



THE BOOK OF REVELATION

A Commentary by David J Riggs

and

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THE THREE “C’s” OF REVELATION

– Rev 2:10

CONFLICT
COMFORT
CONQUEST

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STUDYING THE BOOK OF REVELATION

By David J. Riggs & John Cripps

INTRODUCTION

John is the writer of the book of Revelation (1:1,4,9; 22:8); God is its author (1:1). The book consists of the revelation (unveiling, uncovering) of Jesus Christ which God gave him to show unto his servants (1:1). Christians at the time when the book was written were being beheaded and slain for the word of God and the testimony which they held (2:13; 6:9-11; 7:13-17; 13:7-8; 16:6-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4). This means the book was written in the atmosphere of intense and widespread persecution.

The author of this work on Revelation is convinced that the book was written at the later date (about 97 A.D). Some believe that the book was written at the earlier date (about 69 A.D). One's choice of dates has much to do with his interpretation of the book. In other words, is the book referring primarily to the destruction of the Roman Empire or the destruction of Jerusalem? Instead of trying to establish the later date in this introduction, I have chosen to let the students decide for themselves as they progress through the book. I believe that as we carefully study the book verse by verse we can easily ascertain the correct date and interpretation of the book.

There are many other views as to the interpretation of the book. Some think that the book reveals all the future of history from the beginning to the end of time. Others think it reveals the future for the church--the rise of the Papacy, Mohammedanism, the Reformation, etc. Still others say that these are not actual historical events, but are symbolical of temporal and physical forces at work. Some, in the light of this, say that the book was fulfilled in John's day and could have no meaning for us. Besides all these, there are Millennial groups which have formulated their own various doctrines from the book.

To rightly interpret the book, we should seek to find the meaning the book had in the day of its origin. In other words, "**What did it mean to the Christians of John's day?**" The things in it were "shortly" to come to past (1:1,3; 22:6,10). Rev. 1:4 says, "*John to the seven churches which are in Asia...*" Furthermore, we should seek to determine its meaning for all ages and especially for our own age. Thus, "**What does the book mean to us today?**" All readers are blessed (1:3), and it is for "*everyone who hears*" (22:18). It is written to "*his servants*" (1:1). Therefore, in our study of the book we will seek to understand how its principles applied then, and observe how they will apply in similar situations now.

The victory of Christ is revealed throughout the book (1:18; 5:9; 6:2; 11:15; 14:1,14; 17:14; 19:15). Christ conquers death, hades, the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and those who worship the beast. The book also pictures the victory that the saints have through Christ--as having washed their robes (7:14; 22:14), as having come out of the great tribulation (7:14), as standing upon their feet and not dead (11:11), as victorious over the beast (15:2), as reigning on earth and with Christ (1:6; 5:10; 20:4). The book, therefore, was given to bring comfort for the church and to encourage the saints in time of great tribulation--for example, God sees their tears (7:17); their prayers shall rule (8:3-4); suffering on earth is surpassed by glory (14:13; 20:4); their blood will be avenged (6:9-11; 19:2); victory is assured (15:2).

We are convinced that the book met a need at the time of its writing and that it dealt with an historical situation in which spiritual forces were at work. We are even more persuaded that its message will apply to all generations. In the book we see the conflict between God and Satan. God's forces are Christ and the

church, while Satan's forces are evil government and false religion. God and His righteousness will triumph. Satan is destined to destruction; he and all his helpers will be defeated. Christ is victorious and His saints can be victorious through Him. This idea is set forth gloriously and completely in 17:14: "*These will war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful.*" (ASV) This is the main theme of the book.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. Who is the author of the book of Revelation and to whom is it written?
2. Under what atmosphere is the book of Revelation written?
3. What are two good questions that we should keep before us as we try to find the meaning of the book?
4. What is the purpose of the book with reference to the saints and their persecutions?

Rev. 1:1-3

Verses 1-3 are the inspired introduction to the book. The revelation (unveiling, uncovering) of Jesus Christ (He is the giver of it; also, it reveals Him in His present glory and as executor of judgment) which God gave to Him (from God through Christ) the things which must shortly come to pass for the time or occasion is at hand. The expressions, "*shortly come to pass*" (vs. 1) and "*the time is at hand*" (vs. 3), along with verses 6 and 10 of the 22nd chapter, show that the things of the book would not tarry or delay and had a definite bearing on that generation. Besides giving immediate encouragement to the Christians of that day, its principles and messages are applicable to Christians of all time.

The word "*signified*" (vs. 1) means "the act or process of signifying by signs or other symbolic means" (Webster); "to give a sign, indicate, to signify" (Vine). Normally, a passage of Scripture must be understood in its plain and natural sense unless the context demands that it be taken figuratively. The reverse is true in Revelation--the symbols are to be taken figuratively unless the context demands otherwise. The symbols and figures of Revelation should be understood in the light of the plain passages of the New Testament and should never be made to contradict them. It was "*by his angel unto his servant John.*" Angels played a part in giving the law (Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19) and angels also have a significant role in the book of Revelation.

The apostle John bore witness, gave evidence and testimony of (1) **The word of God**--the word of the Lord which is the gospel (1 Pet. 1:25); (2) **The testimony of Jesus Christ**--all those things which Jesus both did and taught (Acts 1:1); (3) **All things that he saw**--John was always careful to point out that he gave a true witness (John 19:35; 21:24; 1 John 1:1-4).

"*Blessed*" in verse 3 carries both the idea of being "happy" and being "praised or spoken well of." It is the same word used by Jesus in Matt. 5:1-13 and is the first of seven in Revelation. "*Blessed*":

- (1) 1:3 --- "*is he who reads...and those who hear...and keep those things*"
- (2) 14:13 --- "*are the dead who die in the Lord*"
- (3) 16:15 --- "*is he who watches and keeps his garments*"

- (4) 19:9 --- "*are those who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb*"
 (5) 20:6 --- "*is he who has part in the first resurrection*"
 (6) 22:7 --- "*is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book*"
 (7) 22:14 --- "*are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life*" (The above are from the NKJV)

The "he" of verse 3 is probably the public reader of that day as seen in the fact that he changes to the pronoun "they" for the listeners. The word "*prophecy*" is defined as "the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God." Note that the blessing is not based on reading and hearing, but on **reading, hearing, and keeping**. (See also James 1:25).

Rev. 1:4-7

The book is addressed to "*the seven churches which are in Asia*"; they are listed in verse 11 of chapter one. Grace (divine favor) and peace (tranquillity, free from disturbance) from (1) **Him who is and was and is to come**--God the Father (see also Rev. 4:8); (2) **Seven Spirits**--used also in Rev. 3:1; 4:5; 5:6--this perhaps means that there are literally seven spirits before the throne of God or since the number "seven" often represents fullness and completeness, it probably symbolized the full, complete and all seeing Holy Spirit; (3) **Jesus Christ**.

John's description of Christ gives the scope of the ministry of Christ: **faithful witness**--He gave witness of Himself (John 8:14; 1 Tim. 6:13); **first begotten of the dead** (Acts 26:23; Col. 1:18)--first to be resurrected never to die again; **prince of the kings of the earth** (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:15-16)--rules over all kingdoms of men with a rod of iron (Psalm 2:7-12; 110:1-7). He **loved us** (Gal. 2:20; John 15:9) **and washed** (or "loosed" ASV) **us from our sins** (Heb. 9:14; Acts 22:16). He is the Savior who gave His blood and offered Himself to redeem and heal us from our sins (1 Pet. 2:24). He also **made us to be kings** (kingdom ASV) **and priests** (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 5:10)--founded the kingdom and priesthood. "*To him be glory and dominion*"--to Him is the praise and honor, and the rule and sovereignty; "*for ever and ever*"--for unending or unlimited duration. Angels, authorities and powers have been made subject to Him (1 Pet. 3:22) and before Him every knee shall bow (Phil. 2:9-11).

Some understand verse 7 to be referring to Christ's coming in judgment upon Jerusalem (Matt. 24:30-34; 26:64; Luke 21:20-32; 23:27-31). However, by the expressions, "*every eye*" and "*all kindreds*," it no doubt is a description of the second coming of Christ. He first came as a Savior; He is returning as a judge. For other second coming passages, see 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-53; Phil. 3:20-21; Acts 1:10-11.

Rev. 1:8

This verse probably has reference to the Father as in verse 4, but when we compare 1:17; 2:8; 22:12-13, we see that similar expressions were used of Jesus. These refer to the "eternal existence" of the Father and the Lord Jesus. (Compare Phil. 2:6).

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What word in verse one shows that the book of Revelation is a symbolical book (with signs and figures which are not to be taken literally)?
2. On what are the blessings of the book (as well as all other books of the Bible) based?
3. The grace and peace were from whom?
4. To what does verse seven refer?

Rev. 1:9-16

John was their brother and fellow partaker (sharer, joint-participant) in three things: (1) **Tribulation**--the saints were suffering persecution at this time from the Jews, the Roman Empire, and Paganism (Rev. 2:13; 7:14; 20:4; also see John 16:33; Acts 14:21-22; 2 Tim. 3:12). (2) **Kingdom**--Jehovah's Witnesses and Millennialists are wrong in saying the kingdom was not in existence at that time. (Compare Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Mark 9:1). (3) **Patience**--the perseverance, steadfastness that Jesus had and wants all men to have especially under tribulation (Rom. 5:3-5; 12:12; James 1:2-4). The American Standard Version makes clear that all three of the above things are in Christ--"*which are* (plural) *in Jesus.*" Thus, the tribulation, kingdom, and patience were all in and by Him.

"*Isle of Patmos*"--A rocky island in the Aegean Sea about ten miles long and six miles wide and about twenty-four miles off shore of Asia Minor. John was on the isle "*for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ*" which could mean (1) **in punishment for having proclaimed it** (banishment to an island was a common mode of punishment at that time; some were slain and beheaded for the same purpose, Rev. 6:9; 20:4); (2) **in order to proclaim it**; or (3) **for the specific purpose of receiving it**. Number one seems to be more correct; John was on Patmos for the same reason as suffered by fellow saints.

"*In the Spirit*"--a miraculous vision in which one had contact with God (Ezek. 3:10-15; 8:1-4). Visions, dreams and trances were frequently used a mediums of divine revelation (Ezek. 1:1; Dan. 2:19; Matt. 1:20; Acts 2:17; 10:3,10; 22:17-18). "*The Lord's day*"--The following suggest that the first day of the week (Sunday) is the Lord's day. (1) Jesus was raised on the first day of the week (Mark 16:1-9). (2) Jesus met with His disciples several times on the first day (John 20:1,19,26). (3) Pentecost came on the first day of the week (Lev. 23:15-16); hence, all of the events of Acts 2 took place on that day--first gospel sermon, first converts, beginning of the church, etc. (4) The church assembled on the first day to partake of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). (5) Christians were commanded to give on the first day (1 Cor. 16:2).

John hears behind him a great voice as of a trumpet (loud and clear) which tells him to write in a book the things he sees and send it to the seven churches. The book of Revelation was first sent to them but God wanted it preserved for all. He turns to see who was speaking with him and sees seven golden candlesticks (the seven churches, 1:20) and one in the midst of the seven candlesticks (Christ--He is always in the midst of His churches as Head, High Priest, and King). In verses 13-16 John gives a description of the triumphant Christ in His present state of glory in heaven. It is difficult indeed for mortal man to comprehend the great glory of this wonderful Spirit Being reigning at the right hand of the Heavenly Father. John, through

symbols, tries to give a glimpse of what He and His reign is like. The following chart gives only a vague picture of what the symbols represent:

1. "One like unto the Son of man" (vs. 13a)	Often used of Jesus in the N.T. indicating His relationship to man and signifying that He was a man; also a Messianic term (Dan. 7:13-14).
2. "Clothed with a garment down to the foot and girt about the paps with a golden girdle" (vs. 13b)	The clothing of those of high rank and office; the golden girdle is also used of the seven angels (15:6) indicating high ranking position.
3. "His head and his hairs were white like wool as white as snow" (vs. 14a)	White represents purity, holiness (Rev. 3:4-5); descriptive of God (Dan. 7:9).
4. "His eyes were as a flame of fire" (vs. 14b)	Bright, penetrating vision; omniscient, infinite awareness, insight.
5. "His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace" (vs. 15a)	Symbolical of strength as pure, hard, metal; He will crush His enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25; Rev. 19:15).
6. "His voice as the sound of many waters" (vs. 15b)	Great moving force; omnipotent, alpowerful, almighty.
7. "He had in his right hand seven stars" (vs. 16a)	The angels of the seven churches (1:20).
8. "Out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword" (vs. 16b)	The sword of judgment as in 2:16; 19:15; 2 Thess. 2:8; also used of the Word, Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17
9. "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (vs. 16c)	As the sun on a clear day at noon, too intense for human eyes to stare at; His majesty and glory.

Some can only picture Christ as a tender, loving Savior. He is that and much more. He is clothed with power and majesty, with awe and terror. He is living, holy, majestic, omniscient, authoritative, powerful as He stands in the midst of the churches.

Rev. 1:17-20

When John sees the glorious figure, he falls at His feet as a dead person. No doubt he was frightened as in Isa. 6:5; Ezek. 1:28; 3:23; Dan. 8:17, but the purpose of the vision was not to terrify. It was to comfort John and his fellow sufferers. The expressions "*the first and the last*" and "*he that liveth*" are divine titles (Isa. 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Deut. 32:40) here used of Jesus. Fear not (verse 18 continues the thought of verse 17) for Christ had to die, but is now alive forevermore (first one raised to never die again and is the firstfruits of them that sleep, 1 Cor. 15:20). He now has the keys of death (power over death) and hell ("hades" in the Greek). Hades (the unseen place of disembodied spirits, Luke 16:19-31) was not able to hold Christ (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:27-31) and He arose from the dead. He destroyed him who had the power over death (Heb. 2:14-15); He was victorious over death. Both death and hades have their gates (Psalm 9:13; Matt. 16:18) but Christ has their keys.

In verse 19 Christ instructs John to write the things (1) **which he had seen**--e.g., the vision of the Son of man; (2) **which are**--present conditions, e.g., of the churches of Asia; (3) **which shall be hereafter**--the book includes things of the immediate future and things which reach unto and include the second coming of Christ, the judgment, and the eternal kingdom.

In verse 20 we are given the mystery (that which was once hidden but now revealed) of the seven stars (vs. 16) and the seven golden candlesticks (vss. 12-13). The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches. The angels are used symbolically of the life, spirit and destiny of the churches as Christ holds them. In other words, it is a symbolical angel referring to the spirit of the church itself. Although John wrote to the "angel" of each church (chapters 2 and 3), he concluded by saying "*what the Spirit saith unto the churches*". The angel was addressed but the church was to hear it. The seven Candlesticks (light bearers) are the seven churches. Each church is a light bearer--holds forth the light of the gospel to a lost world (1 Tim. 3:15). Individual Christian likewise are light bearers (Phil. 2:15-16; Eph. 5:8). The same word "candlestick" is used in Matt. 5:15-16; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16; 11:33.

QUESTIONS FOR STUDY

1. What does verse nine show concerning the kingdom?
2. Why was John on the isle of Patmos?
3. Briefly state what verses 13-16 reveal.
4. What is the "hell" of verse 18? (See also 20:13-14)
5. How does verse 19 show that not all things in Revelation are future?
6. What are the seven golden candlesticks?

The short epistles to the seven churches of Asia (Chapters 2 and 3) reveal the good and bad conditions of each church. No doubt the Lord wanted these revealed because they are general conditions that would be found in churches in all generations. Hence, a close study of the letters will reveal the strong and weak points of any church and will show how it stands in relation to Christ. Application of the principles are necessary for all churches of all time. To say that the seven churches represent seven dispensations through which the church must pass appears to be a ridiculous interpretation.

Rev. 2:1-7 - #1 Ephesus (The Loyal but Lacking Church)

Christ addresses Himself as holding the seven stars in His right hand (the seven angels of the seven churches, 1:20) and walking among the seven golden candlesticks (the seven churches, 1:20). This illustrates that He watches over His churches and cares for them.

Commendation. There were at least three things for which the Lord commended the church at Ephesus (vss. 2,3,6). (1) They were praised for their **work** (the rendering of actual service), and **labor** (toiling effort that produces even at the cost of pain). There is no place for an idler in the kingdom of God

(Matt. 20:1). Their efforts were "*for my name's sake*" (Matt. 19:29; 1 Pet. 4:14) and they had "*not fainted*" (Gal. 6:9). (2) **Patience**--(mentioned twice). When work had to be done under trying circumstances they had endured with steadfastness (Matt. 24:13; Heb. 10:36). (3) **Defense of truth and purity**. In this they were praised for (A) **not bearing them which were evil**, vs. 2 (see 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15), (B) **testing and rejecting false apostles**, vs. 2 (see 2 Cor. 11:13-15; 12:12; also with reference to false teachers, see 1 John 4:1; Rom. 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11), and (C) **hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans**, vs. 6. There has been much speculation concerning the Nicolaitans, but we can only conclude that they were followers of a man named "Nicolas," whose deeds and doctrine (vs. 15) were condemned without being mentioned. Jesus's "*hate*" of the deeds and doctrine of the Nicolaitans clearly exemplifies His attitude toward false doctrines and practices.

Condemnation. Nevertheless, Jesus had something against them; they had left their first love. The warm praise now changes to reproof and rebuke. Commendations for virtues will not atone for faults. Formality and outward faithfulness had been persistently practiced, but they had lost genuine love and devotion in their hearts. Normally, when a few individuals establish a church in their community, they are diligent in zeal and work, but as they become more stable in numbers, they often grow lax in their enthusiasm and rest on past accomplishments. Notice the Lord's admonition--vs. 5. Removing the candlestick represents removing their identity as one of His churches. Those that have the disposition to hear--those that will hear--let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. This emphasizes universal application.

Promise. Those who overcome will be given to eat of the tree of life in the paradise of God. They will inherit eternal life in heaven (Rev. 22:1-4,14).

Rev. 2:8-11 - #2 Smyrna (The Poor-Rich Church)

Christ designates Himself by referring to His eternal existence and His death and resurrection.

Commendation. Christ possessed a complete and perfect knowledge of their (1) **Works**--their spiritual accomplishments and deeds (James 1:25). He knew the works of all His churches (2:2,9,13,19; 3:1,8,15). No church anywhere deceives the Lord; He knows us. (2) **Tribulation**--living the Christian life and serving the Lord had brought them under many difficulties (2 Tim. 3:12). The Jews blasphemed (reviled, railed, showed contempt) against the religion of the Christians in Smyrna--other examples, Acts 13:45; 18:5-6. The Jews considered themselves as the synagogue of God, but were actually the synagogue of Satan. They turned the Christians over to the Romans because they would not confess Caesar as lord. This would cause some of them to be cast into prison (the "devil" would do it through his servants executing his will). In this instance, though, they were not to fear because it would be only for a short time--ten days (vs. 10). (3) **Poverty**--They were extremely poor in this world's goods but were rich in spiritual goods. Contrast Laodicia--3:17.

Promise. If they were faithful "*unto*" death (to the point of death; "*until*" death is expressed in other passages, Matt. 10:22; 24:13), they would be given the crown of life and not be hurt of the second death. For explanation of the second death, see Rev. 20:13-15; 21:8, and for companion verses on the "*crown*," see 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4.

Rev. 2:12-17 - #3 Pergamos (The Compromising Church--Balaam)

Christ addresses Himself as having a sharp two-edged sword--used of the Word of God (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17) and chastisement (Rev. 1:6; 19:15). Satan had a seat (throne ASV) in Pergamos and dwelled there; he ruled with control over its citizens.

Commendation. (1) "*Thou holdest fast my name.*" This would include suffering shame and reproach for His name (Acts 5:40-42; 1 Pet. 4:14-16) and upholding His name and all that goes with it (Col. 3:17; 3 John 7). (2) "*Hast not denied my faith.*" One could deny the faith in works (Titus 1:16), in lack of support for his own (1 Tim. 5:8), in an open denial of the Lord (Matt. 10:33; 2 Pet. 2:1) or, as was **not** done in Pergamos, in order to escape persecution. Even when one had been put to death for his faith, they remained loyal to the Lord. Nothing more is know of Antipas than what is said in verse 13. Our English word "martyr" (as in the KJV) comes from the Greek word "martur" which means "witness" (as in the ASV); hence, it means "one who bears witness by his death."

