



The Victorious Disciple

Revelation

THE VICTORIOUS DISCIPLE

by

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INTRODUCTION

The title, **THE VICTORIOUS DISCIPLE**, indicates what we consider to be the intent of **THE REVELATION OF JOHN**. This is the golden thread of emphasis throughout this last book of the Bible. The book, written in the form and style of a letter, is to be read in the churches (ch. 1:3) to encourage Christians to stand firm in their faith over against false doctrine and persecution. As Christ has been victorious and now rules as King of kings and Lord of lords, so every disciple of Christ will be victorious if he lets no one seize his crown (ch. 3:11).

Since the Book of Revelation is a form of apocalyptic literature, its interpretation has led to many forms of distortions and misunderstandings. Many Christians read no farther than the first three chapters for fear of being misled. This is unfortunate because they miss so much of the note of triumph and victory which permeates the entire book. The first three lessons, which constitute the **INTRODUCTION** of this book, give an explanation of apocalyptic literature, of the background, symbolism, and methods of interpretation, and of the Old Testament background of the Book of Revelation. It is essential that these be studied carefully before beginning the study of the Book of Revelation itself. Several review or overview lessons (Unit II, Lesson 5; Unit IV, Lesson 1; Unit VII, Lesson 6) are included in the book to keep the title and theme, **THE VICTORIOUS DISCIPLE**, vividly before the student at all times.

The Book of Revelation is best understood as a series of seven broad cycles each beginning either with the life of Christ or the beginning of the Christian Church and completed by the coming of Christ for judgment of the world. Each cycle becomes more comprehensive and decisive as the history of the Church moves on. The outline will indicate the chapters comprising each unit presenting one of the seven visions.

To derive the most benefit from the study of each unit, careful attention should be given to the three objectives (**UNDERSTANDING, ATTITUDE, ACTION PATTERN**) at the beginning of each lesson. If the leader of the study group keeps these clearly in mind, each lesson will make a contribution to the emphasis and clarity of the theme and title of the entire book, **THE VICTORIOUS DISCIPLE**. The **LESSON SUMMARY** should be read in its entirety before study of the individual verses of the lesson is begun. This gives the summary and thrust of the lesson and serves as a guideline for interpretation of the text and the parallel passages. At the conclusion of the textual study each student individually or the class as a whole or in smaller groups should answer the **STUDY QUESTIONS**. These will once more accentuate the theme of **THE VICTORIOUS DISCIPLE**.

There are thirty lessons which, no doubt, will be enough material for study for a normal church group for a year or longer. We are convinced that those who undertake and complete this study under the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God will not only no longer fear and shy away from this Book of Revelation but will learn to love it and to return to it frequently to bolster their faith and courage in living their life, even in the face of difficulties, tribulations, and persecutions, as **VICTORIOUS DISCIPLES** of Jesus Christ, the triumphant King of kings and Lord of lords forever.

— *Walter W. Stuenkel*

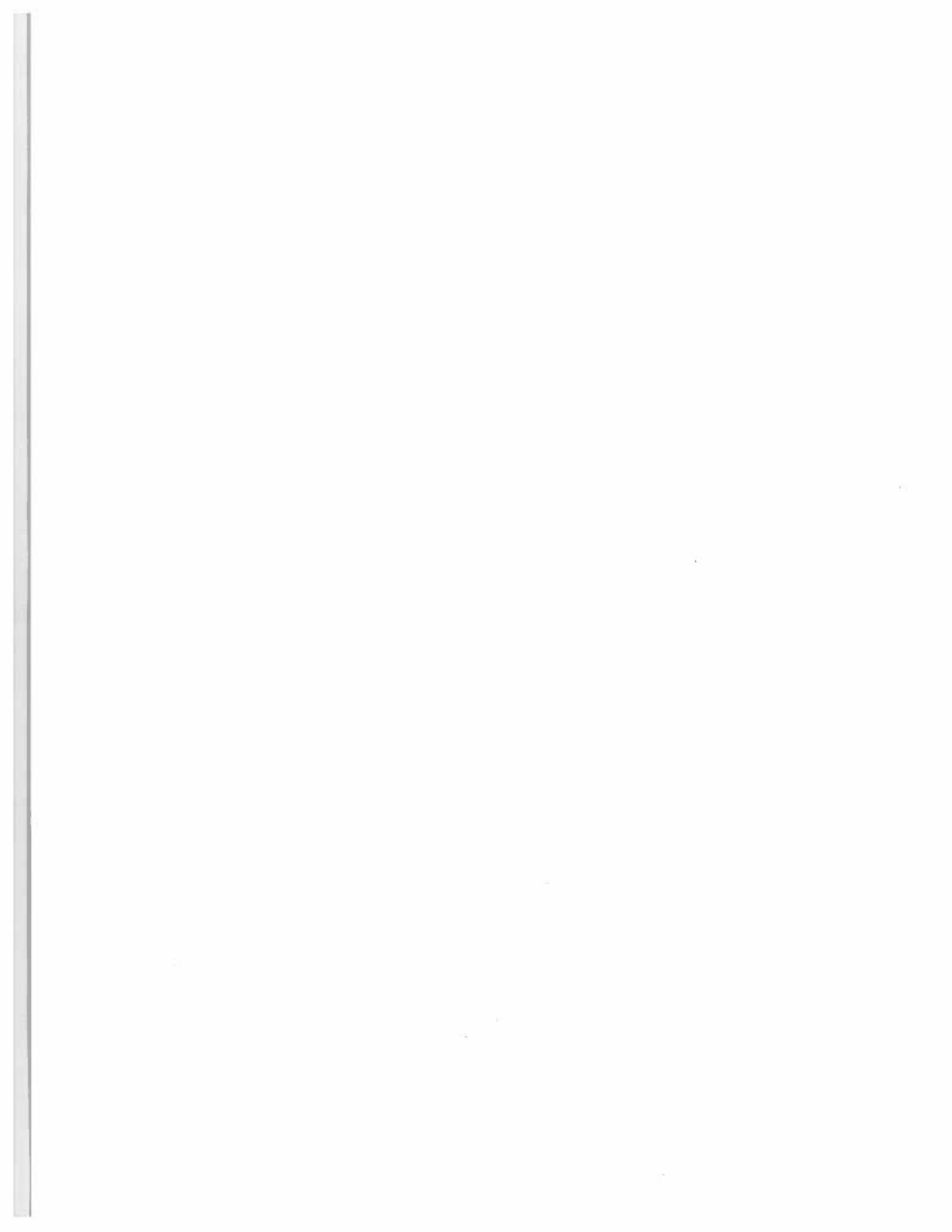


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THE BOOK OF REVELATION

INTRODUCTION

LESSON 1: THE HOLY SPIRIT ALSO CHOSE APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE TO PRESENT JESUS CHRIST TO THE CHURCH

- Understanding:* Apocalyptic literature has certain unusual characteristics that must be recognized and remembered in reading and interpreting it.
- Attitude:* The type of literature used by the Holy Spirit does not vitiate its inspiration.
- Action Pattern:* The student acquaints himself with apocalyptic characteristics and is alert to find instances of these in the Book of Revelation.

LESSON SUMMARY

The Book of Revelation is apocalyptic. It is often referred to as "The Apocalypse" — a Greek word meaning "uncovering." There is much apocalyptic literature outside the Bible but Revelation is the only book of the New Testament that is written in apocalyptic style.

Some of the features to note in apocalyptic literature are: 1) dualism: two opposing forces, good versus evil, cf. Revelation 12:1-5; Revelation 13:6-8; Revelation 18:9-11; Revelation 19:1-2; Revelation 20:2; 2) eschatology: pointing to the end of the world, cf. Revelation 7:9 ff; Revelation 11:19; Revelation 14:16.17; Revelation 19:17 ff; Revelation 21:1 f; Revelation 22:20. Apocalyptic hope is, therefore, always geared to the world to come. And as a result, there is very little ethical and social instruction in apocalyptic literature.

In apocalyptic literature the writer puts himself back into history and from that viewpoint generalizes about the future. It uses many forms of symbolism to comfort the church, especially in time of persecution, Revelation 1:9. Some forms of symbolism are visions, Revelation 4:1; Revelation 5:1; Revelation 6:1; angelology, Revelation 7:1; Revelation 8:2; animal symbolism, sometimes bizarre, Revelation 4:7.8; Revelation 13:1; numerology, Revelation 4:4; Revelation 7:4; Revelation 13:18; Revelation 20:3.

The Book of Revelation claims for itself divine inspiration and authority, Revelation 22:18.19, and promises blessing to reader and listener, Revelation 1:3. It differs from general apocalyptic literature, inasmuch as it is much more definite as to author and source and mentions actual geographical places. It also has a profoundly Christian emphasis.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. Mention any other type of apocalyptic literature, besides the Book of Revelation, with which you are acquainted. Are there any other Biblical books that are apocalyptic?
2. What advantages and disadvantages do you recognize in the use of apocalyptic literature and its symbolism?
3. In view of the apocalyptic character of the Book of Revelation, what are the dangers in interpreting it?
4. In your own words, quote some characteristics of apocalyptic literature and illustrate them from the Book of Revelation.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

INTRODUCTION

LESSON 2: BACKGROUND, SYMBOLISM, AND METHODS OF INTERPRETATION

- Understanding:* The student will misinterpret Revelation if he ignores its first century background, its apocalyptic symbolism, and the church-historical approach in interpretation.
- Attitude:* Even though some of the symbolism may be somewhat grotesque and bizarre, the student will accept all of Revelation as the inspired Word of God.
- Action Pattern:* The student will diligently study the background and symbolism of Revelation to aid him in proper interpretation of the Book.

LESSON SUMMARY

The tradition of the early church states that John wrote the Book of Revelation during or after he returned from his banishment to the Island of Patmos. "In the fourteenth year after the persecution of Nero (54-58 A.D.) John was banished to the Island of Patmos, and there wrote the Revelation . . . Upon the death of Domitian (81-96 A.D.), and upon the repeal of his acts by the Senate, because of their excessive cruelty, he (John) returned to Ephesus, when Nerva (96-98 A.D.), was the emperor." (Jerome) "The Apostle and Evangelist John related these things to the churches, when he had returned from exile in the island after the death of Domitian." (Eusebius).

In the Book of Revelation there is an entirely *new attitude* revealed to the Christians as far as Rome is concerned. In the early missionary activities of Paul he often appealed to the fact that he was a Roman citizen to get help: in Philippi when he had wrongfully been placed in jail, Acts 16, 36-40; in Corinth Gallio dismissed complaints against Paul with impartial Roman justice, Acts 18, 1-17; in Ephesus the Roman authorities were careful for the safety of Paul against a mob, Acts 19, 13-41; in Jerusalem the Roman tribune rescued Paul from what might have become a lynching, Acts 22, 30-40; in Caesarea Paul appealed to Caesar for justice, Acts 25, 10-11.

By the time the Book of Revelation was written, *Caesar worship* was the one religion which covered the whole Roman Empire. Once a year everyone in the Empire had to appear before the magistrates in order to burn a pinch of incense to the godhead of Caesar, and to say: "Caesar is Lord." After he had done that, he could worship any god or goddess he liked as long as this worship did not infringe upon decency and good order. The reason for this was that Rome, thus, tried to weld its heterogeneous empire together.

Caesar worship was not imposed upon the people by the government but it began as a spontaneous outburst of gratitude to Rome. The spirit of the Empire was deified under the name of the goddess *Roma*; *Roma* was Rome personified. Bit by bit, men began more and more to worship the emperor himself instead of the goddess *Roma*.

Caesar Augustus, who died in 14 A.D., allowed the worship of Julius Caesar, his great predecessor. He allowed non-citizens to worship him but not citizens. *Tiberius*, who ruled from 14 A.D. to 37 A.D., somewhat discouraged Caesar worship. *Caligula*, who ruled from 37 A.D. to 41 A.D., was a megalomaniac and insisted on divine honors. He attempted to enforce Caesar worship even on the Jews and have his own image placed in the Holy of Holies in the temple in Jerusalem but died before this took place. *Claudius*, who ruled from 41 A.D. to 54 A.D., reversed the policy of Caligula and sought to control rather than to encourage Caesar worship. *Nero*, who ruled from 54 A.D. to 68 A.D., did nothing

to insist on Caesar worship. He persecuted the Christians because he had pinned the blame for the burning of Rome on them. The next three emperors, Galva, Otho, and Vitellius, who ruled for only eighteen months, did nothing about Caesar worship. *Vespasian*, who ruled from 69 A.D. to 79 A.D., and *Titus*, who ruled from 79 A.D. to 81 A.D., also made no insistence on Caesar worship.

A complete change came under *Domitian*, who ruled from 81 A.D. to 96 A.D. He demanded Caesar worship and erected a monument to "The deified Titus, Son of the deified Vespasian." When Domitian arrived at any theater performance with his empress, the crowd was urged to rise and shout: "All hail to our Lord and his Lady!" He informed all provincial governors that government announcements and proclamations must begin: "Our Lord and God Domitian commands . . ." Everyone who addressed him in speech or in writing had to begin by saying: "Lord and God." Thus, Caesar worship became the deliberate policy; all citizens had to say: "Caesar is Lord." This is the background for the Book of Revelation. Christians were confronted with the absolute choice: Caesar or Christ. It was to encourage men in times like that that the Book of Revelation was written. Domitian's successor, *Nerva*, who ruled from 96 A.D. to 98 A.D., repealed the savage penal laws but the damage was done and Christians were in constant danger.

One of the basic characteristics of apocalyptic literature (as noted in Lesson 1) is its type of cryptic symbolism, often difficult to understand and to interpret. Each vision includes some symbolism which can be interpreted in connection with the respective vision. The numerology represents, however, a more or less consistent symbolism throughout the book: *Seven* (7) is a most holy number (perhaps deriving from the seven-day week) and is the number of completeness – a completed cycle, perfection and consummation . . . *Three* (3) is next to seven in suggested completeness ("beginning, middle, end" and "past, present, future") . . . *Three and one-half* (3½), also 42 months or 1260 days, refers to half of seven and became a common phrase designating a period of particularly harsh persecution. This may have been derived from a phrase in Daniel 7:25 and Daniel 12:7, which predicted a period of serious persecution for the Jews under Antiochus Epiphanes and which actually occurred for 3½ years from June, 168 B.C. to December, 165 B.C. References to 3½ in Revelation occur chapter 11:2, 3, 5; chapter 12:6, 14; and chapter 13:5 . . . *Four* (4) is a sacred number all over the world. It refers to a completed square. There are four directions. Revelation 6:1-8 refers to four horsemen and Revelation 4:6 to four living creatures . . . *Twelve* (12) is a special number because of the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament and the twelve apostles in the New. It, along with its multiples, suggests the church. Revelation 4:4 refers to twenty-four elders and Revelation 7:4 to 144,000 and the verses following to 12,000 . . . *One thousand* (1,000) indicates a very large number or a very long period but with definite boundaries set by God.

Through the centuries there have been four major approaches to the interpretation of Revelation: 1) the praeterist (past) theory: all of Revelation has already happened; 2) the futurist theory; all will still happen, except that recorded in the first three chapters; 3) dispensational: in Revelation we see the last of the sixth and the complete seventh era of church history; 4) church historical: Revelation gives a general prophetic and symbolic picture of church history from the time of Christ up to the Last Judgment and into eternity.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What, in your opinion, were the factors that led to the demand of Domitian to be honored as "God?"
2. What relation is there between Domitian's demand for worship and John's banishment?
3. How does the background of Revelation help us better to appreciate the theme of this Book?

4. Review the symbolism of the numbers with others, so they will be readily interpreted as you read the text.
5. Analyze the four theories of interpretation and come to your own conclusions which is the best one to use.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

INTRODUCTION

LESSON 3: THE USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

- Understanding:* The student will carefully review the Old Testament events, personalities, and quotations referred to in Revelation and note the relationship.
- Attitude:* The student will develop an alertness to Old Testament references and thereby enrich his appreciation of Revelation.
- Action Pattern:* The student will seek to indicate every Old Testament reference by exact location in the margin of the text.

LESSON SUMMARY

Augustine said: "Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet; Vetus Testamentum in Novo patet." (The New Testament lies hidden in the Old; the Old Testament lies revealed in the New.) This certainly applies to Revelation; of the 404 verses of Revelation, 278 contain some type of reference to the Old Testament, even though there is no *direct* quotation. The Prophets and the Psalms are referred to most frequently.

Before mentioning some specific texts, we shall make some broad generalizations:

- 1) No other book in the New Testament draws a more radiant portrait of Jesus as the risen and ascended Lord and as the King of kings and Lord of lords, and, therefore, as the fulfillment of the Messianic portrait in the Old Testament, than Revelation, cf. Revelation 1.
- 2) Clearly Revelation points to the death of Jesus as His supreme work, Revelation 5:6-10, "the Lamb that was slain" as the perfect fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 53.
- 3) Revelation draws from the rich imagery of the Old Testament, particularly from Daniel, chapter 7-12, to give many apocalyptic pictures, Revelation 4:9; Revelation 5:11; Revelation 17:6; Revelation 19:20.
- 4) The Christian church is the new Israel and in many respects can be compared to the Israel of the Old Testament, cf. Revelation 7:4-8. This also holds true of the new Jerusalem, cf. Rev. 21:10-27.
- 5) As the old Israel was in constant danger of compromise with paganism, so, in Revelation, the new Israel is warned about this as one of its greatest dangers, cf. Revelation 2:20-23; Revelation 18:4.

Some of the many individual references to the Old Testament are the following: Balaam, Revelation 2:14 and Numbers 24:25f.; Jezebel, Revelation 2:20 and 1 Kings 16:31; four living creatures, Revelation 4:7 and Ezekiel 1:10; Lion of Judah, Revelation 5:5 and Genesis 49:8-10; tribes of Israel, Genesis 49 and Revelation 7:5-8; eating the book, Revelation 10:9 and Ezekiel 3:3. Many, many others will be noted as the individual chapters and verses are studied.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

1. What do the frequent allusions to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation teach us: a) in regard to the unity of Scripture; b) the relevance of the Old Testament; c) the richness of meaning in the inspired Scriptures; d) the importance of Old Testament study?
2. Would these Old Testament references demonstrate that Augustine was right when he said some Old Testament texts have both an historical and an allegorical meaning?
3. Why, in your opinion, are there more Old Testament references in Revelation than in other New Testament books?
4. Discuss practical ways to discover allusions to the Old Testament on your own in private study.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

UNIT 1: FIRST VISION (Revelation 1:1-3:22)

LESSON 1: JOHN SEES JESUS AS KING OF KINGS IN THE INAUGURAL VISION (Revelation 1:1-20)

- Understanding:* The student is introduced to the purpose of the Book of Revelation and to Jesus Christ in His exaltation as the center of the entire Book.
- Attitude:* The student stands in awe of the majesty and glory of the exalted Christ.
- Action Pattern:* The student notes the characteristics of Jesus Christ which will be repeated and emphasized in the letters to the seven churches.

LESSON SUMMARY

Very directly the opening statement in verses 1 to 8 introduces the subject of the entire book and immediately we notice important differences from other apocalyptic literature. The title of the Book is "the revelation (note the singular) of Jesus Christ." Jesus takes the revelation of the Father and passes it on. Blessing from and through this revelation is promised to those who read it to others, to those who listen to it, and to those who keep it by faith and face the future accordingly.

The book is in the form of a letter with John as the writer and the seven churches of Asia as the addressees. Note the number of triads in these opening verses: three terms or phrases of synonomous nature grouped together. The salutation develops into a beautiful doxology to Jesus Christ for His marvelous work of salvation in our behalf and to His God and Father.

Thereupon John identifies with Christians of all time by referring to the persecution and affliction which are the common lot of all who confess Christ as Lord and God. While John was enduring this suffering on the Island of Patmos, he was given a great vision, the center of which was Jesus Christ in all His glory. What John saw he was told to share with the seven churches, specifically identified, in Asia.

John sees Jesus Christ, "one like a son of man," verse 13, clothed in glorious majesty walking among "seven golden lampstands," verse 12, and holding "seven stars" in His right hand, verse 16, symbolic of His presence among His churches here on earth. John collapses in the presence of this majestic Christ but is personally comforted by the assurance that this is truly Jesus Christ, who died and is now alive forevermore, verse 18.

NOTES

v. 1. The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place; and he made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

v.1. "The revelation of Jesus Christ" – subjective genitive. Jesus is both the Receiver and the Giver of revelation, cf. Matthew 11:27; John 12:49, from the Father. The title "Jesus Christ" occurs only three times and all instances are in this first chapter . . . "to his servants": to God's believing people rather than to the contemplative mystic . . . "what must soon take place" – the first of the many Old Testament references, Daniel 2:28-29 . . . "his servant John": no attempt, as in other apocalyptic literature to carry a pseudonym.

v.2. who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

v. 3. Blessed is he who reads aloud the words of the prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written therein; for the time is near.

v. 4. John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

v. 5. and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.

v. 6. and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

v. 7. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him. every one who pierced him; and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen.

v. 8. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who

v. 2. "Who bore witness": a legal connotation – from eye and ear observance, not from meditation . . . John's witness, like that of the Old Testament prophets, is the "Word of God." It is also "the testimony of Jesus Christ," who is the Word of God, cf. John 1:1, Revelation 19:13; Hebrew 1:2.

v. 3. "Blessed" introduces the first of the seven beatitudes in Revelation: chapter 1:3; 14:13, 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14 . . . Letters of the apostles were read aloud in church services, cf. Colossians 4:16 . . . "Keep" involves not only remembering but also believing and acting on the message . . . "Time" (*kairos*) denotes God's time of grace and opportunity.

v. 4. "Asia": the Roman province in western Asia Minor (Turkey today) . . . "Grace and peace" (*charis* and *eirene*): these are key New Testament terms in all the epistles . . . The triad, "who is and who was and who is to come," identifies God as the eternal Lord of history . . . "Seven spirits": the one Holy Spirit active in the seven churches.

v. 5. The triad about Christ draws from Psalm 89:27.36-37 and Isaiah 55:3-5 to point to Jesus' witness to the truth, John 18:37, to His resurrection "the first-born of the dead," Romans 8:29; and to His rule as king over all, Romans 8:38.39 . . . He did it all because of His boundless love for us, 1 John 4:9.10.

v. 6. The doxology rises to great heights by telling the purpose of Christ's work for us: "priests to his God and Father," Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6; 1 Peter 2:9. We are under the kingship of God and have been made partakers of God's rule and of Christ's priesthood.

v. 7. From the doxology John moves on to a type of introit drawing attention to Christ's return, cf. Daniel 7:13, when even those who pierced Him will see Him, Zechariah 12:10, and many "will wail on account of Him," Matthew 13:42; cf. also Matthew 24:30 . . . "Even so. Amen." *Nai* "even so," "yea" is the Greek counterpart of the Hebrew *Amen*.

v. 8. God the Father is speaking as "the Alpha and the Omega": the first and the last

was and who is to come, the Almighty.

v. 9. I John, your brother, who share with you in Jesus the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

v. 10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

v. 11. saying, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches, to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

v. 12. Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turn- I saw seven golden lampstands,

v. 13. and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle around his breast;

letters of the Greek alphabet. He is the Beginning and the End, the Lord and Master of all.

v. 9. Patmos is a small barren rocky island 40 miles off the southwest coast of Asia Minor. Roman emperors used it as a place of banishment . . . "kingdom": of grace now and of glory hereafter . . . "patient endurance": (*hypomone*) not giving way under trial, Acts 14:22 . . . "testimony of Jesus"; here neither "Lord" nor "Christ" is added because the emphasis is on the manhood of Jesus.

v. 10. "I was in the Spirit": "I found myself in an ecstatic state but still maintained my personality" . . . "Spirit" in the Old Testament involved: 1) creativity (where human possibilities end, there the Spirit begins); 2) eschatology, Isaiah 11:42.61; 3) charismatic gifts, cf. Judges 13:25; 14:6; 4) prophecy, 2 Peter 1:21; Ezekiel 2.2 . . . Lord's day: this is Sunday, not the Sabbath . . . "as a trumpet": John is overwhelmed by the sound, here not so much as an instrument of music but as a signal to alertness.

v. 11. These seven cities formed a kind of horseshoe with Ephesus on the southwestern tip and Laodicea on the southeastern tip. All had seats of Roman government and centers for emperor worship in them . . . "Seven" is a number of completeness, so these may be considered representative of all the Christian churches on earth. Note the statement: "What the Spirit says to the churches," chapter 2:7, 11, 17, 29; chapter 3:6, 13, 22.

v. 12. "Seven golden lampstands": the function of the churches is to express the light of divine presence here on earth, Matthew 5: 14-16; John 8:12, Philippians 2:15.16. Cf. Zechariah 4:2, 10.

v. 13. "In the midst of the lampstands": Jesus keeps His promise of being with the church, Matthew 28:20; Matthew 18:20 . . . His deity is emphasized: "long robe" and "golden girdle" are marks of dignity and of the priestly office. Pertinent Old Testament references here are: Daniel 7:13; 10:5-6; Ezekiel 9:2; Ezekiel 1:24, 26-27; Zechariah 4:2.

v. 14. his head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire,

v. 15. his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters;

v. 16. in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

v. 17. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last,

v. 18. and the living one; I died and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.

v. 19. Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter.

v. 20. As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.

v. 14. "White as snow": adds the idea of luster and brilliance . . . "flame of fire": omniscience.

v. 15. The entire description reminds one of Daniel 10:6 and Ezekiel 1:7, 24. There is no question but that John stands face to face with the majesty of God.

v. 16. This is a grand picture of universal sovereignty emphasizing the theme of the entire Revelation: "Jesus Christ is the Victorious and Triumphant Lord of Lords and King of Kings, God Blessed Forever" . . . "Sharp two-edged sword": cf. Isaiah 11:4, Isaiah 49:2; Ephesians 6:17; Hebrew 4:12 . . . "Sun shining in full strength", cf. Deborah's song, Judges 5:31.

v. 17. "I fell at his feet as though dead": this is a typical reaction when God's holiness and majesty meet man's unworthiness, cf. Isaiah 6:5; Judges 6:22-23; Ezekiel 1:28; Daniel 10:7-9; Matthew 17:6; Luke 5:8.

v. 18. The two triads in Jesus' response: "first," "last," and "Living"; and "died," "alive," and "have keys"; show that Jesus has all the qualities of Jahweh in the Old Testament. His power and majesty, however, always serve His mercy and His love for sinners. He is Lord of all that we might the better be served. Cf. Isaiah 41:10, 13-14; Luke 5:10; John 10:10.

v. 19. "Now," "therefore," (*oun*) because of majesty and sovereignty of Christ, He authorizes and commands John to write His "words of eternal life" (John 6:68) for the church now, that it may courageously live and witness in the light "of what is to take place hereafter." All is under the control of the Living Christ.

v. 20. Jesus explains "the mystery of the seven stars" and "of the seven lampstands" by referring to "the stars" as the "angels of the churches" and to the "lampstands" as the "churches." Who are "the angels of the churches"? Some have thought of them as the pastors. It may be more appropriate to look upon the "stars" ("angels") as the church in divine perspective, the true Christians in a congregation, and the "lampstands" ("churches") as all those considering them-

selves members of a given congregation. Only He who has eyes “like a flame of fire” can distinctively see the difference.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Review the chapter to see how many triads you can locate.
2. Give a verbal picture of Jesus Christ as John saw Him on the Island of Patmos.
3. What truth or what lesson has been most emphatically impressed upon you in this first chapter?
4. With what aspect of this first vision can you identify most completely? Would you give a reason?
5. In this picture of majesty and sovereignty the Gospel still shines through clearly. Quote evidences of this.
6. What is this chapter saying to the church today?
7. How do you explain “the stars” and “the lampstands” in verse 20?

