the warning given here is two-fold.

• **Men are warned not to add to the Bible** – The Bible is a complete book. When the Bible was finished, the revelation of God to man was brought to an end. There are no more new revelations being given today! Every person who stands up and claims to have a “**new word from the Lord**” is guilty of adding to the Word of God! They are bringing the threat of divine judgment upon themselves.

These verses also let me know that every book written by man that claims to be Scripture is a lie of the devil! The book of Mormon; the writings of Mary Baker Patterson Glover Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, which is neither Christian nor scientific; the so-called “**lost books of the Bible**,” are all attempts by Satan to undermine our faith in the Word of God.

Those who add the Word of God will face divine vengeance and judgment. God does not want His Word tampered with!

Men are warned not to subtract from the Bible – Many people are guilty of picking and choosing what they want from the Word of God. They may not add to the Bible, but they are guilty of subtracting from its words. For too many are guilty of diluting the message of God. They deny its truth; water down its doctrines; and ignore its warnings. They too will face divine judgment!

Many years ago, J.A. Seiss, in his commentary on Revelation, said, “***O, my friends, it is a fearful thing to suppress or stultify the word of God, and above all ‘the words of the prophecy of this Book.’ To put forth for truth what is not the truth,—denounce as error, condemn, repudiate, or emasculate what God himself hath set his seal to as his mind and purpose, is one of those high crimes, not only against God, but against the souls of men, which cannot go unpunished.***” God does not take it lightly when people tamper with His Word. And, neither should we!

I take this matter of handling the Word of God very serious! I do not want to add to it or take away from it. I want to present it just as it is given to us in the pages of the Bible. I want to preach it clear and straight! If it makes folks mad, so be it! I would rather offend you by preaching the truth than offend God by diluting and changing the truth.

Let every preacher of the Gospel, every Sunday School teacher, everyone who leads in a devotion, take heed to how you handle the Word of God! It deserves our best effort! We should study it, meditate over it and present it in the power of the Spirit. If you lack that power, prostrate yourself before the Lord until He gives you that power! When you have found the meaning of His Word, then stand forth and proclaim it in the authority of the Spirit, being careful not to add to or take away from its divine message!

Conclusion: Jesus wants you to know that he is coming again! He is coming to put down evil and raise His kingdom. He wants you to be ready to meet Him when He does come. Are you?

If you are not ready, you can be. Come to Jesus today and He will save your soul and make you ready for Heaven. If you are ready, then you should come to Him and praise Him for His grace in saving you from your sins and from Hell.

Folks, this old world is winding down! The Lord is coming! These are exciting days to be alive. I am glad that I know Him and that I am ready!

THEN I HEARD EVERY CREATURE IN
HEAVEN AND ON EARTH AND UNDER
THE EARTH AND ON THE SEA,
AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM, SAYING
“TO HIM WHO SITS ON THE THRONE
AND TO THE LAMB BE PRAISE AND
HONOR AND GLORY AND POWER,
FOR EVER AND EVER!”

R E V E L A T I O N 5 : 1 3



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