Condemnation. Balaam taught Balac to lead Israel into sin that they might be cursed for their sin. See Num. 25:1-5 for the sin which Balaam promoted and Num. 31:8-17 for the final punishment that resulted. See also 2 Pet. 2:15-16; Jude 11. Evidently, for their own selfish ends some of the members of the church in Pergamos were teaching that one could partake of the immoralities of the heathen festivals. Ephesus hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans (2:6), but Pergamos had some who held to them. In both instances the Lord said He hated it and, accordingly, His followers are to manifest the same attitude toward all false doctrines and erroneous practices (Rom. 12:9; Psalm 119:104).

Warning. The whole church was told to "*repent*" for allowing such wickedness in their midst. This shows the importance of discipline; the church must not tolerate sin and error remaining within. The church is to make diligent effort to convert and restore the erring (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20; 1 Thess. 5:14) and as last resort, if they will not repent, must withdraw from them (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6). If proper action was not taken, and those yielding to the false seductive teaching did not repent, Christ would come swiftly unto the church at Pergamos and execute judgment upon the guilty.

Promise. He that overcomes would receive hidden manna (spiritual food, John 6:49-51; similar to the tree of life, Rev. 22:2) a white stone (some type of gift or blessing from God) a new name (a new identification or final recognition by the Lord in the hereafter).

Rev. 2:18-29 - #4 Thyatira (Another Compromising Church--Jezebel)

Jesus addresses Himself as (1) "*Son of God*"--indicates His relationship to God and signified that he was God--contrast "*Son of man*" (1:13). (2) "*Eyes like unto a flame of fire*"--bright, penetrating vision; infinite awareness and insight; omniscient. (3) "*Feet like as fine brass*"--symbolical of strength; His enemies will be put under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25) and He will tread upon them with the wrath of God (Rev. 19:15).

Commendation. The church was praised for several good qualities: (1) **Works**--labor and efforts which were exerted in the spiritual realm (Eph. 2:10). (2) **Charity**--love, active good will, unselfish concern that freely accepts another in loyalty and seeks his good (Matt. 22:35-40). (3) **Service**--ministry,

work of benevolence, love in action (1 John 3:17). (4) **Faith**--see Heb. 11:1. (5) **Patience**--perseverance under difficulties; the ability to endure under pressure (Heb. 6:11-12). (6) **Growth**--"*Thy last works are more than the first*" (ASV).

Condemnation (vss. 20-21). This woman's name could have been "*Jezebel*" or perhaps she was called this because of her similarity to the Jezebel of the Old Testament--1 Kings 16:31; 18:4; 19:1-2; 21:8-15, 23-25. She was probably teaching that one could never conquer sin unless he was thoroughly acquainted with its experiences; hence, one must "*know the depths of Satan*" (vs. 24) to conquer Satan. The word "*sufferest*" shows that the church was tolerating her works and influence when she should have been withdrawn from.

Warning (vss. 22-23). The Lord was gracious in giving her time to repent, but now since she had not repented, He would bring a terrible judgment upon her and her followers. He would (1) "*cast her into a bed*" (stricken with sickness) and (2) send "*great tribulation*" (severe affliction) on those that followed her teaching and wickedness. (3) Her children (either her own physical offspring or those taught by her) would come to a violent death (vs. 23). This is similar to what happened to the house of Ahab (Jezebel's husband); they all came to a sudden and violent end (1 Kings 22:34; 2 Kings 9:30-37; 10:7). From observing these three immediate punishments, the churches would know that it is Jesus who not only knows the overt acts, but the secret thoughts, counsels, designs of men's hearts (1 Chron. 28:9; Jer. 11:20; 17:10; 20:12; Acts 1:24), and renders to every man according to his works (Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:25).

Exhortation. Upon those who were remaining faithful, Christ would impose no other burden--no other burden than the fight against it and the abstinence from it. (Compare Acts 15:28-29). That which they already had as in vs. 19, they were to hold fast until Christ came to claim the faithful. (See also Rev. 3:11; Heb. 4:14).

Promise. Two blessings are promised to those who overcome: (1) **Power over the nations.** They will share in Christ's dominion over the nations (Rev. 3:21). The picture of their ruling with a "*rod of iron*" is symbolical of the certainty of their vindication and triumph with Christ. (See Psalm 2:8-9; Rev. 19:15). (2) **Morning star.** Christ Himself is mentioned as the morning star in Rev. 22:16. As the morning star rules the heavens (one of the brightest in the heavens) so will the faithful rule with Christ and share in His royal spender and dominion. The star is symbolical of royalty being linked with the scepter (Num. 24:17).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 2

1. Does Jesus tell each church "*I know thy works*" and does He offer the saints in each church a reward if they overcome?
2. What does "*will remove thy candlestick out of his place*" mean?
3. Explain the expressions, "*the synagogue of Satan*" and "*Satan's seat*."
4. Briefly describe the Balaamites.
5. Who might Jezebel have been at Thyatira?

Rev. 3:1-6 - #5 Sardis (The Living-Dead Church)

In this letter Jesus introduces Himself as He that has (1) **The seven Spirits of God**. This perhaps means that there are literally seven Spirits before the throne of God (Rev. 1:4) or, since the number "*seven*" often represents fullness and completeness, it perhaps means that Christ possesses the fullness of the Spirit--without measure (John 3:34). (2) **The seven stars**--the angels of the seven churches (Rev. 1:20). Probably the angels are the life, spirit or identity of the churches.

Condemnation. The church at Sardis was "*alive*" by reputation and appearance only. It probably had a large membership, fine meeting place, prominent members, etc., and the outsider observing from outward appearances would think that they were the ideal church. However, in the eyes of Christ they were "*dead*." (See Jude's description of some who were dead--Jude 12). Many churches today have a reputation of being sound and active but inwardly are decaying and dying.

Exhortation. All churches today that are in the same condition of Sardis need to heed the Lord's exhortations: (1) **Be watchful**. See His warning in the latter part of verse 3. Those who are dead in the Lord's work are not ready for His coming (Luke 12:35-40; 1 Thess. 5:1-6). (2) **Strengthen**. They were to grow and to build upon what they had. Why? Jesus had not found their works perfect (completed, fulfilled, perfected) before God. For example, some can only partake of milk when they should be able to partake of meat (Heb. 5:11-6:2). (3) **Remember**. They should recall the time when they first gave their hearts to the Lord and compare it to their present condition. (Contrast Rev. 2:5). They should remember what they heard and how they accepted it and (4) **Hold it fast**. (See also 2:25; 3:11). They should rigidly hold to what they had received with the same love and zeal they once had. (5) **Repent**. Those who are dead in the Lord's work are in sin and need to repent while they have opportunity lest sudden destruction overtakes them as a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2-3; Prov. 29:1; Heb. 12:25).

Commendation. Even in a place where so much had declined and where most had become dead, there were a few who were true and loyal in their service to God. In many of the churches only a few keep the work going and keep the church together. They have not defiled their garments (have kept themselves unspotted from the world and from the prevailing corruption of being dead) and they shall walk with the Lord in white.

Promise. The Lord in this verse (vs. 5) mentions three blessings which will be given to those who overcome: (1) **Clothed in white raiment**. White represent holiness, purity, perfection. (Compare Isa. 1:18; 61:10; Rev. 19:8, 14). It is appropriate that those who keep their garments undefiled on earth should appear in white in heaven (Rev. 6:11; 7:9, 13-14). (2) **Will not blot his name out**. It is first put there when one obeys the gospel and is allowed to remain if one continues to be faithful. (Compare Phil. 4:3; Rev. 20:15; 21:27; 22:19). (3) **Confess his name**. (See Matt. 10:32; Luke 12:8-9). It is evident that those who do not overcome will not be confessed before the Father. The same is true of all the other conditional promises all of which destroy the idea of "once saved always saved."

Rev. 3:7-13 - #6 Philadelphia (The Church of the Open Door)

Jesus in this epistle introduces Himself as (1) **He that is holy**--separate, set apart; characterized by perfection and purity. (See Heb. 7:26). (2) **He that is true**--steadfast, dependable, genuine, real. Jesus is

the "true light" (John 1:9), "the true bread" (John 6:32), "the true vine" (John 15:1), "the true God" (1 John 5:20), and "the faithful and true witness" (Rev. 3:14). (3) **He that hath the key of David**. This was prophesied of the Messiah (Isa. 22:22). "Keys" bear the idea of opening and shutting; hence, Christ alone has the supreme authority over admission in the kingdom both on earth and in heaven. He opens and none shuts and shuts and none opens.

Commendation. Jesus praises this church for (1) **A little strength** ("power" ASV)--although they were not as strong and zealous as He wanted, He did see evidences of spiritual life. (2) **Kept my word** (vs. 8)--faithfulness and fidelity to truth, not compromising with error. They had "*kept the word of my patience*" (vs. 10)--they followed and upheld the gospel in spite of great opposition. This was endurance such as Christ had and patience as manifested by Him. (3) **Not denied my name**--those of the synagogue of Satan would often bring Christians before the heathen magistrates when they would not confess Caesar as lord, but in all of this they had not renounced the name of Christ.

Rewards. As a result of their faithfulness, Christ would give them the following blessings: (1) **An open door**--opportunity to preach to willing listeners (2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3; Acts 14:27; 2 Thess. 3:1). (2) **Enemies exposed and punished** (vs. 9). He would in some way make the persecuting Jews realize that the Christians were the ones He really loved. (See also Isa. 49:23; 60:14). (3) **Kept from the hour of temptation** ("*hour of trial*" ASV). He either meant that He would free them from the period of great tribulation which would try all Christians (Rev. 6:11; 7:14) or, from the great judgments described in the rest of the book which were to come upon all the world to try non-Christians (Rev. 8:13; 9:20-21). The latter seems to be the one to which He was referring because it was the one that would come upon "*all the world*" as shown in verse 10.

Exhortation. "*I come quickly*" either refers to His second coming (e.g., every generation is to consider it as near and that it could happen in their own lifetime, James 5:7-9; 1 Pet. 4:7; Rev. 22:20) or, to His coming in judgment and retribution (e.g., by the plagues in this book). They were to hold fast what they had lest someone robbed them of their reward (Col. 2:18-19; 2 Pet. 3:17-18). For passages referring to the "*crown*," see 1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Tim. 4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet. 5:4.

Promise. (1) "*Pillar in the temple*" (a permanent blessing) and (2) "*he shall go out no more*" (will have no reason to go out, will not be forced out). (3) **Will write upon him:** (a) **Name of God**--signifies identity and divine recognition; (b) **The name of the city of God**--new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-2, 10); (c) **My new name**--shall wear Christ's own new name (Rev. 19:12), shall be identified to share in the glory of Christ (Col. 3:4; 1 John 3:2). Thus, these inscriptions upon the one who overcomes identifies him as belonging to God, to the new city, and to Christ the Redeemer.

Rev. 3:14-22 - #7 Laodicea (The Rich-Poor Church)

In this last epistle Christ identifies Himself as: (1) **The Amen**--something which is established and positive; hence, indicates the stability of Jesus (see Heb. 13:8). (2) **The faithful and true witness**--He declares the exact truth as seen; His testimony is absolute and trustworthy. (3) **The beginning of the creation of God**. The word for "*beginning*" as used in the New Testament means (a) "*primacy in regard to time*" that is, the commencement of a thing; (b) "*primacy in regard to rank and authority*"--it is often translated "*principality*" as a concordance will show. Jesus was not the first part of God's creation

(Jehovah's Witnesses' teaching on this verse), but was the head and prince of God's creation. He created all things and sustains all things (Col. 1:15-16; John 1:1-3; Heb. 1:2, 10-12).

Condemnation. The condition of this church was indifference and lukewarmness (having a knowledge but no zeal, inactive and unconcerned). Christ wished that they would be one way or the other--cold or hot. When individuals become cold and completely fall away and make wrecks of their lives, they can be reached easier than the self-conceited lukewarm. The lukewarm are most difficult to reach and are a great hindrance to the cause of Christ because they influence others to be like themselves. The Lord showed His attitude toward this condition in verse 16 and His feelings toward it are no less today. They said they were rich and had need of nothing (thinking their wealthy physical condition provided for or resulted from their spiritual condition, Luke 12:16-21), but in reality were wretched, poor, blind, and naked (their actual spiritual condition in the eyes of Christ).

The picture of Laodicea well describes many churches today. They enjoy a comfortable building, have a respectable social standing in the community, and live in material prosperity unequalled before their time. Their religion requires neither sacrifice nor effort and they feel perfectly satisfied in their own self-sufficiency. It is sad that they do not realize that their lukewarm condition is an abomination in the sight of the Lord.

Exhortation. They were summoned to purchase of Christ: (1) **Gold refined by fire** (tested works, 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 1 Pet. 1:7) that they might be rich; (2) **White garments** (clothed with purity, not stained with sin and indifference) to cover their nakedness; (3) **Eyesalve to anoint their eyes** ("*salve to put on your eyes*" NIV) (insight and realization) that they might come to realize their miserable condition. The Lord demanded of them fervent zeal and immediate repentance. His sharp rebuke to them (and to all who are lukewarm) was a result of His love for them (vs. 19). (Compare Heb. 12:5-11). Christ stands on the outside seeking entrance and all can have His approval, comforts and blessings by letting Him in. To open the door to Christ is to obey His word, and to sup with Him is to dine with Him in spiritual communion and fellowship.

Promise. He that overcomes or he that is victorious in living the Christian life will sit with Christ as He did with His Father--will share in His glory and dominion (Rev. 2:26-28)--shall reign with Him for ever and ever (Rev. 22:3-5). He who has an open mind and receptive heart, let him listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

Through the seven short epistles we gain clear insight regarding the conditions of the churches existing at that time. In the light of these, how do we stand as a church today?

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 3

1. What was wrong with the church at Sardis? What do churches which have the same condition today need to do?
2. Did Sardis have any who were still faithful?

3. What did Jesus mean when he said to the church at Philadelphia, "*I have set before thee an open door*"?
4. What is the "*new Jerusalem*"?
5. Does the expression, "*the beginning of the creation of God*" (3:14) mean that Jesus was the first person God created?
6. What was the church at Laodicea counseled to buy from the Lord?

Rev. 4:1-11

The main theme of chapters 1-3 was "*Christ in the midst of the seven golden lampstands.*" We were given a glimpse of the glorious reign of Christ (ch. 1) and of the seven churches as Christ saw them (chs. 2-3). Chapters 4-7 deal with the throne scene and the loosing of the seven seals. In chapter 4, God the Father is the central figure. He is symbolically described as the center of all things as He rules on His magnificent throne. This chapter marks the beginning of the visions that continue in sequence through the rest of the book.

After these things (referring to what he saw in chs. 1-3), John sees a door standing open in heaven. (Compare Ezek. 1:1; Matt. 3:16). As he was looking, a voice as of a trumpet spoke to him again as in Rev. 1:10. The voice tells him to come up and he will be shown the things which must come to pass hereafter, that is, in the future after the vision. Immediately, he beheld a throne set in heaven and the one sitting on the throne looked like jasper (clear as crystal, Rev. 21:11) and sardine (red) stones and there was an emerald (green) looking rainbow about His throne; these things emphasize God's magnificence. For other descriptions of His throne, see Psalm 89:14; 97:2-3. Isaiah and Ezekiel also had visions of the throne (Isa. 6:1-5; Ezek. 1:26-28; 10:18-22). There are four things common to all: the throne, the glorious one sitting on the throne, the gem-like things round about the throne, and the living creatures.

John sees round about the throne twenty-four thrones on which twenty-four elders sit arrayed in white garments, wearing crowns of gold. These are mentioned several times throughout the book--4:4,10; 5:5,6,8,11,14; 7:11,13; 11:16; 14:3; 19:4. These are probably the redeemed of the Old and New Testaments, holy and victorious (Rev. 3:21; 7:9, 13-14). The redeemed of the O.T. are represented by the twelve patriarchs and the redeemed of the N.T. by the twelve apostles thus making twenty-four. (Compare Rev. 21:12-14). The lightnings, voices, and thunders (vs. 5) remind us of God's descension on mount Sinai (Ex. 19:16-18; Deut. 5:22-24) and probably symbolizes the terror and severity of God which in turn should produce reverence and awe in man (Heb. 12:18-29). Regarding "the seven Spirits of God" (vs. 5), see Rev. 1:4 and the notes on that verse. The sea of glass (vs. 6) is probably only drapery to beautify the scene; later, those who are victorious stand on it (Rev. 15:2).

The four beasts ("*living creatures*" ASV) in vss. 6-8 are not to be confused with the "*beasts*" of chapter 13. They resemble those revealed in Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:4-14; 10:14-15, 20-22). The first was like a lion (noble), the second like a calf or young ox (strong), the third had a face as a man (wise), and the fourth was like an eagle (swift); hence, they were like the noblest, strongest, wisest, and swiftest of earth's creatures. Each of the four living creatures had six wings (swiftness--can move as lightning to carry out God's will)

and were full of eyes round about and within (watchfulness--nothing escapes their vision). These are probably the cherubims (sometimes called "seraphims," Isa. 6:1-3) which are high ranking angels of some sort (see Gen. 3:24; Ezek. 10:20). In other words, so great is the throne that even the all-glorious and holy cherubims arrange themselves around it in reverence and awe.

All the beasts and elders which John saw began to glorify God (vss. 9-11). The four living creatures vocalize (they do it without rest, constantly, vs. 8) a psalm of glory, honor and thanks (vss. 8-9) and the twenty-four elders paid homage and reverence to the One on the throne and express adoration because of the creation (vss. 10-11). As we study these signs and symbols here and elsewhere we need to focus our attention on the central thought and not on the intricate details. As in the parables of Jesus, the details are only drapery to enhance the central thought of the story. Thus, the meaning of fourth chapter is that the One who sits on the throne of heaven with all His grandeur and splendor is due all glory, honor and praise from all of His creatures which He made. They all are and were created for His pleasure (vs. 11); they were planned in His mind and were brought forth for His purpose, and they should render the praise and thanksgiving due Him, and should stand in reverence and awe before Him.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 4

1. What is mainly involved in chapter 4?
2. Give a possible explanation as to whom the twenty-four elders are.
3. Give a possible explanation as to whom the four beasts are.
4. What important lesson for all men is taught in this chapter?

Rev. 5:1-14

The victorious Christ is the central figure of chapter five. In the Father's right hand was a book (a sublime and awesome one) written within and on the backside (a complete one, no more room for writing) which was sealed with seven seals (an obscure one, its contents unrevealed). The breaking of the seals indicates the revealing and executing of the purpose and plan of God as it relates to man on earth as disclosed in the chapters which follow. The strong (mighty and powerful) angel proclaimed with a great voice, "*Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?*" John weeps when he discovers that no one in the entire universe was found worthy to open the book or to look thereon. No doubt he thought that revelation was halted and the future development confronting the church would be unknown. However, one of the elders said to him, "*Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book and to loose the seven seals thereof.*" The Lion represents the ruling one (Gen. 49:9-10); He was a descendant of Judah (Heb. 7:14), the Root of David (Isa. 11:1,10; Rom. 15:12; Rev. 22:16). He "*hath prevailed*"--has overcome, conquered and achieved the victory over sin, Satan and death (1 John 3:8; Heb. 2:14-15) and, therefore, is worthy to open the seals of the book.

John had been told of a "*Lion*" when he looks he sees a "*Lamb*." Jesus is both; He is as a lion in majesty and might and as a lamb in meekness and lowliness. The sacrificial Lamb obtained the eternal redemption (John 1:29; Acts 8:32-35; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). He was in the midst of the throne (a central figure;

He is the central figure of redemption) and stood as a slain lamb (on Him the slaughter marks were visible and though He had been slain was now standing and living). He had seven horns (fullness of strength and honor; horns are the chief weapons and ornaments of the animals which possess them; hence, they came to signify strength and honor). He had seven eyes (the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth, vs. 6). Probably this is speaking of the fullness of His own Spirit which is sent forth through His Word and which dwells in the hearts of those who receive and retain it, John 6:63; 14:23).