**UNIT I. LESSON 2: THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF THE INAUGURAL VISION
(EPHESUS, SMYRNA, PERGAMOS, THYATIRA). CHAPTER 2: 1-29**

- Understanding:* The student learns the positive and negative characteristics of the first four of the seven churches of Asia Minor according to the analysis of Jesus Christ submitted to and through John the Apostle.
- Attitude:* The student perceives that the Triumphant Christ is personally interested in every Christian church on earth and watches it with care and concern.
- Action Pattern:* The student will analyze the church of which he or she is a member in accordance with the judgment expressed by Christ concerning these churches of Asia.

LESSON SUMMARY

The four letters of this chapter (Ephesus, v. 1-7; Smyrna, v. 8-11; Pergamos, v. 12-17; Thyatira, v. 18-29) follow a similar arrangement: 1) a command to write; 2) identification of Christ as the author by using one or several of the descriptive designations of Himself in the first chapter; 3) diagnosis of the church; 4) commendation and condemnation; 5) exhortation to repentance and improvement; 6) call to attention (*Weckruf*); 7) statement of promise.

The first letter is addressed to the church at Ephesus. Ephesus was the wealthiest and the greatest city in all Asia at that time. It was a free city and the center of the worship of Artemis (Diana). The temple built in honor of this goddess was one of the seven great wonders of the ancient world. The city was a notorious center of pagan superstition as is evident in the account of Paul's ministry there in Acts 19:1-41. It also had a great amount of crime and immorality, but Paul enjoyed quite a successful ministry there. Today, little is left of Ephesus but ruins. Christ commends the church at that time for its steadfast adherence to sound doctrine, verse 2-3. The chief stricture lies in the statement: "You have abandoned the love you had at first," verse 4. Ephesus is known as "the church that left its first love."

The second letter is directed to the church at Smyrna, about 40 miles north of Ephesus. Smyrna was a beautiful city, founded as a Greek colony around 1000 B.C., destroyed, and then rebuilt in 200 B.C. as a carefully planned city with broad and sweeping streets. It was a free city in which culture flourished. The Christian church here was small and suffered serious persecution, much of it at the hand of Jews who were very numerous and influential in Smyrna. Jews played an important role in the martyrdom of Polycarp, the great bishop of Smyrna, in 155 A.D. Smyrna is still a city of several hundred thousand people today, full of brightness, life, and activity. In this letter Jesus assures the Christians He is aware of their problems of tribulation, poverty, and persecution and urges them to remain faithful. Smyrna is "the church encouraged to be faithful unto death."

The third letter is written to the church at Pergamos, the northernmost of all the seven cities. It was built on a tall conical hill and, thus, gave the impression of a royal city, seat of authority. Pergamos was noted for its vast library of some 200,000 volumes. Because Egypt had put a boycott on papyrus; parchment and vellum, writing material developed from the skins of beasts, became popular in Pergamos. Pergamos regarded itself as the custodian and defender of the Greek way of life and the Greek worship of idols. It was, however, also the administrative center of this province of Asia and for that reason Caesar worship was enforced here. One of the Greek idols was Asclepius, "the god of healing," whose emblem, the serpent, is still used by the medical profession. Today, the small town there is known as Bergama. Jesus is pleased that in spite of the evil and idolatrous surroundings the Christians have remained faithful but He warns them about some of the dangerous people that are present among them. This is known as "the church tempted to compromise in an evil community."

The fourth letter Jesus directs to the church in Thyatira, the smallest of the seven cities, lying in an open valley southeast of Pergamos. It was not a strong religious center but it did have a fortune-telling shrine. It was a center of the dyeing industry and active in the trade of woolen goods. Lydia came from Thyatira, Acts 16, 14. The many trade guilds here had common meals with meat previously offered to idols and associated with drunkenness and immorality. The present population of Thyatira is about 20,000. Jesus commends this church highly for its "love and faith and service and patient endurance" but censures it for tolerating "Jezebel," a "prophetess," who is tempting and misleading Christians. He gives strong encouragement to faithfulness. This is known as "the active church tempted to tolerance of evil in its midst."

Two significant features to note in each of these letters are the descriptive characteristics of Jesus taken from the first chapter and their relation to the characteristics of the respective church and the relation of the environment of the various cities to the church located there.

NOTES

v. 1. "To the angel of the church in Ephesus" write: "The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

v. 1. "Holds" (*kraton*) refers to holding in one's grip for the purpose of retaining or restraining or both . . . The references to chapter 1:13 and chapter 1:16 indicate that Christ will use His authority and not tolerate lack of love even though the church is orthodox.

v. 2. "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear evil men but have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and found them to be false;

v. 2. Jesus commends them for contending "for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," Jude 3, even as Paul had encouraged their elders to do, Acts 20:28-31. They have tested "those who call themselves apostles," 1 Thessalonians 5:21, and have discerned "the false," 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. They have applied toil (*kopos*) and patience (*hypomone*), both of which are necessary in dealing with error.

v. 3. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

v. 3. They have acted in accord with the name and revelation of God, James 2:7.

v. 4. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

v. 4. In their fight for the truth, however, these Christians seem to have become harsh and bitter and lost their first love (*agape*) which is always active and self-sacrificing vertically to God and horizontally to the neighbor, 1 Corinthians 13:5-7 . . . "abandoned" (*aphekes*): "let go what you once had," cf. Jeremiah 2:1-2, a picture of Israel's "first love." Love in Christians should constantly be growing, not declining.

v. 5. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works

v. 5. Jesus demonstrated the seriousness of the situation by threatening the very life of

you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

v. 6. Yet this you have, you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

v. 7. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

v. 8. "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: "The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.

v. 9. "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

v. 10. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.

the entire church at Ephesus, Matthew 13:12. The good a church has enjoyed, in faith and in Christian living, in the past can be a blessing if it is recalled and relived in the present, but it can never atone for or cover up present sloth or lack of zeal or love. The only solution is repentance, Luke 3:8; 1 John 1:8-10.

v. 6. There is no definitive derivation of the name "Nicolaitans." Attempts to identify them with Nicolaus of Acts 6:5 or to find a Hebrew counterpart in the name "Balaam" have no scholarly support. The Nicolaitans were a Gnostic sect who wanted to compromise with the world. They were not prepared to be separate from the lusts and evils of the world around them. Jesus commends the Ephesians for "hating the works of the Nicolaitans," which was quite a step for newly converted Gentiles, 1 Peter 4:3-4.

v. 7. Jesus uses an expression urging attention to His Word that He used a number of times during His earthly ministry, Matthew 11:15; 13:9, 13:43, and Mark 4:23. This implies effective hearing which results in action, Matthew 7:24-27 . . . "to him who conquers" describes a believer who listens to the Lord and acts courageously in faith according to His Word. To him Jesus will give that beautiful fellowship with Him that was lost by man's sin in the first paradise, Genesis 2:9 and Genesis 3:22-24. Cf. Revelation 22:2, 14.

v. 8. "Angel of the church": the church in its Godward aspect, as Jesus sees it in its purity and holiness . . . The descriptive terms for Jesus here, cf. chapter 1:17-18, apply well since the church in Smyrna is suffering persecution.

v. 9. These Christians fit the terminology used in James 2:5 "poor of this world, rich in faith." The Jews in Smyrna allied themselves with the Gentiles of the imperial cult and thus identified with Satan, John 8:44, rather than with God.

v. 10. As Jesus had personally steeled His disciples against the animosity of the Jews, Matthew 10:16-23, 34-39, with the words, "Fear not," Matthew 10:26.28.31, so He does now to the church at Smyrna. He says the persecution will be a test of their faith which will be good for them, James 1:2-4.

The Lord will limit the extent: "ten days": symbolic of relatively short time, definitely determined . . . The oft-quoted words urging faithfulness take on new and enriched significance in this context. Cf. Matthew 5:10-23.

v. 11. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who conquers shall not be hurt by the second death.'

v. 11. Similar call to alertness as at the end of the first letter . . . "Second death" refers to eternal damnation in hell, cf. Revelation 20:14; Revelation 21:8; and also Matthew 10:28.

v. 12. "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword.

v. 12. For this third letter Jesus takes the identification of the One with "the sharp two-edged sword," Revelation 1:16. This indicates the sharpness of His judgment on all those both in and outside the church, who are the instruments of Satan referred to in this letter.

v. 13. "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; you hold fast my name and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

v. 13. "Satan's throne" and "where Satan dwells" point to the fact that Pergamos as a city had elements in it that pleased the devil rather than Jesus Christ, e.g. the idol Asclepius or Aesculapius with the serpent as a symbol; the magnificently sculptured altar or monument dedicated to Zeus as *Soter* (Savior); the cult of Caesar worship . . . Jesus commends the church for not denying "my faith": faith in Him as Lord and Savior (*fides quae*, not *qua creditur*), even though one out of their midst, Antipas (otherwise unknown), suffered martyrdom.

v. 14. But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality.

v. 14. While commending the faithful, Jesus condemns those in the church who are eager to compromise with the wicked world around them in Pergamos, perhaps by eating meat offered to idols, 1 Corinthians 8:1-6; 1 Corinthians 10:19-20; or by joining in immoral practices. 1 Corinthians 10:7-9; 1 Peter 4:3-4. He refers to such as holding "the teaching of Balaam," cf. Numbers 31:15-16, cf. also Numbers 25:1-3.

v. 15. So you also have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

v. 15. The matter of compromising that which pleased God with that which pleased Satan was the problem of the Nicolaitines, cf. Revelation 2:6.

v. 16. Repent then. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.

v. 16. Tolerance of or compromise with the idolatrous or adulterous is a sin for which Jesus demands repentance. If this is not forthcoming, He will come "with the sword of my mouth," cf. Revelation 2:12.

v. 17. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone which no one knows except him who receives it.'

v. 18. "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

v. 19. "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first.

v. 20. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and beguiling my servants to practice immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

v. 21. I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her immorality.

v. 17. After the usual call to alertness, Jesus gives the promise "to him who conquers" of "hidden manna" and "a white stone." Those who will not compromise with eating food offered to idols will receive special food: "the hidden manna," some of the wilderness manna, Exodus 16:32-34, preserved as a symbol of God's feeding us forever in heaven. There are many theories about "a white stone" but none authoritative. Those who receive the "white stone" will recognize it as assuring them of the joy and bliss of heaven forever, cf. Isaiah 62:2; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 1 John 3:2.

v. 18. In this fourth letter, the one to Thyatira, Jesus takes the identification of Revelation 1:14.15. His "eyes like a flame of fire" will discover the wickedness of Jezebel and since His "feet are like burnished brass," He will crush her and all her wicked "children" in the midst of this church of Thyatira.

v. 19. With His "eyes like a flame of fire," Jesus has beheld the "good works" of the church of Thyatira: works of self-sacrificing love (*agape*), of true faith (*pistis*), of loving voluntary service (*diakonia*), and works of enduring patience (*hypomone*). Unlike Ephesus, Thyatira has grown and increased in her works for the Lord, especially in deeds of service and endurance. For this Jesus commends this church.

v. 20. But there is a serious reproach and warning for those in this church who want to tolerate a false prophetess who is corrupting the life of the new people of God in their midst. She is called "Jezebel," the princess of Tyre who married King Ahab and brought "the harlotries and the sorceries" of her native land to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, cf. 1 Kings 16:31-32, 1 Kings 18:19; 2 Kings 9:22 . . . Jesus says she is seducing "my servants" (*doulos*): "slaves" bound to Me but serving her. Because of the many trade-guilds in Thyatira, there was a special temptation to tolerance of evil alliances.

v. 21. The Lord tried to turn her around from her immorality (*porneias*: "fornication") which includes all her evil ways but she would not.

v. 22. Behold, I will throw her on a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her doings;

v. 23. and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches shall know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

v. 24. But to the rest of you in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not learned what some call the deep things of Satan, to you I say, I do not lay upon you any other burden;

v. 25. only hold fast what you have, until I come.

v. 26. He who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, I will give him the power over the nations,

v. 27. and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received power from my Father;

v. 28. and I will give him the morning star.

v. 29. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

v. 22. With His feet "like burnished bronze," Jesus will approach this wicked propheticess and will make her bed of adulterous practices a bed of pain for her and for all who will be led to lie in the same bed with her, be this adultery or idolatry. But there is still hope for some of these being misled, if only they will repent, cf. 1 Kings 18:21.

v. 23. "Her children" (*tekna*): those who claim this wicked woman as their "mother" and have become one with her. For these there is only judgment. This will be a dreadful witness to Christ's justice and punishment on those who reject Him and His Word.

v. 24. Fortunately there are those in the church at Thyatira that were not lured away from the truth by Jezebel and her followers to "the deep things of Satan": evidently the Satanic teaching that real satisfaction comes to those who plunge all the way into Satan's allurements. Jesus commends these faithful ones and does not lay upon them "any other burden."

v. 25. The only burden, and this burden is light, Matthew 11:30, is "to hold fast what you have, until I come." To be a faithful disciple of Jesus and to avoid "the deep things of Satan" brings lasting peace and joy.

v. 26. This joy will consist in bringing forth fruit, John 15:1-8, as branches of the True Vine, and of sharing in His powerful Messianic reign, Psalm 2:8.9.

v. 27. This will mean the destruction of the godless as Christ brings to bear upon them all the authority and the power He has from the Father, Matthew 11:27.

v. 28. "The morning star" finds its best interpretation in Revelation 22:16 and gives the promise to all those who remain faithful that they will have Jesus Christ, Lord of lords and King of kings, as their very own forever.

v. 29. The letter closes with the usual call to alertness. This is so essential to the church of Thyatira, for wickedness is right in its midst.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. All seven letters follow a similar style of construction. Mention the seven elements common to all.
2. Seek to relate the chief characteristics of the respective city as well as the characteristics of Christ mentioned at the beginning of each letter to the contents of the letter addressed to a given church.
3. Recall the chief characteristic of each church in one sentence or phrase.
4. Which church, in your opinion, is the strongest and which is the weakest of these four and give reasons for your choice.
5. What is the one consistent remedy suggested to overcome the existing weaknesses or evils in a church?
6. Translate the strengths and weaknesses of these churches into current terminology and conditions in church life today.
7. Of which of these four churches would you prefer to be a member? Why?

**UNIT 1. LESSON 3: THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF THE INAUGURAL VISION
(SARDIS, PHILADELPHIA, LAODICEA). CHAPTER 3:1-22**

- Understanding:* The student learns the positive and negative characteristics of the seven churches of Asia Minor according to the analysis of Jesus Christ submitted to and through John the Apostle.
- Attitude:* The student deepens his appreciation of the interest the Triumphant Christ shows in every Christian church and His watchful care and concern over each.
- Action Pattern:* The student will analyze the church of which he or she is a member in accordance with the judgment expressed by Christ concerning these churches in Asia Minor.

LESSON SUMMARY

The three letters of this chapter (Sardis, v. 1-6, Philadelphia, v. 7-13, and Laodicea, v. 14-22) follow an arrangement similar to the four letters in Chapter 2. Cf. that Lesson Summary. The first letter of this chapter, fifth in the total series of seven, is addressed to the church in Sardis. When Croesus ruled over Sardis, it was the richest city in the world. At that time (540 B.C.), and again some three hundred years later (218 B.C.), the city was conquered because it was "sleeping in security" because the people trusted in the strength of their walls and armed forces. It was destroyed by an earthquake in 17 A.D. but was rebuilt by Roman Caesar Tiberius. At the time of this letter it was the center of the woolen trade of Asia Minor and was very wealthy but also very degenerate. It was known as a pleasure-loving city. Today, little is left of old Sardis except a small settlement called Sart or Sert-Kalessi, consisting of some huts for shepherds. It is located about 25 miles south of Thyatira.

The church at Sardis does not seem to have had the problem of false doctrine or of persecution and perhaps because of that slipped into a spirit of lethargy and carelessness. Amidst the surroundings of wealth and pleasure, the church was led to somnolence and deadness. Only a few of the members demonstrated faithfulness in Christian living. It is known as "the church that was dying."

Quite opposite is the picture in the next letter, sixth in the series, to the church in Philadelphia. The name of the city stems from the man who founded it, about 150 B.C., King Attalus Philadelphus. Some scholars say the name expressed the brotherly love Attalus had for his brother, Eumenus. Attalus founded the city to be a "missionary" of Greek culture and of the Greek language for Lydia and Phrygia. The area was the center of the grape-growing industry and, thus, famous for producing fine wines. It was subject to frequent earthquakes. Today, Philadelphia has about 10,000 inhabitants, most of which are Turks, but about ten per cent are Christians. Philadelphia is the youngest of these seven cities and is located about 20 miles southeast of Sardis.

The church was rather small and insignificant in this prosperous city but it was very special in Jesus' eyes because it was faithful and true and missionary-minded. It is the only church of the seven for which Jesus has no condemnatory statement. It is known as "the faithful church with the open door before it."

The last letter is written to the church at Laodicea. Laodicea was about 35 miles south of Philadelphia, near Colossae, and about 50 miles east of Ephesus. It was founded in 250 B.C. by Antiochus of Syria and named after Laodice, the wife of Antiochus. At the time of these letters it held a prominent position in Asia Minor as a great banking and financial center and also as a strong medical center and a center for clothing manufacturing. It had a rather large Jewish population. The modern city is known as Denizli with a population of about 17,000.

Jesus uses some of the strongest language in both directions, condemnation: "I will

spew you out of my mouth,” and invitation: “Behold, I stand at the door and knock,” of all the letters. Surrounded by all the wealth and medical expertise of the city, the church had become “lukewarm” and self-satisfied. Jesus calls it back in strong and tender terms. This church is mentioned in Colossians 4:16. It had become known as “the lukewarm church.”

NOTES

v. 1. “And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: “The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. “I know your works; you have the name of being alive, and you are dead.

v. 2. Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death, for I have not found your works perfect in the sight of my God.

v. 3. Remember then what you received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you.

v. 4. Yet you have still a few names in Sardis, people who have not soiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy.

v. 5. He who conquers shall be clad thus in white garments, and I will not

v. 1. Jesus uses the self-designation: “Who has the seven spirits of God (ch. 1:4) and the seven stars” (ch. 1:16 and ch. 1:20). This is meaningful because through the creative power of the Spirit He can give new life to the church which is at the point of death. By His Spirit He can create for the church what He commands, Romans 4:17; Ezekiel 37:14 . . . He proceeds immediately to the serious charge that even though it is still called a Christian church, it really has no rightful claim to it because it is “dead.”

v. 2. The word used for “awake” is *gregorein* which implies being awake because of being aroused. The verb is a present imperative and demands continuing wakefulness . . . This is to apply to all the life of the church which must “be made firm” lest it die . . . The problem lies in lack of Christian activity and ministry as evidence of faith, James 2:26; cf. also Ephesians 2:10: not carrying out the works, “not found your works perfect” (completed), which God had prepared that they should walk in them. 2 Corinthians 6:1.

v. 3. In a loving way Jesus pleads with these church people at Sardis to recall and relive their early spiritual experience of being enlightened by the beautiful message of the Gospel, much as Paul does in Ephesians 5:14 . . . Jesus’ words of warning remind one of what He told the Jews in John 12:35-36 and in Matthew 24:43.

v. 4. A few examples of faithfulness still remain in this church. They are clad in the wedding garments of Jesus’ blood and righteousness, cf. Revelation 7:14, not like the man in Matthew 22:11-14. They are the exception to the rule in Sardis and “they are worthy” to be with Jesus in light.

v. 5. They are conquering the temptation to “sleepiness” and will receive a threefold

blot his name out of the book of life; I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels.

v. 6. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

v. 7. "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: "The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one shall shut, who shuts and no one opens.

v. 8. "I know your works. Behold I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut; I know that you have but little power, and yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name.

v. 9. Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie – behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and learn that I have loved you.

v. 10. Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth.

v. 11. I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

v. 12. He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God;

reward: 1) clad in white garments, Revelation 7:14; 2) their names in the book of life, cf., Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 69:28; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; 3) Jesus will confess their names in heaven, Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8.

v. 6. This call to alertness is especially meaningful in the case of this sleepy and secularized church.

v. 7. Jesus calls Himself "the holy one" and "the true one," designating thereby His divinity, John 6:69, and His genuineness, John 14:6a . . . as such He "has the key of David," cf. chapter 1:18. This reminds one of the statement about Hezekiah's steward, Eliakim, in Isaiah 22:22. Only through Jesus can we enter the kingdom of God, John 14:6b.

v. 8. Even though this church seems to have appeared weak and insignificant ("you have but little power"), Jesus was aware of its ministry ("I know thy works"). Because it was loyal to His Word ("you have kept my word"), John 14:23, and ready to confess Him before men ("you have not denied my name"), Romans 10:9-10, Jesus is giving it truly fruitful mission opportunities ("I have set before you an open door"), cf. 1 Corinthians 16:9; 2 Corinthians 2:12.

v. 9. An unusual aspect of this mission's success will be the conversion of Jews to Christ, cf. Revelation 2:9;

v. 10. Jesus demonstrated how much faithfulness to His word means to Him. He will faithfully keep such Christians as His own, cf. Psalm 18:25.27 . . . The truth of this will be borne out in all the visions of tribulation and persecution that follow in succeeding chapters.

v. 11. All tribulations are to be reminders of the imminence of the Lord's return, cf. 2 Peter 3:8-10. It is essential that we continue to adhere faithfully to His Word, lest we lose our "crown," eternal life itself, Revelation 2:10; Matthew 10:38.39.

v. 12. What a beautiful promise to the faithful! The reference to names on pillars may

the New Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name.

v. 13. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'

v. 14. "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

v. 15. "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were cold or hot!

v. 16. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.

v. 17. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

v. 18. Therefore, I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, that you may be rich, and white garments to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see.

v. 19. Those whom I love, I reprove and chasten; so be zealous and repent.

be connected to the custom in Philadelphia to recognize faithful citizens by erecting a pillar, properly inscribed, in a temple in their honor. Jesus will exceed this immeasurably with three inscriptions: God's name, the church's name, and Jesus' name. Who can adequately describe that! 1 Corinthians 2:9.

v. 13. Even faithful Christians need the continuing call to alertness.

v. 14. In this last of the seven letters, to the church in Laodicea, Jesus designates Himself as the "Amen," cf. chapter 1:8, "the faithful and true Witness," cf. chapter 1:5; and, "the beginning of God's creation," some possible reference to chapter 1:17 but especially to Colossians 1:15-18 and to John 1:3.10. Jesus who is the center of God's creative activity wants to be central in the life of the church in Laodicea.

v. 15. As an honest and true Witness, Jesus explores the "limping between two opinions," 1 Kings 18:21, and the judgment of God upon such a lukewarm attitude, Matthew 12:30; 1 John 2:15; James 4:4.

v. 16. But there is still time to change. The verb *mello* is used, which means "I am about to," rather than *thelo* which means, "I will."

v. 17. This dreadful self-delusion reminds one of the Pharisee in Luke 16:15. Instead of being self-satisfied with outward prosperity, they ought to be horrified at inward misery.

v. 18. This tender and warm invitation reminds one of Isaiah 55:1.2. The promise may well refer to three prominent industries of Laodicea: gold – banking; white garments – clothing industry; eye salve – medical center. Cf. Lesson Summary.

v. 19. As Elijah sincerely wanted "to win back" the hearts of the Israelites, 1 Kings 18:37, so Jesus wants to do even more so. He uses *ego* "I" to stress this emphasis. His love for them prompts Him to do this, Hebrews 12:6. He wants them definitely to repent (aorist) and then remain zealous (present imperative) instead of lukewarm.

v. 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

v. 21. He who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

v. 22. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.””

v. 20. Jesus goes even farther to demonstrate His zealous love. This majestic Lord and King, cf. picture of Revelation 1, lovingly comes to the sinner and knocks at the door and declares His willingness to enter. This is the powerful influence which enables the sinner to open, Romans 1:16. He who does will experience the Savior's close fellowship: "I will come to him and eat with him," cf. John 14:23; John 15:5.

v. 21. Even more than that: Jesus promises such people fellowship even with His reigning, cf. 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 22:5. What a promise to rouse them from their self-sufficiency and complacency!

v. 22. Surely the call to alertness is most appropriate here.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. As in the previous lesson, so also here, relate the chief characteristics of the respective city as well as the characteristics of Christ mentioned at the beginning of each letter to the contents of the letter addressed to a given church.
2. Recall the chief characteristic of each church in one sentence or phrase.
3. What, in your opinion, is the primary difference between the church of Philadelphia and the ones in Sardis and Laodicea?
4. Translate the strengths and weaknesses of these churches into current terminology and conditions in church life today.
5. If these seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 represent a composite of Christian churches on earth until the end of time, try to construct this composite and then judge to see if it fits the actual historical situation as you see it.
6. Which would you consider the most negative and the most positive characteristic of any Christian church according to these letters?
7. What most vivid insight have you gained from a study of these letters in reference to the relation of Christ and the Christian church?

**UNIT II: THE SECOND VISION: THE SEVEN SEALS ON THE HEAVENLY SCROLL
(Revelation 4:1-7:17)**

**LESSON 1: THE THRONE VISION: GOD THE FATHER SITS IN MAJESTY ON HIGH
(Revelation 4:1-11)**

- Understanding:* The student gets a glimpse of the serene majesty of God the Father sitting on His heavenly throne, adored and worshipped by the hosts of heaven.
- Attitude:* The student develops a quiet confidence and firm conviction that God has all things, including all future events, under control.
- Action Pattern:* The student will seek to emulate this vision of heaven in his or her personal worship pattern on earth.

LESSON SUMMARY

Properly to understand and appreciate the Book of Revelation, one must view the seven visions as seven repetitive cycles revealing the history of the Christian church from various angles of persecution, deliverance, witnessing, and conquering from the time of its birth to its glorious coronation at the end of the world. Each vision presents a complete cycle, not necessarily sequential to the one preceding, but each one enlarges and intensifies the picture of tribulation which the Christian church must suffer and endure until it is granted final and complete victory over Satan and all evil and is led to enjoy the marriage feast with the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, forever in the glory of heaven.

In the first vision we saw the reality of Christian churches in various types of earthly cities and surroundings, subjected to temptations and tribulations that could easily lead them astray. But we also saw the Exalted Christ "in the midst of the lampstands," condemning that which was wrong and commending that which was of the Spirit of God. Seven times we heard His call to alertness: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

In the second vision the scene shifts from earth to heaven. John is invited to "come up thither." He sees a glorious throne with Someone sitting on it who "appeared like jasper and carmelian." Then John describes what he sees all around the throne: many different living creatures and "twenty-four elders," all doing the same thing: adoring and worshipping "Him who is seated on the throne." It is a majestic manifestation of God's glory and the creatures' worship and praise of Him.

NOTES

v. 1. After this I looked, and lo, in heaven an open door! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up hither, and I will show you what must take place after this."

v. 2. At once I was in the Spirit, and lo, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne!

v. 1. "After this I looked": with these words John indicates a striking incident pointing to the future. He uses a similar expression in chapter 7:1, 7:9, 15:5, and 18:1 . . . John hears the voice "like a trumpet," as in chapter 1:10-11, inviting him to "come up thither," cf. invitation to Moses in Exodus 19:24. John is to see what lies ahead in the future of the church.

v. 2. "In the Spirit" denotes a state of ecstasy with full personal consciousness, chapter 1:10, cf. also 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 . . .

“Throne” is frequently used in the Old Testament as a symbol of majesty and power, Psalm 29:10; Psalm 47:8, Psalm 103:19, Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26; Daniel 7:9 . . . The term “seated” does not refer to resting but to reigning.

v. 3. And he who sat there appeared like jasper and carmelian, and round the throne was a rainbow that looked like an emerald.

v. 3. The two precious stones (jasper and carmelian), used to describe God the Father on the throne, are difficult to identify distinctly. They seem to indicate great majesty and firm judgment . . . The rainbow is “like an emerald”: the restful green that symbolizes calmness and peace, cf. also Genesis 9:13-16; Ezekiel 1:28; Psalm 93:1-5. All is to serve for comfort for the trials to come.

v. 4. Round the throne were twenty-four elders, clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads.

v. 4. The twenty-four thrones and twenty-four elders (multiples of twelve) are best taken to symbolize the consummated church in its totality, referring, no doubt, to the twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament, cf. chapter 7:4-8 and chapter 21:12, and the twelve apostles (including John) in the New Testament, cf. chapter 21:14. Here then we have the Christian church triumphant and glorified before God’s throne, Ephesians 2:6, Romans 8:30, “clad in white garments, with golden crowns upon their heads.” Some see in this a striking picture of the ministry of the Gospel of grace: saints proclaim it on earth and praise God for it in heaven.

v. 5. From the throne issue flashes of lightning, and voices and peals of thunder, and before the throne burn seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God;

v. 5. We are taken back again to Mt. Sinai, Exodus 19:16, where we see God’s display of power and majesty, cf. also Psalm 77:18, Job 37:1-5. But the seven torches, which are the seven spirits of God, symbolize warmth and God’s desire to communicate in love with man, cf. chapter 1:4; John 16:7.

v. 6. and before the throne there is as it were a sea of glass, like crystal. And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind:

v. 6. “A sea of glass, like crystal” refers to the transparency rather than to the smoothness of the sea. Only God can eliminate all barriers between Himself and Man. He has done that through His Son and thus all creation (“four living creatures”) stand in His service, Romans 8:19-24.

v. 7. the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.

v. 7. Referring to the imagery of Isaiah 6:2 and Ezekiel 1:5-10, there is a composite representation of all creation: the wild and untamed (lion), the domesticated (ox), human beings (man), the fowl of the air (eagle).

They represent all creation in the service of God the Creator.

v. 8. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all round and within, and day and night they never cease to sing,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”

v. 9. And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever.

v. 10. the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

v. 11. “Worthy art thou, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for thou didst create all things,
and by thy will they existed
and were created.”

v. 8. With full equipment (“six wings”), in full knowledge and insight of God’s will and wisdom (“full of eyes all round and within”), and in full consecration (“day and night”), these creatures express their adoration and praise of God in a threefold song: “the triple designation of “holy,” (Trisagion or Tersanctus); the threefold name of God (Lord God Almighty); and the triad of time (“who was and is and is to come”). All glory be to God!

v. 9. The living creatures give to God that which belongs to Him already: glory, honor, and thanks, but is denied Him by unregenerate man, Romans 1:21.

v. 10. They are joined in praise by the twenty-four elders. “They cast their crowns before the throne” to acknowledge that they owe everything to Him who is seated on the throne and, therefore, declare their total dedication to Him.

v. 11. Their song of praise gives expression to that. God, not Domitian or any other earthly ruler, is worthy to be called “Lord and God” and “to receive glory and honor and power.” As evidence of God’s unlimited power they mention His creation of all things. God has made all things according to His will. “By thy will they existed,” and then to emphasize how they came to be, they add the words, “were created.” Our Lord and God is the Creator of all things visible and invisible. To Him alone belongs all glory and honor and power! Very wisely, God shows this first to John so that when he sees all the tribulation he may remember and believe that God is still always in control and will guide all things for the good of His own, Romans 8:28.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Recall those aspects of this vision which depict “the serene majesty of God the Father.”
2. Can you see good reasons for giving John this vision at this point?
3. Give your impression and interpretation of the terms: “twenty-four elders” and “four living creatures.”

4. Draw some comforting and challenging lessons for Christians today from this imagery of the “elders” and “the living creatures.”
5. What, in your opinion, is the most important reason for stressing God as Creator, cf. v. 11?
6. Read Romans 1:18-26 and tell what is the inevitable result when man denies God as Creator.
7. What does this vision say to you and to all Christians in reference to trust and dedication to God in life today?

UNIT II. LESSON 2: THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN HAS CONQUERED.
(Revelation 5:1-14)

- Understanding:* The student sees how absolutely essential Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is in a comforting history of the church and the world.
- Attitude:* A grateful spirit of adoration and praise of Jesus Christ develops in the mind and heart of the student.
- Action Pattern:* The student learns to follow the example of those in the vision in praising and serving the Lamb of God.

LESSON SUMMARY

This lesson builds on the previous one in which we saw God the Father in all His majesty sitting on the throne of heaven. Our attention is focused on a scroll in the Father's hand, not mentioned in the previous chapter.

John is alarmed that no creature anywhere can be found worthy to take the scroll from the Father to open it. To his great relief, John is told by one of the elders that there is One who is worthy. He is identified as the Lion of Judah and the Root of David.

Then John notices Someone whom he describes as a "Lamb that was slain" with seven horns and with seven eyes. We recognize these identifications as pointing to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Dramatically, John depicts Christ's approach to the throne, His taking of the scroll, and the spontaneous response of all the creatures in heaven. He gives us the beautiful psalm of praise they sang.

Then John expands our view to include thousands and thousands more all singing a paean of praise to the "Lamb who was slain." As if that were still not enough, John tells us of a third song sung to both the Father and the Lamb, emphasizing that both are equal in majesty and glory, to which the four living creatures add an emphatic "Amen."

NOTES

v. 1. And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals;

v. 2. and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?"

v. 1. "And I saw" adds more important details to the vision of chapter 4. Concentrating on the Father sitting on the throne, John sees a scroll in the right hand. It is filled with writing, inside and outside. This is a permanent record of the future reaction to what God has done in and for the world through His Son. It has seven seals, the number of completeness; it is God's full story, known only to Him and sealed from man's view at present. It is reminiscent of Ezekiel 2:9-3:3; cf. also Revelation 10:2-11.

v. 2. Some have identified this strong angel as Gabriel because the name in Hebrew means: "the strong one of God." Gabriel is connected with visions in Daniel 8:16 and 9:21 . . . The question is not who is able or willing but rather who is worthy? It is more than merely opening the seals, it also involves executing, carrying out, what the document will reveal.

v. 3. And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it,

v. 4. and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

v. 5. Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals."

v. 6. And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders, I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth;

v. 7. and he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne.

v. 8. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and with golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints;

v. 3. Nowhere, in heaven, on earth, or in the realm of the dead, is there a single individual qualified to open the scroll. What a judgment on all of the efforts of men autonomously to reach into the future.

v. 4. This causes John to be so disappointed and frustrated that he starts to cry. Could it be that the will of God revealed through these scrolls will never be carried out?

v. 5. One of the elders, not God Himself or an angel, tells John to stop crying and to look at the One standing near the throne. It is the "Lion of the tribe of Judah," an obvious reference to the Messianic prophecy in Genesis 49:9,10; even as the second connotation, "Root of David," refers to Isaiah 11:1-2. Cf. also Romans 15:12 and Revelation 22:16. This is Christ, the Son of Him who sits on the throne, He who conquered through the cross. The scroll will reveal "what must take place," cf. chapter 4:1, because of the victory of Christ.

v. 6. John describes what he sees. It seems paradoxical that He who is the "Lion of Judah" should now be seen as "a Lamb." Then another paradox the Lamb is "standing" even though John sees it "as though it had been slain." These paradoxes emphasize the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. He alone is the Savior who has and is the key to the future. Cf. Isaiah 53:7 and John 1:29-35 . . . The seven horns point to the omnipotence of Christ, cf. Deuteronomy 33:17, and the seven eyes to His omniscience. Cf. especially Isaiah 11:2-9 and Zechariah 4:10. All of the future of the church is the object of His all-powerful protection and spiritual concern and enlightenment, cf. John 16:7, 13.

v. 7. Now John describes the important step which demonstrates the recognition by the Father of the worthiness of the Son to receive the scroll, cf. Psalm 110; Ephesians 1:20-23; Hebrew 1:1-9.

v. 8. This is a dramatic moment evoking immediate response from the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders; all break forth in adoration and praise. They each have a musical instrument (*kithara*), often translated "harp," but actually more like a

v. 9. and they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy art thou to take the scroll and to open its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God

from every tribe and tongue and people and nation,

v. 10. and hast made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on earth”

v. 11. Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

v. 12. saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”

v. 13. And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all therein, saying, “To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!”

lyre, adding beautifully appropriate background music. They also had “bowls full of incense” and these are described as “the prayers of the saints,” cf. Psalm 141:2. The church in heaven and the church on earth unite in worship and praise of the Lamb.

v. 9. Then follows the first of three doxologies. This one is sung by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders directly to the Lamb, declaring its worthiness because of being slain and having ransomed men for God. Being slain and ransoming lie side by side with Christ, cf. Matthew 20:27-28; 1 Peter 3:18. His work is for all men without exception regardless of blood relation (“tribe”), language (“tongue”), interests or history (“people”), or customs or political relation (“nations”).

v. 10. All can be in God’s kingdom and can be “priests to our God,” cf. Exodus 19:6; Revelation 1:6; 1 Peter 2:9; and they shall reign on earth, not by weapons of war, but by the glorious Gospel of God’s grace and love, Isaiah 55:10-11.

v. 11. The next doxology is sung by thousands upon thousands of angels, cf. Daniel 7:10; Hebrew 12:22.

v. 12. Here the song is in the third person rather than the second as in the first doxology. “The Lamb who was slain” is declared worthy of seven (number of completeness) grand qualities or ascriptions: “power, wealth, and wisdom”: limitless resources and the gift to use all of them in the best possible manner; “might”: control over everything; “honor, glory, blessing”: all the credit for victory won forever.

v. 13. The expansion of the singers grows to include all creatures everywhere in the third doxology. This doxology is sung in honor of both the Father and the Son. Three of the terms “blessing, glory, honor” are the same as in the second doxology, but the fourth (“might”) is *kratos* here (“might that is exercised”) whereas in the second doxology it is *ischus* (“might as possessed”). Where is there anything to match these glorious psalms of praise!

v. 14. And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshipped.

v. 14. This worship reaches its climactic close with a resounding "Amen" by the four living creatures and by complete adoring prostration of the twenty-four elders. O that such appreciation of the Lamb of God would prevail everywhere always!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Find the reasons given in this chapter for Jesus' being essential to a blessed future for the Christian church.
2. Analyze these terms in relation to Jesus Christ and to the Christian church: "Lion of Judah"; "Root of David"; "slain"; "ransomed"; "seven horns"; and "seven eyes."
3. Discuss the implications for your prayer life that lie in comparing the prayers of the saints to "bowls full of incense."
4. Compare the three doxologies as to similarities and differences.
5. Find all the various indications in this chapter of the universality of the Savior's redemption and of the Christian church.
6. What exemplary implications are there in this chapter for the Christians' worship life here on earth?
7. Draw lessons of comfort and inspiration from this vision for your personal life in the world today.

UNIT II. LESSON 3: THE MIGHTY AUTHORITY OF THE SON IS ESTABLISHED
(Revelation 6:1-17)

- Understanding:* The student observes the opening of six seals and learns the symbolic significance of each in the history of the world and the church.
- Attitude:* The student recognizes that "we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22.
- Action Pattern:* The student seeks to find practical historical examples of the symbolic action in this chapter.

LESSON SUMMARY

As the seals are opened we see an active execution of God's plans and purposes in the history of the world and the church. The picture is not one of immediate triumph for the Son who took the scroll from the Father.

What is revealed is a series of tribulations and disasters which seem to be more an expression of the triumph of evil than of the Son of God. The first rider comes on a white horse and so, closely resembles Christ as He will appear in chapter 19:11-21, but it seems much more appropriate to identify him as a false imitator of Christ who proudly "went out conquering and to conquer," verse 2.

The other three follow quite logically. The second is a bright red horse, a symbol of war, "to take peace from the earth," verse 4; followed by the third, a black horse, a symbol of great scarcity of grain and resulting famine. Then comes the fourth horse, which is pale, "and its rider's name was Death," verse 8. All are under God's limiting control. They "were given power over a fourth of the earth," verse 8, no more.

The martyrs, God's faithful witnesses who were the physical victims of wicked enemies and the weapons of death, are depicted upon the opening of the fifth seal as troubled by the seeming triumph of war and famine and death. They cry out, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long?" verse 10. They are assured of eventual victory by the gifts of white robes and the recommendation toward patience "a little longer," verse 11.

Then the opening of the sixth seal opens up the furious floodgates of the full and final destruction of all things when "every mountain and island was removed from its place," verse 14. This will be a horrible time for all those who are not on the side of the Lamb of God, "for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" verse 17.

NOTES

v. 1. Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!"

v. 2. And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

v. 1. It is important to note that the lamb opens the seals. He is the Victor who is worthy to do this . . . But those who expect that the opening of the seals will reveal triumph and glory will be disappointed. The time for that has not yet come . . . One of the living creatures in humble obedience to Christ as the Victor cries out: "Come": *erchou*: "get going, be on your way."

v. 2. For the first four seals we have horses and riders, symbols of God's patrols on earth, Zechariah 1:8-10; 6:1-7. In view of Revelation 19:11, many have identified the rider on the white horse as Christ, but a much better

v. 3. When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"

v. 4. And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword.

v. 5. When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in his hand;

v. 6. and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine!"

v. 7. When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

v. 8. And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with the sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

v. 9. When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of

interpretation indicates it is an imitator of Christ, the Antichrist, who is granted a temporary crown by Christ, but goes out to conquer and harm the church. Instead of a sword, Revelation 19:15, he has a bow, the weapon of God's enemy, Gog, in Ezekiel 38 and 39. All this reminds one of Christ's statements in Matthew 24:4-8.

v. 3. In Matthew 24:6 Jesus speaks of "wars and rumors of wars" and they are symbolized by the bright red (*purros*: fiery red) horse and its rider.

v. 4. Jesus says in Matthew 24:6 these wars "must take place"; even though all mankind will be sick of war and bloodshed, they will experience the same until the end of the world.

v. 5. In addition to the black horse and its rider, the opening of the third seal reveals "a balance," a scale to weigh and measure food in time of famine and scarcity, cf. Ezekiel 4:10.16-17.

v. 6. The denarius was a day's wage for a laborer, cf. Matthew 20:2, and a quart of wheat was a day's ration for a laboring man. He could buy three times as much barley but its nutritional value was much lower. This is an indication not only of inflation but also of maldistribution because oil and wine, the luxuries of the rich (cf. Ps. 104:15), were unharmed and in abundance. The rich get rich and the poor get poorer.

v. 7. The fourth seal is opened in similar manner as the previous ones.

v. 8. The pale horse's rider's name is Death, the dreadful doom of all men, regardless of rank or riches. Hades is the realm of the dead and "follows" death and constantly is enlarged through death . . . But for the present God and the Lamb have set a limit. The instruments of death mentioned here can affect only "a fourth of the earth." The time for total destruction has not yet come.

v. 9. The opening of the fifth seal does not reveal a horse and a rider but martyrs "under the altar." This points to Christians who

God and for the witness they had borne;

v. 10. they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?"

v. 11. Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

v. 12. When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood.

v. 13. and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale;

v. 14. the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

v. 15. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains.

v. 16. calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from

poured out their life through death as a sacrifice "for the word of God and for the witness they had borne," even as John was banished to Patmos for the same reasons, Revelation 1:9. Cf. also Leviticus 4:7, Philippians 2:17; 2 Timothy 4:6.

v. 10. The martyrs address the question of "How long?" to the "Sovereign Lord" (*despotes*), the only time this term is used thus in the New Testament. They recognize the absolute sovereignty of God and the Lamb and wonder why He just doesn't end it all by judging and avenging the blood of the martyrs upon the wicked murderers on the earth. They commit their cause to God as they pray for final judgment to come.

v. 11. The response given to the martyrs assures them of their continued blessed relation to God ("each given a white robe") but encourages them patiently to let all matters rest in God's hands. There are still more that must die the death of a martyr before the end of the world.

v. 12. The opening of the sixth seal portrays a fulfillment of the martyrs' wishes and prayers. The earthquake, the sun darkened, and the moon like blood are all signs of the end, cf. Haggai 2:6 (Heb. 12:26); Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7; Joel 2:10, 30; Joel 3:15; Matthew 24:29.

v. 13. The dramatic comparison of stars falling down from the sky like fruit from a tree during a strong windstorm is just another sign of the end of the world.

v. 14. The sky rolled up like a scroll, and mountains and islands removed are also signs of the final destruction of the world. Psalm 46:1-3 offer great comfort when those things begin to happen.

v. 15. Various classes and ranks of human beings are mentioned who despised the love and patience of God (Romans 2:4) and now find no way of escape from the devastating judgment of God.

v. 16. The hopeless plight of the wicked and their despairing cries are echoes of other Bible

the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

v. 17. for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?"

statements: Isaiah 2:19, 21; Hosea 10:8; Luke 23:30; and Matthew 24:30 . . . What a contrast "the wrath of the Lamb" is to His mercy and grace while there was time for these to repent.

v. 17. God told them this day of wrath was coming. They were forewarned but did not listen, as a result now they must face the wrath of God, Zechariah 1:14-18; Malachi 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Peter 3:10.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. One might expect the opening of each seal to reveal a new victory of Jesus Christ. But, instead of that, what do the opening of the seals reveal?
2. Identify each of the four horses and riders by color and by significance. What do they teach us?
3. What comforting feature for the faithful is emphasized in verse 8 by the phrase "were given power?"
4. What is a martyr? What is the main concern of the martyrs in this chapter? What is God's response to them? Any lessons for us?
5. Find the descriptive terms indicating the final judgment of the world upon the opening of the sixth seal.
6. Could you summarize in one comprehensive statement what the opening of these six seals tells us about church and world history?
7. What elements of Law and of Gospel, applicable to our life today, can you find in this chapter?

**UNIT II. LESSON 4: THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT EVIDENT IN THE CHURCH:
MILITANT AND TRIUMPHANT (Chapter 7:1-17)**

- Understanding:* The student sees God's care for the church militant here on earth and gets a glimpse of the bliss and the beauty of the church triumphant in heaven.
- Attitude:* The student develops a spirit of gratitude for his security in the church militant and a spirit of joyful anticipation for the blessedness of the church triumphant.
- Action Pattern:* The student recalls the names of the tribes of Israel and seeks to visualize the essential components of life in heaven.

LESSON SUMMARY

The sixth chapter closed with the fearful question: "The great day of their wrath has come and who can stand before it?" In this seventh chapter, John is given a twofold answer to this question: one for the church militant and the other for the church triumphant.

There are four angels standing at the four corners of the earth restraining the four winds that would bring disaster on earth. Then John sees the fifth angel with the seal of the living God. This angel tells the other angels why they are to restrain the winds. God wants all His own first marked with His seal so that no harm or disaster will come to them.

Then the sealed are presented under the symbolic picture of the twelve tribes of Israel of the Old Testament, a total number of 144,000, which represents the number of the 12 tribes raised to the second power (12×12) multiplied by the number 10 raised to the third power ($10 \times 10 \times 10$). Each tribe is numbered at 12,000. Judah is listed first, for this is the tribe from which Christ came, cf. Hebrews 7:14. Joseph is listed and Manasseh but Ephraim and Dan are omitted. This is to indicate that God's elect, all of them without exception are safe under His care. They shall stand even in the great day of wrath.

The second part of the chapter pictures the church triumphant in all its bliss in heaven. The vastness of this multitude is described as so great that no man can number it. They represent all different kinds of people of the world but they have this important characteristic in common that they all have white robes washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. Their song of praise gives God and the Lamb all the credit and glory for their salvation.

They are very busy in heaven, serving God day and night within His temple. All the trials and tribulations of life have been removed and, best of all, the Lamb of God is their Shepherd who adds many special blessings to their joy-filled life in heaven.

NOTES

v. 1. After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

v. 2. Then I saw an angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea,

v. 1. The four angels are God's angels under His control and command. Their task is to "hold back" destructive winds that might bring harm "on earth or sea or against any tree." Cf. Jeremiah, 49:36; Daniel 7:2.

v. 2. John sees another angel. This one arises from the east. This symbolizes something good and favorable because "the east" indicated such good things as "the rising of the sun"; the former location of Paradise, Genesis 2:8; and the coming of the Messiah

v. 3. saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads."

v. 4. And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel,

v. 5. twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand of the tribe of Gad,

v. 6. twelve thousand of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand of the tribe of Manasseh,

v. 7. twelve thousand of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand of the tribe of Issachar,

v. 8. twelve thousand of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Benjamin.

according to Judaic tradition . . . This angel carries "the seal of the living God." He represents "*the living God*," not some dead, inactive idol. The "seal" guaranteed official approval, ownership, and protection, cf. Ezekiel 9:4.6 . . . This angel also carries the important direction for the four angels not to allow the destructive winds to harm the world just yet.

v. 3. The four angels are to restrain the winds until all "the servants of our God" have the seal of protection placed on their foreheads, 2 Timothy 2:19.

v. 4. Who are the 144,000? They are made up of "every tribe of the sons of Israel." They represent all of God's people to whom Paul refers as "the Israel of God," Galatians 6:16. The term carries with it a note of victory and security: safe under God's care in the tribulations of the world and especially in the final judgment of God, cf. Matthew 25:34.

v. 5. Of the twelve tribes mentioned, Judah is first, as often in the Old Testament, because from this tribe came the Messiah; then Reuben, the oldest of Israel's sons, then Gad.

v. 6. There is no definitive explanation for the order of the tribes. Here Asher and Naphtali are mentioned and Manasseh, one of the sons of Joseph.

v. 7. Next comes Simeon, the tribe which was denied a land allocation in the occupation of Canaan, because of cruelty to the Shechemites, cf. Genesis 34:25-30; Genesis 49:5-7. The same judgment was pronounced upon Levi but later enriched, cf. Exodus 32:26; Numbers 35:1-8 . . . The third tribe mentioned in this verse is Issachar.

v. 8. The last three tribes mentioned are Zebulun, Joseph, (not his other son, Ephraim, in Israel's history a major tribe of the Kingdom of the North), and Benjamin. The reasons for omitting Dan and substituting Joseph for Ephraim are not given. One of them might be the Jewish tradition that the Antichrist would come from the tribe of Dan, cf. Jeremiah 8:16; and another the apostasy of the tribe of Dan, Judges 18:1-31, and of Ephraim, Isaiah 28:1-15; Hosea 5:3. No definite reasons can

v. 9. After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

v. 10. and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"

v. 11. And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God.

v. 12. saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen."

v. 13. Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?"

v. 14. I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

v. 15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.

v. 16. They shall hunger no more,

be established. The twelve tribes of 12,000 each give a symbolic picture of totality, sealed by God for protection.

v. 9. From the sealing the picture is elevated to the glory of heaven. This is the other half of this picture. The picture of heaven reminds one of the joyous Feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament, Leviticus 23:33-43; Zechariah 8:18-23 and 14:16. Truly a picture of triumphant joy!

v. 10. The psalm of praise echoes Psalm 3:8. Thanks and praise for this one great salvation from sin, death, and hell belong to no man, only to "our God who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb."

v. 11. All three groups: the angels, the elders, and the four living creatures unite in obeisance and worship, cf. Revelation 5:11.

v. 12. Their song is emphatically affirmed with "Amen" at the beginning and the end. There are seven (completeness) ascriptions of praise indicating that complete credit for salvation belongs to God.

v. 13. The elder anticipates the question that must have been in John's mind. It carries the double thrust of identity and origin.

v. 14. John encourages the elder to answer his own question because he knows the elder has the right answer. The elder mentions two distinctive characteristics: these saints suffered tribulation, Acts 14:22, and they cleansed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, Isaiah 1:18; Hebrew 9:14; 1 John 1:7-9. Their victory is totally due, not to their merit or effort, but to the Lamb!

v. 15. For that reason they enjoy the presence of God forever, where their entire life and activity center in service to God, cf. Matthew 20:26-28. They will live and serve like the angels, Luke 20:36. And God will be with them and over them as a tabernacle of peace and blessing.

v. 16. Comparing the life of God's people on

neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

v. 17. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

earth to Israel’s desert wanderings, heaven is pictured as blessed and perfect relief from all problems and pains. Cf. Isaiah 49:9-10.

v. 17. Here the imagery produces the paradox that the Lamb becomes the Shepherd, cf. Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34:23. The refreshing picture of “springs of living waters” and the comforting picture of wiping away “every tear from their eyes” complete this marvelous portrayal of the bliss of God’s saints in heaven, cf. Psalm 126:1.2.5; Isaiah 25:8. This rounds out the second vision of the Book of Revelation, leading us through the history of the church militant to the church triumphant in heaven.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What, in your opinion, gives the saints of God security in the “great day of wrath”?
2. List as many evidences of God’s concern and care for the saints of God as you can find in this chapter.
3. Explain the number “144,000.” Why are there 12 tribes and exactly 12,000 in each? Does this say anything regarding God’s care and concern for the church?
4. Pick out descriptive terms that indicate the reasons why people receive the joy of heaven.
5. List as many implications about the life of saints in heaven as you can find in the expression: “serve him day and night in his temple.”
6. Which of these pictures of God’s people in heaven is most appealing and inspiring to you? Why?
7. Find as many contrasts as you can between the church militant and the church triumphant.

**UNIT II. LESSON 5: CHURCH TRIUMPHANT IN CONTRAST TO
CHURCH MILITANT
(Revelation 1:1 to 7:17)**

- Understanding:* The student takes a panoramic view of church history through all the tribulations to the eventual eternal triumph in heaven forever.
- Attitude:* The student develops an attitude of hope and anticipation as he lives life victoriously in the Christian church.
- Action Pattern:* The student learns to find the Christian church through its “marks” – the Word and the Sacraments – rather than through man-developed signs of evidence.

LESSON SUMMARY

Before proceeding to discuss further visions, it is wise to review the major emphases of the introduction and the first two visions in chapters 1 to 7. It has become obvious that revelation is wholly God’s action. The Triune God makes Himself known and makes Himself felt. All angels, all humans, and all other creatures are dependent on and subject to the revelation and operation of God. All the creatures can do is witness that which has been revealed to them by God. No creature has the revelation inherent by nature. The source and center of revelation is Jesus Christ, John 1:18; Revelation 5:6-10.

God is constantly revealing Himself to the church and to all true members of the church but He remains sufficiently obscure that man recognizes the difference between himself and God, Isaiah 45:15; Romans 11:33-36; Revelation 5:3.4. God reveals Himself through the Word, John 1:1-4; Revelation 1:16, which includes not only a revelation of His Person but also of His deeds and His words.

The church is presented under the picture of a kingdom to indicate God’s control regardless of what trials the church may encounter. Again and again the word “throne” is used. All creation bows before Him who sits on the throne in majesty. The heaping of terms in the doxologies emphasizes God’s sovereignty and majesty. All honor of those who serve before the throne is derived from Him whom they serve. Yet behind the throne is the rainbow, the symbol of mercy and grace.

The heart of this grace is expressed in the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. Only He has the right to receive and open the scroll of God’s revelation of the future. He earned this right by His sacrifice as the Lamb that was slain. This arouses the *new* song of redemptive victory. All creation is redeemed, Revelation 5:11; cf. Romans 8:18-38.

The number of the redeemed in heaven is 144,000, symbol of the immensity of the kingdom but also of the careful concern of God that not one be overlooked. Throughout history there will be an orderly development of the kingdom according to the predetermined plan of God and under His direction and control. Those in the kingdom can patiently suffer and courageously endure because God’s promises are guaranteed by His love in Christ. Those who are not in the kingdom will live to regret it.

The saints in the church may become somewhat impatient because of the continuous suffering of God’s people rather than immediate brilliant triumph and victory, Revelation 6:10. God assures them that the final victory will come very suddenly and unexpectedly and that, therefore, the course of the kingdom cannot be exactly charted by any creature. He does, however, assure the believers that He has carefully sealed them as His own and will allow no outside power to ruin His plans for them, Revelation 7:3; Romans 8:31. By utilizing various Old Testament allusions and references God assures the universality and the continuity of the kingdom from the first believers to the last.