Jesus came and took the book out of the Father's hand; He alone has the authority to reveal and execute the plan and purpose of God. When He had taken the book, the four beasts (4:6-8 - high ranking angels, the cherubims or seraphims) and the twenty-four elders (4:4 - the redeemed represented by the twelve patriarchs and the twelve apostles) fell down (in worship--see vs. 14) before the Lamb. Each of them had harps and golden vials (bowls) full of odors (footnote, "Or, *Incense*"). There can be no question as to what the golden bowls full of incense represent (vs. 8b; see also Rev. 8:3-4; Psalm 141:2). The harps (also mentioned in 14:2 and 15:2) do not justify instrumental music in worship as some claim. "That which proves a lot proves too much!" If this verse justifies instrumental music, it also justifies burning incense, and 6:2-8 justifies riding horses in worship and 7:9 justifies wearing white robes and carrying palms to worship. The harps are to be taken figuratively as are all the other symbols in Revelation. Here in 5:8, being connected with the prayers of the saints, they perhaps represent the songs of the saints.

When the book was taken by the Lamb--the one who was slain, but prevailed--three songs of praise were raised in adoration. The first (vss. 9-10) was a new song (never before was there a song of its kind). It was a song of redemption and was sung by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders. The new song was a glorification of the victorious Christ who had brought redemption to His people. He had redeemed ("*didst purchase*" ASV) them to God "*by his blood*" (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7) out of "*every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation*" (Dan 7:13-14). He "*madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth*" (5:10 ASV; see also Rev. 1:6; 1 Pet. 2:5,9). They have the highest positions and offices attainable on earth because of Him.

The second song (vss. 11-12) was sung by an innumerable host of angels (one hundred million, and thousands of thousands) and was a song of exaltation and praise to the victorious Lamb of God. Angels have an important role in the book of Revelation. Angels have always had intense interest in man (Luke 15:10). They desired to look into God's plan of redemption (1 Pet. 1:10-12) and through the establishment of the church could see it (Eph. 3:9-10). In verse 12 they mention seven things of which the Lamb is deserving. He is worthy of our thanksgiving and praise for all that He has done and will do for us.

The third and final song (vs. 13) was sung by all creation (by every created thing; the point here is not that the animals will literally do it, but if they could, this is what they would do). (Compare Psalm 148 wherein the whole creation is invoked to praise God). They said, "*Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne (the Father) and unto the Lamb (Christ) for ever and ever.*" Thus, God and Christ were worshiped, honored, and praised by this great anthem that John heard in his heavenly vision of God's throne. Unto God and Christ be the blessing, honor, glory, and dominion for ever and ever for their work in creation and redemption.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 5

1. What is mainly involved in chapter 5?
2. What are the golden vials full of odors?
3. How many songs are sung in chapter 5?
4. What important lesson for all men is taught in this chapter?

Rev. 6:1-2 - First Seal--Conquest

In chapter six the Lamb begins to open the seven seals of the book. The seals consist of the four horses, the martyred saints under the altar, and the great earthquake. The seventh seal is a transition to the seven trumpets. As the seals are opened, one by one the living creatures as with a voice of thunder (a mighty voice) cry "*Come*" (as in the ASV) and the horses and their riders come forth. The "**thunderous call**" was either to the horsemen to come forth (as indicated by the ASV) or to John to come and see (as indicated by the KJV). Scholarship tends to point to the former as more nearly correct.

The horsemen are not named by John (except for 6:8) and we think it best to let it go at that. The emphasis is on the "**mission**" of the riders as seen by the color of their horses and the description of their purpose. Nearly all of the commentaries identify the first rider as Christ. However, Christ is pictured as the opener of the seals and it seems strange for Him to be quickly changed and pictured as a rider. Furthermore, if Christ is the first rider, who are the others? The first horseman seems simply to represent "**conquest**" for he came forth conquering and to conquer. A white horse was often ridden by the ruler or general after he had conquered. The bow was a military weapon of that day and the crown was a sign of victory (also royalty). The first horse, therefore, symbolized one of the forces which was to bring about the downfall of the enemies of God's people. The Christians were to see in it a sign of victory.

Rev. 6:3-4 - Second seal--War (Not the Decline and Apostasy of the Church)

The second rider's horse is red and to him is given "*to take peace from the earth*" and cause men to kill one another. There was given him a great sword (the power and means to carry out his mission) which, added to the other details, identifies him as "**war**." War is the bloody means of carrying out conquest; thus, it was only natural that the red horse would follow the white. Many times in the Old Testament war was God's means of judgment against the wicked and so it appears to be here.

Rev. 6:5-6 - Third Seal--Famine (Not the Condition of the Church in the Middle Ages)

Christ opens the third seal and John hears the third living creature say, "*Come*." John sees a black horse with its rider having a balance (an instrument for weighing) in his hand. "*A measure of wheat for a penny*" ("*shilling*" ASV; a common day's wages, Matt. 20:2) implies great scarcity; to eat bread by weight refers to a condition of economic hardship (Lev. 26:26; Ezek. 4:10, 16-17). The expression, "*And see thou hurt not the oil and the wine*" shows either that these first plagues were not as extensive as those yet to

come (see 2nd paragraph below under 6:7-8) or, that some would be excluded from the affliction (see Rev. 3:10; 7:3; 9:4). The black horse and its rider, therefore, represents famine or economic hardship.

Rev. 6:7-8 - Fourth Seal--Death (Not the Persecutions of the Apostate Church of Rome)

The pale horse is the symbol of death; the rider's name was "Death" and "Hell" followed with him. This shows that these were not actual persons, but forces. The word "Hell" here is the Greek word "Hades" which is the abode of the dead, the realm of disembodied spirits (Luke 16:19-31; Acts 2:27-31). In this instance, there was power ("authority" ASV) given to them (or "him" KJV footnote) over the fourth part of the earth (not a complete destruction). They had authority to kill with the sword, hunger ("famine" ASV), death (or "pestilence" ASV footnote), and the wild beast of the earth. John's figures are very much similar to God's judgments against the wicked in the Old Testament (Ezek. 5:12, 16-17; 14:21).

Each seal becomes more and more severe as John proceeds with the vision of the opening of the seven seals. The seven trumpets in chapters 9-11 and the seven last plagues in chapters 16-19 follow the same pattern. The trumpets appear to be more severe than the seals and the last plagues appear to be more severe than the trumpets. I understand all of these to be the same occurrences all of which describe a series of judgments which God brought upon the wicked of John's day. The next seal (6:9-11) which is different from the rest (no rider) shows the reason for the judgments--because they were killing the children of God.

Rev. 6:9-11 - Fifth Seal--Cry for Avenging (Not those Killed by the Apostate Church of Rome)

When the fifth seal was opened, John saw the souls of the slain (martyrs, see 2:13) underneath the altar. The blood was poured out at the base of the altar (Lev. 4:7) and here we have under the altar the martyrs whose blood was poured out for Christ. They were slain (slaughtered in sacrifice) for (because of or by reason of) the Word of God (that which they had received and proclaimed) and the testimony which they held (their open profession and witness in word and life). In 12:11, John states that they overcame "by" ("because of" ASV) "the word of their testimony" and that "they loved not their lives unto the death," that is, they were willing to give up their lives rather than deny the faith.

The sacrificial souls cried, "How long (the bitter persecution had continued for some time and they asked God how long it would be before He counteracted), *O Lord, holy and true* (see notes on 3:7) *dost thou not judge* (determine and pronounce a judgment) *and avenge our blood* (not revenge, but vindication of their death) *on them that dwell on the earth* (the unregenerate earth-dwellers responsible for the saints' death)." They earnestly cried for the avenging of their blood through a just God. This thought represents the purpose and design of the book. The following chart are the verses (NKJV) which show that the avenging of the martyrs is a theme which ties the book together.

THE MARTYRS OF JESUS

Revelation 2:13 – I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

Revelation 6:9-11 – When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number* of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

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

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

Revelation 16:6-7 – For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due. And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* Your judgments."

Revelation 17:6 – I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

Revelation 18:24 – "And in her was found the blood of prophets and saints, and of all who were slain on the earth.

Revelation 19:2 – For true and righteous *are* His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants *shed* by her.

Revelation 20:4 – And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then *I* saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Each one was given a white robe (symbolical of his holiness and purity) and were told to rest for a little season (the vindication would come after a short time). Their fellow-servants and brethren would also be killed to fulfill the time. The "*little season*" was the period of persecution and tribulation through which the church was then passing. It is parallel to the time Satan came down in great wrath "*because he knoweth that he hath but a short time*" (12:12). The "*short time*" of Satan stops when he is defeated and bound for a thousand years (20:1-3); likewise, the "*little season*" of the martyred saints ended when their complete vindication came (as disclosed in the latter part of the book).

Rev. 6:12-17 - Sixth Seal--Severe Judgment of the Wicked of John's Day (Probably not the Second Coming of Christ)

The opening of the sixth seal probably gives a glimpse of the great judgment which was to come upon the persecuting force in John's day to avenge the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Remember, the persecuting force is not identified until the 13th chapter. The descriptions of the earthquake, sun, moon, and stars add intense fear, terror, and terribleness to the picture of the coming judgment. The Old Testament is filled with similar judgments which meant the end of the world for the nations involved. Notice the following for similar thoughts regarding each verse:

vs. 12----Isa. 13:9-13; 29:6; 50:3; Jer. 4:19-26; Ezek. 32:7; 34:12

vs. 13----Isa. 34:4b; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:12-16

vs. 14----Isa. 34:4a; Ezek. 26:15, 18; 27:35

All classes of men of the earth will meet this judgment (chapter 7 reveals that the faithful will be excluded). Whether, king, prince, chief captain, rich, strong, bond or free, they shall try to hide when the judgment of Christ comes and shall say to the mountains and rocks, "*Fall on us.*" See also Hosea 10:8; Isa. 2:19; Luke 23:28-30 wherein similar statements are made and refer to God's judgment upon particular cities. The expression shows that the wicked will be filled with terror as their doom comes. Verse 17 further shows that the great day of His ("*their*" ASV--God and Christ) wrath has come. (See also Isa. 13:9; Joel 2:11, 31; Zeph. 1:14-15). Nahum asked a similar question (as in 17b) regarding God's judgment that was about to come upon Nineveh (Nah. 1:6). The answer implied in both is, "*No one.*" Thus, the sixth seal most likely represents the judgment which would come upon the earth in order to avenge the blood of the saints. It gives assurance to the saints that God would avenge their cause.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 6

1. Offer some evidence why the rider on the white horse represents conquest rather than Christ. Or, if you believe it is Christ, show why.
2. What do the red, black, and pale horses symbolize?
3. Who were the souls under the altar?
4. Must the sixth seal refer only to the second coming of Christ or, could it refer to something else? If so, what?

Rev. 7:1-8

Between the sixth and seventh seals is an interlude (an interruption in the scene) that involves all of chapter seven. The seventh seal will be opened in chapter eight. In chapter six we saw the saints under the altar (9-11) and a terrible judgment coming upon the earth which was closed with the question, "*Who shall be able to stand?*" (12-17). In view of this one might ask, "*Will the saints on earth be able to stand and what will happen to the souls under the altar?*" John's interlude (a vision of two parts) answers these questions. The saints on earth are sealed and those martyred are before the throne of God. Thus, the first part of the interlude is to permit the sealing of the saints in order that they will be able to endure the afflictions set forth in chapter six. The judgments seem to be altered so that they will not hurt God's children.

The four angels standing at the four corners (used to designate the four directions) were holding the four winds of the earth (the four winds of judgment--conquest, war, famine, and death--as in 6:1-8 and as

seen from the word "*hurt*" in 7:2-3). (Compare Jer. 49:36-38; 51:1-2). They were given to hurt the earth and the sea, but another angel ascending from the sunrising (from the direction of the morning light; suggest a message of cheer and encouragement), having the seal of the living God, said, "*Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we shall have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*" The seal symbolizes ownership and consequent protection. (See Ezek. 9:6; 2 Tim. 2:19; 2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30). Hence, God's people will not be affected by the forthcoming judgments as will the people of the world. (See Rev. 9:4).

In verses 5-8 Ephraim and Dan are not mentioned among the listing of the twelve tribes. Levi (who received no land inheritance) and Joseph (his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, are normally listed) are included in the list. Perhaps Ephraim is not listed because it introduced calf and Baal worship (1 Kings 11:26; 12:25-33) and Dan left its habitation and inheritance and went into idolatry (Judges 18). No one can be certain as to why they were omitted.

Rev. 7:9-17

After these things (he now reveals the second part of the interlude scene), John sees a great multitude which no man could number out of every nation and from every tribe, people and tongue. Jehovah's Witnesses try to teach that these are the saved who inherit the earth and the 144,000 are those who receive heaven. However, the 144,000 are those on earth who are sealed and the great multitude are those souls with God who had come out of the great tribulation (6:9; 7:13-14). Furthermore, the expression, "*before the throne*" is used both of the great multitude (7:9) and later in the heavenly setting of the 144,000 (14:1-5). The white robes of the great multitude are symbolical of holiness, and justification (3:4-5; 6:11; 7:14), and the palms suggest a joyful, festive occasion (Lev. 23:40; John 12:13). They cried with a loud voice saying "*Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb*" (an expression of praise and gratitude to both God and Christ for the salvation provided). They are followed by angels who fell before the throne on their faces and worshiped God with a sevenfold praise similar to that given to the Lamb in 5:12. The angels stood around the throne, as well as the elders (4:4) and the four living creatures (4:6-8), which again shows that this occurred in heaven and is not something that is to occur on earth.

One of the elders speaks asking John, "*What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?*" John did not know, but he was certain that the elder knew. The elder answered, "*These are they which came out of the great tribulation...*" The "*great tribulation*" here is the one that took place under the world wide persecution (not fully identified until the 13th chapter) in John's day. It was "world wide" because this great multitude with the white robes were of "*all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues*" (vs. 9). They are the same ones with "white robes" who cry for the avenging of their blood (6:9-11). They had been put to death for their faith, had gained the victory, and are now before the throne. They had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. By Christ's blood the saint is washed from his sins (Rev. 1:5), redeemed (Rev. 5:9-10; 1 Pet. 1:18-19), given remission of sins (Matt. 26:28), has constant cleansing as he continually complies with the conditions (1 John 1:7-9), and is able to overcome (Rev. 12:11).

Verses 15-17 describe the blessings the victorious received. They are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple. God shall " *dwell among them* " (KJV), " *spread his tabernacle over them* " (ASV); they have His protection and receive His blessings. They possess peace and joy; every want is given and every sorrow is healed. The Lamb shall feed them (" *be their shepherd* " ASV) and guide them to fountains of water of life. Since these have just come out of the great tribulation, we conclude that these are the blessings the faithful receive after death in the place of comfort (Luke 16:22-26), paradise (Luke 23:43), in the presence of Christ (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8). They here await the end of all things at which time their physical bodies will be raised (John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:52-53; 1 Thess. 4:13-18) and at which time they will receive the new heaven and new earth, the heavenly Jerusalem, or the holy city (2 Pet. 3:10-14; Rev. 21 & 22).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 7

1. What is mainly involved in chapter 7?
2. Who are the 144,000?
3. Who were those arrayed in white robes?
4. Are verses 15-17 speaking of heaven or the place of comfort in hades?

Rev. 8:1-5 - Seventh Seal (Prayer and Response)

We now continue with the opening of the seals which had been interrupted by the interlude of chapter 7. As the seventh seal was opened there was a great silence in heaven. Silence in the Old Testament indicates prelude to judgment and that God was about to act (Zech 2:13; Zeph. 1:7). This silence here in Revelation makes the vision more impressive. The seven angels which stood before God were each given a trumpet. They will later in sequence sound their trumpets and great plagues will come forth.

The " *censer* " (vs. 3) was a vessel that was used for holding incense while it was being burned (Lev. 16:11-13). The " *incense* " which was to be offered " *with* " the prayers of the saints no doubt stands for the intercession with prayers (made both by the Holy Spirit and Christ, Rom. 8:26-27, 34). The prayers of " *all* " the saints are mentioned here as opposed to only those under the altar in 6:9-10. The " *smoke* " which ascended up before God (vs. 4) indicates that the prayers were acknowledged, heard and received at the throne (similar to the phrase, " *sweet smelling savor,* " Gen. 8:21; 2 Cor. 2:15; Eph. 5:2; Phil. 4:18). The angel filled the censer with fire from the altar and cast it upon the earth and there followed voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. This indicates the fierceness and terribleness of the judgment sent from God. (Compare Rev. 6:12; 11:19; Isa. 29:6; Joel 3:14-16). It represents the suffering inflicted upon the wicked because of the cry of the saints. The thought here, therefore, is that God hears the fervent prayers of his struggling and afflicted people and causes His judgments to go forth against their enemies.

Rev. 8:6-7 - First Trumpet affects the Land (Plagues)

Some make the distinction of the seven seals and the seven trumpets between verses 5 and 6. Others say that the seven trumpets make up the seventh seal. A distinction between the two verses seems to give the book a better balance.

The seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound. Trumpets were used for alarming and warning of approaching danger (Amos 3:6; Ezek. 33:1-6). They are often mentioned in God's messages of doom against the wicked (Hosea 5:8-9; Joel 2:1-2; Zeph. 1:15-16). Similarly, here in Revelation the trumpets represent partial judgments upon the wicked and serve as warnings of greater judgments to follow.

The first judgment affects the earth bringing plagues on a third of the ungodly world. The hail and fire mingled with blood remind us of the plagues or judgments which were brought upon the Egyptians (Exodus chs. 7-12). The judgments both in the days of Moses and John had the same effect on the people. Remember, though, that in Revelation we are dealing with symbolical expressions ("*signified it by his angel unto his servant John,*" Rev. 1:1). In Moses's age the judgements were brought about by miracles; in John's age they were caused by natural forces. These plagues were brought on the wicked to cause them to repent (9:20--this is a key verse to the correct interpretation of the trumpets) and to avenge the blood of the saints (6:9-10; 16:6-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2).

Rev. 8:8-9 - Second Trumpet affects the Sea (Natural Calamities)

The second angel sounded and it affects the sea. This judgment brings great upheavals in society, which will aid in the destruction of the persecuting force (compare Jer. 51:25-26, a judgment against the Babylonian Empire and Ezek. 38:18-23, a judgment against Gog). It is not to be taken literally that a third of the sea became blood and that a burning mountain was cast into the sea, but God is working through natural calamities. This brought economy collapse and great upheavals in their society which inturn destroyed their power as a dominating force which inturn brought freedom from tribulation (martyrdom) for the saints. To show how these plagues could at the same time not hurt the saints, see Psalm 46:1-3; Isa. 54:10; 61:1-3; 2 Thess. 2:16-17.

Rev. 8:10-12 - Third Trumpet - Inland waters (Upheavals in Society, Bitterness of Life)

Isaiah's description of the fall of the king of Babylon aids in an understanding of the third trumpet. He said, "*How are thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer ("O day-star" ASV), son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations.*" (Isa. 14:12; see Isa. 14:4-23 especially vss. 4 and 12). Thus, Isaiah used similar language concerning Babylon when it was destroyed. The fall of the star named "*Wormwood*" (vs. 11) caused a third part of the waters (inland waters) to become wormwood (a bitter plant which came to stand for bitterness, Jer. 9:15; Lam. 3:19) and many men died as result of the waters. Thus, the third trumpet symbolized calamity and destruction which brought bitterness of life, distress, sorrow, and death.

Rev. 8:12 - The Fourth Trumpet affects the Heavenly Bodies (Severe Judgement)

The things mentioned in verse 12 are identical with those in other passages which symbolize judgment from God (Isa. 13:10-11; Jer. 15:9; Ezek. 32:7-8; Amos 8:9; Joel 2:1-2). Hence, the heavenly bodies "darkened" symbolized judgment from God. The term "*third part*" (used in the first four and sixth trumpets) shows that it was only a partial judgment at this time.

The first four trumpets can be defined as judgments of natural calamities brought on the wicked. Historians tell us that natural calamities played an important role in the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Although the Roman Empire has not been specifically introduced as of yet, (it is not mentioned by name in the entire book), as we proceed farther in our study, it will become more and more evident that the plagues in the book were those brought against it.

Rev. 8:13

The angel ("*eagle*" ASV; some ancient manuscripts have the word "*eagle*") flies through the midst of heaven (in mid heaven where it is visible to all) and gives warning that the last three trumpets, each represented by a "*woe*" (9:12; 11:14), are to be worse than the first four trumpets. The angel (or eagle) flying through the midst of heaven represents a **swift message**. The "*inhabitants of the earth*" represent the world of the unregenerate--those who have not washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb--those without the seal of God in their foreheads (7:3; 9:4, 20-21). The trumpet plagues were against the inhabitants "*of the earth*" (vs. 13, 9:4, 20-21) and which demonstrates that they were **world wide** and not just localized against Jerusalem or the nation of Israel. The following chart again shows (NKJV) how the book is tied together in all of its scenes.

THOSE WITHOUT "THE SEAL OF GOD" HAVING "THE MARK OF THE BEAST"

Revelation 8:13 – Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!

Revelation 9:4 – They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

Revelation 13:16-17 – And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Revelation 14:9-11 – Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength 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. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name."

Revelation 15:2 – And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

Revelation 16:2 – So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

Revelation 19:20 – Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Revelation 20:4 – And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 8

1. What is mainly involved in chapter 8?
2. Do verses 3-5 indicate that the things following were in answer to the prayers of the saints? What were the saints mainly praying for at that time?
3. What do the first four trumpets represent?
4. What do the three "*woes*" in verse 13 represent?
5. Who are the "*inhabitants of the earth*" of verse 13?

Rev. 9:1-11 - Fifth Trumpet--Locust (Uneasiness, Worry, Uncertainly)

In this chapter we began a study of the three woe trumpets. These will be more severe than the first four (corresponding to what was said in 8:13). The fifth angel sounded and John sees a star fall from heaven to the earth. The star becomes personified for he receives the key to open the bottomless pit. This star is probably not Satan as most commentaries state, but is the angel which has the "*key*" of the bottomless pit (see Rev. 20:1). The bottomless pit ("*pit of the abyss*" ASV) as seen from other verses is the abode of the devil (Rev. 17:8; 20:1-3).

When he opened the bottomless pit, a great smoke ascended from it and out of the smoke came forth locust and they were given power like that of scorpions. From the time of Moses locusts have been instruments of divine judgment (Ex. 10:3-6; Deut. 28:38-42; 1 Kings 8:37; Joel 2:1-11, 25). Here they are commanded to hurt only those men which have **not** the seal of God in their foreheads. In the book of Revelation we have:

1. Those who have the seal God on their foreheads (7:3-8).
2. Those who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads (9:4).
3. Those who have the mark of the beast (13:16-17, 14:9,11; 16:2; 19:20).
4. Those who did not have the mark of the beast (15:2; 20:4).

Verse 5 shows that the locust did not have power to kill but only to torment five months. The "*five months*" (mentioned also in vs. 10) shows that the judgment was for a definite period of time and that it was

not a complete judgment. Regarding verse 6, see Job 3:21; 7:15; Jer. 8:3 which are more examples of some wishing to die. These locust, therefore, represent forces which caused those who were not Christians to receive intense worry, uncertainty, and uneasiness. An example of this would be the threat of collapse of economy, a long line of corrupt rulers, and invasion of outside forces. These things do not affect the Christians, but to the ungodly, it brings torment. In this connection, see Psalm 46:1-3; Isa. 54:10.

Verses 7-10 give an eight-fold description of the locust. The "*as it were*" phrase indicates imitation, not genuine. Many of the expressions are similar to Joel's figurative description of locust which came in his day--see Joel 2:1-11, 25. They were shaped like horses prepared for battle (powerful); had crowns of gold on their heads (victorious); faces like men (humanistic); hair like women (beautiful); teeth like lions (devouring); breastplates of iron (impregnable); wings that sounded like many chariots running to battle (forceful); and tails like scorpions (destructive). In verse 11, the Hebrew word "*Abaddon*" means "*destruction*" and the Greek word "*Apollyon*" means "*destroyer*." Again, this is not necessarily Satan, but is probably an angel so named. Please see 1 Cor. 10:10 where God is spoken of as the destroyer. Here it is not Satan's forces at work, but God's against the children of Satan.

Rev. 9:12-21 - Sixth Trumpet--Men Are Slain (War and Invasion from Other Lands)

The sixth angel sounded and John heard a voice from the horns of the golden altar which is before God. This is where the prayers of the saints had been presented (8:3-4) and their cry at this time was for the avenging of their blood (6:10-11; 18:20; 19:2). The voice tells the sixth angel to loose the four angels that are bound at the great river Euphrates. The time fixed by God for them to be loosed had come; thus, they will now do their destructive work. The number of the army of the horsemen was a great complete number. Notice the vivid description given concerning them. The horses had heads as of lions, and fire, smoke and brimstone proceeded out of their mouths. The horses also had power in their tails like serpents that could hurt men. By their three-fold power they killed a "third part" of men. For a vivid description of the war-horse, see Job 39:19-25.

The sixth trumpet or second woe, therefore, describes the unleashing of armies that bring destruction to a third part of those without the seal of God in the foreheads. These probably were the Parthians in the East--from the land of the Euphrates. As always, John's use of the term "*Euphrates*" is figurative and not literal. God's forces of vengeance against the persecutors (the theme of the book, 6:9-11; 7:13-17; 13:7-8; 16:6-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4), were held in restraint at their border until a time determined by Him. The destruction of the enemies of God's people would shortly come to pass. The theme of the book is not "God's determined punishment on Israel" as some try to claim. If that is the theme of the book, where are the verses which indicate it?

We have before us now two of the major things which played a part in overthrowing the persecuting force: natural calamities and external invasion. God used these various means not only to avenge His people but also to bring the ungodly to repentance (vss. 20-21). These things help the Christians to see that their enemies will never triumph over Christianity. Still after these six "**plagues**" (a key word to the correct interpretation of the book--see 16:9; 18:8; 22:18), they refused to repent, but continued in their evil: idolatry, murders, sorcery, theft, fornication. This again aids in understanding which persecuting force the

plagues were primarily against. The Roman nation at that time was **idolatrous**, but the Jewish nation was not. Since they would not repent, the only thing left for them is the heavier judgment of God. The trumpets do not refer to the end of the world as some think. No one will be given opportunity to repent when the Lord comes (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 9

1. What do the swarm of locust represent in the ninth chapter?
2. On what or whom did the locust come?
3. What does the sixth trumpet or second woe represent?
4. What portion (or how many) of men were killed by them?
5. Did this cause those who were left to repent?

Rev. 10:1-7 - The Mighty Angel and the Seven Thunders

At this point we have an interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpets or the second and third woes as there was between the sixth and seventh seals. John sees another strong angel coming down out of heaven arrayed with a cloud. Notice the vivid description of this angel. He was clothed with a cloud and a rainbow was upon his head (clad with radiance and splendor) and his face was as it were the sun and his feet as pillars of fire (bright and glorious). He had "*a little book open*" in his hand (vs. 2), unlike the one in ch. 5. He sat his right foot upon the sea and his left foot on the earth (of immense size--indicating that his message was for all people of the world). This glorious vision indicates that it is one of importance.

The angel cried with a great voice (indicating an important message that should be heard) and seven thunders uttered their voices (this is the first time we are introduced to these). John was about to write, but was told to seal up the things the seven thunders uttered and do not write them. The seven thunders, therefore, represent the things in the far distant future that are sealed and unrevealed. God saw fit not to reveal any details about how He would be working in the many years that lie ahead. We understand that God is still working in the affairs of men; He still hears the prayers of the saints. However, it is not up to us to try to pen-point just how God is working through His providence today.

The mighty angel swore by the Creator (indicating an everlasting decree) that there should be time ("*delay*" ASV; NKJV) no longer. The souls under the altar had cried, "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*" (6:10) Delay would be no longer! The angel added, "*In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall began to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*" Thus, the seventh angel will finish or complete the mystery as declared to the prophets. The seventh trumpet (11:14-19) fulfills the prophecies of the Old Testament, the last of which reached to the destruction of the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:36-45; 7:1-28). The things which occurred in those early years of Christianity (about 100

A.D. to 250 A.D.) as revealed in the book of Revelation are the important length which fills up the whole of God's revelation.

Rev. 10:8-11 - The Little Book in the Angel's Hand

John again hears the voice. It tells him to take the book which is open in the hand of the strong angel. The little book "*open*" suggests things revealed or known (not "sealed" as was the seven thunders). John went and told the angel to give him the little book. The angel told John to take it and eat it and his belly would be made bitter but it would be as sweet as honey in his mouth. It happened exactly as the angel instructed. The angel followed by saying to John "*Thou must prophesy again over many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.*" It is easy to understand what took place, but hard to comprehend what the figure represents. What is the little book? What is the bitter and the sweet? The angel said that John would again prophesy. We have learned that the Old Testament prophecies would be fulfilled with the seventh angel. Thus, the little book no doubt represents the prophecies that John would yet utter (vs. 11) in the remainder of his book (chs. 11-22) which includes things nowhere else revealed, i.e., the loosing of Satan for a little season.

The sweet represents the pleasant reaction of John as he received the Word of God. The bitter represents the reaction of his preaching to his hearers--the sorrow and woe it would bring upon them. Jeremiah and Ezekiel had similar experiences. Ezekiel was shown a roll of a book and was told to take and eat it and when he did, it was sweet as honey in his mouth (Ezek. 2:8-3:3). Jeremiah said, "*Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart...*" (Jer. 15:16). Thus, when they received the Word of God it brought them much joy; however, as they later taught it among the people, it brought many bitter results (Compare Jer. 20:7-9).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 10

1. What is mainly involved in chapter 10?
2. When the seventh angel sounds, what would be finished or completed?
3. What does the little book represent?
4. What other prophets experienced the same as John in verses 8-11?

Rev. 11:1-2 - Measuring the Temple

In the interlude we are introduced first to the strong angel with the little book in his hand. Next, we witness the measuring of the temple. John is given a reed like a measuring rod and is told to measure the temple, altar, and worshipers. Remember, these are visions which John saw. It was not the literal temple that he was to measure, and it was not the literal city of Jerusalem that was to be trodden underfoot for a literal forty-two months.

There are only two visions mentioned in the Old Testament wherein something was measured. There was a complete measuring of the temple with all its holy ordinances in Ezek. 40:1-42-20 which was designed to cause the Israelites to make a separation between the holy and the common (see Ezek. 40:20; 43:10-11; 22:26). There was a measuring of Jerusalem in Zech. 2:1-5 (after the captivity, Zech. 1:1) and was designed to show that God would preserve and protect His suffering people. Thus, the measuring of the temple in Rev. 11:1-2 was to separate and protect His people, and is parallel to the sealing of the 144,000 in chapter 7. They were sealed and measured for the same purpose. The temple (sanctuary) represents the spiritual temple, God's dwelling place or habitation among men (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; 1 Tim. 3:15). The temple is to be measured but the outside court was to be left out. The temple (Christians or the church) would receive divine recognition and protection, while the outer court (the wicked or the world) would not.

John added that "*the holy city*," later called, "*the beloved city*" in Rev. 20:9 (again, the church, Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26) would be trodden under foot by those outside the court. In other words, the Christians or the church would be trodden under foot or persecuted by the world, but not touched in their relation to God.

THE HOLY, BELOVED CITY

Revelation 11:2 – But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city under foot for forty two months.

Revelation 20:9 – They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.

This period of persecution would last forty-two months--the same length of time for the event of 11:3; 12:6, 14, and 13:5. This is the same amount of time Daniel said the fourth kingdom (the Roman) would persecute the saints (Dan. 7:21-27). The literal city of Jerusalem would be "*trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*" (Luke 21:24) which meant that it would have its "*end*" (Luke 21:9; Matt. 24:6,14). John's "*holy city*," however, would be trampled under foot only for a limited time. The following shows that the events of 11:2,3; 12:6; 13:5,7 and Dan. 7:13-15 all referring to the same time period:

1. 42 months - The holy city trodden – Rev. 11:2
2. 1,260 days - The two witnesses prophesy – Rev. 11:3
3. 1,260 days - The woman is feed in wilderness – Rev. 12:6
4. Time and times and half a time - 3 and ½ years - The beast would continue...was granted to make war with the saints and over come them – Rev. 13:5,7
5. Time and times and half a time - 3 and ½ years - The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom...the saints would be given into his hand – Dan. 7:23,25

Rev. 11:3-13 - The Two Witnesses

The third part of the interlude involves the two witnesses. "*Two*" symbolizes strength (Eccl. 4:9-12). The early missionary journeys were accompanied two by two. We see in these verses the symbol of the

strength of the early apostles and prophets bearing witness of the gospel. This same testimony continued in the Word held and proclaimed by the saints. They gave a powerful witness for 1,260 days (again, the same time as in 11:2, 12:6, 14; Dan 7:21-26) clothed in sackcloth (a coarse sack fabric which was worn by ancient people in time of mourning); thus, they were prophesying through a time of affliction or persecution.

Verse 4 says, "*These are the two olive tree, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*" This explanation of the two witnesses seems to be drawn from the vision in Zechariah 4. The angel that talked with Zechariah asked him saying, "*Do you not know what these (the two olive trees) are?*" (Zech. 4:13) The angel said, "*These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the Lord of the whole earth.*" In the context of chapters 3 and 4 of Zechariah, Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor were God's anointed ones. It was through those offices that He was blessing Israel at that time. The "two witnesses" of Rev. 11 perhaps is referring to the apostles and prophets. The terms "*they will prophesy*" (vs. 3) and "*their testimony*" (vs. 7) no doubt refers to the testimony that was borne during the time of persecution (Rev. 6:9; 12:11,17; 19:10; 20:4). Here again is a chart which shows that many of the terms in the book tie all the scenes together. It will become more evident as we proceed, that this fact is important in helping to obtain the correct interpretation of the book.

THE TESTIMONY OR WITNESS OF JESUS

Revelation 1:2 – Who bore witness to the word of God, and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, and to all things that he saw.

Revelation 1:9 – I, John, both your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 6:9 – When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held.

Revelation 11:7 – Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them.

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

Revelation 12:17 – And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 19:10 – And I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "See that you do not do that! I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren who have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Revelation 20:4 – And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

Through their testimony, the two witnesses had great power and strength (vss. 3, 5, and 6). They had power to devour their enemies and to prevent rain (as did Elijah) and power to turn water into blood and

afflict the earth with every plague (as did Moses). All of this showed that the restraining force of the civil authorities were not able to destroy the early work of witnessing and preaching the gospel.

However, the testimony must meet its opposing strength. The beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit (the beast, the instrument that Satan used to overcome the saints, is not here identified; it will be identified in ch. 13 as the Roman Empire; see also 17:8) shall make war against them, and shall overcome and kill them (see 13:7). Their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city (called "*Babylon*" and "*the great whore*" and will later be identified as the city of Rome, 14:8; 16:19; 17:5-6,18; 18:2,10,16,18,19,21,24; 19:2). Sodom (ungodliness) and Egypt (bondage to sin) are the things that put the Savior to death. These opposing characteristics, the same ones that put Jesus to death, seem to overcome. (Note: If one makes the expression, "where also our Lord was crucified" literal, why doesn't he also make the "beast," "bottomless pit," "their dead bodies," and "they ascended to heaven" literal?)

In applying the scene to the Christians of that day, it seemed to them that Imperial Rome would be able to destroy Christianity. Indeed, the influence and spread of Christianity was stopped by the great persecution. Its believers had been slaughtered; its voice was silenced. Their dead bodies were a gazing-stock (not literally) as the wicked rejoiced over them. However, Rome had not thought of the power of God. After three days and half (meaning a short time) the breath of life from God entered into them. The cause of Christianity will always eventually triumph. The church is restored to its power and influence. Great fear fell on the earth dwellers as the two witnesses came alive and went up to heaven. In that hour there was a great earthquake (symbolizes a judgment from God) and a tenth part of the city fell and seven thousand people died. Those who remained in the city were terrified and gave glory to God.

The witnessing or the preaching of the gospel had great force at first, but there soon arose a terrible persecution and many of the Christians were killed. The witnessing seemed to be stopped. However, the strong witness of God will eventually triumph though bitterly opposed. The two witnesses being raised and taken into heaven indicates the revival of the gospel cause. John's vision compares with Isaiah's vision of the figurative resurrection of Israel from Babylonian exile (Isa. 26:13-19), and with Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones (Ezek. 37:1-14) in which the prophet described the resurrection of Israel from the grave of their captivity. Ezekiel's and John's visions contain several similar expressions, but Ezekiel's referred to the return of Israel from exile, and John's to the victory over the heathen persecutors. Also, remember that the kingdom was never to be destroyed, but was to be proven that it is an everlasting kingdom (Dan 7:21-27; Rev. 11:15). The purpose of John's words was to give comfort and encouragement to the suffering saints of his time as well as to suffering saints of any age.

Rev. 11:14-19 - The Seventh Trumpet

Remember that when the seventh angel sounded the mystery of God which was declared to the prophets would be finished (10:7). When the seventh angel sounded, there were great voices in heaven saying, "*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and his Christ.*" (Vs. 15). This is precisely as Daniel the prophet declared (Dan. 2:44-45; 7:21-27). Thus, the seventh trumpet or the third woe represents the last judgment against Rome which will finish the words spoken by the prophets, will bring victory for the saints, and will demonstrate that the kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

The song of thanksgiving is sung by the twenty-four elders (probably the redeemed of both Testaments; see comments under 4:4). They gave thanks to God because (1) "*Thou hast taken to the thy great power, and hast reigned.*" He has demonstrated His reigning strength indicating that Christians have nothing to fear. (2) "*Thy wrath is come*" (see Rev. 16:19 for an example of His wrath against the great city). (3) "*And the time of the dead, that they should be judged*" (probably God's judgment against the spiritually dead rather than the final judgment--as in Dan. 7:26-27). (4) "*Thou shouldest give reward*" (probably here the reward of deliverance from persecution and avenging the blood of the righteous dead). (5) "*And shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth*" (the wicked at that time who were killing Christians). It is possible that the above is referring to the final judgment; however, it seems far better to give the book a consistent interpretation rather than repeatedly changing from John's day to the end of time. Each set of seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath cover the same period of time. Each set concerns God's judgment against the wicked from beginning to end, and each set is more severe than the preceding one.

The opening of heaven to show the ark of the covenant shows that God keeps covenant with His people. Although the church is in a tremendous conflict with the world, and it appears that the church will loose, God will keep His covenant--the church will be victorious. Also, at the same time (as vs. 19b shows) God's judgment of impending doom and disaster is reserved for the wicked (see also Isa. 29:6). By way of summary, we have studied regarding the seven churches (chs. 1-3), the seven seals (chs. 4-7) the seven trumpets (chs. 8-11), and now, the seven figures (chs. 12-14).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 11

1. John was given a rod and told to do what?
2. How long was the holy city to be trodden under foot?
3. How would the witnesses' resurrection serve as encouragement to the persecuted saints?
4. What is involved in the statement, "*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*"?
5. Was thanksgiving made after the seventh trumpet? If so, who was doing it and for what purpose?

Rev. 12:1-2 - First Figure - The Glorious Woman (The Faithful Remnant)

In this section we have an altogether different vision, but it deals with the same period of time that we have already studied. We do not step out of that era into another. We get a glimpse of the actual struggle at work between God and Satan. God uses His forces (Christ and His followers) and Satan uses his (evil governments and false religions). In chapters 12-14 seven majestic figures or personages are involved in the intense conflict: (1) the woman, (2) the great dragon, (3) the man child, (4) Michael, (5) the sea beast, (6) the earth beast, and (7) the Lamb with the 144,000.

John says, "*And there appeared a great wonder* (footnote: "Or, *sign*"; chapters 12-14 are highly symbolical) *in heaven*" (as seen from heaven's viewpoint). First, he sees a woman of glorious appearance. She was clothed with the sun (glorious and exalted) and had the moon under her feet (dominion). She had on her head a crown of twelve stars (victorious). Also, the radiant woman being with child "*cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered*" (vs. 2). This woman probably does not represent the Jewish nation or the virgin Mary, but the spiritual remnant through which the Messiah would come. This view is sustained by Micah who said, "*Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies.*" (Micah 4:10). The one brought forth by the daughter of Zion would "*be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.*" (Micah 5:2) Micah also added, "*Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.*" (Micah 5:3-4)

This woman gloriously arrayed represents more than just the Patriarchal and Mosaical remnant. After bearing the man child she came to symbolize all of those "*who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*" (vs. 17). Paul said, "*Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace*" (Rom. 11:5).