As a glorious climax God gives us glimpses of the church triumphant, forever with Him in the glory of heaven, all tribulation and sorrow removed, and the people of the kingdom

expressing their gratitude and joy in eternal hymns of praise and in continuous service before the throne.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Review chapters 1 to 7 to find Biblical substantiation for the various emphases expressed above.
2. Point out the differences in God's method of revelation in this book from others in the Bible.
3. What answers could you find in these chapters to the questions: "What is the kingdom of God?" and "Where is the kingdom of God?"
4. How must the sovereignty of God and the grace of God be kept in balance in picturing the kingdom of God?
5. What do you learn about the kingdom of God from the symbolic number of 144,000?
6. What are distinguishing features of the church militant in contrast to the church triumphant? In which respects are both the same?
7. Mention all the emphases in these chapters that should inspire disciples of Christ with confident hope and with a spirit of victorious gratitude.

UNIT III. LESSON 1: THIRD VISION. PHYSICAL PROBLEMS FOR MANKIND ON EARTH. (Revelation 8:1-13)

- Understanding:* The student learns to recognize the disturbances in nature as phenomena foreboding the judgment of God upon the world.
- Attitude:* The student sees that man's security in this world is very fragile and uncertain.
- Action Pattern:* The student develops alertness to natural phenomena and relates their significance to his Christian faith and hope.

LESSON SUMMARY

In the second vision only six of the seven seals on the scroll which the Lamb took out of the hand of Him that sat upon the throne were opened. Each one opened scenes of happenings in the history of the church.

One might expect that the opening of the seventh seal would give a picture of the end of all things. Such is not the case. The opening of the seventh seal presents a whole new series of things to come that will cause still more suffering and pain on earth. The end is not yet. The church must still experience much more tribulation, Acts 14:22, and the world must still be much more shaken up before God permits the final judgment to come. As perplexing and frightening as these experiences will be, they are only "the beginning of the birth-pangs," Matthew 24:8.

This eighth chapter begins with the opening of the seventh seal followed by an ominous silence. Thereupon, seven angels, each with a trumpet, take their places. Before any trumpets are sounded by the seven angels, another angel brings the prayers of all the saints of God, mingled with sweet-smelling incense, before God, Psalm 141:2. The prayers of the saints for the coming of God's kingdom invite judgment and restraint upon the enemies. Therefore, this same angel casts down upon the earth such judgments as "peals of thunder, voices, flashes of lightning and an earthquake," chapter 8:5.

Thereafter, the seven angels get ready to sound their trumpets. The trumpet was regarded more as a signaling device than as a musical instrument, Joel 2:1; Zephaniah 1:16; Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16. Here the trumpets are signals of approaching judgments. As each trumpet is sounded God sends another troubling judgment upon nature. God strikes at man's secular tent to show man his insecurity in this world. Every disturbance of nature accentuates the cry of the eagle in chapter 8:13. "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth!" and indicates still greater judgments to come.

NOTES

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| v. 1. When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. | v. 1. It is again the Lamb, the only One worthy to do so, that opens also the seventh seal. The silence indicates eager expectation of what is to follow, Zechariah 2:13. |
| v. 2. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. | v. 2. The article, "the seven angels," seems to refer to angels previously mentioned but evidently it is simply vivid language to call attention to these loyal servants of God who constantly "stand before" Him, ready to do His will, Psalm 103:20, 21. Luke 1:19; Hebrew 1:14. The sounding of the seven trumpets is a striking reminder of the seven trum- |

- pets blown when Jericho was destroyed, Joshua 6:1-16. It was a well-known military signal to the Jews, Numbers 10:9.
- v. 3. And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne;
- v. 3. Another angel is introduced standing at the altar, reminding one of scenes in the temple, Isaiah 6:6-7; Luke 1:10. He has a golden "censer": a small pan or vessel in which incense was burnt. Incense adds fragrance to the prayers of the saints, Psalm 141:2, symbolizing bringing requests to God in the name of "the Lamb that was slain."
- v. 4. and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.
- v. 4. How beautiful to see that the angels of God "mingle incense" with the prayers of God's people before the throne.
- v. 5. Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, loud noises, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.
- v. 5. In contrast to verses 3 and 4, this verse presents the same angel throwing fire on the earth amidst the great commotion of thunder and lightning and shaking. Cf. Ezekiel 10:2; Psalm 29:3-9. The God of grace for the people of God let the world know He is also the God of Judgment.
- v. 6. Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.
- v. 6. This is an impressive pictorial statement that all is in readiness for the various judgments to begin as each trumpet is sounded.
- v. 7. The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, which fell on the earth; and a third of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.
- v. 7. The blowing of the first trumpet is followed by an unusual outpouring of such contrasting elements as cold hail and hot fire and these are mixed with blood, cf. Exodus 9:22 ff (the seventh plague in Egypt) and Ezekiel 38:21-23 (God's threat to His enemy, Gog). No mention is made of man being hurt but the earth, man's abode, is seriously affected. Instead of one-fourth, chapter 6:8, it is now intensified to one-third of the earth and the trees and all of the green grass. Man's physical security is severely shaken and much of it completely destroyed (*katekai*: "completely burned up": term used three times).
- v. 8. The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea;
- v. 8. When the second trumpet is sounded, another strange phenomenon is seen: "a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea." In Jeremiah 51:25 Babylon is referred to as a "burnt mountain." This is another token of judgment and disaster, which will hit the sea rather than the land.

v. 9. and a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

v. 10. The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the fountains of water.

v. 11. The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter.

v. 12. The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

v. 13. Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice, as it flew in midheaven, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets which the three angels are about to blow!"

v. 9. Three effects are seen: "sea became blood" (cf. first Egyptian plague, Ex. 7:20 ff); "creatures in the sea died"; and "ships were destroyed." One-third of the sea's resources: water, fish, and commerce, are destroyed for man. Jesus tells us we may expect "distress of nations in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves," Luke 21:25.26.

v. 10. When the third angel blows his trumpet, judgment is signaled by a great star, blazing like a torch, falling on a third of the rivers and springs, the sources of fresh water for man's sustenance and refreshment. God is Lord of the stars, Isaiah 40:26, and of the waters, Job 12:15.

v. 11. We see the effect of this falling star on the water. The star is named Wormwood (*Apsinthos*). No star has ever been identified by that name by astronomers. It is the name of a bitter non-poisonous herb, which is related to "poison to drink," in Jeremiah 9:15. One-third of the people died as a result of this. It is just another way in which God shows man the insecurity of his physical existence.

v. 12. When the fourth angel sounds his trumpet, unusual things begin to happen in the sky: a third of the sun, of the moon, and of the stars are struck and are partially darkened. These heavenly bodies, placed there by God in creation "for signs and for seasons and for days and years," Genesis 1:14, have seemed so secure and reliable, unable to be hurt by man but altogether under the control of God. When a third of their light is darkened and they are kept from shining a third of the day and the night, man's secular security is still more undermined. This reminds one of the ninth plague in Egypt, Exodus 10:21-23.

v. 13. And this is not the end. Worse things are yet to come, indicated by the loud cry of an eagle (*aetos*) Hosea 8:1, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth." There will be still more serious disasters, cf. Revelation 9:12 and 11:14. "Those who dwell on the earth" are people who show no interest in or respect for God, Philippians 3:19; Revelations 6:10.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Find the different signs and symbols in this chapter that show us that we have here “no lasting city,” Hebrews 13:14.
2. Can you relate any recent or recurring disturbances in nature to those described in this chapter?
3. Describe how you visualize angels and their various services to God and man.
4. Talk about the prayers of God’s people in the light of Revelation 8:3.4 and Psalm 141:2.
5. What indications do you find in this chapter to demonstrate that God does not act haphazardly?
6. Is the intensification of the judgment (from one-fourth to one-third, and all the green grass) a sign of God’s power or of His wrath or of His grace or of all of these?
7. Mention ways that the insecurity of man’s secular environment can be brought to the attention of “those who dwell on the earth.”

UNIT III. LESSON 2: MAN'S PHYSICAL SECURITY IS SHAKEN
(Revelation 9:1-21)

- Understanding:* The student realizes that he must expect that there will be no permanent relief from physical disturbances and disasters in this world but rather an intensification of the same.
- Attitude:* The student lives in the conviction that although he cannot control the evil forces rampant in the world, God can and will do so.
- Action Pattern:* The student becomes much more aware of God's message in nature and in history and relates all this to his knowledge of God and His Word.

LESSON SUMMARY

As annoying as the disturbances in nature and in man's broad physical environment were in chapter 8, they affected man only indirectly. And as the devil said to God about Job, "A man will give everything he has for his life" (Job 2:4), so the eagle announces that the woes of chapter 9 will hit man harder than the first four disturbances of nature in chapter 8.

The fifth trumpet sounds and a frightening vision is seen of the bottomless pit out of which proceeds such a mass of dark smoke that the sun and the air are darkened. To make matters still much worse, from the smoke come locusts who attack and torture men as scorpions would. It is so painful that men long to die but "death will fly from them," verse 6.

Two other unusual characteristics make these locusts unreal and fear-provoking: they have a hideous and horribly frightening appearance and their leader is the angel of the bottomless pit whose name in Hebrew and in Greek means "Destroyer."

The sounding of the sixth trumpet produces another woe upon the earth. A voice, "from the four horns of the golden altar before God" orders the release of the four angels which are restrained at present "at the great river Euphrates." These angels are more vicious than the locusts because they come to kill. They come as a tremendous cavalry, 200 million strong. Horses and riders both present a terribly grotesque and hideous appearance. They are successful in killing "a third of mankind," verse 18.

Unfortunately, "the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues," verse 20, did not repent but continued in their idolatrous and adulterous practices.

NOTES

v. 1. And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key of the shaft of the bottomless pit;

v. 2. he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

v. 1. When the fifth trumpet is blown, John sees something falling from heaven to earth which he first identifies as a star but as it comes closer John recognizes a personality who has the key to "the shaft of the bottomless pit" (*tou abyssou*: a terrible place which even the evil spirits abhor, Luke 8:31).

v. 2. God has been shielding man from this but now has given the key which really belongs to Christ, Revelation 1:18, to open the shaft to the pit and let the evil effects loose upon mankind. It is more than a natural plague. It reveals to man his utter helplessness over against such catastrophes.

v. 3. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth;

v. 4. they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads;

v. 5. they were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion, when it stings a man.

v. 6. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flies from them.

v. 7. In appearance the locusts were like horses arrayed for battle; on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, verse 8. Their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lion's teeth; verse 9. they had scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle;

v. 10. they have tails like scorpions, and stings, and their power of hurting men for five months lies in their tails.

v. 11. They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.

v. 12. The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

v. 3. As the smoke proceeds from the shaft, unusual locusts come with it. Severe locust plagues were bad enough, cf. Exodus 10:12-20; Joel 1:4-2:11; but this is even worse because these locusts "were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth."

v. 4. They direct their fierce attack not on grass or any green growth or any tree (that had been done after the first trumpet was sounded, Revelation 8:7) but directly on man. Only those are protected who have "the seal of God upon their foreheads," cf. Revelation 7:3.

v. 5. They are limited to five months (the life-span of a locust) in their torture of man but those five months (symbolic for restricted period of time) are as hell itself for those being tortured.

v. 6. The torture will be so painful that men will long for death but it will not be granted them. Cf. Job 3:20-23; Jeremiah 8:3.

v. 7,8,9. Even though some of these descriptive terms are similar to those used by Joel, most of them are strange and grotesque. Read them and imagine for yourself the hideous and hellish sight they presented.

v. 10. The comparison with scorpions depicts the poisonous attacking power and the comparison with locusts the limited span of the attack.

v. 11. Another strange feature of these locusts is the fact that they have a leader ("king") who is "the angel of the bottomless pit." His name is given in Hebrew (*Abaddon*) and in Greek (*Apollyon*). Both terms mean "Destroyer." It refers to the devil or to one of his chief agents. God can call forth whom He wants. Hell lies open before Him, Job 26:6; Proverbs 15:11.

v. 12. The first one of the three woes threatened by the angel in Revelation 8:13 has passed. There are still two to follow.

v. 13. Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,

v. 14. saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

v. 15. So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of mankind.

v. 16. The number of the troops of cavalry was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.

v. 17. And this was how I saw the horses in my vision: the riders wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur issued from their mouths.

v. 18. By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur issuing from their mouths.

v. 19. For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails are like serpents, with heads, and by means of them they wound.

v. 20. The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshipping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk;

v. 13. After the sixth trumpet sounded, John heard an unidentified voice. He recognized it as coming "from the four horns of the golden altar before God." Cf. the prayer of the saints, Revelation 8:3-6. Here is another response to those prayers.

v. 14. It is a voice of authority commanding the release of the four angels who have thus far been restrained "at the great river Euphrates." The Euphrates symbolized the area from which destruction had been threatened for Israel, Isaiah 8:5-8.

v. 15. These angels are depicted as having been prepared and standing ready to proceed at the exact time determined by God to be released. Their purpose is "to kill a third of mankind." The attack is on man directly but not on all men as yet, only on "a third of mankind."

v. 16. Very suddenly "troops of cavalry" are introduced. Two hundred million of them, more than have ever been assembled in any army on earth. John is not estimating or guessing. This figure was announced to him.

v. 17. John tries to describe the horses and the riders. The colors mentioned – fire, sapphire (*hyacinth*: dark red-blue), and sulphur (brimstone) – all remind us of hell, cf. Revelation 14:10,11; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8. "The heads of the horses were like lions' heads": symbols of power and destruction, cf. 1 Chronicles 12:8.

v. 18. Death comes to one-third of mankind from the hellish destructive forces issuing out of the mouths of the horses.

v. 19. The tails are also mentioned because "their tails are like serpents, with heads, and by means of them they wound." There was no way for men to defend themselves from these vicious harmful attacks.

v. 20. One would expect that those who were not killed but witnessed what happened to their fellowmen would repent. But they did not. They continued in their wickedness and idolatry. Cf. Psalm 115:4-7; Psalm 135:15-17; Isaiah 44:9-20; Daniel 5:23.

v. 21. nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts.

v. 21. They continued to revel in sins distinctly forbidden in God's Law. Thus, it has ever been with man, Hosea 6:4-11; Amos 4:9,11; Romans 1:18-24. Man must learn that penitence and faith in a gracious God are the only safeguards from destruction and hell.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What conclusions do you draw from the fact that both the locusts and the cavalry are described in such hideous terms?
2. Someone has said, "The devil always remains God's devil," i.e., limited by God. Illustrate that from this vision.
3. Commentators have tried to identify the locusts and the cavalry in definite historical characters. What is your opinion regarding that?
4. What do you understand with the term "the seal of God?"
5. Find evidences in this chapter again of the exactness of God's concern and control.
6. Comment on the reaction of "the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues."
7. Man cannot defend himself against the horrible forces of evil. What can he do?

UNIT III. LESSON 3: GOD IN CONTROL OF LAND AND SEA ALWAYS (Revelation 10:1-11)

- Understanding:* The student learns that although all created things are insecure, God created all things also controls them for the future.
- Attitude:* The student develops confidence that the history of the church in the world is secure, under the guidance and control of God.
- Action Pattern:* The student compares John's experience in learning and transmitting God's message with that of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and draws conclusions therefrom for himself.

LESSON SUMMARY

Six trumpets have sounded but before the seventh is blown there is an interlude to assure the people of God that in spite of disturbances in nature and attacks by the enemies of God, God remains in control and His plan and will for the church will be carried out victoriously.

John is no longer in heaven whither he was lifted up in the first vision, cf. Revelation 4:1. He is standing on earth and sees an angel come down from heaven. It is a mighty and majestic angel "with a rainbow over his head," a beautiful symbol of kindness and love. His face, brilliant like the sun and his legs, like pillars of fire, add to his heavenly majesty. This image is further enhanced by his placing his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.

Attention is called to "a little scroll open in his hand," verse 2. This scroll is different from the one in the hand of God in Revelation 5:1. It is little, not as comprehensive as the other; it is open, not sealed; and it can be taken by John, instead of by the Lamb of God. The angel speaks with a loud lion-like voice and evokes a response or an echo of seven thunders. As John gets ready to write down the message of the thunders he is forbidden to do so by "a voice from heaven."

Instead the mighty, majestic angel brings a different message, introduced with a very formal oath to God the Creator, declaring "that there should be no more delay." All the things foretold and promised by the prophets will be fulfilled. Even though there will be tribulation and affliction and opposition from the enemies of God, God's people can be absolutely sure that what God has prophesied will most certainly come to pass.

Now the voice which John heard from heaven addresses him directly and tells him to approach the majestic angel and take the open scroll. John asks the angel to give him the scroll to which the angel responds that John should take it and eat it. He tells John that "it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth," verse 9. As John takes it and eats it, he finds out the angel told him the truth.

As a final comment, John is told that he will have to prophesy still more "about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." This comment refers not only to the vision in chapter 11 but to those still to be revealed in all of Revelation, esp. chapters 13, 17, and 18.

NOTES

v. 1. Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.

v. 1. Lest any of God's people should lose heart because of the continuing impenitence and idolatry of the world, God sends another angel. This one is mighty and majestic, "wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head," Genesis 9:13; Ezekiel 1:28; Revelation

- v. 2. He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,
- v. 3. and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring; when he called out, the seven thunders sounded.
- v. 4. And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."
- v. 5. And the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven
- v. 6. and swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there should be no more delay,
- v. 7. but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled.
- v. 8. Then the voice which I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land,
- 4:3. His face and legs also symbolize heavenly grandeur, similar to that of Jesus, Revelation 1:15.16.
- v. 2. This angel has a scroll in his hand, smaller than the one God held in Revelation 5:1 which contained the whole story of man's redemption. This scroll will reveal the part which the church will play in the drama of redemption, cf. Revelation 11:1-19, a picture of the disciples of Christ in their service, suffering, and victory with Christ, Matthew 16:24-25 . . . The angel takes a stand on land and sea, an insecure environment for the wicked, but the place where redemption will be proclaimed and lived under the guidance and protection of God.
- v. 3. The angel cries out "with a loud voice, like a lion roaring" for all the world to hear. Cf. Hosea 11:10; Amos 3:8; Joel 3:16. There was an answering echo of seven thunders, cf. Psalm 29:3-11.
- v. 4. There was a discernible message in the sound of the seven thunders and John wanted to write it down but a voice from heaven forbade him to do so. God alone determines what is to be prophesied and preached, 2 Peter 1:21, 2 Corinthians 12:4.
- v. 5. The mighty angel gets ready to swear an oath by lifting up his right hand to heaven, Deuteronomy 32:40; Daniel 12:7.
- v. 6. He swears by God who is described as eternal and almighty and thus able to control all time and all events, cf. Isaiah 40:12-31. Therefore, no man need be frustrated by prophesied and expected events being delayed, 2 Peter 3:8.9.
- v. 7. When the seventh angel will sound his trumpet, "the mystery of God" will be fulfilled. This mystery was announced (*euangelisen*: "told as good news") to God's servants, the prophets, cf. especially Daniel 2:24-45. As God told it, so it will most certainly come to pass.
- v. 8. John receives specific direction to take the scroll from the hand of the angel. The scroll is open because the Lamb of God was worthy to open the seals and did it.

v. 9. So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, "Take it and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth."

v. 9. John follows directions and the angel not only gives him the scroll but tells him to eat it. This reminds one of Ezekiel 2:8 to 3:3, and of Jeremiah 15:16, 17. The angel tells John it will be very bitter in his stomach although it has tasted sweet in his mouth. Ezekiel relates only the experience of the sweetness, but Jeremiah had both, even as John did. The sweetness, no doubt, refers to the thrill of being a part of God's plans and the bitterness to the cost of discipleship to tell the truth of God's judgment to others and to suffer the results.

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

v. 10. John experienced what the angel had predicted. So it will be always with the prophets and people of God.

v. 11. And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

v. 11. The experience John has had with the scroll, he is told, will be continuing as he prophesies "about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings." Not only John but all of God's people have this as their constant obligation and opportunity, Matthew 28:18-20. It will continue thus until the "end will come," Matthew 24:14, and the reaction will always be two-fold: "the savor of death unto death and of life unto life," 2 Corinthians 2:16.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. An aged pastor was asked what he would do differently if he were to start over in the public ministry. He replied, "I would comfort more." How is that illustrated in this chapter?
2. Find as many words and instances of comfort in this chapter as you can.
3. What specific comfort can you draw from the position the angel takes on land and sea?
4. What references and implications about inspiration of God's Word can you draw from verses 4 and 10?
5. Can you relate to the "sweetness in the mouth" and "the bitterness in the stomach"? Have you had any such experience?
6. What assurances do you find in this chapter that "the powers of death shall not prevail against the church," Matthew 16:18?
7. According to verse 11 and related passages what will be the mission of God's prophets and people as long as the world endures?

UNIT III. LESSON 4: GOD PRESERVES THE CHURCH FOR ETERNITY (Revelation 11:1-19)

- Understanding:* The student becomes aware that no matter what the people of God must suffer and no matter how weak and helpless they appear, victory will eventually be theirs.
- Attitude:* The student lives his discipleship with a spirit of victorious certainty and gratitude.
- Action Pattern:* The student studies the biographies of martyrs in the history of the church and sees therein corroboration of the message of this chapter.

LESSON SUMMARY

In a new and different way, God wants to impress upon John and upon all disciples for all time that the Christian church is under His care and protection. John is directed to "measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there." This recalls to mind the picture of the temple in Ezekiel 40-48. This is, of course, symbolically referring to the church of the New Testament.

Specific instruction is given not to measure the court because "it is given over to the nations," verse 2. These heathen will trample over the holy city for 42 months – 1260 days – 3½ years (half of the sacred number of completeness), no doubt, an allusion to the length of time when the Syrian monarch, Antiochus Epiphanes, desecrated the temple in Jerusalem, 168-165 B.C., but in a broader sense referring to the time of persecution for the church. Even during this time when heathen will oppose the church, God will raise up witnesses (*martusin*).

These witnesses are pictured as olive trees and lampstands (cf. Zech. 4:3, 11-14) and their powerful prophesying and miraculous activities remind us of the Old Testament prophets Elijah (2 Kings 1:10, 12; 1 Kings 17:1) and Moses (Ex. 7:17, 19). "When they have finished their testimony," verse 8, the beast, representative of the power of evil from hell, kills the witnesses and nobody gives them burial. "The great city," evidently a symbolic reference to Jerusalem which has become apostate and "where their Lord was crucified," verse 8, is referred to as Sodom and Egypt, places of adultery and idolatry. The general population agrees with the treatment the witnesses received and even celebrates by exchange of gifts the joy of being rid of the judgmental testimony against their sins by these two witnesses.

But after the time of tribulation (3½ days) is over, God brings these witnesses to life and fear grips all those who see them. The witnesses are invited to come up to heaven and the people see them ascend (cf. Elijah's ascent to heaven 2 Kings 2:11). Thereupon, a great earthquake destroyed one-tenth of the city and killed 7,000 people. It is estimated that Jerusalem had about 70,000 inhabitants at this time so this city serves as a symbolic model. Those who were not killed reacted differently than the people did in Revelation 9:20-21. There they continued in sin, here they "were terrified" (*emphoboi*) and "gave glory to the God of heaven" (*edokan doxan*), both terms indicating genuine repentance and faith. This is the end of the second woe. The third woe is predicted as coming soon but not presented here.

Now the seventh angel blows his trumpet and ushers in a picture of the glorious consummation of all things. Voices are heard singing the triumph song: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever," verse 15. The twenty-four elders expand that hymn of praise with their own, giving thanks to God and recognizing that even though enemies attempted to thwart God's plans they could not do so. Victory has been gained for "those who fear thy name, both small and great," verse 18. When the victory songs have been sung, God's temple is opened for His people to enjoy forever while lightning and thunder and earthquakes and hail bring

judgment on the ungodly. Thus, ends the third vision and another cycle from the beginning of the history of the Christian church to its glorious eternal triumph in heaven.

NOTES

v. 1. Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told: "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,

v. 2. but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months.

v. 3. And I will grant my two witnesses power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sack-cloth."

v. 4. These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth.

v. 5. And if any one would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes; if any one would harm them, thus he is doomed to be killed. v. 6. They have power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

v. 7. And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends

v. 1. Here, as in Ezekiel 40-48, the temple in Jerusalem is alluded to as a symbol of the Christian church, 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:19-22. The measuring is an indication of God's careful concern for the church.

v. 2. The court outside the temple is not to be measured because this represents the apostate church, carrying the connotation of "church" but not "living stones," 1 Peter 2:5. The nations, the people of the world, will trample over these during the 42 months (3½ years), the period of tribulation, persecution, and suffering. They will not enjoy the loving care of God because they are not His own.

v. 3. During this period of 1260 days (3½ years), God will have His witnesses who will be "clothed in sackcloth" (symbols of repentance and mourning, Jonah 3:5-10; Matthew 11:21) and they will prophesy. The church is the body of Christ and as Christ is "alive forevermore," Revelation 1:18, so the church will always be there to witness, Matthew 16:18.

v. 4. The symbols of trees and lampstands are allusions to Zechariah 4:3, 11-14 and point to the witnesses as loyal and authentic servants of "the Lord of the earth." Therefore, their message is a judgment to the unbelievers.

v. 5-6. Many aspects of the witness reminds one of Elijah (2 Kings 1:10-12; 1 Kings 17:1) and of Moses (Ex. 7:17-19) but others of Zerubbabel (Zech. 4:6-10) and Joshua (Zech. 3:6-7) or of a king and a priest in general. There is a fusion of symbols and, therefore, the two witnesses cannot be identified with two definite people. The image is that of continual witnesses of God during the entire period so that the world will never be without God's witness to it.

v. 7. God will not permit their witness to be stopped prematurely. But "when they

from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them,

v. 8. and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

v. 9. For three days and a half men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb,

v. 10. and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.

v. 11. But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them.

v. 12. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up hither!" And in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven in a cloud.

v. 13. And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of Heaven.

have finished their testimony" God will allow "the beast" (identified as Antichrist in Revelation 13:1-10, cf. also Dan. 7:21) to kill them.

v. 8. No burial will be granted the witnesses, a terrible disgrace, cf. Jeremiah 22:18-19. "The great city" which is designated by the Holy Spirit (*pneumatikos*: allegorically or spiritually) as Sodom (adultery) and Egypt (idolatry) both under God's judgment. "Where their Lord was crucified" refers not so much to Jerusalem as to the pseudo-church at that time. In the history of the witnessing church, the earthly life of Christ, the head of the church, is repeated. The opposition comes not only from the unbelieving world but the apostate church, cf. John 15:18-21.

v. 9. During the time of opposition and persecution (3½ days), all types of people of the world and the apostate church continue the disgrace of the "martyrs" by refusing burial to them.

v. 10. There is not only disgrace for the martyrs but even rejoicing over their disgrace, cf. John 16:20. They will even exchange gifts, cf. Esther 9:22, because the witnesses had been a constant irritant and threat.

v. 11. But the rejoicing was premature, because after the period of permitted persecution ended, the witnesses, in a picture reminiscent of Ezekiel 37:1-14, come back to life, cf. 2 Corinthians 6:9; Romans 6:9, and the persecutors are overcome with fear.

v. 12. What a paradoxical triumph! God calls these witnesses into His blessed presence in the sight of the people who had celebrated their death and lack of burial.

v. 13. Some refer to the 7000 as a symbol of one-tenth of Jerusalem's population at that time, others think there may be an allusion to the 7000 who did not worship Baal in Elijah's day (1 Kings 19:18). At any rate, it indicates only a portion killed and the others terrified and repentant. This is a better result than occurred in Revelation 9:20-21.

v. 14. The second woe has passed; behold the third woe is soon to come.

v. 15. Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

v. 16. And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,

v. 17. saying, "We give thanks to thee, Lord God almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign.

v. 18. The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

v. 19. Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, loud noises, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

v. 14. The second woe is concluded and the coming of the third is announced.

v. 15. The blowing of the trumpet by the seventh angel results in loud voices being heard from heaven singing a grand song of triumph and victory. The kingdoms of the world have now become (victory is hailed in anticipation as an accomplished fact) the Lord's. What God's saints have prayed for and longed for has been realized!

v. 16. The twenty-four elders, symbol of the church triumphant, add an affirming song of praise.

v. 17. They also speak of God's victory and reign as an accomplished fact and thank Him for it. Note that the expression "who is to come" (Rev. 1:4, 8; 4:8) is not used here.

v. 18. In allusions to Psalm 2:1-12, the hymn of praise reflects God's judgment upon His opponents but His reward of grace and mercy on all those who trust Him and serve Him, "both small and great."

v. 19. God's presence can now be fully enjoyed by His own forever whereas forebodings of terrible judgment continue for the unbelieving enemies of God. God's covenant stands firm and secure.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What pertinent comfort do you draw for the church today from the measuring of the temple of God?
2. Discuss the symbolic time: 42 months – 1260 days – 3½ years, as to its significance to God's dealing with the church.
3. The word "martyr" in the Greek means "witness." Show how that is illustrated in various ways in this chapter.
4. Recall any stories of witnessing and martyrdom from church history that illustrate this chapter.
5. Give your impression of the fulfillment of verse 15 as you see it by faith in God's promises for the future of the church.