Rev. 12:3-4 - Second Figure - The Great Red Dragon (Satan, 12:9; 20:2)

John sees another wonder in heaven--"*a great red dragon.*" He is pictured as a dragon to demonstrate his monstrous nature. Notice his vivid description: he had ten horns (symbol of power) and seven crowned heads (dominion). The crowns ("*diadems*" ASV) were worn by royalty (hence, a symbol of authority). The dragon's tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and cast them to the earth. He was of immense size, power, and fury. Also, he stood before the woman to devour (to eat up greedily or ravenously, to seize upon and destroy) her child as soon as it was born. Thus, from the time in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:15) to this point in the conflict, the dragon has stood ready to destroy the Seed when He would come. The dragon, of course, is Satan, the old serpent, the devil (vs. 9; 20:2).

Rev. 12:5-6 - Third Figure - The Man Child (Christ)

The man child no doubt represents Christ. He is the one who was to rule the nations with a "*rod of iron*" (Psalm 2:6-9; 110:1-7; Rev. 19:11-16). He was "*caught up*" to God not for protection but to establish His rule. (See 1 Pet. 3:22; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-23 Rev. 3:21). Dan. 7:13-14 says, "*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*" One short verse (Rev. 12:5) covers the entire time from Christ's birth to His crowning in heaven.

The woman receives divine protection during the time of the dragon's persecution (vs. 6, 13-14). As has been shown, five verses describe the same period of time--11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5. The faithful remnant (represented by the woman) would not be destroyed but would be protected and aided by God.

Rev. 12:7-12 - Fourth Figure - Michael (The Archangel, Jude 9; The Prince of the People of Israel, Dan. 10:13,21; 12:1)

Next, John sees a war in heaven. He sees Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon and his angels. The great dragon and his angels are cast out (they are defeated). This represents the spiritual battle that was going on in John's day because verse 11 says that they (the saints who had been martyred) overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony. "The word of their testimony" is the same "testimony" or "witness" under consideration throughout the book (1:2,9; 6:9; 11:7; 12:11; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4). The expression, "*They loved not their lives unto death*" means that they were willing to give up their lives. They are the same "martyrs of Jesus" described throughout the book (2:13, 6:9-11; 7:13-17; 16:6-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4). Thus, the martyred saints in John's day had a part in this victory over Satan.

In verse 10, when Satan was defeated, John said that he heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ: for (or "because") the accuser of our brethren is cast down...*" This does not mean that the kingdom was established at a later date than the day of Pentecost (Jehovah's Witnesses' teaching on this verse), but those things (salvation, kingdom, etc.) were completely realized when Satan's forces were defeated. In other words, the victory at that time over Satan and his forces demonstrated that the kingdom was indeed an everlasting kingdom. This is the same as taught in 11:15 and the same principle as in 10:7 (completing the prophets), and precisely as Daniel had said in Dan. 7:21-27.

Those above in heaven were to rejoice because Satan had been cast down, but those below on earth were to beware because Satan had but a short time before his forces would be completely defeated. The blood of the martyrs was quickly to be avenged but in the mean time Satan would try to hurt and kill as many Christians as he could. The "*short time*" of Satan and the "*little season*" of the martyrs are the same (see comments on 6:11). In 20:1-3, Satan's short time ends which means that the martyrs' little season ended, and also that during the thousand years, Satan's extensive power to put Christians to death would be taken away.

Rev. 12:13-17

In verse 13 Satan persecuted the woman (he would destroy her if he could) but in verse 14 she is given divine protection. She was given two wings of a great eagle that she might fly into the wilderness and there be nourished during the time of persecution. The expression "*bore you on eagles wings*" was used in the O.T. as a symbol of divine aid (Ex. 19:4; Deut. 32:11-12). Again, the period of time given in verse 14 is the same as 11:2, 3; 12:6; 13:5 and Dan. 7:25 ("*time*" one year, "*times*" two years, and "*half a time*" half a year--1,260 days, 42 months, or 3 ½ years). This represents an indefinite period of time through which the spiritual remnant would undergo persecution.

The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a river after the woman. This stream that the devil cast out is probably a great line of falsehood against God's people (false charges, malicious reports, etc.) and the earth swallowed it. This helped the righteous instead of destroying them. As long as the faithful drink from the fountain of divine truth and the world from the river of Satan's lies, a separation between them will remain. It is only when Christians begin to compromise with Satan's falsehoods that tragedy results. The devil was furious with the woman when he saw that he failed to sweep her away with his flood and, thus, he turns to make war with the remnant ("*rest*" ASV) of her seed who keep the commandments of God and hold the testimony of Jesus. The dragon had been defeated in his effort to devour the man child who was caught up to God and His throne. He had failed to sweep away the woman when the earth swallowed up his river of lies. Made furious by these two defeats, he now turns to persecute the woman's other offspring (the New Testament remnant, the saints). As we continue our study in the book of Revelation these saints are assured victory in Christ. We, too, can have victory through Christ (Rom. 8:31-39).

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 12

1. Who is the glorious woman?
2. Who is the great red dragon?
3. What is the meaning of the statement, "*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom...*" in verse 10?
4. Do the periods of time mentioned in verses 11:2,3; 12:6, 14, and 13:5 all seem to refer to the same period of time?
5. Who are the remnant of verse 17?

Rev. 13:1-10 - Fifth Figure - The Sea Beast (The Roman Empire)

In chapter thirteen we are introduced to two beasts. One came up out of the sea (vss. 1-10) and the other out of the earth (vss. 11-18). Notice the awesome description of the first. He has seven heads (symbolizing seven kings, 17:9-11). He has ten horns (ten kings of the ten provinces, 17:12-13) and ten crowns (not identified by John). Upon his heads are names of blasphemy which depicted the evil claims and assertions connected with emperor worship. He was likened unto a leopard with feet as a bear and a mouth as a lion. One of his heads had a deadly wound but it was healed. This is probably referring to the death of Nero, the first emperor who persecuted the church, whose policy of persecution was revived by Domitian. The world rendered homage to the dragon who had given his authority to the beast for to them this power seemed absolute and invincible.

In Daniel, chapters two and seven, the iron kingdom or the fourth great beast is the fourth ruling world empire. This kingdom would be in rule when the church would be established (Dan. 2:43-44). There are many similarities of the beasts of Daniel 7 and Revelation 13. Both came up out of the sea (evil world governments arising from society, Dan. 7:3; Rev. 13:1). Daniel's fourth beast was more fierce and terrible

than the rest (Dan. 7:7); John's beast had characteristics that made up Daniel's three previous beasts (Rev. 13:2). Daniel's beast spoke words against the Most High (Dan. 7:8, 25); John's spoke blasphemies against God (Rev. 13:1, 5-6). Daniel's beast devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet (Dan. 7:7, 19), and the world thought that none was able to war against John's beast (Rev. 13:4). Both had ten horns (Dan 7:20; Rev. 1:1) and made wear with the saints and overcame them (Dan 7:21, 25; Rev. 13:7). Both had authority over the earth dwellers (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:8) for an indefinite period of time (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5). Daniel also strongly emphasized that in spite of the efforts of the beast, the saints would possess the kingdom which would prove it to be an everlasting kingdom (Dan. 2:44; 7:18, 25-27). John likewise teaches the same (Rev. 11:15; 12:10).

There is no other such parallelism to John's vision found elsewhere in the Scriptures. We conclude, therefore, that the beast of Daniel 7 (the fourth world government from Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 7:23; also Dan. 2:36-45) and Revelation 13 are the same and they represent the Roman Empire. We have now positively identified the persecuting force in the book of Revelation. As we have shown repeatedly by various charts, all of the book is tied together as a unit. Thus, the whole of the book reveals the destruction the Roman Empire. Here, again, is another chart which shows the same.

A WORLD WIDE DESTRUCTION OF THE PERSECUTORS
"Inhabitants of the Earth"—"Those without the seal of God"

Revelation 8:13 – And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

Revelation 9:4 – They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

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

Revelation 11:18 – The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, and those who fear Your name, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.

Revelation 13:8 – And all who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Revelation 13:12 – And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

Revelation 13:14 – And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Revelation 14:15-16 – And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

Revelation 14:18-19 – And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

Revelation 16:2 – So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

Revelation 17:2 – With whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

Revelation 17:8 – The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

Revelation 19:2 – For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.

The beast received its authority from the dragon (Satan, Rev. 12:9; 13:2). The devil is using the Roman Empire represented in the emperor to war against the saints. However, Satan and his forces will be defeated. The blood of the saints will be avenged, and their kingdom will be proven to be everlasting. This is the theme and purpose of the book.

Concerning "*the book of life*" (vs. 8b), compare Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; Luke 10:20, and regarding "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (vs. 8c), see Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:20. It was not that Christ actually died before the foundation of the world or that individuals were chosen then (see ASV on vs. 8), but it was God's plan before He made the world that Christ should die and those in Christ be chosen. Those that have the disposition to hear, let them hear (vs. 9). The Christian who listens and understands these things will exercise patience in regard to them (vs. 10). He realizes that all who lead into captivity shall go into captivity (Isa. 33:1) and all who take the sword shall perish with the sword (Matt. 26:52). In other words, he has faith that God will avenge those who are killing the saints and he exercises patience in these matters (vss. 9-10).

Rev. 13:11-18 - Sixth Figure - The Earth Beast (False Religion--Later Called the False Prophet, 16:13; 19:20; 20:10)

John sees another beast coming up out of the earth. The next force that the devil uses is false religion which is paganism and emperor worship. False religion in that day was backed by the government. The beast out of the earth had two horns like unto a lamb (appearance harmless) and he spoke as a dragon (like the devil himself--his lies appear as the truth). What could appear more harmless than a religion? The devil in the same manner uses his religions to war against the saints today.

The earth-beast exercised all the authority of the first and caused all the earth-dwellers to worship the first. In other words, this beast backed by the power of the government, insisted that all worship the state symbolized in the emperor. This was emphasized under Domitian, in whom the deadly wound was healed. Regarding the "*deadly wound healed*" (vs. 12b) and "*the wound by a sword, and did live*" (vs. 14b), see 13:3

and the comments on that verse. Those of the earth followed this beast as they did the first one (vss. 8, 14). They followed him because of the great wonders ("*signs*" ASV) which he performed. The true witnesses had power over fire by which to devour their enemies (11:5); thus, the false prophet imitates this power with pseudo-wonders and signs in order to deceive the world. Verse 14 establishes that these signs were not genuine but were deceptions. There is a lesson here for those of today who like to rely on their so-called miracles (see also 2 Thess. 2:9-12; Matt. 7:22-23).

The earth-beast causes the people to worship the first beast and to make an image to him (vss. 12, 14). He had power to give life (footnote: "*Gr. breath*") unto the image of the beast. Paganism which had control over its subjects caused people to worship the image. Also, he caused those who would not worship the image to be killed (he introduced martyrdom of the saints on a large scale). The power of death for those who refused to pay homage to the emperor rested in the religious hierarchy which in turn was backed by the power of the empire. Through the hierarchy Christians were put in the position where they had to either confess Christ or Caesar as Lord; therefore, choosing Christ meant choosing death.

Also, the beast sought to cause all (no exceptions--from the highest official to the lowest slave) to receive the mark of the beast (again, he imitates God's action, 7:3; 9:4; 14:1). As God's seal placed on the foreheads of the saints was not literal but figurative of his recognition of his own, so the mark of the beast is symbolic of those officially belonging to Satan. Later, those with the mark of the beast receive the wrath of God (14:9-10; 16:2; 19:20). Those who did not receive the mark of the beast were refused the privileges of buying and selling (vss. 16-17). This is a well-known fact in Roman history in the time of Domitian. Images were set up to make worship of the emperor easier and those who refused to worship the image were refused the privileges of buying and selling in the market places. Thus, those with the mark of the beast were those who yielded to the idolatrous edicts of the Roman emperor.

John shows in verse 17 that the mark of the beast (the first one), the name of the beast and the number of his name are all the same. In verse 18, he shows that the number of the beast (666) is the number of a man. In other words, he is identifying the first beast for us; it represents a man (the emperor of the Roman Empire). Thus, the forces of evil are engaged in battle with the forces of righteousness. The dragon, identified as the devil, uses the force of the Empire embodied in the emperor, and the forces of false religion, embodied in paganism and emperor worship. These appeared in that day as the conquering power over Christianity.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 13

1. What is introduced in chapter 13?
2. What do you think John's beast in verses 1-11 represents?
3. Where in the N.T. did Jesus state a principle that is similar to the first part of verse 10?
4. What lesson can those who rely on modern-day miracles learn from verse 14?

5. No man could buy and sell unless he had what?

Rev. 14:1-5 - Seventh Figure - The Lamb On Mount Zion (Christ)

John turns from the scene of the beasts to the Lamb (Christ, John 1:29; Rev. 5:6) standing on mount Zion. We receive comfort and assurance when we realize who will be victorious (compare Rev. 17:14). Mount Zion is used in the Scriptures of physical Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5:6-7--where it is first mentioned), the church (Heb. 12:22-23), and here for heaven or divine headquarters. The hundred and forty-four thousand are the perfect number of the redeemed with Him. They have a name written on their foreheads--the name of His Father (some ancient manuscripts have, "*having his name, and the name of his Father,*" see ASV). The redeemed are singing a new song which only they could learn (a special song that the redeemed will sing; no others can take part in it). It sounded like many waters, great thunder, and harpers harping on their harps (indicates volume and rhyme). These are they which were not defiled with woman (morally pure and free from spiritual fornication--idolatry). They follow the Lamb wherever he goes (absolutely faithful to Him). These were purchased to be the firstfruits (they were the first--indicates others will follow--all can be of that number, James 1:18). In their mouth was found no guile (see 1 Pet. 3:10) for they were without fault before the throne of God (see Jude 24).

These no doubt are the rest of those who were to come out of the great tribulation (6:9-11). They are "*before the throne*" as was the great multitude who had come out of the great tribulation (7:9, 13-17). The term "*before the throne*" is probably used figuratively of the place of comfort or paradise in hades. These are those that live and reign with Christ (20:4). They were sealed with the Father's name in their foreheads (7:3; 14:1). They were the holy city that had been tread under foot (11:2). The beast had made war with them and overcame them (13:7). They are now safe with God and thus sing a new victory song. The scene of the seven figures ends with verse five rather than at the end of the chapter. The rest of the chapter (vss. 6-20) prepares for the coming bowls of wrath.

Rev. 14:6-13 - The Announcement of the Coming Judgment

John sees another angel (this introduces a new scene; the last one of this sort is in 20:1) flying in mid heaven who had eternal good tidings or eternal gospel of God's victory. These good tidings call them that dwell on the earth to worship and praise God for the hour of His judgment is come (compare Jer. 1:16; Mal. 3:5; Rev. 18:8-10). The time of avenging and punishment has come; the forces of the devil must fall. Another angel followed saying, "*Babylon is fallen, is fallen...*" This is the first mention of "*Babylon*" but we have already been introduced to "*that great city.*" The outcome of the battle is announced before the battle is fought (compare Isa. 46:10; 48:3). Babylon, that which was evil and repulsive to God's people, will fall. The fall of Babylon represents the fall of "*that great city*" (11:8,13; 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10,16,19,21; 19:2 – see chart below) the main one responsible for the blood of the martyrs of Jesus (17:5-6; 19:2). It had made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication (vs. 8) which means that it had caused the nations to commit spiritual fornication (see 17:2; 18:3,9) which along with her would cause them to drink of the God's wrath (see 14:10; 16:19).

THAT GREAT CITY

Revelation 11:8 – And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

Revelation 11:13 – In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand men were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven.

Revelation 14:8 – And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication."

Revelation 16:19 – Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

Revelation 17:18 – And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.

Revelation 18:10 – Standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come."

Revelation 18:16 – And saying, "Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!"

Revelation 18:19 – And they threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, "Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate."

Revelation 18:19 – And they threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, "Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate."

Revelation 18:21 – Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore."

Revelation 19:2 – For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication; and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants shed by her.

Christians were not to give in to the force of Rome even if it caused their death. The third angel (the first is in vs. 6 and the second in vs. 8) declares that if anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark, he shall be under the wrath of God. This again shows that John is still dealing with that same age. The whole book is tied together in this fashion. The cruel persecution may be uplifted for a while when one submitted to the beast, but it is far better to endure. The torment prepared for one who worships the beast is much more horrible and it is eternal. He will receive "*the wrath of God...without mixture*" (nothing added; thus, wrath in full force) and "*fire and brimstone...forever and ever*" (eternal punishment, eternal death). Concerning "*the mark of his name*" (vs. 11), see 13:17-18 and the comments on those verses. The Christians realize these things (e.g., the wicked persecutors will fall; eternal fire awaits those who worship the beast) and have patience and keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus (vs. 12; similar to 13:10). Those that die in the Lord have rest (vs. 13; Heb. 4:9-11), but those what worship the beast have no rest (vs. 11; Mark 9:43-48). To die in the Lord should be the goal of everyone on earth (see Num. 23:10b; Psalm 116:15). Regarding "*their works do follow them,*" see 2 Cor. 5:10; Eccl. 12:14; 2 Tim. 1:12; 1 Tim. 6:19.

Rev. 14:14-20 - The Time For The Judgment (Against the Wicked in John's Day) Has Come

John sees a white cloud with one sitting on it like unto the Son of man (Jesus, Rev. 1:13; Matt. 3:12; 13:36-43; Dan. 7:13). On His head is a golden crown (king and ruler) in His hand was a sharp sickle (the carrying out of divine judgment). God uses the victorious Christ to reap the earth. Another angel (the fourth) comes out of the temple (from the presence of God; where the throne is, 16:17) crying to Him who sat on the cloud, "*thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap...*" The earth was ready for harvesting; it was ready for the judgment. The harvesting was as good as done when the announcement was made (vs. 16). The Son of man has the power to carry it out (19:15).

The next verses (17-20) add light to the scene as the earth is put in the winepress of the wrath of God. This divine judgment is brought directly from God. Another angel (the fifth) comes out from the temple ("Or, *Sanctuary*" footnote, ASV; from the same place as the one in vs. 15) having a sharp sickle and another (the sixth) comes out from the altar (where the prayers were offered, 6:9; 8:3-5) and tells the one with the sickle to gather the clusters of the vine for they are fully ripe. The grapes were cast in the winepress of God (compare Isa. 63:1-6; Lam. 1:15; Joel 3:11-16; Rev. 16:19; 19:11-21). The city (vs. 20a) is probably the holy city or spiritual Jerusalem (see 11:2 and comments on that verse) and, thus, excluding it from the judgment. Ten furlongs are equal to one mile (Smith's Bible Dict., p. 813); thus, blood flowed for 160 miles and was even unto the horses' bridles (several feet deep). This tremendous amount of blood symbolized a thorough, complete judgment on the earth (the wicked of that time).

Therefore, verses 14-20 reveal that God was about to bring an end to the Roman Empire and Roman paganism. This will be made even more evident in John's remaining words through chapter 19. The finality of the judgment against the beast and false prophet is described in the words, "*cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone*" (19:20), thus, destroyed, never to rise again. Bear in mind that though John's words had specific application, the principles still apply today. God yet rules in the kingdoms of men and will bring His judgments against all evil governments and wicked nations.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 14

1. Who are the one hundred and forty-four thousand mentioned in the first five verses? Do the verses indicate that these will be the only ones in heaven?
2. To what do you think the great city Babylon refers?
3. What do those who worship the beast and those who die in the Lord receive?
4. Who is the person described in verse 14?
5. Briefly state what verses 14-20 are revealing.

Rev. 15:1-4

Another sign is introduced--seven angels having seven last plagues. These are the last judgments which God brought upon the wicked of that day. First, however, we have a brief interlude as the redeemed-

-those who came off victorious from the beast--sing praise to God. The sea of glass was introduced in the throne scene in 4:6. Those who had obtained victory over the beast (the martyrs) are before the throne of God (the same as in 7:9-17 and 14:1-5). The sea of glass "*mingled with fire*" perhaps symbolized the fire of God's judgment on the beast or the persecutions by which the saints were purified. Their having harps of God symbolized their praise and adoration to God. The victorious sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. When Israel stood on the banks of the Red Sea and saw Pharaoh and all his army drowned, Moses sang a song of victory (Ex. 15). Likewise, the victorious saints when standing on the sea of glass sing a song of exaltation and praise to God for His works, justice, and holiness. Much of the language given in the praise is parallel to expressions found in the Psalms. (Compare Psalm 89:9; 111:2; 139:14; 145:17). Much comfort and joy was brought to the suffering saints on earth when they beheld this glorious and triumphant scene.

Rev. 15:5-8

After these things (after the interlude of praise) the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened (meaning God will now reveal His righteous works and keep His pledge of vindication) and the seven angels that had the seven plagues came out. They came out from the temple (where the throne is, 16:17) which means they came out from the presence of God. They were clothed in pure and white linen (some ancient manuscripts have "*stone*;" see ASV and its footnote) and having their breasts girded with golden girdles (such as was worn by the glorified Christ; see 1:13 and the comments on that verse). Their appearance represents the fact that they are glorious messengers of God.

One of the four living creatures (cherubims, 4:6-9) gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials ("*bowls*" ASV) full of the wrath of God. The bowls are of gold; they are used in the service of God. All of the instruments of the temple in the Old Testament were of pure gold. They are "*full of the wrath of God*" indicating God will not tolerate the wicked any longer; the time for their judgment has come. The temple was filled with the glory of God and no one was able to enter it until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed (vs. 8). This corresponds to the times when the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-35) and the temple were completed (1 Kings 8:10-11). The fact that none were able to enter until the seven plagues were finished shows that the wrath of God was altogether full. There would be no room for intercession now. The bowls were ready to be emptied; the judgment has come. The word "*plagues*" (vss. 1, 6, 8) is a key word to the correct interpretation of the bowls of wrath of chapter 16.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 15

1. Who were those who sung the song of Moses and the Lamb?
2. What did one of the four beasts give to the seven angels and what were they?
3. Was this beast the same as the one that came up out of the sea? Was it the same as the one out of the earth?

Rev. 16:1-2 - The First Bowl (Sickness)

We have been well prepared for these judgments, e.g., announcement of judgment (14:6-13), the time of judgment is come (14:14-20), the seven last plagues introduced (15:1-8). The angels are sent and the judgments of the wrath of God come upon the earth (on those who worship and serve the beast, vs. 2; on the persecutors, vs. 6). There are many similarities between these and the trumpet plagues (8:7-9; 11:15-19). Like the trumpets, they represent woes upon the wicked and, like the trumpets, a part of their symbolism is parallel with the Egyptian plagues. However, there is marked difference between the bowls and the trumpets. The trumpet judgments were calls to repentance (9:20-21); the bowl judgments are the final means of punishment to avenge the blood of the saints (16:5-7).

The first was executed and it became a noisome and grievous sore on those that had the mark of the beast. If affected the physical nature of the wicked making them sick. It was not until the fifth trumpet that "men" were directly affected, but here in the bowls of wrath they are grievously smitten from the first. For some literal examples of God doing this, see Deut. 28:27; Acts 12:23.

Rev. 16:3 - Second Bowl (Affliction in Their Society)

The second angel caused the sea to be changed into blood and every living creature of the sea died. In the seals it affects a fourth part (6:8), in the trumpets a third part (8:8-9) and here it affects all. This shows that the seals and trumpets are partial in their nature and served as warnings to the oppressors of God's people. In contrast, the bowls of wrath are complete and final. As in the Old Testament (Isa. 57:19-20; Zech. 10:11), the sea here probably represents restless human society which brought afflictions on God's people. This second plague, therefore, probably symbolized another great upheaval in society which brought bitterness of life and affliction to the wicked.

Rev. 16:4-7 - Third Bowl (Natural Calamity)

The third bowl of wrath affected the inland waters and they became blood. This happened literally in the Egyptian plagues (Ex. 7:17-21), but here it is figurative of grievous plagues on that society. An angel proclaims this to be a righteous judgment of God for they had poured out the blood of the saints and prophets. Those who had the mark of the beast (vs. 2; see also 9:4; 13:16-17; 14:9-11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4 – see chart "Those Without 'The Seal of God' having 'The Mark of the Beast'") and those who shed the blood of the saints and prophets (vs. 6; also 2:13; 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 12:11; 16:6-7; 17:6 18:24; 19:2; 20:4 – see chart "The Martyrs of Jesus") are the same individuals and, thus, identifies the persecuting force as the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire had caused the blood of the martyrs to be poured out and now, figuratively speaking, they must drink blood (they must reap the consequences of their evil and receive a just recompense of reward). One out of the altar (where the prayers were offered, 6:9-10; 8:3-4; 9:13) declared that God's judgments are true and righteous (vs. 7). He punishes the wicked in accordance with their sins. (See also Psalm 97:2-3; 89:14). Verses 5-7, along with 6:6-11; 7:13-14; 12:11; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2 (again, see chart "The Martyrs of Jesus") are key verses in understanding the theme and purpose of the book of Revelation.

Rev. 16:8-9 - Fourth Bowl (Fire and Famine)

The next bowl was poured out upon the sun bringing fiery heat upon the wicked scorching them. This perhaps represents destruction by natural fire (see Ezek. 23:25, 47) or destruction by great famine and drought (see Deut. 28:22-24; Joel 1:14-20). The wicked did not repent when scorched with great heat; rather, they blasphemed God because of it. The word "*blaspheme*" means "to rail at or revile" (Vine), "to speak of or address with irreverence, to revile, to utter blasphemy" (Webster). Thus, even the scorching heat of God's wrath did not melt their obstinate hearts; instead, they added two other sins to their wicked lives. They blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they had no change of mine or life to give God the glory due Him.

Rev. 16:10-11 - Fifth Bowl (Internal Decay)

The fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast and his kingdom was darkened. When a great nation like the Roman Empire is about to fall, the wicked lose all courage in despair. A hopeless and darkened condition in political affairs and the threat of the complete collapse of government brought intense worry, despair, and pain to the wicked. They gnawed their tongues for pain and blasphemed God because of it and did not repent of their works. Again, instead of recognizing and acknowledging their own pride, stubbornness of heart, and rebellion against God as the cause of their condition, they blasphemed the God of heaven and refused to repent.

We cannot be dogmatic as to what these calamities actually were, but we know they represent acts of God against the wicked in order that God's cause might be vindicated.

Rev. 16:12-16 - Sixth Bowl (External Invasions)

When the sixth is poured out, there is a picture of the preparation for war. Euphrates being dried up to make the way of the kings easy gives the picture of external invasions and wars (similar to the 6th trumpet, 9:13-21). Three unclean spirits like frogs came out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan, 12:3,9), the beast (evil government, 13:1-10), and the false prophet (false religion, 13:11-18). These are spirits of devils working their falsehood and deception (false miracles, vs. 14; 13:13-14) to prepare the kings for the battle (vs. 14). These kings, different from the ones in vs. 12, are probably the kings of the provinces as in 17:12-14. This war is said to be the battle of the great day of God Almighty (vs. 14) in the place which is called in the Hebrew, Armageddon (vs. 16). Armageddon (also called "*the valley of Jezreel*") is the famous Hebrew battlefield. Barak and Deborah, Gideon, King Saul, and Josiah are some of those who fought there. (See Judges 5:19; 2 Kings 23:29-30). Regarding the expression, "*the great day*" (vs. 14), see Joel 2:11; Zeph. 1:14. Armageddon, therefore, to the Hebrews is where the righteous and the wicked engaged in battle. At this great battle God will intervene and the enemies of the saints will be destroyed. It seems to be a far-fetched view to think that the battle of Armageddon will be a literal, universal war that will occur just before the second coming of Christ.

Verse 15 contains one of the seven beatitudes in Revelation (see also 1:3; 14:13; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). We should be ready, watching and waiting at all times because Jesus will come as a thief (not in the sense of unnoticed, but unexpected). Those who do not keep their garments, being unprepared, will stand naked before God. Concerning "*coming as a thief*" see Matt. 24:43-44; 2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 3:3), and regarding

"keepeth his garments" see Rev. 3:4; 19:8. Consequently, in the midst of the scene of the gathering army and decisive battle, verse 15 stands as a warning and exhortation to the saints not to be deceived or led astray by what is taking place.

Rev. 16:17-21 - Seventh Bowl (Severe Judgment)

The forces of evil cannot defeat the cause of righteousness. The seventh is poured out and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven from the throne saying, "*It is done*" (the series of plagues are now completed). Also, there were voices, thunders, lightnings, and great earthquake. In the seventh seal there were voices, thunders, lightnings and an earthquake (8:5) and in the seventh trumpet there were these same four, to which was added "*and great hail*" (11:19). The descriptions in verse 18 of the greatness of the earthquake and of the great hail (vs. 21) shows that this was a more intense judgment than before. The great city (city of Rome, 11:8,13; 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10,16,19,21; 19:2 – see chart "That Great City") was divided into three parts (was broken up) and great Babylon came in remembrance before God (God remembered to punish her for her sins, 18:5; compare 1 Sam. 15:1-3) Babylon stood in the minds of God's people of the Old Testament as a world power against God and His people. The "*Babylon*" of God's people in John's day was Rome.

Concerning verse 20, a similar removal of islands was pictured in the sixth seal (6:14). Ezekiel likewise described the fall of Tyre by saying, "*Now the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure.*" (Ezek. 26:18). Later, by the Holy Spirit John repeats Ezekiel's descriptions when he describes the fall of the great city (ch. 18). Great hailstones, "*every one about the weight of a talent,*" (about a hundred pounds) were cast from heaven upon the wicked and they blasphemed God because of the plague. God intervened in this way literally to help His people in the Old Testament (Joshua 10:11); however, in Revelation we understand it to be figurative of a great sweeping plague of destruction. (Also see Psalm 18:6-17). Once again, instead of repenting, the wicked blasphemed God because of the plague (see also vs. 9, 11). God's efforts to soften their hearts resulted in their complete hardening. This shows that John's vision was not one of the final judgment because in that day men will not have opportunity to repent or rebel.

The following chart shows that all the bowls of wrath were against the same individuals:

THE "BOWLS OF WRATH" AFFECT WHOM?
First Bowl: Upon the men who had the mark of the beast.
Third Bowl: For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets.
Fourth Bowl: Because of these plagues they blasphemed God.
Fifth Bowl: On the throne of the beast. Because of their pain and sores they blasphemed God.
Sixth Bowl: The dragon (Satan, 12:9), the beast (Roman Empire, 13:1-10), and the false prophet (false religion that supported the Empire, 13:11-18) gathered the kings of the earth to the battle of that great day of God. The battle in the verses is against those of the beast and the false prophet. See also 17:12-14.

Seventh Bowl: The great city, Babylon, was remembered before God to punish her. Because of the **plague** of hail, they **blasphemed** God. "Therefore her **plagues** will come in one day--death and morning and famine." (18:8).

Thus, involved in the seven plagues are things which led to the downfall of Rome., e.g., natural calamity, internal decay, external invasion. The plagues were not designed to satisfy curiosity about the future. They were designed to set forth the ultimate triumph of righteousness over the evil forces which oppose it. This was the message to the Christians of Asia Minor. It assured them of the certain victory of Christianity over Rome. Though Rome controlled the world, though it looked supreme and non-destructible, and though it appeared as if it would conquer and destroy Christianity, God brought it to its doom and it received its ultimate judgment. In a similar manner today, the book assures us of the certain victory of Christ's cause over the forces of Satan, and though Satan is using different forces today to war against the church (Catholicism, Denominationalism, Evolutionism, Humanism, Materialism, Apostate Church, etc.), the outcome will be the same.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 16

1. What is mainly involved in chapter 16?
2. Briefly state what the vials or bowls of wrath represent.
3. The bowls of wrath were poured out on whom?
4. What do you think the battle of Armageddon is (vss. 14-17)?
5. What do you think the great city is in verse 19?

Rev. 17:1-7

The following chart shows that "Babylon the great" can only be the city of Rome:

"BABYLON THE GREAT" WHICH CITY IS IT?	
1.	She has made all nations (14:2), the inhabitants of the earth (17:2) drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.
2.	She receives God's wrath which is in keeping with the theme of the book--bringing vengeance or judgment on the persecutors (11:18; 14:5-6; 15:4; 16:5-7; 17:1; 18:8-10; 19:2).
3.	She sits on many waters (17:1), rules over many peoples (17:15,18). Jerusalem did not rule over many peoples when John wrote revelation.
4.	She had caused a world-wide corruption (14:2; 17:2; 18:3,9; 19:2). She had corrupted the "inhabitants of the earth"--the same ones who had the mark of the beast, the persecutors, on whom the plagues came (6:8; 8:13; 9:4; 13:8,12,14; 14:15-16, 18-19; 16:2,14; 17:2,8; 18:3,9,11,23; 19:2,19).

5. She had committed fornication with the kings of the earth (17:2; 18:3,9) and had reigned over them. Jerusalem did not reign over the kings of the earth when John wrote Revelation.
6. The kings of the earth were the ones making war with the Lamb when John wrote revelation (17:12-14; 19:19). They had already been called to the battle by Satan's forces, the beast (the Roman Empire 13:1-10) and the false prophet (false religion that supported the Empire 13:11-18) as shown in the sixth bowl (16:12-16).
7. She was sitting on the beast (17:3) which means she was supported by the Empire. The kings of the earth gave their power and authority to the beast (17:13). They had committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her (18:8).
8. She was drunk with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus (17:6; 19:2). Again, this is in keeping with the purpose and theme of the book. To bring vengeance to the martyrs of Jesus (Rev. 2:13; 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 12:11; 16:6-7 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4). These are the martyrs at the time when John wrote. There is no indication that Jerusalem ever martyred Christians on such a large scale.
9. There is no indication that Jerusalem had such a great abundance of luxuries during the time of John (18:3-24).
10. The mariners, those having to do with the sea, also bewail the city's fall. As shown in the book of Acts, connected with Rome and the Roman Empire was a great fleet of ships (some very large, Acts 27:37). Jerusalem at the time of John's writing did not have such.

In chapter 17 one of the seven angels, more or less, says to John, "*Come over to another stage and see in detail what you have just witnessed in the quick fall of the city in the seventh plague.*" Thus, in chapters 17-19 we picture the final destruction of Rome which had already been foreshadowed in 6:12-17; 14:8; 16:19. There are many key verses in chapters 17-19 which when applied to the previous chapters give the correct interpretation of the entire book. Here Rome is pictured as a great whore ("*harlot*" ASV; see 17:5-6; 19:2) that sits upon many waters (rules over many peoples, 17:15,18). The kings of the earth (rulers of the provinces, 17:12-18) had committed fornication with her and the earth-dwellers were made drunk with the wine of her fornication (see 14:8 and comments). The rulers of the provinces had purchased Rome's favors (pleasures and rewards) by promoting her objectives and yielding to her whims. Also, she had seduced the wicked of the earth with the strong drink of lust, pleasure, and power and they were intoxicated by it and likewise submitted to her idolatrous demands.

One of the seven angels that had the seven bowls carried John away in the spirit into the wilderness that he might see the judgment (the judicial verdict of condemnation and punishment) of the great harlot. He sees a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast (this beast is the same one which emerged from the sea, 13:1-10) full of names of blasphemy (names that rail or revile against God) having seven heads and ten horns (see vs. 7,9,12,16, and 13:1). She was arrayed in purple and scarlet (color of royalty), and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls (symbol of luxury and splendor). Thus, the harlot (the city of Rome, 17:18), arrayed in splendor and royalty, was supported by the beast (the Roman Empire). She dressed as would a well-favored harlot to entice kings. By her dress (she thought she was a queen, 18:7), she covered up her true harlot's character and thereby deceived and seduced the kings and the inhabitants of the earth. She had in her hand a golden cup which was full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication ("*full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication*" ASV). These are the unclean things of her idolatry--the evils that had come out of her emperor worship and persecution.

Upon her forehead a name was written, "*Mystery*" (once hidden, but now openly exposed), "*Babylon the Great*" (anti-divine; here it symbolized Rome; see also 14:8; 16:19; 17:18), "*the Mother of the Harlots and Abominations of the Earth*" (the main one responsible for idol and emperor worship, evil and persecutions). She is never called an adulteress for she was never the bride or wife of the Lamb; thus, she is not the apostate church of Rome. She was drunk (saturated) with the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus--a key thought through the book, 2:13; 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 12:11; 16:6-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4 – see chart "The Martyrs of Jesus". She delighted in putting the saints to death. As John looks on her, he is filled with wonder and amazement. However, the angel said unto him, "*Wherefore didst thou wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath seven heads and ten horns.*" (vs. 7). Thus, some things in the book, e.g., concerning the beast, are a mystery (hidden) up to this point, but will now be revealed. Verses 8 through 18 are the angels' explanation of the mystery of the woman and the beast.

Rev. 17:8-18

The beast shall ascend out of the bottomless pit (from Satan's domain, 20:1-2) and go into perdition (into destruction, utter ruin). The beast as shown by the details in 17:3,7-18 (see also 19:19-20) is the same one in 13:1-10 and, thus, symbolizes the Roman Empire. The beast "*was, and is not, and yet is*" (also, "*his deadly wound was healed,*" 13:3,12). The Empire had an appearance of going down after the rule of Nero, but was built up again to its full persecution power under Domitian. The heathen world wondered at the progress and history of the Empire. The Christians, however, knew that it was doomed. Names not written in the book of life "*from the foundation of the world*" simply means that God determined that a certain class or group would not have their names in the book of life and He decided this before He founded the world.

The angel again reveals some things for the wise (vs. 9; 13:18). The seven heads are **seven mountains** on which the woman sits and there are also **seven** (a full number) **kings** (vs. 10a). The seven kings formed the basis of the Empire. It is difficult to determine the exact names of the seven emperors represented here. Since John did not name them, it is best to take the number as symbolical representing the whole series of emperors. Their number would remain "*seven*" (often used as a complete number) no matter how long the actual list happened to be. John said that five of these kings had fallen, one ruled then, and another was going to rule a little while (vs. 10b). The point he emphasizes here is that the emperor line had only a short time to continue before the emergence of the eight who would be destroyed. He said that the beast that was, and is not (the one of vs. 7-8), even he is the eight (thus, the beast symbolizes a king or emperor) and is of the seven (embodied the seven; probably Domitian who through cruel persecutions, the whole of the emperor system found its completion in him). Also, He would go into perdition (God would soon destroy him and his Empire).

The ten horns are ten kings who would receive authority as kings one hour (for a short time) with the beast (vs. 12). These were the rulers of the provinces--the ones who committed fornication with the harlot (14:8; 17:2; 18:3,9), and the ones who had already been called to the great battle (16:14). They shall war against the Lamb, but the Lamb shall overcome them (see also 19:17-18), for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings (vs. 14), and they that are with Him are called (2 Thess. 2:14), chosen (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2), and faithful (Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:2). These are those saints that overcame with the Lamb (12:11; 14:4); they

are already "*with*" Him and shall live and reign with Him (20:4). The ten kings have one mind to give their authority to the Roman Empire (vs. 13). They no doubt did this in order to receive benefits and rewards, but actually they hated Rome, and the time would come when they would play a part in her destruction (vs. 16). (Compare Ezek. 16:37-41). God had put in their hearts to fulfill His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. God has often used men and nations to carry out His purpose (2 Chron. 20:23; Hab. 3:6; Ezek. 30:24-25). These kings would give their kingdom unto the beast until the words of God shall be fulfilled (until the short time spoken by John was completed (17:10; 12:12; 6:11), and until that which was spoken by the Old Testament prophets was fulfilled (see 10:7 and comments). After that short time, God would fulfill His words of judgment against the harlot and the beast. Verses 15 and 18 identify the woman and the waters and aids much in the interpretation of the book (see chart "'Babylon the Great' Which city is it?").

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 17

1. Who or what is this woman which John saw?
2. What does the expression, "*drunken with the blood of the saints*" (vs. 6) means and in what other verses in Revelation is this stated?
3. According to the angel, what do the seven heads, ten horns, and the waters represent?
4. According to verses 16 and 17, what will the ten kings do?