6. List all the encouraging notes of victory for God's people you find in this chapter.
7. One of the goals of this lesson is: "The student lives his discipleship with a spirit of victorious certainty and gratitude." Can you indicate how this vision may have helped you toward that goal?

UNIT IV. FOURTH VISION: (Revelation 12:1-14:20)

LESSON 1: SATAN, THE DEVIL, ENEMY OF GOD AND OF GOD'S PEOPLE THROUGHOUT SCRIPTURE

- Understanding:* The student gains a more complete and adequate picture of the devil as adversary in the Scriptures.
- Attitude:* The student recognizes the devil as a serious threat but believes that Christ is stronger and will gain the ultimate victory.
- Action Pattern:* The student studies the characteristics of the devil's personality and deeds in Scripture and is alert to those characteristics in life today.

LESSON SUMMARY

We have come to the center of the Book of Revelation. In broad perspective the seven letters to the churches (chs. 1-3), the seven seals on the scroll (chs. 4-7), and the seven trumpets blown by angels (chs. 8-11) have given us a panoramic view of what Christians may expect in the history of the church until Judgment Day. Even though there has been constant evidence of the presence of Satan in the history of the church ("a synagogue of Satan in Smyrna," chapter 2:9-10; "Satan's throne" in Pergamum, chapter 2:13; "the deep things of Satan" at Thyatira, chapter 2:24; "the angel of the bottomless pit," chapter 9:11; and "the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit," chapter 11:7), the visions that follow will give a much more direct and personal picture of the devil as the enemy of God, of Christ, and of God's people. One sees the picture of a kind of "counter-Trinity (dragon, first beast, second beast) in chapters 12 and 13, and of a kind of "counterchurch" (Babylon) in chapters 17, 18, and 19. The entire Book of Revelation, however, emphasizes that Satan always remains "God's devil," as Martin Luther calls him, always under God's limiting control and eventually completely conquered and vanquished by Christ, the Victorious Son of God and Lord of heaven.

The people of God must take the devil seriously and realize that they "are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places," Ephesians 6:12. For that reason it will be helpful to study references to the devil throughout the Scriptures. Various designations of the devil in Scripture are: Satan (*satan* (Heb.): an adversary, opponent), Job 1:6-12; Devil (*diabolos* (Gr.): accuser), 1 Peter 5:8; Dragon, Revelation 20:2; (symbolically referred to in the serpent in Genesis 3); the Evil One, John 17:15; the Angel of the Bottomless Pit, Revelation 9:11; the Prince of this World, John 16:11; and Prince of the Power of the Air, Ephesians 2:2; the God of this World, 2 Corinthians 4:4; Apollyon, Revelation 9:11; Abaddon, Revelation 9:11; Belial, 2 Corinthians 6:15; Beelzebub, Luke 11:15; and the Wicked One, Matthew 13:19.

What is the origin of Satan? Scripture speaks of "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation," Jude 6. Accordingly, we can conclude that the devil was created as a perfect angel but inexplicably rebelled against his Creator. Jesus speaks of the devil as "a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him . . . for he is a liar, and the father of it," John 8:44. John says "the devil sinneth from the beginning," 1 John 3:8.

Temptation is a favorite device of Satan. It worked successfully in the Garden of Eden, Genesis 3:1, and countless times thereafter, but it did not work with Jesus, Matthew 4:1-11. Throughout the New Testament the devil is pictured as constantly opposing and attempting to thwart Jesus Christ in His life and mission for the salvation of the world: he leads Peter to try to dissuade Jesus from His passion, Matthew 16:23; he suggests betrayal of Jesus to Judas, John 13:2, and leads Judas to carry it out, Luke 22:3; he takes the Word from those who receive it, Matthew 13:19.

The devil also tried to harm the early Christians in various ways: he tried to sift the disciples like wheat, Luke 22:31; he filled the heart of Ananias with deceit, Acts 5:3; he disguised himself as an angel of light, 2 Corinthians 11:14; his messenger harassed Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:7; he went about as a roaring lion seeking to devour the Christians, 1 Peter 5:8; and kept Paul from making a visit to Thessalonica, 1 Thessalonians 2:18. The devil will be limited in his harmful tactics for a definite period of time, Revelation 20:1-3, but "after that he must be loosed for a little while," Revelation 20:3. We can get a vague idea of how terrible that time will be from the words of Jesus in Matthew 24:9-28.

But Satan always remains subject to the power of God and will be ultimately subdued. Jesus saw Satan fall from heaven, Luke 10:18. He triumphantly faced him in His temptation and freed all men from Satan's power by His perfect life, His vicarious suffering and death, and His glorious resurrection, 2 Timothy 1:9-10. Now Christians can resist the devil in faith, 1 Peter 5:9. If they will do so, the devil will flee from them, James 4:7; and God will crush Satan under their feet, Romans 16:20. At last there will be complete deliverance and victory in Christ because eternal fire is prepared for the devil and his angels, Matthew 25:41.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Some believe that too much is being made of Satan today. What is your opinion?
2. Someone recently wrote: "Where once we ignored the demons, now we cower in front of them, despairing, weak, and cringing, unmindful of what the New Testament really says about the devil and all his works and all his ways!" Do you agree?
3. Recount the chief characteristics of Satan that Scripture reveals to help us recognize his evil tactics.
4. As you look at Jesus' encounter with the devil in Matthew 4, do you see any advantage He had over us in withstanding the temptation?
5. What do Jesus and the entire New Testament teach us as to the most effective weapon for fighting against Satan?
6. Read Ephesians 6:10-20 and point out the seriousness of the devil's opposition and the variety of suggestions successfully "to stand against the wiles of the devil."
7. Comment on this statement: "Satan is the strong man, but Jesus has come to bind the strong man and set at liberty those who are oppressed!"

UNIT IV. LESSON 2: THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN MICHAEL, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD, WITH THE DEVIL. Revelation 12:1-17

- Understanding:* The student gains a vivid picture of the vicious but unsuccessful animosity and opposition the devil exercises against Christ and the church.
- Attitude:* The student maintains a spirit of victorious hope in the face of all the tricks and trials to which the devil may subject him.
- Action Pattern:* The student refreshes himself with recollections of victories over the devil by God's people in Biblical and church history.

LESSON SUMMARY

In the visions in Chapters 1 to 11, each cycle, depicting the history of the trials and tribulations of the church, began with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and continued on to the end of the world. In the succeeding visions, which will depict an even more direct conflict between Christ and Satan, the cycle begins already with the birth of Christ and then extends to the end of the world.

John sees a great and new sign which "appeared in heaven." It is a woman in heavenly splendor with the sun as a robe, the moon as a footstool, and twelve stars as a crown. This beautifully attired woman is in the last stage of pregnancy, ready to give birth to a child.

Over against that grand and expectant scene is placed another sign, quite different than the first. This is "a great red dragon," decked out with such symbols of power and royalty as seven heads, ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads. This dragon is the enemy of God and he shows it by sweeping down a third of God's stars out of the heaven with his tail.

But the dragon is especially eager to get at the woman and at the child she is about to bring into the world. The child is born and it is a very special and significant child because it "is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron." The dragon fails in the attempt to devour the child because the "child was caught up to God and to his throne." God also prepared a place of refuge and safety for the mother for the entire period of her threatening danger - 1260 days or 3½ years, cf. chapter 11:2.

Before the story of the dragon and the woman and her child is continued (ch. 12:13 ff.), we are told of a war in heaven between the dragon and Michael and his angels. With great brevity but also great finality we are told the dragon and his angels were defeated and they lost any place they might have had in heaven. There is no place for the defeated ones but on earth. That means trouble on earth because the dragon is identified as "that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world."

The angels and saints in heaven call down encouragement. A loud voice from heaven proclaims a great victory song. The song begins with the word "now" indicating that as a result of the great dragon's defeat "the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come." There is no longer anything to fear for God's people. The devil can no longer accuse them successfully before God. Now all those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and have faithfully kept His Word, even in the face of persecution and death, are absolutely safe and secure in His love. There is reason to sing and shout for joy. At the same time those who dwell on the earth and the sea must expect continued tribulation and distress because the devil is furious and even though he has lost his accusing power, he retains his harming power, and he will use the latter all the more zealously since he recognizes "that his time is short!"

Thereupon the vision of the dragon and the woman is resumed picturing the devil's pursuit of the woman who gave birth to the male child. In an allusion to Exodus 19:4 ("I bore you on eagles' wings"), God's loving protection of the woman is pictured in the wilderness "for a time, and times, and half a time" (3½ years, cf. ch. 11:2 and 12:6).

The devil makes one final desperate attempt to destroy the woman by pouring a tor-

rent of water against her but even that is unsuccessful because good "mother earth" opens up and swallows the mighty stream of water. In utter frustration and bitter anger the devil launches out at individuals "who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus." This will be hard for them to endure but they can do it courageously and confidently because they know the victory over the devil has been won and in Christ they are forever safe and secure.

NOTES

v. 1. And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;

v. 1. "A great portent (*semeion*) appeared." This is the first time this term is used in Revelation which indicates the beginning of a new series of visions. The sign alerts us to God's presence and purpose among men. "A woman" does not refer to an individual here but to all the people of God through whom the Messiah was coming into the world. She is adorned with heavenly gifts: "clothed with the sun," "the moon under her feet," and "a crown of twelve stars" (allusion to twelve tribes of Israel, Revelation 7: 4-8). It reminds us "salvation is from the Jews," John 4:22; Romans 9:4-5.

v. 2. she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.

v. 2. This woman is in labor pains, ready to deliver a child, cf. Micah 4:10; 5:2-3.

v. 3. And another portent appeared in heaven; behold a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads.

v. 3. Over against the first "portent" (*semeion*) a second "portent" (*semeion*) appears. This is "a great red dragon," the bitter enemy bent on destruction of the child being born, chapter 12:9. The dragon demonstrates tremendous power; he has "seven heads and ten horns" and he is the "ruler of this world" (John 14:30), demonstrated by "seven diadems upon his heads," signs of royalty indicating he will use earthly rulers in his wicked plans.

v. 4. His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth;

v. 4. The dragon even reaches into the heavens, cf. Daniel 8:10, and casts a third of the stars of heaven to the earth, evidently referring to the angels who rebelled against God with the devil, Revelation 12:7; John 8:44; Jude 6. But primarily the dragon is interested in killing the child that is about to be born. He stands in front of the woman waiting for the birth to occur.

v. 5. she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,

v. 5. The child that is born is very clearly a fulfillment of Psalm 2:7-9, the Messiah "who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron." Jesus' entire life on earth is summed

v. 6. and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

v. 7. Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,

v. 8. but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

v. 9. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

v. 10. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

up in the statement: “caught up to God and to his throne.” Jesus said it similarly in the words: “I go to the Father,” John 16:10. With all this waiting and plotting and working the devil had no power over Jesus, John 14:30.

v. 6. The woman, the mother that brought the Messiah in the world, the people of God are still in the wilderness but protected and cared for by God even as Israel was in its wilderness journey, Hosea 13:5. That time is also under God’s control: 1260 days, in which the church will be safely kept.

v. 7. The vision of the dragon and the woman is interrupted and will be resumed in verse 13. First, our attention is directed to a war in heaven between Michael, the protecting angel of the people of God, Daniel 10:13, 21, and the dragon.

v. 8. The victorious triumph of Michael and his angels is told in simple words by saying the dragon and his angels “were defeated.” As a result “there was no longer any place for them in heaven.”

v. 9. The defeat and its disastrous results for the dragon are further emphasized by stating that both the dragon and his angels were “thrown down to the earth.” The devil’s power is broken forever, Luke 10:18; Matthew 12:28; John 12:31; 1 John 3:8. The dragon is referred to by various terms: “that ancient serpent” (*ophis archeios*): Genesis 3:1; “Devil” (*diabolos*): “slandering one, false accuser”; “Satan” (*Satanas*): “one lying in ambush”; “the deceiver” (*planon*): “the tricky or deceitful one.” Each term complements the other and gives us a more complete picture of how bad the devil really is.

v. 10. John hears a loud voice declaring an announcement of triumph. The first word is “now” (*atri*) denoting the turning point in man’s destiny. Since man’s accuser (*diabolos*) has been thrown down, salvation (*so-teria*) and the power (*dynamis*) and the kingdom (*basileia*) of God have come for God’s people, Matthew 28:18. Jesus by His perfect life and sacrifice in behalf of all the world has forever silenced the accuser.

v. 11. And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

v. 12. Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!

v. 13. And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child.

v. 14. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.

v. 15. The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood.

v. 16. But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had poured from his mouth.

v. 17. Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

v. 11. The conquering power lies in the blood of the Lamb of God, John 1:29; Revelation 5:12-13. To this all the people of God bear testimony boldly even if it may mean the loss of their earthly life, Mark 8:35; John 12:25, cf. the example of Paul, Acts 20:24.

v. 12. The heavens (plural used only here) and those dwelling therein are urged to rejoice in the victory gained, but earth and sea can still expect much grief and anguish because the devil has been cast down to them and he is very angry and during the short time still allowed to him he will bring havoc and destruction, Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:8.

v. 13. Now we return to the vision of the dragon and the woman with child, cf. Revelation 12:1-6. Since the devil has lost his place in heaven, he wants to make the most of his place and time on earth, so he pursues the woman because she is responsible for the special child that has been born.

v. 14. God, however, is watching over the woman, which is the church of God, and provides "two wings of the great eagle," cf. Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:9-11; Isaiah 40:31, to a place of safety for "a time, and times, and half a time" ($3\frac{1}{2} = 1260$ days = 42 months); the time of tribulation before the glorious end. Cf. Martin Luther's hymn: "Though devils all the world should fill," etc.

v. 15. In a desperate attempt to destroy the woman (the church), the serpent (the devil) spued out a mighty river of water "to sweep her away with the flood," cf. Psalm 32:6. This could refer to physical destruction or to such spiritual problems as "a flood of lies," John 8:44.

v. 16. This also fails because the earth, which Isaiah 11:9 tells us will in the Messianic age be "full of the knowledge of the Lord," "opened its mouth and swallowed the river." Thus, again, the devil's wicked plan is foiled and the church is rescued.

v. 17. Frustrated in his attempt to destroy the child, and now the mother, the dragon (devil) is exceedingly angry and furious. Since he sees the church as such undefeatable, Matthew 16:18, he launches forth against "the rest of her offspring," individual believers

“who keep the commandments of God,” John 14:21, 23; I John 3:23-24, and “bear testimony to Jesus, Luke 11:28; I John 5: 9-11. Those that are “fellow heirs with Christ” must expect “to suffer with Him” but eventually they will also “be glorified with Him,” Romans 8:17. This part of the vision closes with the devil standing on the sand of the sea ready to attack.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Recount as many major instances as you can from Biblical and church history of the devil's attack on the church.
2. Someone has said, “The church in its history re-enacts the life of Christ.” To what extent can you demonstrate this from this chapter?
3. Give the major characteristics of the devil by recalling the various titles and names ascribed to him in this chapter.
4. Find all the various indications of victory and triumph over the devil indicated in this vision.
5. “Caught up to God” describes Jesus' entire life on earth. Explain.
6. How can this vision help you “maintain a spirit of victorious hope” in the face of the devil's work against you?
7. Discuss the descriptive terms of a Christian in verses 11 and 17 and confess freely how they apply or do not apply to you.

UNIT IV. LESSON 3: THE BEAST FROM THE SEA AND THE BEAST FROM THE EARTH. Revelation 13:1-18

- Understanding:* The student is more apt to recognize the false and counterfeit nature of various anti-Gods he encounters in the church and in the world today.
- Attitude:* The student develops a critical attitude in his analysis of religion generally and of the many different religious creeds and theories promulgated through the mass media today.
- Action Pattern:* The student deliberately analyzes the tenets of certain non-Christian groups to find in them similar characteristics to those described in this chapter.

LESSON SUMMARY

The vision continues in depicting satanic opposition to God and His church. As in chapter 12 we saw Satan himself attempting to destroy the child (the Messiah), then the mother (the church), and then "the rest of her offspring" (individual believers). In chapter 13 he works such opposition through two "beasts" (anti-Christian powers in the world). One can detect a clever imitation of God in the devil's attempts at attack. Since God is revealed in a Trinity of Persons (cf. ch. 1:4-5), the devil tries to imitate the trinitarian idea by an anti-Trinity: the dragon himself (ch. 12), as the anti-Christian chief; the first beast (ch. 13:1-10) as anti-Christian power; and the second beast (ch. 13:11-18) as anti-Christian propaganda.

John sees the first beast rising out of the sea. He is looking west toward Rome, the great anti-Christian world power emphasizing worship of its emperor as a god. The beast John sees has the horns and seven heads. One is reminded of the image in Daniel 7:7 with ten horns and of the seven hills on which Rome was built. It carries ten diadems on its horns and "a blasphemous name upon its heads," perhaps the title "Lord and God" which Emperor Domitian claimed for himself. John's description of the beast is a grotesque conglomerate of the image in Daniel 7:4-7. The dragon endues the beast with "his power and his throne and great authority," a distorted imitation of what Jesus says about Himself in Matthew 28:18.

The distorted imitation continues with the mortal wound that is healed resulting in the whole earth respecting and adoring "the beast with wonder." What a dreadfully weak imitation of Jesus' death and resurrection. But it served its purpose. Men began to worship the dragon and the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" This makes the beast bold enough to make some blasphemous claims for itself.

During the period of tribulation for the church (42 months), God permits the beast to go even farther. It can speak blasphemies against Him, against His name and also against heaven and the angels. It can also persecute the Christians and "conquer them." Then even as in Revelation 5:9-10 people from all over the world worshipped Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, so here "all who dwell on earth" worship this beast, the imitation of the Lamb. But there is one decided difference: the worship comes only from such "whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain." Accordingly, God adds, "a call for the endurance and faith of the saints," by urging His people to remember the words of Jeremiah 15:1-2, not to fight against the beast but patiently to endure the persecution trusting that God has all things under control.

Then John seems to turn around to the east as he stands on the Island of Patmos and to look toward the land, toward Asia Minor. Here he sees "another beast which arose out of the earth." As the first was an imitation of Christ, so this is an imitation of the Holy Spirit, completing the anti-Trinitarian picture. This beast had "two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon." It reminds one of Jesus' description of false prophets in Matthew

7:15: "sheep's clothing" (lamb) and "ravenous wolves" (dragon). This second beast works altogether to glorify the first beast (caricature of John 16:13-15). Even as God predicted in 2 Thessalonians 2:9ff, this anti-Christian beast will perform great signs, even make fire come down from heaven, (cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 18:38 and 2 Kings 1:10 ff.). These miraculous signs, which God permits it to perform, deceive many of the people. These miracle workers were, no doubt, the members of the cult of Caesar who worshipped images of Domitian and even credited them with life and speech. They were so rabid in their cult worship that they killed those who refused to participate.

To identify all those, "both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave," who worshipped the first beast, members of the cult of Caesar, the mark of the Caesar (*charagma*) was placed on them. Again a poor imitation of God sealing His saints in Revelation 7:1-8. This mark of the Caesar (*charagma*) was essential for health and well-being because it was decreed that "no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name." That number is given as 666 (some manuscripts have 616). Many scholars have tried in many different ways to decipher this number but there is no general agreement. If we do what many have done, namely, put numerical values on letters (gematria or cryptogram), the suggestion of Irenaeus, at about 150 A.D., is as good as any, taking the numerical value of the Greek letters spelling out LATEINOS: "the Latin or the Roman person": L = 30; A = 1; T = 300; E = 5; I = 10; N = 50; O = 70; S = 200; for a total of 666. All the rest of the description points to the Roman rulership as the first beast. Perhaps a better explanation is that the three sixes (666) indicate the anti-Trinity falling short of three sevens (777), the number of completeness, and, thus, pointing to the anti-Trinity (dragon, first beast, second beast) as a poor imitation of the true Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

NOTES

v. 1. And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads.

v. 1. The "beast rising out of the sea" is more than an individual, it is an organization with horns and heads and diadems, all signs of power, and so has been rather consistently identified as the Roman Emperorship, which especially at this time was claiming deification for itself. It has "a blasphemous name upon its heads." This beast is a degrading imitation of the Lamb of God who came not to be served but to serve, Matthew 20:28, whereas the Roman emperors lorded it over others, Matthew 20:25. Domitian, who ruled from 81 A.D. to 96 A.D., informed all provincial governors that government announcements and proclamations had to begin with the words: "Our Lord and God Domitian commands" . . . Everyone who addressed him in speech or in writing had to begin by saying: "Lord and God." Thus, Caesar worship became the deliberate policy of the Roman empire.

v. 2. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave

v. 2. In describing the beast, reference is made to the image in Daniel 7: "like a leopard," Daniel 7:6; feet "like a bear's," Daniel 7:5; mouth "like a lion's," Daniel 7:4. The

his power and his throne and great authority.

v. 3. One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth followed the beast with wonder.

v. 4. Men worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

v. 5. And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months;

v. 6. it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

v. 7. Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation,

v. 8. and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.

composite points to a world power, to which the dragon gives "his power and his throne and great authority," 2 Thessalonians 2:9. As in Revelation 5:12 authority is given to the beast. There it is the Father and the Son, over against that here it is the dragon (devil) and the beast (Roman emperor).

v. 3. The imitation of Christ extends even to "a mortal wound" inflicted on one of the heads of the beast and then being healed, cf. Revelation 5:6, arousing wonder and adoration from the whole world. Some have referred this to the "Nero-redivivus" legend but it seems to leave it more general and refer it to the fact that Roman imperialism continued strong in spite of serious attacks.

v. 4. So great was the Roman emperor in the minds of the people that the question was no longer as in Exodus 15:11: "Who, Lord, is like you among the gods?", but rather "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?" The adoration for glory and invincibility went to the dragon and the beast instead of to God and the Lamb.

v. 5. Yet the dragon and the beast remain under God's control. He sets the limits of their power ("was given" and "was allowed") and of their time (42 months – 3½ years – 1260 days).

v. 6. The dragon and the beast seem to be unaware of God's majesty and power. They blasphemously speak against Him; against His name; against heaven, His dwelling; and against His holy angels, who dwell in heaven.

v. 7. God's permissive control ("it was allowed" and "authority was given") is extended to allow a worldwide persecution of Christians. What similarity and yet what a contrast to the worldwide activity of the Lamb, Revelation 5:9; 7:9.

v. 8. The success of the beast makes such an impression on people all over the world ("all who dwell on earth") that they worship the beast. Those, however, whose names were written in the book of life, the elect of God, Revelation 3:5; 21:27, were not misled. They saw the sham and emptiness of it all and continued to worship God and the Lamb.

v. 9. If any one has an ear, let him hear:

v. 10. If any one is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

v. 11. Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

v. 12. It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.

v. 13. It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men;

v. 14. and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived;

v. 15. and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who will not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

v. 9. In view of the danger and the seriousness of the situation, all the saints are urged to hear effectively.

v. 10. These words are an allusion to Jeremiah 15:2 and reflect the attitude we might expect from Christians in the face of persecution and death, not an attitude of vengeance, Matthew 26:5, 52, but rather an attitude of endurance and faith, 1 Peter 2:20; Revelation 6:11.

v. 11. John sees another beast as he looks landward to Asia Minor. This beast wants to give the appearance of innocence ("two horns like a lamb") but when it speaks it shows its Satanic character ("spoke like a dragon"), cf. Matthew 7:15.

v. 12. Like the Holy Spirit points to Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, John 16:13-15, so this beast, the anti-Spirit, "makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast."

v. 13. To impress "the earth and its inhabitants," the beast "works great signs," an example of which is "making fire come down from heaven" as Elijah did, 1 Kings 18:38; 2 Kings 1:10 ff. In evaluating these signs we need to remember the prophetic words of Christ in Matthew 24:24 and the inspired words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, especially the word *pseudous*: "of lie," a qualitative genitive in Greek: they are "lying" signs and wonders.

v. 14. God allows the second beast to work these lying signs, thereby to deceive those who dwell on earth. These deceived and deluded people are led to create an image of the first beast. This image becomes a vital and integral part of their worship, cf. Revelation 14:9, 11; 15:2; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4. Images of Emperor Domitian were erected all over the Roman Empire and people's allegiance was tested by their worship of such images.

v. 15. God even allows the image the strange ability to speak. There are reported instances of "miracle-workers" who were able to make images "talk." This only added to the presumptuous demand for worship of "the image of the beast." Those who refused were slain.

This reminds one of the demands of Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 3:5-6.

v. 16. Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

v. 16. To gain complete control of their lives the anti-Spirit even developed a special mark on the right hand (action) or the forehead (thinking) to identify those who worshipped the image. So completely man can give himself over to a lie, cf. Romans 1:20-25. The Greek word for the "mark" (*charagma*) is the most common word used to designate the seal of the Roman Emperor. What a contrast to the sealing of God's people in Revelation 7:1-8.

v. 17. so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

v. 17. The very existence of the people became dependent on the "mark" because no one could any longer buy or sell unless he had the "mark." The "mark" consisted in "the name of the beast or the number of its name."

v. 18. This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six.

v. 18. It will take wisdom, ingenuity, and enlightenment properly to discern the number of the beast. The number in the best manuscripts is 666, but some manuscripts give the number as 616. All kinds of efforts have been expended to decipher the number by giving numerical value to letters, but this has led to many different and conflicting identifications. The number was, no doubt, known to contemporaries according to a code. For us it is enough to see it as pointing to a diabolical imitation and caricature of our God and Lord. Cf. Lesson Summary.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Find all the different devilish imitations of God in this chapter.
2. Show also by the words used and the circumstances described that God sets limitations on the activities of the devil and his agents.
3. Why, according to verse 8, have you not fallen into the error of worshipping an idol?
4. Does the fact that God permits or allows unbelievers to blaspheme Him and His name, verses 5, 7, 15, excuse their sin?
5. Can you identify any aspects of a false religion today that seem to be imitations of Christianity to deceive people into following the false religion?
6. How might leaders in a false religion try the idea of economic sanction ("buy or sell") in discriminating against those who do not have the "mark" upon them?
7. Are conditions for Christians worse, similar, or better today than they were for Christians in this chapter? Explain your answer.

UNIT IV. LESSON 4: THE ANGELS OF THE LORD AND THE HARVEST AND VINTAGE OF THE EARTH. Revelation 14:1-20

- Understanding:* The student sees the tremendous contrast between the false imitations of Satan and the dreadful doom of his followers and the genuine glory to the true Lamb of God and the eternal bliss of His disciples.
- Attitude:* The student grows in his faith and devotion to live and die in the Lord.
- Action Pattern:* The student reviews in his mind Biblical examples depicting the bliss of believers and the doom of unbelievers.

LESSON SUMMARY

The picture of the clever imitations of the Trinity by the dragon and the two beasts, and the successful effect of thereby misleading so many people of "every tribe and people and tongue and nation" in chapter 13, provokes the question whether the people of God will be able to remain firm unto the end. Cf. Revelation 6:17. Will there be any saints of God left when Jesus comes again at the end of the world?

Chapter 14 supplies the answer to such anxious questions. John looks up to heaven, beyond the sea and the land of chapter 13, and there he sees on Mt. Zion the Lamb of God and the 144,000 who were sealed, not with the mark of the beast, but with the "Father's name written on their foreheads." John hears a majestic voice that reminds him of the voice of Jesus Christ from previous visions, Revelations 1:15; 4:5. He hears the 144,000 sing a special song which only these redeemed saints of God can learn and sing. The 144,000 are more explicitly described than they were in Revelation 7:1-17. In contrast to those who follow the dragon and the beasts, these followers of the Lamb: "have not defiled themselves"; they "follow the Lamb wherever he goes"; they "have been redeemed" as "first fruits for God and the Lamb"; and "in their mouth no lie was found."

We are assured, therefore, that in the end God's people will be safe in the hands of God. But what will happen up until the end? Three different angels will indicate the answer to that question, verse 6-13. The first angel, "flying in midheaven," has an eternal Gospel to proclaim "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." God has a message that will always be good news. It invites people to recognize and respect Him as the only true God and "give him glory" by humbly confessing their sins and worshipping God as the Creator of all and as the Savior of all in "the hour of his judgment."

The second angel announces the doom of "Babylon." In the Old Testament Babylon was the devilish power that destroyed the city of God and the temple of God. Its counterpart in the New Testament is Rome, 1 Peter 5:13, as depicted in chapter 13. It has contaminated those it has dominated by leading them to its kind of idolatry: "drink the wine of her impure passion."

The third angel announces doom and destruction on all those who are followers of Babylon (Rome), worshippers of the beast and its image. They shall drink God's cup of wrath, Jeremiah 25:15, and be "tormented with fire and sulphur," Genesis 19:24. This judgment will be dreadful ("no rest, day or night") and without end ("forever and ever"). "Here" (*hodie*) in these three announcements of the angels "is a call for the endurance of the saints." Those who will heed this call even unto death can expect a most hearty welcome in heaven, Matthew 25:21, 34. A voice from heaven announces that these faithful ones will enjoy the blessed "rest" of heaven, Hebrews 4:3, 9, and their works will stand as shining testimonies of their faith, James 2:20-26; Matthew 25:34-40.

After the three angels, Jesus Christ Himself appears in the vision "seated on the cloud," "with a golden crown on his head" and "a sharp sickle in his hand." This is to emphasize the reality and significance of the final judgment.

As three angels preceded Jesus, so three others follow Him, completing the picture of seven. The first angel that follows brings the authorizing command (Joel 3:13) to Jesus

“to put in your sickle, and reap.” Immediately Jesus acts “and the earth was reaped.” It is comforting that the harvest of the righteous is personally performed by Jesus. Then follows a second angel with a sharp sickle who is commanded by a third angel “who has power over fire” and is told to begin the harvest of the ungodly, referred to as “the vintage of the earth,” in keeping with the idea of blood. He throws the grapes into “the great wine press of the wrath of God” which is “outside the city,” forever separated from God’s saints in the city of God, forth flows a terribly large stream of blood representing the immensity of God’s judgment on those who are the objects of His wrath because of the godlessness and unbelief, Romans 2:5.

NOTES

v. 1. Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads.

v. 2. And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps,

v. 3. and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth.

v. 4. It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind at first fruits for God and the Lamb,

v. 1. The words, “Then I looked, and lo” (*eidon kai idou*) give notice that something very special is coming. In contrast to Babylon which will be declared as “fallen,” we see Mt. Zion, the highest point in Jerusalem the symbol of victory and security for God’s people, Joel 2:32; Isaiah 59:20-21; Romans 11:26-27; Hebrews 12:22-24. On Mt. Zion we see the Lamb of God in glorious majesty, Psalm 2:1-6, and with Him the 144,000, who have God’s name as their mark, Revelation 7:3, 4, rather than the mark of the beast, Revelation 13:16.

v. 2. The voice John hears is similar to the voice of Jesus in Revelation 1:15 and 4:5, but it has the added feature of being “like the sound of harpers playing on their harps,” reminding one of David’s playing the harp to soothe the spirit of Saul, 1 Samuel 16:16-23.

v. 3. Next John hears “a new song” which can be learned and sung only by the 144,000 “who had been redeemed from the earth.” The Psalms make frequent reference to “a new song,” Psalms 98:1; 144:9; 149:1. It is a song of praise sung “before the throne” honoring the King of heaven rather than an emperor on earth. It is sung by those who were “bought with a price,” 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23.

v. 4. The 144,000 are described as follows: “have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste (*parthenoi*: virgins)”; faithful to God alone, 2 Corinthians 11:2, Ephesians 5:25, 27; “follow the Lamb wherever he goes”; loyal in their discipleship, John 10:4, 27; John 12:26; “first fruits for God and the Lamb”: dedicated to God’s service and glory, Exodus 23:19.

v. 5. and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.

v. 6. Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

v. 7. and He said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water."

v. 8. Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion."

v. 9. And another angel, a third, followed, saying with a loud voice, "If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,

v. 10. he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the Lamb.

v. 5. "In their mouth no lie was found": they know the truth, John 8:31, 32, and they speak the truth, 1 John 4:6; "for they are spotless": without blame or fault, Exodus 12:5, so was Jesus, 1 Peter 1:19, so are His disciples, Ephesians 5:27; Jude 24.

v. 6. Before the end God wants the Gospel to be preached to all nations, Mark 13:10, Matthew 24:14. John sees an "angel flying in midheaven," where no enemy can stop him or harm him, "with an eternal gospel to proclaim." This good news of God's love for the world and of His mighty act of redemption is eternal. It will never be without messengers to proclaim it, 1 Peter 1:24-25.

v. 7. The message speaks of judgment but it is the "eternal gospel" because it invites man to recognize and respect God as that which He really is, a God of love and grace, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-12, and to worship Him as the loving Creator of all the world, Acts 17:24f. The very fact that God thereby shows He has not cast off man but invites and urges all to come to Him is good news, the Gospel.

v. 8. This angel is followed by a messenger of judgment. He speaks of Babylon, mentioned here for the first time in Revelation, but referred to hereafter in chapters 16:19; 17:15; 18:2, 10, 21. It is an allusion to the great Gentile world power of the Old Testament, Daniel 4:30, but utterly destroyed, Isaiah 13:19-22. Here the direct reference is, no doubt, to Rome, 1 Peter 5:13, and its idolatry and adultery but then, in a wider sense, to all anti-Christian powers and structures, who make "nations drink the wine of her impure passion," Isaiah 57:3-12, Revelation 17:2-5; 18:3; 19:2.

v. 9. The third angel follows with an earnest warning and threat to any one who "worships the beast and its image," Revelation 13:4,8, and "receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand," Revelation 13:16.

v. 10. One of the judgments will be to "drink the wine of God's wrath," Psalm 75:8. It will be unmixed with any mercy or grace but will be poured in the full strength of its fury. The other judgment will be "fire and sulphur," Amos 1:4, 7, 10, 12; Joel 2:30. Cf. also

Genesis 19:24. And neither the holy angels who protect God's saints, Revelation 7:1-3, and assist in their prayers, Revelation 8:3, nor the Lamb of God who is the Great Mediator, 1 Timothy 2:5, will intercede in their behalf.

v. 11. And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

v. 12. Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

v. 13. And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed, indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

v. 14. Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.

v. 15. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."

v. 16. So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

v. 11. In contrast to the incense and the singing before God's throne, here one sees only "the smoke of their torment" and it will never change but keep on going up "for ever and ever," Isaiah 66:24.

v. 12. "Here" (*hodie*), in these angelic pronouncements lies the challenge to steadfastness and patience for all the saints, Matthew 24:13; to prove themselves faithful disciples, Hebrews 12:2, by keeping "the commandments of God," Matthew 22:37, "and the faith of Jesus," Revelation 2:10; Revelation 3:10-11.

v. 13. A voice from heaven announces the second beatitude in Revelation. The first one was Revelation 1:3. "To die in the Lord" means those who held "the faith of Jesus," verse 12, until the end, John 5:24; 1 Corinthians 15:18. They will receive rest and rich reward of grace in heaven. Cf. Lesson Summary.

v. 14. Another cycle of Revelation (ch. 12-14) is coming to an end and we are given another picture of the judgment at the end of the world. With an allusion to Daniel 7:13, a white cloud appears in the vision "and seated on the cloud one like a son of man," cf. Revelation 1:7, 13, which is Jesus Christ. He comes with great power and glory, "a golden crown on his head," to judge the world, "and a sharp sickle in his hand," cf. Mark 13:26-27.

v. 15. Authorization comes from "another angel" who "came out of the temple" for Jesus to begin gathering the harvest, bringing together for eternal redemption and rest the people of God, Mark 4:29; John 4:35-36.

v. 16. Immediately action results "and the earth was reaped," Matthew 24:30-31. What a great occasion for the people of God! Luke 21:28.

v. 17. And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he, too, had a sharp sickle.

v. 18. Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."

v. 19. So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God;

v. 20. and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia.

v. 17. The contrast to this joyful picture is introduced by another angel appearing with "a sharp sickle." Jesus, personally, is involved in the ingathering of the godly but not in the "harvest" of the ungodly.

v. 18. This gathering for judgment is in the hands of "the angel who has power over fire," cf. Rev. 8:5. This angel commands the angel with the sharp sickle (v. 17) to "gather the clusters of the vine of the earth." Cf. Deuteronomy 32:32 and Jeremiah 2:21 for grapes as symbols of the wicked. "Its grapes are ripe": God's mercy eventually ends for the wicked, 1 Thessalonians 2:16, Hebrews 3:7-11.

v. 19. The grapes are gathered and thrown "into the great wine press of the wrath of God." For the wine press as an image of judgment on sin, cf. Isaiah 63:2; Joel 3:13.

v. 20. Instead of wine, blood flows out of the winepress which is "outside the city," perhaps as allusion to the valley of judgment in Joel 3:2, 12. To indicate the immensity of the judgment we are told the blood was "as high as a horse's bridle" and the stream stretched over "one thousand six hundred stadia." There may be the symbolism of comprehensiveness in $1600 = 4 \times 4 \times 10 \times 10 =$ four corners of the earth and the multiple of ten for completeness to indicate "the whole earth." Another cycle is completed from the birth of Christ to His judgment of the world.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What characteristics of disciples of Jesus Christ are presented in this chapter?
2. "Another angel" in chapter 14:6 was designated as Martin Luther by the church fathers. Express your opinion regarding that.
3. Chapter 14:13 is a favorite funeral text. What aspects of the text are applicable? Can you see any dangers in using it as a text for a funeral sermon?
4. Comment on the expression, chapter 14:13, "that they may rest from their labors." What does it not mean?
5. How does Jesus' statement in Matthew 13:30 relate to Revelation 14:14-20?

6. What Biblical examples can you mention to illustrate Revelation 14:13 and Revelation 14:19-20?
7. "Here is the patience of the saints." How has this statement become more meaningful to you as a disciple of Christ through the study of this chapter?

UNIT V. FIFTH VISION. Revelation 15:1-16:21

LESSON 1. THE SONG OF THE SAINTS OF THE LORD AND THE BOWLS OF WRATH, Revelation 15:1-8

- Understanding:* The student learns that the salvation of the righteous and the destruction of the wicked both glorify God. One is evidence of God's grace, the other of His justice.
- Attitude:* The student stands in awe of the majesty of God and of the praise accorded Him by the angels and saints in heaven.
- Action Pattern:* The student relates the songs of praise and the action of angels and saints in heaven to Old Testament quotations and events.

LESSON SUMMARY

The fifth cycle of the Book of Revelation begins with scenes and songs in heaven which serve as a kind of prolog (cf. ch. 4:1-5.14; 8:2-6) to seven severe judgments in chapter 16 resulting from the seven bowls of wrath. The entire vision is capsulized in chapter 15:1. It is another portent (semeion), even as in chapter 12:1, 3, that is "great and wonderful." We have seen seven seals (ch. 4-7). We have heard seven trumpets (ch. 8-11). Now there appear "seven angels with seven plagues." This is working toward a climax. The text says these "are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended." After these plagues will come the judgment of Babylon, followed by the coming of Christ to end the old world with all its sin and sorrow and to bring in the new with all its bliss and joy.

In this prolog two scenes follow closely upon one another. In the first scene John sees the saints in heaven and hears them sing a hymn of praise (cf. ch. 7:9; 12:10; 14:1). They are standing before the throne of God "beside the sea of glass" (cf. ch. 4:6) "with harps of God in their hand" (cf. ch. 5:8; 14:2). The sea of glass is mingled with fire, forebodings of tribulation. The saints' hymn of praise is made up of various Old Testament quotations and allusions. As the song of Moses at Israel's deliverance at the Red or Reed Sea praised God's glorious deeds, so here there is high praise of God for His great work in the judgment of the enemies. The hymn already recognizes as completed what will be announced through succeeding visions of judgment.

In the second scene we see the preparation and equipping of the seven angels who will pour out the bowls of wrath. The heavenly temple is opened (cf. ch. 11:19) and one is reminded of the tabernacle of the Old Testament (cf. Ex. 25:9, 40; Ex. 40:34-36; Heb. 8:5). The seven angels come out of this temple. They are "robed in pure bright linen (as priests are dressed), and their breasts girded with golden girdles" (as kings are girded). They receive from one of the four living creatures the golden bowls which are "full of the wrath of God."

As faithful ministers of God these angels are commissioned by God to execute these judgments as a priestly service and sacrifice to Him "who lives for ever and ever." The unapproachable majesty of God is indicated by the smoke of God's glory and power filling the temple, cf. Isaiah 6:4. As long as the bowls have not been poured out, no man can enter that glorious temple of God because God's judgment would destroy him immediately.

NOTES

v. 1. Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

v. 2. And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.

v. 3. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages!

v. 4. Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed.”

v. 5. After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened,

v. 6. and out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen, and their breasts girded with golden girdles.

v. 1. This portent or sign (semeion) which John sees has climactic features that make it very significant: “great and wonderful” . . . “which are the last” . . . “with them the wrath of God is ended” (completed: *etelesthe*). God’s wrath is not a “fit of temper” but rather the deliberate and just judgment deserved by those upon whom it comes, Romans 2:5.

v. 2. John’s attention is first directed to God’s providential and protecting care of His saints. There is a sea “of glass,” “transparent” (*hyalinen*) cf. Revelation 4:6, suggesting God’s providential care and concern but “mingled with fire,” no doubt, a reference to the “fiery ordeal” God’s people must expect, 1 Peter 4:12 . . . God’s people are described as “those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name.” Their victory is indicated by the fact that they are “standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands,” cf. Revelation 5:8; 14:2.

v. 3.4. The scene clearly reminds one of the great event in Exodus 14:29 ff. and Exodus 15. Deliverance is always God’s goal for His people. The song of praise gives expression to that. It is made up of allusions to various Old Testament texts: Jeremiah 10:6-7; Psalm 111:2, 4; Psalm 139:14; Exodus 15:11; Exodus 34:10; Deuteronomy 32:4; Jeremiah 16:19-21. The song recognizes that God is unique; only He could accomplish such great and wonderful deeds of judgment and of deliverance. For that reason “all nations shall come and worship” Him, the only true God.

v. 5. Next John sees “the temple of the tent of witness in heaven” and it is open. Both the tabernacle and the temple were signs and symbols of God’s gracious presence amidst His people cf. Exodus 29:43, 45-46; Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:28,29.

v. 6. Having demonstrated that He is present among His people, God sends forth His seven angels who are to bring plagues on the enemies of God. These angels are dressed in priestly and royal raiments befitting the service they are to render, cf. Exodus 28:4, 39; Revelation 1:13.

v. 7. And one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives for ever and ever;

v. 8. and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.

v. 7. One of the living creatures, representative of all creation in service to God, cf. Ezekiel 1:5, 10, hands each angel one of the seven bowls, all of which are “full of the wrath of God.” The phrase is added “who lives for ever and ever,” reminding man that though he and all the world perish, God abides forever. Nothing can overcome His unique majestic and everlasting nature.

v. 8. As smoke was a part of God’s appearance to Moses on Mount Sinai, Exodus 19:18; Exodus 20:18; and to Isaiah in the temple, Isaiah 6:1-4; so here “the temple was filled with smoke,” demonstrating, and produced by, the glory of God and His almighty power. God’s judgment is determined. No one can interfere and, therefore, “no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.”

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What assurances do you find in this chapter that God always is concerned for the safety of His people before He permits disaster to come?
2. According to the song of Moses what is the proper response of God’s people?
3. Mention at least four Old Testament references or allusions you find in this chapter.
4. How do the plagues and other judgments upon the wicked serve to the glory of God?
5. What are the implications in terms and phrases like the following: “the seven last plagues”; “filled up the wrath of God”; “till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled”?
6. Find all the descriptive terms in this chapter that provide comfort and hope to God’s people even in the face of imminent danger and trouble.
7. Relate Exodus 40:34.35 and 1 Kings 8:10.11. to the statement that “no man was able to enter into the temple.” What is the significance of this?

UNIT V. LESSON 2: EVERY BOWL OF WRATH IS A PRECURSOR OF THE DAY OF FINAL JUDGMENT, Revelation 16:1-21

- Understanding:* The student sees that even though the wicked are helpless over against God's judgments they do not respond with repentance but with blasphemy.
- Attitude:* The student is strengthened in the conviction that human beings are completely in the hands of God and are fools to oppose Him and to reject His grace and mercy.
- Action Pattern:* The student analyzes each plague to see the potential for good in the elements that bring trouble and judgment on the ungodly.

LESSON SUMMARY

A loud voice from the temple of heaven, which we saw opened in chapter 15, commissions the seven angels to empty out their bowls of wrath upon the earth. This time the whole earth will be affected, not only a fourth, chapter 6:8, or a third, chapter 8:7-12; 9:15, as previously. Total destruction is imminent.

The intensity of the plagues will be increased. The first three plagues exceed similar Egyptian plagues in the days when Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt: foul and evil sores on all wicked people; sea became like blood "and every living thing died that was in the sea"; and the rivers and the fountains of water "became blood." When all this happens "the angel of water" justifies the action of judgment and destruction by referring to the fact that "men have shed the blood of saints and prophets." The same assurance comes from the altar as a kind of answer to questions by and about martyrs, cf. Revelation 6:9-11.

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun and "men were scorched by the fierce heat." This, however, did not lead them to repentance but "they cursed the name of God." The fifth angel poured his bowl "on the throne of the beast," the seat of the anti-Christian power; "and its kingdom was in darkness." Something in the plague also brought terrible pain and sores upon the people but they did not repent. Instead "they cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores."

With the pouring out of the bowl of wrath in the sixth case, the Euphrates River is dried up, allowing the kings of the east and other hostile forces to march across unhindered, Isaiah 11:15. Under the symbolism of these kings of the east, the followers of the beast are pictured as they approach for their last onslaught. Out of the mouth of the anti-Trinity (dragon, beast, false prophet), there come "three foul spirits like frogs," cf. Exodus 8:1-4. Among some barbarian people frogs were regarded as servants of the god of darkness. Here they represent the servants or agents of the enemies of God, "who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble for battle on the great day of God the Almighty." The place of assembly "called in Hebrew, Armageddon," is difficult to identify but is surely a reference which people would connect with some fierce and climactic conflict. A warning note is injected by Jesus announcing that He will come "like a thief" and that His people must be awake and waiting.

The seventh angel's bowl of wrath brings the end. As he pours out his bowl, he cries out, "It is done." This is followed by lightning, voices, peals of thunder, and the greatest earthquake that has ever occurred. As a result "the great city" is split into three parts; other great cities fall into destruction; and "God remembered great Babylon" to bring the punishment due upon it also. In addition, such stable landmarks as islands and mountains are removed, and tremendous hailstones "dropped on men from heaven." Another cycle is ended and unfortunately man's reaction continues to be the same: not repentance but cursing.

NOTES

v. 1. Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

v. 2. So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and foul and evil sores came upon the men who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

v. 3. The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died that was in the sea.
v. 4. The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of water, and they became blood.

v. 5. And I heard the angel of water say, "Just art thou in these thy judgments, thou who are and wast, O Holy One. v. 6. For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. It is their due!"

v. 7. And I heard the altar cry, "Yea, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are thy judgments!"

v. 8. The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch men with fire;

v. 1. The "loud voice" is not identified but it is clear that it expresses the will of God in heaven. The plagues that follow cannot be definitely connected with specific subsequent historical events but the message is clear, namely, that punishment is coming to the wicked. None of these plagues strikes the children of God, even as the plagues did not in Exodus 7-12. They are results of God's wrath toward the wicked.

v. 2. The plagues follow in quick succession and bear a certain resemblance not only to the Egyptian plagues in Exodus 7-12 but also to those ushered in by the trumpets, Revelation 8-11. The one in this verse relates closely to the one in Revelation 8:7, as well as to the one in Exodus 9:8-12. Men are struck directly. The mark of the beast, which had been regarded as a great advantage, now turns to be a distinct disadvantage.

v. 3-4. The sea turning to blood, as well as the rivers and fountains in the third plague, remind us of Exodus 8:19 and Revelation 8:8-10. But these two plagues are much more comprehensive and intense than the previous ones. Matters are getting much worse for the wicked.

v. 5-6. The "angel of water," no doubt, the angel of the third plague, issues a theodicy, a justification of the action of God. With allusions to Psalm 79:1-3; Isaiah 49:26; 1 Thessalonians 2:15; he states that the blood-thirsty deserve what God is giving them: "blood to drink" for the "blood of saints and prophets" which they shed.

v. 7. The altar, represented as animated and alive, reminiscent of the cry of the martyrs in chapter 6:9-11, adds emphatic support to the announcement of "the angel of water" with the words, "Yea, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are thy judgments." Those that despise and oppose God bring upon themselves His judgment.

v. 8. The fourth plague deals with the sun, even as in Revelation 8:12, but its force is increased "to scorch men with fire." The misery of the wicked gets worse and worse:

v. 9. men were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.

v. 10. The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was in darkness; men gnawed their tongues in anguish

v. 11. and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

v. 12. The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

v. 13. And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs;

v. 14. for they are demonic spirits performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

from sores to stench to thirst to scorching heat. What a contrast to God's promise to His saints, Psalm 121:5 or Revelation 7:16.

v. 9. The wicked, in turn, increase in their wickedness and opposition to God as the judgments multiply and intensify. They imitate the beast, cf. Revelation 13:6, in viciously cursing the name of God; and they defiantly refuse to repent of their sins and to give glory to God, cf. John 9:24.

v. 10. The fifth plague reminds us of the result of the fifth trumpet in Revelation 9:1-12 and the ninth Egyptian plague, Exodus 10:21. The darkness all over the kingdom of the beast was so terrible that "men gnawed their tongues in anguish": *emasonto*: imperfect tense indicating that they kept on biting their tongues, indication of continued extreme anguish and pain.

v. 11. Their anguish, their terrible pain, and their deep sores still do not drive them to their knees in repentance but only provoke them to curse the God of heaven in anger and defiance.

v. 12. The river Euphrates was regarded as a kind of protective barrier for Palestine against the enemies of the east. The sixth bowl of wrath dries up the Euphrates and, thus, allows the enemies free reign to sweep in for destruction, cf. Revelation 9:14 f.

v. 13. As a result of the pouring out of the sixth bowl of wrath, "three foul spirits like frogs" appear, coming out of the mouth of the anti-Trinity: the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The frogs cannot be identified but typify the extreme opposite of the clean and bright "seven spirits of God," Revelation 4:5. One also sees an allusion to the Egyptian plague of frogs, Exodus 8:1-15.

v. 14. They are called "demonic spirits." They are able to "perform signs" that impress the unbelieving world. They serve as messengers of the anti-Trinity to the leaders of the entire inhabited world (*oikoumenes*: ecumenical) to "assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty." They work under the delusion that if they all join forces they can triumph over God, and, thus,

- v. 15. ("Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!")
- v. 16. And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon.
- v. 17. The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a great voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"
- v. 18. And there were flashes of lightning, loud noises, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake.
- v. 19. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath.
- v. 20. And every island, fled away, and no mountains were to be found;
- they mock at the idea of a day of final judgment, cf. 2 Peter 3:3, 4.
- v. 15. A personal warning by Jesus Christ Himself reminds the Christians they dare not become lax in regard to this day of final judgment, cf. Matthew 24:42-44; Mark 13:36. If they remain vigilant in faith, they will "not go naked and be seen exposed" but will experience real joy and glory, Matthew 13:43, 1 John 3:2.
- v. 16. There is no mention of Armageddon in the Old Testament; but many have found in this a reference to Megiddo which is on the southern rim of the plain of Esdraelon, the great battlefield of Palestine, cf. Judges 4:15; Judges 5:19. Whatever the historical background, the term Armageddon today designates "any great climactic battle or conflict." That certainly applies here as well as in Revelation 19:11-21.
- v. 17. The seventh angel pours out his bowl of wrath and the results of lightning, noise, thunder, an earthquake, and hail are very similar to those in Revelation 11:19 at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. It is poured "into the air," the realm of "the prince of the power of the air," Ephesians 2:2. The finality of it all is announced in the words: "It is done!"
- v. 18. These terrifying phenomena in nature, cf. also Exodus 19:16, become even more frightening because they include the greatest earthquake that has ever occurred.
- v. 19. Here we witness the utter falling apart of anti-Christian powers and citadels: the great city (could be a reference to the holy city in Revelation 11:8 "where their Lord was crucified") fell apart into three parts; the cities of the nations whence the kings were summoned, v. 14, collapsed; and Babylon (symbolic of anti-Christian Rome) received the due reward of all her wickedness as God remembered and pressed "the cup of the fury of his wrath" to her lips.
- v. 20. And no place of hiding for refuge remained: every island, to which mariners resort in a storm at sea, "fled away," and all

mountains, to which men look for security especially in floods, were gone.

v. 21. and great hailstones, heavy as a hundred-weight, dropped on men from heaven, till men cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.

v. 21. As men ran hither and yon to escape the fury of God's judgments, they were pelted by unbelievably large hailstones that were so heavy that they would kill those that were hit by them. Yet as God complained about the Jews: "I smote you . . . yet you did not return to me (Amos 4:9), so now those smitten did not repent but "men cursed God for the plague of the hail." Another cycle is ended with the believers safe and secure "standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands," chapter 15:3, and the unbelievers stubborn and doomed, "men gnawed their tongues in anguish, and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores," chapter 16:10-11. So it will always be!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do these seven plagues of God teach most emphatically in reference to the majestic providence of God toward the godly and the ungodly?
2. Why, in your opinion, do the ungodly insist on opposing God when in the end they are bound to lose out and be destroyed?
3. What is a theodicy? Illustrate from verses 5, 6, and 7 in this chapter.
4. What do the results of God's judgment in the reaction of the punished in verses 11 and 21 teach us in regard to the effectiveness of the law in producing conversion?
5. Find all the indications in this chapter that point toward the end or the climax of God's judgment on the world.
6. Where can you find comfort and encouragement in this chapter as a child of God?
7. How do the allusions to the Egyptian plagues in the days of Moses enrich the significance of these plagues for you?