Rev. 18:1-8

Another angel which had great power ("*authority*" ASV) came down from heaven and the earth was illuminated with his glory (indicates his greatness and the importance of his message). He announces with strong voice, "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen...*" As announced and foreshadowed in earlier visions (14:8; 16:19), the final destruction of Rome has now come. It is now become the habitation of devils ("*demons*" ASV; see 9:20; 16:14) and the hold (a place of guarding, a prison for detention) of every foul ("*unclean*" ASV) spirit, and a cage ("*hold*" ASV) of every unclean and hateful bird. Its overthrow was like that of ancient cities which became dwelling places for all types of doleful creatures (Isa. 13:19-22; 34:11-15). Concerning "*the wine of wrath of her fornication*" see 14:8; 17:2 and the comments on 14:8. The nations of the earth had followed her lascivious ways, yielded to her seductive practices, and had engaged in her "*wrath*" (in persecuting Christians). The kings of the earth had committed fornication with her (had made idolatrous political and economic alliances to purchase pleasures, power and prestige). The merchants (first mentioned here; their involvement is discussed in vss. 11, 15) had waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies ("*wantonness*" ASV; refers to her desire to heap up riches and luxuries). Thus, the angel explains the "*fornication*" more fully. It is seen all over the world today as men seek to gain pleasure, wealth, and power through unethical, immoral and unscrupulous means.

The people of God were summoned to come out of her that they would have no fellowship with her sins and would not receive of her plagues. A complete separation from her sins was necessary to escape

her plagues. Her sins had reached even unto heaven (see also Jonah 1:2) and God had remembered her iniquities (see also 16:19). God was going to render to her double (the phrase indicates a balancing of the scales); thus, the punishment was commensurate with the guilt. Verse 7a adds to the thought revealed in verse 6; the judgment was to be in accord with her sin. The word "*deliciously*" ("*waxed wanton*" ASV) again refers to her desire for pleasures, luxuries and riches. She had great pride even as the old Babylon (Isa. 47:7-9) and as ancient Tyre (Ezek. 28:2). Therefore (because of these things) in one day (very suddenly) shall here plagues come upon her for strong is the Lord God who judges her (the guarantee of her end rests on the power of God). The plagues mentioned in verse 8--death, mourning, famine, fire--shows the proper interpretation of the bowls of wrath of chapter 16.

Rev. 18:9-19

Nineveh, represented as a harlot, received its glory through conquest (Nahum 3:1-7). Tyre, a harlot, relied on its trade and commercial aspects (Isa. 23; Ezek. 26-28). Babylon, a mistress, was a city of pleasure and conquest (Isa. 13 and 14). However, the great city of Rome represented all of these evils for she was made up of all. Rome represents all that is lustful, seductive and enticing. Verses 19-19 give a picture of how the destruction of the great city affected those on earth. Three groups stand by to bewail and lament her fall: kings (vss. 9-10), merchants (vss. 11-17a), and mariners (vss. 17b-19).

The kings of the earth (identified as the kings of the provinces, 17:2, 12-18; 18:3) who had enjoyed pleasures, luxuries and riches through whoring with the great harlot, bewail and lament her fall. Helplessly they stand afar off (because they fear her torment) and bewail the sudden destruction of the city. Like many of the world with selfish sorrow and tears, these kings are mourning because of their own loss.

The merchants also weep and mourn because their opportunity to make riches is taken away. Verse 12 and 13 list 28 things of luxury in which they traded. "*Thyine wood*" according to Smith's Bible Dictionary was wood from a small cone bearing tree related to the pine valued for its beauty. The "*souls of men*" probably refers to "*persons of men*" as in Ezek. 27:13-14; e.g., mercenaries, horsemen, or special hired servants for particular services. In verse 14 all those things of extreme luxury would be found no more at all when God brought His plagues upon her. The merchants (as all rich men do) were weeping and wailing because their riches were quickly taken away. The things in verse 16 with which the great city was clothed are the same in which the harlot was arrayed (17:4); thus, again confirming the identity of the two. All three groups say, "*Alas, alas,*" (meaning "Woe, woe;" an expression of bitter grief) bewailing the destruction of "*that great city*" (vss. 10, 16, 19).

The mariners (those having to do with the sea; Rome had a great fleet of ships, some very large, Acts 27:37) also bewail her fall. They cast dust on their heads (a sign of great mourning, Joshua 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12; Job 2:12) and weep and wail--again, because their riches are quickly lost. Like the others, their grief was through selfishness. They were grieving over their own loss and not because of the destruction of Rome. Trade and commerce in and of itself is not evil but good when used for the welfare of humanity. However, when used for selfish luxury and the gratifying of fleshly lusts, it becomes wicked and embodies sins of all kinds.

Rev. 18:20-24

The heaven, the holy apostles and prophets (some ancient manuscripts add, "*and ye saints*" are told to rejoice because God had avenged them on her ("*for God hath judged your judgment on her*" ASV). This is another of the key verses which shows the theme and purpose of the book. (See also 6:9-11; 16:6-7; 19:2). The great city shall be cast down as a millstone (literally, "*millstone turned by an ass*;" thus, a stone of great size used to grind grain; it is the same word used in Matt. 18:6) thrown into the sea and three types of sound would be heard no more at all in her: of music (22a), of business life or industry (22b), and of the home (23). The same kind of symbolism was used in reference to ancient Babylon's destruction (Jer. 51:63-64; 25:10). The sounds of amusement, business, and the home would no more be heard in her because: (1) "*Thy merchants were great men of the earth*" (also said of Tyre in her destruction, Isa. 23:8-9; here it has reference of Rome's quest for luxuries and riches; it was founded on these and her merchants became rich through them, 18:3). (2) "*For by thy sorceries were all nations deceived*" (this, too, was said of Tyre, Nah. 3:4; it has to do with her witchcraft by which she beguiled the people into wickedness and idolatry). (3) For her martyrdom of the saints and conquering of peoples (vs. 24). This is another key verse to the proper understanding of the book. It was the reason for her utter destruction (19:2).

Instead of questions, for a study of chapter 18, compare these Old Testament passages with the following verses:

vs. 2	Isa. 21:9; 13:21; Jer. 50:35; 51:37
vs. 3	Isa. 47:15
vss. 4-5	Jer. 51:9
vs. 6	Jer. 50:15, 29; 51:49
vs. 7	Ezek. 28:2-8; Isa. 47:7-8; Zeph. 2:13-15
vs. 8a	Jer. 50:13
vs. 8b	Jer. 50:34
vss 9-10	Ezek. 26:16-17
vss. 11-17a	Ezek. 27:33-36
vss. 17b-19	Ezek. 27:25-32
vs. 20	Jer. 51:48
vs. 21	Jer. 51:63-64
vss. 22-23	Jer. 25:10

We see that the same language of chapter 18 was used against various cities of the Old Testament era and we conclude the chapter 18 is speaking of God's doom and destruction upon the city of Rome.

Rev. 19:1-10

After these things John hears a great voice of many people in heaven saying, (1) "*Alleluia*." The word "*Alleluia*" (praise ye Jehovah) is found four times in this chapter (vss. 1,3,4,6)--the only passage in the New Testament where it is mentioned. (2) "*Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God*." (Compare 12:10). He alone is due all honor and praise because He saves His own

and brings the wicked persecutors to destruction. (3) "*For* (or "*because*;" the reason for their praise) *true and righteous are his judgments*" (see Psalm 89:14; 97:2; they are genuine and just) and (4) "*For* (second reason) *he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication.*" She corrupted the earth (brought moral decay upon the whole earth) by her deceptions and enticements. (5) "*And* (third reason) *hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*" The prayer of the souls under the altar has now been answered and their blood has been avenged--the theme and purpose of the book (2:13; 6:9-11; 7:13-14; 12:11; 16:6-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2; 20:4). (Compare Deut. 32:43). Her destruction is complete and final--the same punishment all the wicked receive (vs. 3; 14:11; 19:20).

Verse 4 is the last mention of the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures (see 4:4-10; 5:5-8,11,14; 6:1-7; 7:11,13; 14:3; 15:7). The "*throne*" (vs. 5) is mentioned 38 times in Revelation and keeps before us the presence of God. Concerning the expression, "*Praise our God, all ye his servants and ye that fear him, both small and great,*" see Psalm 134:1; 135:1. This is one of the many verses in the Bible which shows that men should fear God (see also Eccl. 12:13; Luke 1:50; 12:4-5; Acts 10:34-35; Col. 3:22; 1 Pet. 2:17). John heard as it were the voice of a great multitude (all the saved sing in unison) and as many waters (a great forceful sound such as a mighty waterfall) and as the voice of mighty thunderings (a great loud forceful sound) say, "*Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.*" The word "*omnipotent*" means "*almighty, all powerful*" and occurs only here in the KJV, but the same word in the original Greek manuscripts occurs in 2 Cor. 6:18 and in eight other verses in Revelation (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7,14; 19:15; 21:22) where it is translated, "*Almighty.*"

The marriage of the Lamb represents the church receiving heaven. The faithful of the church will make up the heavenly city, the bride, or the Lamb's wife (21:2, 9-10). The church's relationship to Christ now is that of a wife but in the same way Mary was betrothed to Joseph before they came together (Matt. 1:18). Paul said, "*...I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*" (2 Cor. 11:2). Thus, the responsibility of the church now is to make herself ready. The faithful saints in John's day had thus prepared themselves. In sharp contrast to the attire of the harlot (gaudy, luxurious apparel of the world, intending to seduce by worldly splendor), the wife of the Lamb was to array herself in fine linen, clean and white ("*bright and pure*" ASV) which is the righteousness ("*righteous acts*" ASV) of the saints. Those who are called to the marriage supper (vs. 9) are the ones who accept the call of the gospel (Luke 14:15-24; Matt. 22:1-4, 9-10). Those who reject the gospel will never taste of that supper (Luke 14:24; Matt. 22:5-8) and those without a wedding garment (who did not make themselves ready by righteous acts) will be rejected (Matt. 22:11-14).

Evidently John became so overwhelmed by the great voices and visions that he loses control and falls down to worship the angel that signified those things to him and told him to write them (see also 22:8-9). However, the angel (assuming it was an angel in vs. 10; we are not told here but we are in 22:8) said to John "*See thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*" He should not worship him because (1) He is a fellow servant (Heb. 1:13-14); (2) God is the one to be worshiped (Matt. 4:10); (3) The whole spirit (life-principle) and design of prophecy is to give the witness and testimony of Jesus. In other words, it was to glorify Him and His work (John 16:14), not angels (Heb. 1:4) or anyone else.

Rev. 19:11-16

Next, we see a picture of the glorified Christ. He is riding a white horse (a victorious warrior). He is called Faithful and True (3:7, 14) and in righteousness He doth judge and make war (Isa. 11:4). His eyes are as a flame of fire (1:14; 2:18; penetrating vision) and on His head are many crowns ("*diadems*" ASV; He is King over all realms). He has a name written that no one knew but Himself (He alone knows the full significance of Himself and His names). He is arrayed in a garment dipped ("*sprinkled*" ASV) with blood (compare Isa. 63:3) and His name is called, "*The Word of God*" (revealed only by John; see John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1). The armies which are in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. These are either angels (12:7) or saints (17:14)--probably the saints who are living and reigning with Him (20:4). These are those who war against evil with Him and are victorious with Him. Fine linen represents the righteous acts of the saints (19:8). Out of His mouth proceeds a sharp sword (not the Word here, but the sword of righteous judgment--see vs. 21) that with it He should smite the nations and He shall rule them with the rod of iron (Psalm 2:7-12), and He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. We picture the winepress as one stomps the grapes with his feet, and so it is with Christ as He brings judgment upon the wicked. (Compare Isa. 63:1-6). Christ also had the names, "*King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*" (see also 17:14) on His vesture and on His thigh. Thus, in summary, we have Christ presented in His fullness as Warrior, Witness, Judge, Conqueror, Savior, Creator, Ruler, King, and Lord.

Rev. 19:17-21

John sees an angel standing in the sun and with a loud voice calls the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven (here, carrion eating birds--buzzards, vultures, condors) to come and gather themselves together to the supper of the great God (e.g., flock to the battlefield where God had provided you much flesh to eat). This reveals that the battle was over; the judgment of God had been completed. The kings of verse 18 and 19 are the same ones of 16:13-14,16; 17:1-2, 12-18; 18:3,9 which again shows that the "great city" and the "beast" are the same persecuting force. With regard to verse 18, compare Ezek. 39:17-23. The verse shows that no class of men involved in the persecution of the saints would escape God's righteous judgment. Following is a chart on the "Kings of the Earth" which again shows how the book is tied together in all of its scenes.

KINGS OF THE EARTH

Revelation 16:13-14,16 – And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty...And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

Revelation 17:1-2 – Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."

Revelation 17:12-14 – And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have– received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast. These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful.

Revelation 17:18 – And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth.

Revelation 18:3 – For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.

Revelation 18:9 – And the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning.

Revelation 19:18-20 – That you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great. And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

The beast (the Roman Empire 13:1-10; persecuting world government) and the kings of the earth (the kings of the provinces) gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the throne (Christ) and against His army (probably saints, martyrs as in vs. 14), but He conquers them (17:14) and, thus, the beast was taken and with him the false prophet (the earth beast--false religion, paganism) that worked the miracles and deceived those (13:11-15) who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image (13:16-18; 14:9, 11; 16:2). Both of them were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone (into the eternal place of punishment, 20:14-15; 21:8). Consequently, these enemies of Christ are eternally destroyed. Satan would never use these particular instruments to war against the saints again. In verse 19 the "*remnant*" (KJV) "*rest*" (ASV) were slain with the sword of Christ. These were the rest of the enemies of Christ in John's day who had not taken part in the evil government or the false religion, but did not have the seal of God in their foreheads (compare 7:3; 9:4). All the fowls were filled with their flesh (this completes the symbolism of verses 17-18); thus, all the enemies of Christ are defeated.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 19

1. How many times is the word "*Alleluia*" used in this chapter? What does it mean? How many times is it used in the New Testament?
2. State how verse two adds to the overall theme of the book.
3. What does the word "*omnipotent*" (vs. 6) mean?
4. Who is the one who sat on the white horse?
5. Who are the "*remnant*" (KJV) or the "*rest*" (ASV) of verse 21?

Rev. 20:1-6

This chapter mentions the "*millennium*" or the "*thousand years*" ("*millennium*" is the Greek word for "*thousand*"). It is mentioned 5 times in verses 2-6 and is mentioned nowhere else in Bible. It is the great **proof** text of the millennialist. We will endeavor to determine what these verses mean as well as what they do not mean. There is no need to force a change in time here (that is, to leave the period under consideration by John). False teachers want to bring in the second coming at verse 1; however, John is still dealing with the events which occurred in his day. He is speaking of individuals who lived during his time and not of some who live far out in the future.

John said that he saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key (he had authority over it; probably the same angel as in 9:1, 11) of the bottomless pit (where the beast came from, 11:7; 17:8) and a great chain in his hand, and he bound Satan for a thousand years. The "*thousand years*" is not to be taken literally any more than are the "*key*," "*bottomless pit*," and "*great chain*." A literal chain cannot bind a spirit being. Like the other numbers in Revelation, the "*thousand*" has a symbolical meaning. The number suggests fullness and completeness (compare Deut. 7:9; 1 Chron. 16:15; Psalm 50:10; 90:5); hence, it is the full and complete number.

In verse 3 Satan was cast into the bottomless pit, shut up and sealed, so that he could "*deceive the nations*" no more until the thousand years were fulfilled. The term "*deceive the nations*" is used often of Satan and his efforts in Revelation (12:9; 13:13-14; 18:23; 19:20; 20:3,8,10). He deceived the nations and among other things caused them to kill the saints. After Satan is loosed again for a short time (20:3, 7), he comes forth to deceive the nations again (20:8). It is certainly true that Christ bound Satan at His death (Luke 10:18; John 12:31-32; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14-15--when Christ provided remission of sins, Satan lost his power over man); however, here Satan was put down or bound when God brought an end to the Roman Empire (the meaning of Rom. 16:20). Thus, during the thousand year period Satan would not have control over the nations as he once had and, consequently, will not have power to cause the saints to be slaughtered as he once did.

In verse 4 John showed that those who had died for their faith were living and reigning with Christ. It does not refer to some living and reigning far out in the future such as in the premillennial idea. Prophetic speculators are very good at leaping over the prophecy's immediate application and applying it far out in the future. John saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus (the martyrs of his day, 2:13; 6:6-9; 7:14-17; 16:6-7; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2) and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. John showed that it was the ones who "*did not worship the beast...neither received his mark*" etc., (again, those of John's day, 13:16-17; 14:9-10a; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20). Thus, these souls--the ones who had been martyred in John's day--were the ones living and reigning with Christ.

Premillennialist have a marvelous time with verse 5. They say it teaches that there will be two resurrections--one at the second coming in which the saints will be raised to reign with Christ, and a second after the thousand years wherein the wicked will be raised. This contradicts plain passages--John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15. Furthermore, it has another trump after the "*last trump*" (1 Cor. 15:52), days beyond the "*last day*" (John 6:44), and time beyond "*the end*" (1 Cor. 15:24). The Premillennialist

misunderstanding of verse 5 resulted from their misunderstanding of verse 4. They have verse 4 out in the future and naturally would place verse 5 out in the future. However, the "rest" of verse 5 are the ones mentioned in 19:21. They represent those who were slain even though they had not taken part in the evil government or false religion. Thus, they were like the good moral man. Although they did not accept the beast or the false prophet, they could not partake in reigning with Christ because they did not have the seal of God in their foreheads. Good moral deeds are not enough; one must obey the gospel and become an active part of the New Testament church. Therefore, in verse 5 John is simply saying that these, the remnant or the rest of verse 21, did not live and reign with Christ through the thousand year period.

The latter part of verse 5 goes better with verse 6. The verses could have been divided that way. What is the first resurrection? It is when the faithful one dies and goes to be with Christ. On these the second death has no power. What is the second death? John tells us plainly in 20:14-15 and 21:8. What is the second resurrection? It is when our bodies will be raised at the second coming of Christ. We conclude, therefore, that any who have the seal of God (have obeyed the gospel) and have overcome (have been faithful until death) will have part in the first resurrection and will reign with Christ unto the end. (See also Rev. 7:14-17; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8).

The premillennial theory from verses 4-6 is as follows: "**At the second coming, Christ is coming back to the earth to reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem with all the saints for a thousand years.**" It is very strange that millennialist can see all of those things in a text which mentions none of them! Old time gospel preachers often put the premillennial theory on the black-board and then erased the things that are not found in the verses. For example, it says nothing about the second coming (they erased it). It says nothing about Christ coming back to the earth (no passage anywhere in the N.T. teaches it--they erased it). It says nothing about the throne of David (erased). It says nothing about Jerusalem (erased). It says nothing about all the saints reigning (only that **souls** reigned--erased). The only thing left is the thousand years and, thus, the millennialist's great **proof** text does not teach their doctrine at all. It does not touch on it nor give the slightest hint about it.

Rev. 20:7-10

In these verses we can determine the duration (the exact length no one knows, Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32) of the thousand year period. After the thousand years Satan is loosed for a short time (vss. 3 and 7). He makes war again and is immediately cast down into the lake of fire and then comes the judgment. The thousand years, therefore, precedes the second coming of Christ in which He will come to judge (2 Tim. 4:1; Matt. 25:31-32). It is not to begin at the second coming but will end at the second coming. Consequently, the reign of the saints for a thousand years began with the faithful martyrs of John's day and remains until the second coming of Christ.

When Satan is loosed just before the final judgment, he comes forth **deceiving the nations** as he had done before.

DECEIVES THE NATIONS

Revelation 12:9 – So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Revelation 13:13-14 – He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Revelation 18:23 – And the light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore. And the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.

Revelation 19:20 – Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone.

Revelation 20:3 – And he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

Revelation 20:8 – And will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea.

Revelation 20:10 – And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Satan makes a world-wide gathering of an innumerable host, Gog and Magog, to war with the saints. Ezekiel's Gog (a chief prince) and Magog (the land over which Gog ruled) represented a wicked nation who were the enemies of God's people (chs. 38 and 39). As has been often shown, many terms and figures in Revelation have their symbolism in the Old Testament. Thus, John prophesies that toward the end of time there will be a great host gathered and led by Satan, and he and his allies will make one last furious effort to destroy the church. This means that persecutions and martyrdom will be revived (or will be more intense than in John's day) in that last great conflict. However, as Satan and his allies compassed the camp of the saints, and the beloved city (the church; see 11:2 and comments)--as they are about to completely destroy it--fire comes down out of heaven and devours them. This represents the second coming (2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 3:7-10) for the scenes that follow are the judgment (Rev. 20:10-15) and the final states (chs. 21 and 22). The devil that deceived the nations is cast into the lake of fire and brimstone; thus, his deception is forever ended. He is "*tormented*" (in anguish and pain) "*for ever and ever*" (eternally; the length of the torment and the duration of God's existence are the same, 4:9) in the place prepared for him and his angels (Matt. 25:41).

Rev. 20:11-15

John now sees a vision of the final judgment--the next thing which occurs immediately after the second coming of Christ (see also 2 Tim. 4:1; Matt. 25:31-33). John sees the great white throne and Him who sat on it, and from His face heaven and earth vanished (Heb. 1:10-12). All the dead both small and great stood before God to be judged. The books were opened (the books of the Bible, Rom. 2:16; James

2:12; John 12:48) and another book was opened (the book of life, Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8) and the dead were judged out of those things written in the books according to their works (2 Cor. 5:10; Eccl. 12:13-14). All the dead will be judged by the Scriptures in accord with their works.

The sea (probably refers to the bodies buried in the sea) gave up the dead that were in it, and death (the separation of soul and body, James 2:26; here it probably refers to the bodies buried in the earth) and hell ("*hades*," the place of disembodied spirits, Luke 16:22-26) gave up the dead that were in them (the spirits came out of *hades* to be judged). In other words, all the dead with both body and spirit came forth and stood (vs. 12: Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:10) before the throne to be judged (also see John 5:28-29). Death (physical death; the last enemy to be destroyed, 1 Cor. 15:26) and *hades* (the temporary place of spirits) were cast into the lake of fire (destroyed; they would no longer be needed; they would no longer have their control over man). The casting into the lake of fire is the second death (see also 21:8). At the judgment all those not found in the book of life (vs. 15) and all the wicked (21:8) will be cast into the lake of fire.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 20

1. How would you answer the following doctrine which is advocated from Rev. 20:1-6? "At the second coming, Christ will come back to the earth and reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem with all the saints for a thousand years."
2. Who are the "*rest*" of verse 5? (Remember verse 21 of chapter 19).
3. What is the first resurrection, the second resurrection, the first death, and the second death?
4. When will Satan be loosed and for how long?
5. What "*books*" will have an important part in the judgment?

Rev. 21:1-4

The wicked are cast into the lake of fire but the righteous receive their glorious state. John sees a new heaven and new earth, which is the new and glorious state of the righteous (compare 2 Pet. 3:10-13). The present earth on which we now live will pass away. Peter says it is stored up for fire (2 Pet. 3:7, 10). Isaiah's new heaven and new earth looked unto the New Testament order (Isa. 65:17-25), but Peter's and John's new heaven and new earth looks unto the new order which follows the Christian age. In verse two John uses many terms which refer to heaven: "*the holy city*" (22:14, 19) "*new Jerusalem*" (3:13) "*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband*" (the glorious state of the church, 21:9-11). This is that city which was looked for by the godly men of old, "*which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*" (Heb. 11:10, 13-16).

The saints in this new order will be in fellowship with God (vs. 3). The verse emphasizes that God will actually be present with them (see also 21:22; 22:3). Under the Old covenant God met with His

people in the tabernacle. In the eternal home the entire city is the tabernacle (dwelling place) of God. His presence remains with His people forever. God will be their protection and comfort (vs. 4). This verse emphasizes that there will be no sorrowful things there: "*not tears, no death*" (see Luke 20:34-36), "*no sorrow, no crying, no pain*" (no sicknesses of any kind) for all those things of this world will be completely taken away.

Rev. 21:5-8

He who sat upon the throne (God the Father, 4:2, 9) said "*Behold, I make all things new.*" The first things (the things of this world now) will pass away and all things will be new. He said to John, "*Write: for these words are true and faithful*" (they are sure and dependable, right and trustworthy, certain and reliable). He said, "*It is done*" (it is as good as accomplished); "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end*" (denotes His eternal existence; used here of the Father as shown by the context; also used of Jesus, 1:17; 2:8; 22:13). Also, He said, "*I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*" (see Matt. 5:6; John 4:13-14; Rev. 22:17). He added, "*he that overcometh shall inherit all things*" (see Matt. 25:34; 1 Pet. 1:4), and "*I will be his God, and he shall be my son*" (see 1 John 3:1-3; 2 Cor. 6:17-7:1). In contrast, the fearful, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The second death is the eternal separation from God (Matt. 25:41-46; Mark 9:43-48). Thus, in contrast to the saints' heavenly inheritance, the wicked suffer the second death in eternal torment.

Rev. 21:9-22:5

Verses 9 through 22:5 give a beautiful description of heaven. It is not a description of the church on earth now (as some claim), but a description of the church in its glorious state in heaven. One of the angels which had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues (15:1) said to John, "*Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.*" This is the that great city, the church in its glorious state in heaven (21:2, 10). The angel carried John away in the spirit (thus, it will not be this way literally, but it is a vision describing it in physical terms; it will be like this) to a great and high mountain, and showed him that great city (21:2; 22:14, 19), the holy Jerusalem (3:12; 21:2) descending out of heaven from God (this was the one that John saw after the first heaven and earth passed away, 21:1-4).

Verses 11 through 21 describe the **exterior** make up of the city (looking at it from the outside); verses 22-22:5 describe the **interior** of the city. Verse 11 shows the glory of the city; the glory of God and the Lord was the light thereof (21:23; 22:3-5). The city is made glorious by the glory of God which fills it. Verse 12 suggests the absolute and perfect security of the city (as cities in ancient times were fortified by great high walls). It had twelve gates, three on each side (vs. 12-13, 21, 25) and an angel at each gate (divine guardians or ministering spirits). The gates had the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel written on them. Thus, the righteous of the Old Testament will have part in it. Twelve foundations implies durability (it has a strong foundation). The names of the twelve apostles written thereon suggests that the saved of the New Testament will have part in it. This corresponds to the 24 elders (4:4) who stand for the redeemed of both Testaments represented by the twelve patriarchs and the

twelve apostles. Thus, the redeemed of the Old and New Covenants are united in the heavenly city (see also Heb. 9:15; 11:40).

In verse 15 the angel had a reed (normally a plant stem similar to bamboo but grows in water as bull-rushes, but here a golden one) to measure the city, the gates and the wall (he will give measurements, descriptions of it). Verses 16 and 17 suggests the enormity of the city (it is of huge, immense size). The city lies foursquare (is as a cube) and is 12,000 furlongs (one furlong equals 660 feet; thus, it was 1,500 miles wide, high, and long. The wall was 144 cubits (one cubit was approximately 18 inches; thus, the walls were about 216 feet thick). This suggests safety and protection. John said that these measurements were "*according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel*" (vs. 17b). In other words, they were no different from that of man and within human understanding though given by an angel. The angel had used man's standards of measurement, but it was to be symbolically applied.

Verses 18 and 19 suggest the value of the city (of great wealth and richness). W.E. Vine says of "*Jasper*," "A Phoenician word, which seems to have denoted a translucent stone of various colors, especially that of fire, Rev. 4:3; 21:11,18,19." (p. 273). The city was of pure gold (e.g., its street, vs. 21) but gold unfamiliar to us for it was like unto clear glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished (decorated, adorned, ornamented) with all manner of precious stones. There are many uncertainties regarding the identities and colors of the precious stones of verses 20 and 21, but that which they typify is not lost--the exquisite beauty of the holy city. In verse 21 John resumes his discussion of the gates (vs. 12) describing each as made of one huge, massive pearl. The street (all streets from each gate evidently are joined together to make up one street) of the city was pure gold and, again, unlike any known to us for it was like transparent glass. It transcends the beauty of any metal known to man. In all these things God seeks to impress upon us the splendor of being a part of that glorious city.

As mentioned above, verses 22-22:5 describe the **interior** of the city. There is no temple in the city for the entire city is the house of worship. The tabernacle of God is with men (21:3). The promise of 3:12 is now completely fulfilled. The celestial city has no need of the sun or moon for God and Christ are the light thereof. It is illuminated by the brightness of the glory of God (21:11); there is not night there (21:25; 22:5). There is only one eternal day, for God and the Lamb are its light. The nations ("*peoples*," 21:3; the saved out of all nations) shall walk in the light of it (shall share in God's glory) and the kings (those that reign for ever and ever, 22:5) bring their glory into it. The gates of the city shall not be shut at night (as in ancient times for fear of invasion) because there shall be no night there. They shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. All the glory and honor sought or achieved by the redeemed shall be brought into it; all the true good out of the nations (Christians) shall be brought into it. All the glory and honor that exists will be inside the holy city; all dishonor and shame shall be outside. There shall in no wise (an emphatic negative; "*shall by no means*" NKJV) enter into it anything that defiles (Greek, "*common*" and means "unclean, filthy, or corrupt"), or works abomination (doing things that are detestable, loathed or hated), or makes a lie (telling lies, being dishonest, believing or practicing false doctrine) shall enter the city, but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life (see Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12,15; 22:19).

In verses 22:1-5, John describes the provisions provided in the city. Three basic things are necessary for sustaining life on earth, water, food, health. This scene symbolizes the provisions for all of these. Jesus promised the water of life (John 4:14) and there we will have it in fullness. The pure river of water of life is that which sustains that new life. The latter part of verse one emphasizes that eternal life comes from God and Christ, the fountainhead of all life. The tree of life was forfeited and lost in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:9; 3:22-24), but will be regained in that holy city (see Rev. 2:7). Notice that the idea is not just one single tree for it was on either side of the river. It is used collectively (as was "*street*" vs. 12) to represent all the trees that lined the river. The tree of life bears twelve manner of fruits ("*twelve crops of fruit*" ASV footnote) and bears each month. This emphasizes that the needs of the saved will be completely and absolutely provided there. They will have constant and perfect abundance. The leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations (for the healing of the nations of them which are saved, see 21:24a). Again, another beautiful expression showing that all needs will be completely and perfectly provided there (see also 21:4).

Concerning the phrase, "*There shall be no more curse*," see Gen. 3:16-19. The throne of God and of the Lamb are together (Jesus sat down with His Father in His throne, 3:21) and it shall be thus in the heavenly city. His servants shall serve Him there (vs. 3); thus, the saints will serve God in heaven. It won't be like their service here for they have physical weaknesses and handicaps here, but there they shall serve Him with a perfect service for all weaknesses will be removed. No man has seen God at any time (John 1:18), but in the holy city they shall see Him even as He is (see 1 John 3:2). The inhabitants of the city are identified as "*the saved*" (21:24), "*those written in the Lamb's book of life*" (21:27), "*his servants*" (22:3), "*those with his name in their foreheads*" (22:4). The phrase "*name in their foreheads*" was mentioned repeatedly throughout the book (7:3; 9:4; 13:16; 14:1,9; 17:5; 20:4) and was a contrast of Christians (those sealed bearing the name of God) with the earth-dwellers who followed this evil world (those of Satan bearing the mark of the beast).

Regarding verse 5a, see 21:11, 23, 25. There is no night in the celestial city; there is one eternal day, for God and the Lamb are its light. The redeemed shall reign "*for ever and ever*" (one of the terms used for eternity; literally, "*to the age of the ages*"). Those who had part in the first resurrection reigned for a thousand years (20:6), but in that great city they reign **forever and ever**. The term shows conclusively that verses 21:1-22:5 refer to the church in its eternal glory and not to the church in this present age. Verse 5 completes the description of the holy city. Instead of questions on chapter 21, consider the following summation of the celestial city:

REVELATION 21:1–22:5 (HEAVEN)

1. The light of it is the glory of God and the Lamb, 21:11,23,25; 22:5.
2. It has a great high wall, 21:12, 17-18.
3. It has twelve gates on which are written the names of the twelve tribes, 21:12-13, 21, 25-27.
4. The wall has twelve foundations on which are written the names of the twelve apostles, 21:14, 19-20.
5. The city was made like a cube and it measured twelve thousand furlongs (1,500 miles), 21:16.

6. The walls measure 144 cubits (approximately 216 feet thick) and were made of jasper, 21:17-18.
7. The city was pure gold (e.g., its street) as transparent glass, 21:18, 21.
8. There is no temple in the city because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple, 21:22.
9. Glory and honor are brought into it, 21:14, 26.
10. There shall be nothing unclean in it, 21:27.
11. The holy city has a pure river of water of life, 22:1.
12. It has the tree of life, 22:2.
13. In the city is the throne of God and the Lamb, 22:1, 3.
14. The inhabitants of the city are those who are saved, His servants, those who are written in the Lamb's book of life, and those who have His name in their foreheads, 21:24, 27; 22:3-4.
15. They shall see His face and reign forever and ever, 22:4-5.

Therefore, we have a beautiful figurative description of God's redeemed dwelling with Him in eternal bliss. It is a glorious picture of a spacious, perfect, durable, valuable, beautiful, marvelous city where the saints will dwell with God and the Lamb forever. The following chart shows that 21:1-22:5 cannot be referring to the church that is now on this earth.

REVELATION 21:1-22:5 (NOT THE CHURCH THAT NOW IS)

1. To picture heaven fits the sequence of the book.
2. Verse 4 – Uses future terms for a better world where the painful experiences of this world will not be.
3. Verse 5 – "He who overcomes" - He who gains the ultimate victory will have these things (see 2:7, 11, 17, 26-27; 3:5, 12, 21-22). The word "overcome" is used in Revelation in the sense of the ultimate victory, even as Christ "overcame" (3:21).
4. Verse 8 – A contrast is made: eternal torment versus eternal life.
5. Verses 12-13 – The righteous of the O.T. have part in it. They were not in the church.
6. Some of the details are not compatible with the church; ex. "twelve gates" (vs. 21), "shall be no night there" (22:4).
7. Verse 22:2 – The "tree of life" (that by which man could live forever, Gen. 3:22-24) is in it. It is not in the church.
8. Verse 3 – "There shall be no more curse" All men and women are still under the curse; i.e., "In pain you shall bring forth children," "Cursed is the ground for your sake" (Gen. 3:16-19).
9. Verse 4 – "They shall see His face" (See 1 John 3:1-3). We see Him only through the eye of faith now, but there faith will be reality.
10. Verse 5 – "They shall reign forever and ever" (lit. "to the age of the ages"). We are not reigning eternally now. Thus, the verses cannot apply to the church.

11. In verses 3-5, John used the word "shall" several times which declares by the inspiration of God that these things are yet future.

Rev. 22:6-9

We now have the epilogue (the conclusion and the closing of the book). He (refers back to one of the angels which had the seven bowls, 21:9) said unto John, "*These sayings are faithful and true*" (dependable and sure, reliable and certain, trustworthy and right). He said that the Lord God (equivalent to the term "*Jehovah God*") of the holy prophets ("*of the spirits of the prophets*" ASV; He endued the prophets with His Spirit to proclaim His message, Deut. 18:18; 2 Pet. 1:21; Acts 1:16; 1 Pet. 1:11) sent His angel to show the things which must shortly be done ("*shortly come to pass*" ASV). The term "*must shortly be done*" and its equivalents is used four times in Revelation (1:1, 3; 22:6, 10) and reveals that God would soon bring the plagues against the wicked to avenge the blood of the saints. To interpret the book so as to embrace the unfolding of events through centuries to follow, is to make the term meaningless. The expression, "*Behold, I come quickly*" in view of its immediate context probably refers to His aid to the saints then (see also 3:9-11), but verses 12 and 20 most likely refer to His second coming (see also Heb. 10:36-37; James 5:7-9; 1 Pet. 4:7). The sixth beatitude (seven in all in Rev.) announces a blessing on the one who keeps the sayings of the prophecy of this book. This repeats the principle set forth in the first beatitude (1:3) and emphasizes the importance of obedience to the commands in Revelation. The same importance is attached to all the Word of God (see James 1:25; Heb. 5:8-9).

The apostle John now adds his own personal testimony. These are the things which he saw and heard (they are his true record, his eye-witness testimony, not hearsay or fictions stories). (Compare John 19:35; 21:24; 1 John 1:1-4). Again, evidently John was carried away and fell down before the angel which showed him these things (see also 19:10). He may not have done this twice, but only repeated again what he once did. The angel rebukes him because: (1) He is a fellow servant of John's, of the prophets, and of them who keep the sayings of John's Revelation (see Heb. 1:13-14). (2) God is the one who is to be worshiped (Matt. 4:10); all adoration, praise, and devotion belong to Him.

Rev. 22:10-15

The angel said to John, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book (do not close or hide these things to the readers) for the time is at hand" (the time for God's avengement is immediately near). He who is unjust ("*unrighteous*" ASV), let him be unjust still, and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still (vs. 11). In other words, let him alone (Matt. 15:14; 7:6; Hos. 4:17) because the last warning has been given. The only thing left for them is receiving their wages and just recompense of reward. The Lord is coming quickly to render to each one according as his work is (Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:25). The thought of the Lord coming quickly is similar to: "*The coming of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James 5:8), "*The end of all things is at hand*" (1 Pet. 4:7) and "*For yet a little while and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry*" (Heb. 10:37). The time is short when compared to eternity.

The terms "*alpha*" and "*Omega*" are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet and correspond to our "A" and "Z." It, along with the other phrases, denotes Christ's eternity or everlasting existence. It identifies Him with absolute Deity. (Compare Heb. 1:10-12; 1 Cor. 15:24-28; John 17:5). Entering the city, where one is entitled to partake of the tree of life, is accomplished by doing God's commandments (vs. 14). Some ancient manuscripts have, "*Blessed are they that wash their robes*" in the place of "*Blessed are they that do his commandments.*" Both are synonymous and necessary to obtain the eternal blessing. Outside the city are those who do not keep His commandments. They will not be given the right to enter into that marvelous city. Notice how they are described in verse 15; those who do not keep His commandments fall into these categories.

Rev. 22:16-21

Jesus, the off spring of David (Matt. 22:42-45; Isa. 11:1,10; Rom. 1:3-4; 15:12), the bright and morning star (a reference to Venus, the forerunner of light, harbinger of day, beautiful and brilliant--see 2 Pet. 1:19) has sent His angel to testify these things to the churches. The Spirit (through the gospel) and the bride (the church) say, "*Come.*" Let him who hears (the individuals) say, "*Come.*" The invitation is extended to all how will accept its terms, "*Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*" Sinners have always been invited to come (Isa. 55:1-3; Matt. 11:28-30). It is appropriate and praiseworthy that in the last words of the holy Scriptures is the invitation of salvation.

If anyone adds to the prophecies of this book, God will add to him the plagues written in it; e.g., famine, morning, and death (18:8) and the lake of fire (19:20; 21:8). If anyone takes from it, God will take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things written in the book. This warning was given to reveal what will happen if one adds to or subtracts from the book of Revelation. However, this is a general principle that applies to any book of the Bible (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5-6; Gal. 1:6-9). One can be guilty of adding to the Word not only by rewriting or changing it, but also by teaching something as if it came from the Word when it did not.

Jesus who testified these things says He will come quickly. This perhaps could refer to His aid to the saints then (1:3; 3:11; 22:7,10), but most likely refers to His second coming (see vs. 12 and comments). John's answer, "*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*" suggests submission and desire. We should strongly desire His help (Heb. 4:16) and with all submission patiently wait for it (Rev. 13:10; 14:12) and, likewise, we should desire His coming (2 Cor. 5:2-3) and submissively wait for it (Matt. 24:42-47; 2 Pet. 3:10-12). The final benediction is: "*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all.*" No greater blessing could be wished or granted to the faithful. "*Amen.*" So be it!

The book of Revelation was designed to give encouragement and hope to the suffering and dying saints of John's day. They were assured of a glorious victory in the midst of bitter and cruel persecution. Their enemies were destined to destruction. The blood of the righteous dead would shortly be vindicated. If they would keep the faith unto the end, they would live and reign with Christ and inherit eternal bliss. Similarly, through John's words we share with them the strength, power and help to overcome. We are assured of victory through the conflicts of life, and are moved toward greater faithfulness as we view that marvelous, heavenly city prepared for us by God and the Lamb.

QUESTIONS ON CHAPTER 22

1. What reply did the angel give to John when he fell down to worship before his feet?
2. What does the expression, "*I am Alpha and Omega*" mean?
3. Which persons are included in offering the invitation to "*Come*" in verse 17?
4. What will happen to those who add to or take from the words of John's prophecy?
5. Do you feel that a study of the book of Revelation has strengthened your faith?