**UNIT VI: THE SIXTH VISION: THE JUDGMENT OF THE GREAT HARLOT,
Revelation 17:1-19:21**

**LESSON 1: THE MYSTERY OF THE WOMAN AND THE BEAST:
DOOM OF THE FALSE CHURCH
Revelation 17:1-18**

- Understanding:* The student is assured that no matter how alluring and spectacular the anti-Christian agencies may appear at the time, they are absolutely doomed.
- Attitude:* The student lives in constant awareness of the seductive attempts of evil around him and remembers that “the Lamb will conquer them,” chapter 17:14.
- Action Pattern:* The student analyzes church history in the light of the pattern presented in this vision.

LESSON SUMMARY

In this sixth vision John is first, chapter 17:1-8, given a picture of the anti-church as a harlot or whore with extreme opposite qualities to the woman pictured as the church in chapter 12; and then an explanation of what he sees, chapter 17:9-18. The hostile powers have been introduced in this order: chapter 12 – the dragon; chapter 13 – the two beasts; and now chapter 17 – Babylon. Their destruction will be presented in reverse order: first, Babylon will be annihilated, chapter 17-18; then the two beasts, chapter 19:20; and thirdly and finally, the dragon (Satan), Chapter 20:1-10.

In chapter 16:19 the statement was made: “And God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath.” In this vision one of the seven angels (which specific one is not indicated) who had the seven bowls of wrath in the fifth vision tells John that he will see the great harlot. In the wilderness John sees the woman, sitting on a scarlet beast. The beast is “decorated” with many different “blasphemous names” and has seven heads and ten horns, cf. chapter 13:1. The woman is dressed in very rich clothes and jewelry. She holds a cup in her hand filled with her vile adultery and she herself is drunk “with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus.” As the harlots of Rome identified themselves with their name on their forehead, so this woman has on her forehead a name of mystery.

The sight of this gaudy harlot astonishes John. The angel gives an explanation of who the beast is, verse 8; the seven heads, verses 9-11; the ten horns, verses 12-14; and finally the woman and her doom, verses 15-18. Accordingly, more attention is focused on the beast than on the woman. The beast is an anti-type to God “who is and who was and who is to come,” Revelation 1:4, because “it was and is not and is to come,” chapter 17:8. It will be destroyed, chapter 19:20. The descriptive terms: “seven heads”; “seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come”; “ten horns that you saw are ten kings”; are so cryptic that, although contemporaries may have understood the references, no current scholars have been able to arrive at universally satisfactory identifications. The purpose, however, is clear, namely, to alert the church to the tension that will always exist between God and His enemies and to urge faithfulness and patience because “the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings,” chapter 17:14.

“The many waters” upon which John saw the harlot seated, chapter 17:1, are here designated as “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues,” chapter 17:15. War breaks out between the beast and the harlot, both enemies of God who previously had been allies and friends. All this was part of God’s providential plan, “for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose,” chapter 17:17. The woman is “the great city,” all glorious for a limited time, but now doomed to utter destruction.

NOTES

v. 1. Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters,

v. 2. with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk."

v. 3. And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

v. 4. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication;

v. 5. and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations."

v. 1. We are not told which of the seven angels of chapter 16 invited John to see the harlot because the harlot is the central figure here, not the angel. It is significant that the anti-church figure is a woman. It allows a comparison with the true church in Revelation 12 also pictured as a woman. Consider the contrast: the true church, adorned with the ornaments of heaven, chapter 12:1, (the harlot with worldly ornaments, ch. 17:4); mother of the Messiah, chapter 12:5, (the harlot, mother of harlots and abominations, chapter 17:5); protected by God, chapter 12:6, (the harlot relying on the beast and the kings, chapter 17:8-12). The harlot shows her security by being "seated," cf. 4:2, but not on a throne but on "many waters," chapter 17:15.

v. 2. The "kings of the earth" are important and influential people of the world, not only in government but in all walks of life. They participate in all the ungodly ways and works of the harlot. They are "drunk" with "the wine" of her "fornication." They care nothing about what God says but submit themselves fully to the "harlot."

v. 3. After this preliminary view, John is taken into a wilderness to get a closer view of the harlot. He sees her sitting on a beast, as ancients pictured their goddesses at times. The beast is described as covered with all types of blasphemous names and as having "seven heads and ten horns," chapter 17:3. All this seems to point to imperialistic Rome the same as the beast rising from the sea, chapter 13:1, the Antichrist. Antichrist and antichurch belong together.

v. 4. The bright and gaudy appearance of the harlot is in stark contrast to the pure white of Christ and His armies, chapter 19:11-14, a brilliant imitation but not real. The golden cup she holds is filled with horrible substance. What a contrast to the "cup of blessing," giving us Jesus' blood, cf. 1 Corinthians 10:16.

v. 5. Roman prostitutes wore identifying headbands. This harlot carries "a name of mystery." He whom the Spirit enlightens, cf. chapter 17:7, will understand that Babylon

v. 6. And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her I marveled greatly.

v. 7. But the angel said to me, "Why marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.

v. 8. The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition; and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

v. 9. This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven hills on which the woman is seated;

v. 10. they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while.

v. 11. As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition.

refers to kings and kingdoms of this world, ordained by God for useful purposes, Romans 13:1, but permitting themselves to be misled and misused by the powers of darkness.

v. 6. That leads to persecution of those who wash their robes white in the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Such enemies revel in seeing "the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." This calls to mind Nero who in 64 A.D. made "circus entertainment" out of the killing of Christians . . . All this caused John to marvel because the angel had said he would see "the judgment of the harlot," chapter 17:1. This hardly looked like judgment.

v. 7. The angel promises to explain the mystery, both of the harlot (antichurch) as well as of the beast (Antichrist). They must be considered together.

v. 8. The first and the most attention is given to the beast. The description reminds one very much of chapter 13:1-8. Even though it has come out of the bottomless pit again for a while, it is doomed to destruction. Unfortunately, it will allure many people after it. Only the elect of God whose names have been written in the book of life will discern the falsity and the doom of the beast.

v. 9. As the interpretation is continued, the statement, "This calls for a mind with wisdom," is injected. It fits well because there follows another section which all scholars have found extremely difficult to interpret. Do the "seven mountains" refer to the seven hills on which Rome was built? How about Jerusalem? or Constantinople?

v. 10. The seven kings have also been identified variously.

v. 11. Most difficult to identify is "the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth." Many scholars refer this to *Nero redivivus*, the legend referring to Nero's mysterious death and rumored return. Others say it is the "number of excess," indicating the extreme to which enmity toward God had gone.

v. 12. And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.

v. 13. These are of one mind and give over their power and authority to the beast;

v. 14. they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

v. 15. And he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.

v. 16. And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,

v. 17. for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

v. 12. The "ten horns" are not on the same level as the "seven kings." "They are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast." These may best be identified as rulers who were serving as vassals in the Roman Empire. Since their number is given as ten, the symbol of totality, it would indicate total unanimity among all the rulers in their opposition to God, even as it is stated in verse 13. The most adequate interpretation of this "mystery" then seems to be a picture of Rome with all its satellites as a symbol of worldly powers throughout the centuries that have accepted and supported the harlot (the antichurch) against God and the Lamb.

v. 13. This is further described in this and the succeeding verse. This mighty array of enemies has one goal and that is to fight against God. To accomplish this "they give over their power and authority to the beast." This they hope will make the beast victorious in this final battle about to begin.

v. 14. God is not concerned. He knows what the outcome of the battle will be: "the Lamb will conquer them," Revelation 19:11-21. The reason is also given: "for he is Lord of lords and King of kings," cf. Deuteronomy 10:17; Daniel 2:47; Daniel 4:17. He has selected His own army of followers who are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people," 1 Peter 2:9, and they will be faithful to Him all the way.

v. 15. After the result of the battle is announced, the angel shows how great the enemy really was. In chapter 17:1 John saw the harlot "seated upon many waters." Now he explains they were "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues," cf. Jeremiah 47:2, all united against the Lamb.

v. 16. There was unanimity of enmity against the Lamb but not continued unanimity of loyalty to the harlot (the antichurch). Rashly, the beast (antichrist) and its satellites turn against the harlot and annihilate her.

v. 17. They failed to realize that God knew and foretold this. The doom of the harlot was certain. Even the involvement of the beast in bringing about the doom was a fulfillment of God's Word which is always sure and always right, cf. Isaiah 40:6-8.

v. 18. And the woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth.”

v. 18. The woman is identified as “the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth.” This seems to point rather forcefully to the emphasis which Rome and its emperor and the people placed on the deification of the Roman emperor. That false promotion carried in its very nature the seeds of doom and destruction.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. To what alluring and spectacular attractions of anti-Christian agencies have you been exposed?
2. What makes some of these attractions appealing to people?
3. What do you learn from this chapter in reference to effective antidotes against these evil forces?
4. What indications can you find in this chapter that the forces against Christ will always be in the majority?
5. Could you relate any personal experience that would illustrate the emphasis of this chapter?
6. How would you seek to convince “peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues” of the futility of supporting the “harlot” or the “beast?”
7. How do you relate statements in verse 8 and verse 14 to predestination?

UNIT VI. LESSON 2: THE MYSTERY OF BABYLON: THE DOOM OF THE ANTICHURCH AND ITS WEALTH, Revelation 18:1-24

- Understanding:* The student perceives that all agencies and institutions that outwardly imitate but inwardly stand in opposition to the Christian church are doomed to be destroyed.
- Attitude:* The student is strengthened in his critical stance against the antichurch and lives in grateful appreciation of his membership in the Holy Christian Church.
- Action Pattern:* The student analyzes the various manifestations of the antichurch and finds ways to warn others about its nature and eventual doom.

LESSON SUMMARY

This chapter presents the doom of Babylon in the form of an unfolding drama. There is first the resplendent light over the earth brought about by the appearance of an angel from heaven announcing the doom of Babylon, the antichurch, verse 1-3. This is followed by an urgent call to the godly to leave Babylon immediately, verse 4-8. Whereupon we hear a pitiful lament from kings, merchants, shipmasters, and sailors decrying the dreadful doom of Babylon, verse 9-19. In contrast, the saints in heaven are urged to rejoice, verse 20. Then finally in a dramatic symbolic act of hurling a great millstone in the sea, a mighty angel seals the doom of Babylon forever, verse 21-24.

This chapter has many obvious allusions to the Old Testament. As in Ezekiel 43:2, the prophet sees the earth shine with God's glory, so here "the earth was made bright with his splendor," the splendor of an angel "having great authority," who brought a very dismal and gloomy message, verse 1-3. The great Babylon is pictured as a dark and deserted place and the same reason is given as in chapter 14:8 and 17:2, 4, namely, her adulterous relations with nations and kings and merchants of the earth, verse 2-3.

Then similar to the prophetic calls in Isaiah 52:11 and Jeremiah 51:6, 45, a voice from heaven calls to the people of God to tear themselves loose from Babylon and come out of her, verse 4-5, and destruction of double portion is urged upon Babylon, because of her pride in her sins, verse 6-8. The destruction of Babylon itself is not described but we hear the heartfelt lamenting of various people who mourn her loss. These laments remind one of the Old Testament lamentations over Tyre in Ezekiel 26 and 27. First we hear the kings "weep and wail over her," verse 9-10; then the merchants "weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more," verse 11-16. The third group of lamenters are the men of the sea because "all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth," verse 17-19.

Quite different is the reaction in heaven to Babylon's doom. There the "saints and apostles and prophets" are called upon to "rejoice over her" and the reason is given: "God has given judgment for you against her," verse 20. With an allusion to Jeremiah 51:63-64 the drama concludes with a mighty angel throwing a great millstone into the sea to demonstrate the completeness and finality of the judgment upon Babylon. As a result there is utter desolation. Everything is destroyed. All that remains is "the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on earth," verse 21-24.

NOTES

v. 1. After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor.

v. 1. As in chapter 14:8 we see and hear another angel announcing the doom of Babylon. This one, however, is "coming down from heaven, having great authority." This spells the destruction of the anti-church and at the

v. 2. And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul and hateful bird;

v. 3. for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness."

v. 4. Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues;

v. 5. for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

v. 6. Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed.

v. 7. As she glorified herself and played the wanton, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning. Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit, I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,'

v. 8. so shall her plagues come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges."

same time brings brightness upon the earth. When God cuts down His enemies, He opens the way for His kingdom to come more brightly in the life of His people on earth.

v. 2. By alluding to Isaiah 13:6-9 and 21:9, the desolation of Babylon is announced. Demons dwell there now and foul spirits, and foul and hateful birds that love desolation have made it their haunt. What a terrible contrast to all the glory and industry that once marked this great city!

v. 3. Why has this happened? Because of the wicked influence her adulterous and tempting vices have had on nations and kings and merchants of the earth.

v. 4. Another voice is heard. There is indication that this is the voice not of an angel but of Christ Himself, because the term "my people" is used and God is referred to in the third person in verses 5 and 8. With an allusion to the invitation in Jeremiah 51:44-46, God's people are called to "come out of her" to escape the temptations and the plagues of Babylon.

v. 5. Babylon is beyond hope, "for her sins are heaped high as heaven." As in chapter 16:19 God "remembers" all the wickedness of which Babylon is guilty, and "remembering" with God always stirs to action.

v. 6. The action God wants is judgment which is doubled in proportion to the evil Babylon has perpetrated, Jeremiah 50:29. The judgment is pictured in the language of drinking the cup of God's wrath, as in Psalm 75:7-8.

v. 7. Especially Babylon's self-conceit and vainglory, Isaiah 47:8-9, are causes for her now to suffer "torment and mourning."

v. 8. "Burned with fire" expresses the certainty, dreadfulness, and completeness of Babylon's destruction. Through this the "Lord God who judges her" will demonstrate that He is mightier than Babylon ever was in all her strength and glory.

v. 9. And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and were wanton with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning;

v. 10. they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! thou great city, thou mighty city, Babylon! In one hour has thy judgment come."

v. 11. And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more,

v. 12. cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble,

v. 13. cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

v. 14. "The fruit for which thy soul longed has gone from thee, and all thy dainties and thy splendor are lost to thee, never to be found again!"

v. 15. The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, verse 16. "alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!

v. 9. In chapter 17:16-17 we saw the rulers of the earth rise up against Babylon and "burn her up with fire" but now that they see the result they "weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning," reminding one of the lamentation over Tyre in Ezekiel 26:16-17.

v. 10. While formerly these kings of the earth were intimate with Babylon and "committed fornication and were wanton with her," verse 9, they now "stand far off, in fear of her torment." Overcome by what they see is happening to the great and mighty city they once admired so greatly, they now cry out in dismay and fear at her very quick and sudden destruction.

v. 11. Our attention is directed next to the mourning merchants who deeply feel the collapse of their profitable business with Babylon.

v. 12. Some of the items that were especially valuable and profitable are listed; precious metals, costly clothes, special wood and ivory from Africa, and bronze and iron and marble from other parts of the world.

v. 13. In addition, all kinds of spices and liquors and foods are mentioned, plus cattle and sheep and horses and chariots. What potential for good business for these merchants! And lastly, slaves are mentioned and an immediate judgment is implied in the words, "that is, human souls." The merchants may have looked upon them as mere bodies (*somaton*) but God saw them as the souls of men (*psychas anthropon*) and is removing also this cruel but profitable business from them.

v. 14. Like the daughters of Zion in Isaiah 3:16-21 gloried in their ornaments and lost them all, so the fruit and the dainties and splendor of Babylon were lost to these merchants, "never to be found again."

v. 15-16. Likewise as the rich man in Luke 12:16-21 hoarded the fruits of his field and then miserably had to face death, and the other rich man in Luke 16:19-31 had to leave all his purple and fine linen behind when he was doomed to hell, so these merchants saw how very quickly and suddenly ("in one hour," v. 17) the great city of Babylon with all its fineries and jewels was laid waste.

v. 17. In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste." And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off

v. 18. and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" v. 19. And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! In one hour she had been laid waste."

v. 20. "Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

v. 21. Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and shall be found no more;

v. 22. and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters, shall be heard in thee no more; and a craftsman of any craft shall be found in thee no more; and the sound of the millstone shall be heard in thee no more;

v. 23. and the light of a lamp shall shine in thee no more; and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall be heard in thee no more; for thy merchants were the great men of the earth, and all nations were deceived by thy sorcery.

v. 17. Next we see the men of the sea who once looked forward to coming to Babylon because of the profitable business awaiting them there now standing "far off."

v. 18-19. With language very similar to that which seamen used about Tyre in Ezekiel 27:29-36, these seamen speak of the incomparability of Babylon both in her former glory and now in her devastating destruction. "They threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned," verse 19, but unfortunately this was not done in repentance but only in self-pity because they no longer had the opportunity to grow "rich by her wealth." So suddenly ("in one hour") all had turned to doom and devastation.

v. 20. Amidst all the lamentations of the seamen, another voice is heard which urges rejoicing. While the caricature of the church lies destroyed, the members of the church triumphant, "saints and apostles and prophets," are to rejoice because their hopes have been realized and their prayers answered in this that God has openly shown Himself to be altogether on the side of His own.

v. 21. The final picture of judgment upon Babylon reminds one of Jeremiah 51:59-64. The picture is that of a massive and final destruction.

v. 22. In language reminiscent of Jerusalem's desolation in Jeremiah 25:10 we see the following marks of utter devastation: no music, no industrial activity, and no grinding of grain,

v. 23. Lights are all out and the joy of weddings and marriage is nowhere to be heard. This is what happens when "the great men of the earth and all nations" are deceived by the wicked sorcery of the antichurch and the great gifts of God, like music, the arts and crafts, and marriage, are used selfishly to take advantage of men rather than to help them, Jeremiah 51:49.

v. 24. And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.”

v. 24. After the terrible devastation the condemning evidence against Babylon remains: “the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth.” As Abel’s blood cried out for vengeance, Genesis 4:10, and the blood of the martyrs, Revelation 6:10, so all this blood shed by Babylon found vengeance and vindication in the dreadful doom of this great city.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Read 1 John 2:16-17 and apply it in the light of the vision in this chapter.
2. The unfortunate circumstance is that neither the kings nor the merchants nor the seamen repented when they saw the devastation of Babylon. Apply Luke 13:1-5 in that light.
3. Do you recognize any “antichurch” today to which this chapter could apply?
4. Can you see any fulfillment of this vision in world or church history to date?
5. What does this chapter say to you personally about your loyalties and priorities?
6. Can you illustrate the difference between contrition and repentance from this chapter?
7. Someone has called the last statement of Revelation 18:13 “the harshest word spoken on slavery in the New Testament.” Do you agree? Why?

UNIT VI. LESSON 3: THE VICTORY OF THE LORD FOR THE CHURCH, HIS BRIDE, AND THE MARRIAGE, Revelation 19:1-21

- Understanding:* The student joyfully recognizes Jesus Christ as the absolute Victor over the dragon and the beast and sings "Hallelujah!" to His praise.
- Attitude:* The student lives in a spirit of victorious optimism in view of Christ's victory and of His marriage to His bride, the Holy Christian Church.
- Action Pattern:* The student learns the significance of terms and expressions frequently used in the worship life of the church.

LESSON SUMMARY

In this chapter we hear the response to the encouragement in chapter 18:20, "Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" The songs of praise are a kind of summation of all the previous hymns of praise woven throughout the entire Book of Revelation, chapters 4:11; 5:9-14; 7:9-17; 11:15-19; 12:10-12; 14:1-5; 15:3-4. Now Babylon is fallen, chapters 14:8; 18:2, judgment has been pronounced, chapters 15:3; 16:7; the blood of martyrs has been avenged, chapters 6:10; 18:20, 23, the wickedness of the harlot has been punished, chapters 17:2; 18:3. All this calls forth a threefold anthem of praise emphasizing the Hebrew word, "Hallelujah," Psalms 104:35; 106:48; 148:1; the only time it is used in the New Testament. A voice from the throne urges this psalm of praise to be extended to "all you his servants" and a "great multitude" responds "like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals," verses 1-8. This marks the time for "the marriage supper of the Lamb," verse 9; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25 ff; Matthew 25:1ff. The Holy Christian Church is the bride. She is clothed "with fine linen, bright and pure"; in contrast to the harlot in glaring colors in chapters 17:4 and 18:16. The angel instructs John to write this down because "these are true words of God" and pertain to all of God's people, verse 9. John is so overwhelmed he falls down to worship the angel but is told not to do so because worship belongs to God alone, verse 10. The angel emphasizes, however, that his testimony is true because it is the testimony of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, John 14:26; John 16:3f.

The scene changes. The heaven is opened and a white horse with a majestic and magnificent rider comes forth. The descriptive terms identify the rider clearly as Jesus Christ, verses 11-13. A whole army of saints of God follow Him on white horses, verse 14. He is pictured as riding forth to battle in order "to smite the nations," to rule "with a rod of iron," and to "tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty," verse 15. His name is prominently displayed, "King of kings and Lord of lords," verse 16. The outcome of the battle is so certain and sure that the carnivorous birds are already invited to gather for a mighty feast to eat "the flesh of all men, both small and great," verses 17-18. What a contrast to the invitation to the marriage feast of the Lamb, chapter 19:9. The enemies, the beast and the kings of the earth and the false prophet, "gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse and his army," verse 19. The result is disastrous for them. The beast and the false prophet are "thrown alive into the lake of fire," verse 20, and the rest are slain by the sword and became food for the birds, verse 21. None escapes. Thus, all the enemies of Christ are defeated and destroyed. Only the dragon, the devil, who is the instigator of all evil and the ruler of the harlot and the beast and all evil ones, remains to be judged and overcome.

NOTES

v. 1. After this I heard what seemed to be the mighty voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,

v. 2. For his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his servants."

v. 3. Once more they cried, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever."

v. 4. And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped God who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"

v. 5. And from the throne came a voice crying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."

v. 6. Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

v. 1. John hears "the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven," like unto the multitude in chapter 7:9. He hears the Hebrew word, "hallelujah" which means, "Praise ye the Lord!" The reason for the praise is given: God deserves praise because salvation (freedom from sin and evil), power (strength to subdue all enemies), and glory (genuine majesty), belong to Him alone.

v. 2. As demonstrated in the first part of this vision, chapter 17:16-18, God has exercised His majestic power to execute true and just judgments on the harlot, the antichurch, because she "corrupted the earth with her fornication." Thereby, He has also answered the plea of the martyrs in chapter 6:9-11 by avenging on the harlot "the blood of his servants."

v. 3. A second song of praise emphasizes the eternal nature of God's judgment on the harlot.

v. 4. The whole Christian church (twenty-four elders) and all creation (the four living creatures) cf. Revelation 4:46, worship God before His throne and add their full assent and support to the hymns of praise with the two Hebrew words "Amen" (Yes, yes, it is true, ch. 1:7-8) and "hallelujah!" (Praise ye the Lord.)

v. 5. The song of praise is to be expanded and extended. A voice directly from the throne of God urges "all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great" to lift their hearts and voices in praise of "our God." The designation "small and great," cf. also chapter 20:12, includes great saints of God like the prophets and apostles and the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, but also the "small," like little children and "babes in Christ" like the healed blind man in John 9 or the malefactor on the cross. All are to "praise our God" in one mighty chorus.

v. 6. John hears an immediate response in a tremendous psalm of praise using the Hebrew word "Hallelujah" once more. The reason for the praise is that God has taken over the rulership. He reigns, cf. chapter 11:17. His kingdom has come in its fullness.

v. 7. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

v. 8. it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

v. 9. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

v. 10. Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

v. 11. Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war.

v. 7. The great inner joy of God's people ("rejoice") leads to outward demonstrations ("exult") and then to the climax of glorifying God ("give him the glory") because the church is identified as "his Bride" who "has made herself ready" for the marriage of the Lamb, cf. Ephesians 5:25ff; Matthew 25:1ff.

v. 8. The Bride is dressed in bright, pure fine linen which is characterized as "the righteous deeds of the saints." Not only the justification but also the sanctification of the saints is entirely a gift of God's grace, Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 2:13; "the righteous deeds of the saints" follow them, Revelation 14:13. The adornment of the Bride stands in beautiful contrast to that of the harlot, chapters 17:4; 18:16; also her deeds, chapter 18:5.

v. 9. The angel instructs John to write the fourth beatitude of the Book of Revelation (cf. ch. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15). Three more will be added later, chapters 20:6; 22:7, 14, for a total of seven. The blessing extends to all those who have received and accepted the wedding invitation, cf. Matthew 22:10; Matthew 25:10. The Bride represents all the people of God as a unit, those invited represent the people of God as individuals. Because God gives this blessed invitation, it is true and genuine and can be relied upon absolutely.

v. 10. When John in his excitement falls down to worship the angel, he is told not to do so. Angels are creatures and servants of God, even as men are. Only God is to be worshipped, Matthew 4:10; Exodus 20:3. It is the testimony of Jesus that is the spirit of prophecy, John 14:26; John 16:3, of which John is a messenger just like the angel and, therefore, worship of the angel is improper.

v. 11. After the blessed invitation to a happy marriage feast, the heaven is opened and John sees a white horse coming forth. The rider is not named but the descriptive terms leave no doubt that it is the Christ. He is called Faithful (absolutely trustworthy) and True (*alēthinos*: genuine) cf. Revelation 3:14. What He does, whether He judges or makes war, He does "in righteousness," even as Isaiah described the Messiah and His kingdom, Isaiah 11:3-5.

v. 12. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed which no one knows but himself.

v. 13. He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God.

v. 14. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, followed him on white horses.

v. 15. From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

v. 16. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, King of kings and Lord of lords.

v. 17. Then saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly in midheaven, "Come gather for the great supper of God,

v. 12. This rider has eyes "like a flame of fire," cf. 1:14; 2:18, and is, therefore, able to search out every enemy. His majesty is evident by the "many diadems" on His head. He is above all kings of the earth. The name He carries is only intelligible to Himself, even as He had said while He was here on earth, "No one knows the Son except the Father," Matthew 11:27.

v. 13. The rider is "clad in a robe dipped in blood," cf. Isaiah 63:1-3, because He goes to battle for His people. He is called "The Word of God," which He is because he is the Word made flesh, John 1:1-5, 14, but also because "from his mouth issues a sharp sword," chapter 19:15.

v. 14. The rider is followed by "the armies of heaven," all clothed, like the Bride, chapter 19:7, in white, pure fine linen and riding on white horses. They show no signs of battle, only of victory.

v. 15. They see the guarantees of victory in Jesus Christ, their Leader and Lord. From His mouth proceeds the "sharp sword with which to smite the nations." This is the Word of God, Revelation 1:16; Hebrews 4:12; Ephesians 6:17; Isaiah 11:4. His overpowering might is shown by ruling the nations "with a rod of iron," Psalm 2:9; Isaiah 11:4. He will do the work of God Almighty by treading the wine press of the fury of His wrath, Isaiah 63:3; Joel 3:13. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "The Father . . . has given all judgment to the Son," John 5:22.

v. 16. He lets His enemies know that He is their Master and Conqueror by displaying the inscription of His name on His robe and on His thigh: "King of kings and Lord of lords," Deuteronomy 10:17; Daniel 2:47. Even if Roman emperors try to usurp the title, "God and Lord," the Rider on the white horse is still far above them to control them and judge them.

v. 17. In verse 9 an angel invites the people of God to a marriage feast, here an angel invites "all the birds that fly in midheaven" to a great supper of dead enemies of God, cf. Ezekiel 39:17-20.

v. 18. to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.”

v. 19. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who sits upon the horse against his army.

v. 20. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had worked the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone.

v. 21. And the rest were slain by the sword of him who sits upon the horse, the sword that issues from his mouth; and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

v. 18. Five times the term “flesh” is used to indicate the comprehensiveness of the defeat coming upon the enemies of God, “both free and slave, both small and great.” No one will escape.

v. 19. “The beast and the kings of the earth,” blind in their self-confidence, do not expect defeat. They marshal all their forces “to make war against him who sits upon the horse and against his army.”

v. 20. What happens? With disdainful brevity the capture and destruction of all the enemies is reported. Cf. Psalm 2:4-6. These enemies had long prepared for this climactic confrontation, chapter 16:12-14; chapter 17:13-14. Very quickly the beast, chapter 13:1, and the false prophet, chapter 13:11 that led people to follow the beast are conquered and are “thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur,” Matthew 25:44; Mark 9:47-48.

v. 21. With the two prominent leaders out of the way, Jesus Christ uses the sword which issues from His mouth, chapter 19:15, and slays all the rest, cf. Isaiah 49:2; Revelation 1:16. “And all the birds were gorged with their flesh.” Another cycle is ended and once again we see utter destruction for the enemies and glorious victory for the King of kings and Lord of lords.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain the words “Hallelujah” and “Amen” in their original meaning and in their implication for God’s people today.
2. Find as many assurances and evidences of victory for God and His people in this chapter as you can.
3. How do you relate the fact that the Rider on the white horse carries the name “The Word of God” to your victorious living today as a disciple of Christ?
4. Is there anyone or anything that can ever defeat God or His son Jesus Christ? If not, why does the devil still drag people to hell?
5. Mention some striking contrast between “the marriage feast,” verse 6-9, to the “great supper of God” for the birds, verse 17-21.
6. Give the full meaning of these words in the light of this chapter: “salvation,” “glory,” “rejoice,” “exult,” “blessed,” “worship.”
7. List the expressions of judgment upon the enemies of God found in this chapter. What do they say to you.

UNIT VII. LESSON 1: SEVENTH VISION. MAN'S MILLENNIAL DREAMS
(Revelation 20:1-6)

- Understanding:* The student becomes aware of the various interpretations of these words of Revelation and the millennial dreams which have developed through the history of the church.
- Attitude:* The student sees the necessity of interpreting individual Scripture texts in the light of the total context (analogy of faith) all of Scripture.
- Action Pattern:* The student seeks to discover millennial emphases in various theological messages and materials.

LESSON SUMMARY

These six verses of Revelation 20 are not only some of the best known verses in this book but of the entire Bible. The interest centers in "the thousand years," mentioned five times in these six verses and once again in the seventh. This has given rise to the emphasis known as millennialism (*mille*: Latin for "thousand" and *annus*: Latin for "years") or chiliasm (*chilioi*: Greek for "thousand").

Millennialism, in broad perspective, is the belief that Christ will reappear sometime very suddenly here on earth to establish His kingdom in bliss and peace in which He will reign personally, together with all the saints, for one thousand years. Then the final judgment will come with the eternal awards.

There are, however, many variations among millenarians regarding specific aspects and details of the millennium. The general points of agreement are: 1) Christ's personal advent and rulership on earth, and 2) a glorious period of peace and joy under the temporal reign of Christ. One of the major differences is in regard to the time when Christ will appear in the millennial period.

The premillenarians teach that Christ will return before or at the very beginning of the millennium. The saints, some say only the martyred saints, will arise. This will be the "first resurrection," verse 5. They will rule with Christ during the millennium. Satan will be bound, iniquity will be repressed, and everywhere, even among the animals, there will be complete peace. Many hold that during that time also all the Jews will be converted. When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed for a short time and bitterly persecute the people of God. But the Lord will quickly call a halt, raise up all the dead for the final resurrection and judgment, destroy the devil, and renew the earth for an eternal home for God's people.

Postmillenarians teach Christ will return visibly after the millennium. They believe that during the millennium the Christian church will flourish and Christian influence will dominate the entire world in all its facets. All Israel will be saved and many others will become Christians. After this great and glorious period, there will come a period of apostasy, and Satanic forces will rise up to destroy the people of God. Before these evil forces succeed, Jesus will come for final judgment. The wicked will be cast into hell and the people of God will enjoy bliss forever.

Although the picture of a millennium never occurs in the Old Testament, millenarianism is generally attributed to Jewish origin, because many of the Jews thought and taught that the kingdom of the Messiah would be an earthly kingdom. Some of the apocryphal books, like 2 Esdras, seem to emphasize that position. The Jews at Jesus' time seemed to be much more interested in a Messiah who would drive out the Romans and establish a powerful Israelite nation. Chiliasm became a popular emphasis among the early Christians after the apostolic era. Some taught a coming kingdom not only of spiritual but also of carnal delights and pleasures, others a golden age of peace for the church on earth, and others just much better days for the church before the end of the world. In some form or other, these different emphases persist among millennialists today, and are found in almost all major Christian churches in the world.

The Lutheran churches in the 16th century already expressed their stance in the Augsburg Confession, Article XVII, rejecting "certain Jewish opinions which are even now making an appearance and which teach that, before the resurrection of the dead, saints and godly men will possess a worldly kingdom and annihilate all the godless." Why this rejection?

1. Chiliasm or millennialism is nowhere taught in Scripture. The Bible never speaks of a pre-period before Judgment Day that will be significantly different than all New Testament history, Matthew 24:36-44.
2. Passages like the following, Isaiah 2:2-4; Isaiah 11:6-9; Zechariah 9:9-10; Joel 2:23ff; Joel 3:18ff; Micah 4:1-4, often used by chiliasts as prophecies of descriptions of "peace on earth," do not refer to an earthly physical peace, because Jesus Himself negates that in Matthew 10:34, but to the blessed spiritual peace of God's people, John 14:27; John 16:33; Philippians 4:7.
3. Scripture does not hold out any hope to Christians that they will assume physical power or rulership on earth but rather that they will suffer tribulation, Acts 14:22; John 15:18-21; Matthew 23:9-13. Any ruling Christians will do will be that of ruling spiritually by the Word of God, John 16:7-11, 1 Corinthians 3:21f; Revelation 2:26-27.
4. The emphasis on a "theology of glory," holding out hope for some type of earthly bliss and power over against the forces of evil in this world is in danger obscuring the central message of the New Testament, "the theology of the cross." That is the heart of the Christian's hope, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Romans 1:16; Galatians 2:20.
5. Contextual interpretation of Revelation 20:1-6 shows that this does not teach millennialism but that it fits well into the total developmental picture of Revelation in which the destruction of the harlot and the two beasts had been presented and now the climax is reached in the overthrow of the devil himself. The first three verses present the first stage of the overthrow, namely, the binding of Satan for a thousand years (symbolic expression for a long but fixed period of time). These thousand years represent the period of time of Christ's reign through the Word of His grace and power. It is a veiled or hidden reign because, as verses four to six indicate, many who reign with Christ have suffered martyrdom. It is, therefore, a reign under the cross during the era of time designated as "a thousand years," but in spite of all appearances, those who believe in Christ and His redemption in their behalf "shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years." Thereafter will come the second stage in which, after a brief furious assault, the devil is "thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur" and "will be tormented day and night for ever and ever," verse 10.

NOTES

v. 1. Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain.

v. 1. Here, as a climax, John sees God's final judgment on the arch-enemy, the devil himself, begin by one of the heavenly angels coming down with a key and a great chain. The key is for "the bottomless pit," cf. chapter 9:1, 11; chapter 11:7; chapter 17:8, the underworld of evil and abode of the enemies of God, shut out from the life and light of God. The great chain is for capture and the key is for firm consignment.

v. 2. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and

v. 2. The victim of the angel and the key and the chain is "the dragon, that ancient ser-

Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

pent, who is the Devil and Satan." These names clearly identify God's major foe and spell out what dangers he represents to mankind, Genesis 3:1ff; John 8:44. The angel captures him. As strong as the devil is, he still remains, as Martin Luther said, "God's devil" (*Gottes Teufel*), under the rule and control of God. God can, therefore, even make one of His angels strong enough to capture him and bind him "for a thousand years." This is not yet the time for utter devastation but merely severe limitation and restriction of the devil's "prowling around like a roaring lion," 1 Peter 5:8. Jesus saw this happening when he spoke of Satan falling as lightning, Luke 10:17-18, and spoke of "binding," Mark 3:27, and "overcoming," Luke 11:22, him during His ministry. Thereupon follow the words that have caused so much discussion of a millennium: "And bound him for a thousand years." There is no reason to take the number "thousand" literally here because throughout the Book of Revelation it is used symbolically to indicate a very long but definite time under the limits and control of God. Ten (10) is the number of completeness, the rounded whole. Ten (10) times ten (10) times ten (10) stretches the time over a long but still very definite period, the exact length of which is known only to God and is under His complete control.

v. 3. and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while.

v. 3. The angel of God, throws the devil into the pit (cf. v. 7) where the word "prison" is used). This is not yet the "lake of fire and sulphur," cf. verse 10. The pit is "shut" and "sealed" and, thus, the devil is restricted "that he should deceive the nations no more," as he had done directly and personally to Eve in Genesis 3 and to Jesus Christ in Matthew 4. His work will still go on during the "thousand years" but no man need to succumb to any of his temptations any longer. As John shows in his Gospel, this is a period of God's judgment here and now, but God's people are safe. In the midst of tribulation and persecution and death the Christians are in life. The Light came and was not received, John 1:9-11. Those who refuse the Light walk in darkness by their own fault, 1 Corinthians 10:6-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11; Revelation 19:20. "The thousand years," therefore, denotes that period of time in which Christians

can carry out Christ's Great Commission because the devil is "bound," "in the pit," "shut" and "sealed." We cannot set the time limits on it, only God can. Ours is the happy privilege and duty to work diligently for God while this favorable time is available to us, cf. John 9:4; Ephesians 5:15-17. The verse concludes with the ominous statement, "After that he (the devil) must be loosed for a little while." According to God's sovereign plan, when the designated period ("a thousand years") has been completed, the devil "must be loosed for a little while." Why? Some assume merely to gather his own to himself, but it seems there is more implied, namely, a final vicious all-over attack on God's people, cf. chapter 20:7-10; Matthew 24:21-22.

v. 4. Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the soul of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life again, and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

v. 4. For John's comfort and for the comfort of all of God's people, the vision included a picture of triumph and judgment. John saw thrones; where they are, whether in heaven or on earth or both, and how many there are are not mentioned. There seems to be an allusion to Daniel 7:9, 22, 26-27. Those who are Christ's disciples, Matthew 10:24-39, Matthew 16:25, enduring all manner of distress and persecution in this world, yes, even death as martyrs, are "those to whom judgment was committed," John 16:8-11; John 12:25-26; Romans 8:37. "They came to life, and reigned with Christ a thousand years." This coming to life is the spiritual awakening of man who was dead to sin and becomes alive unto God, Ephesians 2:5.6; John 5:24. The Christian martyrs are among them, not exclusively as a privileged class, but as a part of the whole church of God's people.

v. 5. The rest of the dead did not come to life again until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection.

v. 5. "The rest of the dead" are those who remained in their trespasses and sins, the original condition of all people, Ephesians 2:1, 5; Colossians 2:13. They never came to spiritual life during "the thousand years" or during their whole earthly life. Being raised to life in Christ through faith in His death and resurrection in man's behalf, "this is the first resurrection." Jesus describes that beautifully to Martha in John 11:23-27. Cf. also Colossians 3:1-4; Romans 6:8.

v. 6. Blessed and holy is he who shares in the first resurrection! Over

v. 6. Here is the fifth beatitude in the Book of Revelation. The preceding ones were chap-

such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years.

ter 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; and two more will follow: chapter 22:7,14. Those are called "blessed," inheriting life in Christ with all its blessings, and "holy," righteous in the sight of God because of forgiveness through faith in Christ. They are born again and alive in Christ and, thus, share "in the first resurrection." "The second death," defined in Revelation 20:14 as being "thrown into the lake of fire," does not cause them any fear or concern because it "has no power" over them, John 10:28. In their blissful freedom from "the second death," these spend their time and efforts gratefully as "priests of God and of Christ," 1 Peter 2:5, 9; Hebrews 13:15-16, praising God and serving Him and His people in whatever way they can. "And they shall reign with him a thousand years." Thus is the fulfillment of the promise of spiritual reigning and ruling which Jesus promised His disciples, Matthew. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30; and of which Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:2f. and in 2 Timothy 2:10-12. The end is always drawing nearer and at times it may seem very dark and gloomy but God's people have nothing to fear. They are alive in Christ and will continue to rule with Him "in grace and truth," John 1:14.17; during "the thousand years" and forever.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What are the basic elements of "man's millennial dreams?" What are some differences or variations in those "dreams?"
2. Could a person hold to some of these millennial ideas without denying the Christian faith?
3. What approaches and "arguments" would you use to discuss "millennial dreams" with an individual?
4. Explain these terms in their Biblical context: "thousand years"; "first resurrection"; "second death"; "reign with Christ."
5. Find all the different things these six verses tell us about the devil.
6. How may a millennial emphasis obscure the central message of the New Testament?
7. Select the statements and implications of comfort and inspiration for Christians in these six verses of Revelation 20.

**UNIT VII. LESSON 2: THE OVERTHROW AND JUDGMENT OF SATAN
THE DRAGON, BY THE LORD, Revelation 20: 7-15**

- Understanding:* The student sees the sharp and distinct cleavage between the children of God and the followers of Satan and the lot of each at the end of the world.
- Attitude:* The student develops a much stronger "other-worldly" instead of a "this-worldly" viewpoint as he sees all of creation moving toward the day of final judgment.
- Action Pattern:* The student takes a sharp look at the things in this world and in his own life that are of God and that are of the devil and reacts to them in the light of the final judgment.

LESSON SUMMARY

At the end of "the thousand years" Satan's imprisonment ends for a limited period. According to God's plan, the devil must be loosed for a little while for the express purpose (*hina* in the Greek in verse 3) to "deceive the nations." To accomplish this as comprehensively and quickly as possible, the devil launches a campaign of deceit that stretches to the "four corners of the earth." As the destruction of the two beasts and the harlot was reported in the previous vision, chapter 19:17-21, so here a mighty multitude of new enemies of God are gathered for battle. They are identified as Gog and Magog, the terms used in Ezekiel 38 and 39 to designate the enemies of God.

From every direction "over the broad earth" they come to surround "the camp of the saints and the beloved city," Ezekiel 38:10-12. Cf. also the mighty uprising in Revelation 9:1-12 and 13-21. "The camp" reminds one of God's people leaving Egypt in Exodus and wandering in the wilderness in Numbers. "The beloved city" presents the picture of God's people happily settled in the holy land and the holy city. The enemies are bent on destroying the people of God and to that end they surround "the camp" and "the beloved city." But before they can do any harm, God intervenes. He lets fire fall from heaven "to consume" these enemies. And then immediately thereafter the devil, who was the deceitful instigator of this hostile attack, is "thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur," which is the hell which God "prepared for the devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41, into which the beast and the false prophet had already been cast, Revelation 19:20. This is their eternal doom of torment.

In happy contrast John next sees "a great white throne." In the majestic presence of Him "who sat upon the throne," earth and sky flee away, Mark 13:31. They have been contaminated by man's sin and rebellion and by the devil's deceit and enmity and can no longer stand before their holy Lord on the throne. But all human beings, "both great and small," without a single exception, must appear before the throne to hear God's judgment concerning them. Accurate records have been kept in "books" as to "what they had done," Romans 2:6; Matthew 25:31-46. But for the people of God there is a special book, "which is the book of life," in which are inscribed the names of God's people, those whom He chose as His own "before the foundation of the world," Ephesians 1:3-4; Matthew 25:34; Revelation 13:8; 17:8. These will receive life eternal as a gift of God's grace.

All the other wicked people, even those who drowned in the sea, must appear to receive God's sentence of judgment upon them which results in their being thrown into the lake of fire into which the beast and the false prophet and the devil himself have been thrown, Revelation 19:20; 20:10. Then Death and Hades (the realm of the dead) are also thrown into the lake of fire, Isaiah 25:8; 1 Corinthians 15:26 and 54:55. This is the second death, the eternal torment of hell from which there is absolutely no deliverance. This is total overthrow and destruction of the devil and his kingdom.

NOTES

v. 7. And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison.

v. 8. and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

v. 9. And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them,

v. 10. and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

v. 11. Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled

v. 7. Satan does not break out of prison on his own. God releases him, according, to His own inscrutable divine plan, as stated in verse 3: "he must be loosed for a little while." This will continue to impress upon the children of God that they will need God's gracious protection also "when the thousand years are ended." They can never go it alone if they intend to endure unto the end and not lose the crown of life, Matthew 24:13; Revelation 2:10; 3:11.

v. 8. As soon as the devil is loose, he initiates a worldwide program of deception. In Ezekiel 38:2 the prophet is told to go against "Gog, in the land of Magog," but here both seem to be personified to designate the total force of God's enemies. They are to join in battle against God's people, cf. chapter 16:12-16 and chapter 19:17-21. "Their number is like the sand of the sea," a huge mass of mankind.

v. 9. "Over the broad earth" shows how massive and worldwide the gathering of these enemies is. Their own objective is to overcome and destroy "the camp of the saints and the beloved city," a composite picture of all of God's people by an allusion to Israel in the Old Testament both in the wilderness and in the Promised Land. God's people will never have a secure "lasting city," Hebrews 13:14, in this world. Although they are God's own, they are always subject to enemy attack. But because they are God's own, they can be sure that God will step in in time to help, even as He does here. "Fire came down from heaven and consumed them," the enemies cf. Ezekiel 39:6.

v. 10. The deceived are consumed by fire but the deceiver, the devil, shares in the doom this time. He is thrown in the lake of fire which is hell. Previously, chapter 19:20, the beast and the false prophet had received this same punishment. This is their final and eternal doom from which there will never be relief or release.

v. 11. Now God (not here identified as Father or Son) appears majestically sitting upon "a great white throne." Other Scripture

away, and no place was found for them.

v. 12. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done.

v. 13. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done.

v. 14. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire;

passages assign judgment to Christ, John 5:22, 27; Matthew 24:30. This is the throne of the final judgment. The earth and the sky, God's marvelous creation, once perfect and good, Genesis 1:31, but now marred by the devil's deceits and man's sin, cannot abide in this majestic holy presence. They flee away and have no place to go, 2 Peter 3:10-12; Matthew 24:35.

v. 12. Next John is given a comprehensive view of all the dead, all over the world for all time. He notices there are great and small among them, no exceptions whatsoever, All must stand before the judgment seat of God, 2 Corinthians 5:10. Then the books of God's record of men's lives are brought forth. Here is the only place in the Book of Revelation where the plural, "books," is used. In all other cases the singular refers to the "book of life," chapter 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27. The wicked dead are judged according to all the sins recorded against them in "the books." There is plenty evidence to warrant God's judgment of eternal hell fire upon them. But "another book was opened which is the book of life." Herein are written the names of all of God's people chosen from eternity to be His own. These were led to faith in Christ as their Savior and died trusting in Him for the forgiveness of their sins, Romans 8:30; Matthew 25:34.

v. 13. No matter where the dead may be located at the time of judgment, they will all be discovered and delivered before the throne of judgment – from the sea in which they may have drowned or been buried, from Death wherever it holds them, and from Hades, the realm of the dead, wherever that may be. All are judged by what they did while they were alive. This is not a second chance but only the public pronouncement of the judgment they deserved in their dying moment, Hebrews 9:27.

v. 14. God is now done with Death and Hades. Even though in world history He used them for His purposes, Revelation 6:8, they are always pictured as hostile and inimical forces, 1 Corinthians 15:26 and 54:55, and, therefore, meet the doom of all the enemies of God. "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire." This is called "the

“the second death,” because it is the last and final doom which extends eternally.

v. 15. and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

v. 15. Finally every human being who rejected Christ, and therefore, whose “name” was not found written in the book of life,” was also “thrown into the lake of fire.” What a horrible and dreadful doom for the devil and all those who were victims of his deceit!

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Can there be more than two classes of people, the saved and the condemned, before God's throne at the final judgment? Explain your answer.
2. Read 1 John 2:15-17 and 1 John 3:2 and show how John applies in that epistle what he sees in this vision.
3. Read John 8:44 and show how this vision of the devil illustrates what Jesus said to the Jews in John 8:44.
4. Discuss Matthew 24:22 and the lot of God's people in the light of conditions described in this vision.
5. Select the warnings and the words of comfort you find in this lesson.
6. How do you know whether your name is written in the book of life?
7. What affect does this picture of the end of the world and the judgment have upon you?

UNIT VII. LESSON 3: THE NEW WORLD OF THE LORD: CREATION
(Revelation 21:1-8)

- Understanding:* The student sees the value God places upon His creation that though He has let His curse fall upon it, He will restore it as "a new heaven and a new earth."
- Attitude:* The student will view all the "change and decay" in the world around him in the light of the promise of eventual restoration in glory.
- Action Pattern:* The student will take a greater interest in God's creation and develop his personal picture of "the new heaven and the new earth" promised for eternity.

LESSON SUMMARY

As already in the Old Testament, e.g. Isaiah 42:5-9; 44:24-26, so in these last chapters God pictures Himself as both the majestic Creator and the gracious Redeemer of the world. Ever since man fell into sin and "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth," Genesis 6:5, a terrible tension existed between God and the world He had created. This tension was evident in the judgments and curses God had to pronounce upon the world with all its inhabitants.

John had seen many of these judgments upon God's creation in previous visions, cf. chapter 8:7-11. The opening of the seven seals, the sounding of the seven trumpets, and the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath were all expressions of God's judgment, climaxed by the vision in chapter 20:11 where John saw God sitting on a great white throne and "from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them."

Thereupon follows this vision in which John tells us, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth." He specifically mentions the passing of "the first heaven and the first earth" and adds the comment, "And the sea was no more." People at that time looked upon the sea as a treacherous enemy. To replace that which has "passed away," God lets a beautiful "holy city, new Jerusalem" come down from heaven with all the perfection and appealing beauty of "a bride adorned for her husband."

As this new creation appears John hears "a loud voice from the throne" announcing a restoration of the happy cordial relation which originally existed between the created world and God when "God saw everything that he had made, and, behold it was very good," Genesis 1:31. This voice emphasizes in four statements that "the dwelling of God is with men." There man will no longer sense any fear or pain in God's presence, only peace and joy and exhilaration, "for the former things have passed away."

To add credibility and emphasis God Himself, the Creator, speaks and says, "Behold, I make all things new." He wants the troubled and afflicted believers on earth to know this, so He instructs John to write this as a sure word of promise. No one and nothing can thwart this new creative act because God is "the beginning and the end," the Creator and the Ruler. Wherever His people whom he has created feel any need, such as thirst, He will supply relief and refreshment without cost or payment.

To supply comfort and encouragement to all faithful believers, the broad generalization is made that those who endure to the end and conquer all doubt and distress will be guaranteed "the heritage," "the new heaven and the new earth" with all its peace and joy. The climax of this will be as God says, "I will be his God and he shall be my son."

In terrible contrast to "the new heaven and the new earth," there exists "the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death." God also created that, but "for the devil and his angels," Matthew 25:41. But who will now also "inherit" that as their "lot?" Those who were not God's people on earth and showed it by being cowardly, faithless and polluted, like murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and liars. All these will suffer the dreadful second death in hell forever.

NOTES

v. 1. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

v. 2. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband;

v. 3. and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them;

v. 4. he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be

v. 1. In chapter 20:11 John reported that he saw how "earth and sky fled away," and now he can report that he saw "a new heaven and a new earth." Was this a transformation of the old or a totally new creation? Scholars differ, but it seems best to take it as a transformation, in view of Romans 8:20-23; also the Greek word used here is *kainos*: "new" in contrast to "old," rather than the word *neos* which means "absolutely new"; the term "new creation" is used in reference to a "converted or transformed sinner" in 2 Corinthians 5:17. All this was beautifully promised in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22; cf. also 2 Peter 3:10-13. "And the sea was no more"; not only did the hideous beast arise out of the sea, Revelation 13:1, but, generally, the sea was viewed as hostile and uncontrollable, cf. Psalm 107:25.26; Isaiah 57:20.

v. 2. Together with and in "the new heaven and the new earth," John saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem." It came down out of heaven from God, so God is the Creator of it also. This demonstrates the close personal relation that will exist between God and His creation hereafter, even as Jerusalem was the center of God's relation with Israel. This relation is even more intimately expressed by referring to Jerusalem "as a bride adorned for her husband," cf. Psalm 45:13.14; the exact opposite of Babylon, the harlot, Revelation 17:3-6; 18:2-3.

v. 3. The intimacy symbolized by the bride and husband picture is emphasized even more by "a loud voice from the throne" speaking of "the dwelling of God," cf. Psalm 23:6. Likewise we are told "God will dwell" with men who will be called "His people," cf. Psalm 79:13; Ezekiel 34:30; Psalm 100:3. As a final clinching assurance we are told, "God himself will be with them." In the full sense He will live up to His name *Immanuel*: "God with us," Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23. This dwelling with men will be much grander than the tabernacle in the wilderness, Exodus 29:43-46, or the temple in Jerusalem, 2 Corinthians 7:23. This is heaven: God dwelling amidst all His peoples.

v. 4. With an allusion to Isaiah 25:8-9, we hear the promise of all removal of tears, of

no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”

v. 5. And he who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”

v. 6. And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of the water of life.

v. 7. He who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.

v. 8. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”

death, and of mourning and crying and pain. We see here a picture very similar to the one in Revelation 7:9-17. “The former things” of sin and all its companions and results, Romans 5:17,21, are gone forever.

v. 5. These words of comforting assurance are very necessary for the church militant, the church under the cross, and, therefore, John is told to write them down for the people of God to read and believe, even as he had been directed to do previously, Revelations 1:19; 14:13; 19:9. They are “trustworthy and true” because they are spoken by God, the Creator, who spoke in Genesis (cf. also Ps. 33:9) as the world was made, and who here speaks as the Creator as He says: “Behold, I make all things new.” (Here also the word *kaina* is used, cf. 21:1).

v. 6. God is so eager to have men believe the promise that He adds some more reassuring emphasis. He says, “It is done.” All the promises of God are absolutely reliable, 2 Corinthians 1:20. What He promises, He always does. He is *Alpha* (first letter of the Greek alphabet) and *Omega* (the last letter of the Greek alphabet. cf; Rev. 1:8). Since He is the beginning and the end, promise and completion always form one package and one project. And all is designed and executed for the good of God’s people like a fountain freely providing all the water the thirsty may need, cf. Psalm 36:7-9; Revelation 7:17.

v. 7. All the precious blessings of God’s people are summed up in the term “this heritage.” The inheritance is theirs because God is their father and they are God’s sons, Romans 8:14-17. “This heritage” is there for all who “conquer,” the oft-repeated promise to the seven churches, Revelations 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:26; 3:5; 3:12; 3:21.

v. 8. As blessed as those will be who remain true to their Creator and His purpose and goal for them, so wretched will be those who for fear or favor forsook the Lord and turned against Him. Some of these are pictured: “the cowardly,” 2 Timothy 1:7; “the faithless,” 2 Timothy 4:10; “the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars,” Romans 1:29ff; 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:

19-21. In this last text Paul pronounces the same doom: "They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What evidence do you find in this vision that God cherishes the world and the people He created?
2. Check some of the Old Testament prophecies and references in this lesson and tell how they match this vision and strengthen your faith and hope.
3. What aspects of the image of a bride and her husband are especially apropos to this vision?
4. Find all the individual statements in this lesson emphasizing the bliss and glory of God's people in heaven.
5. From the study of this lesson do you lean more toward "the annihilation" or "the transformation" theory at the end of the world? Give reasons for your answer.
6. What comfort could you draw from this lesson for yourself or for others in time of suffering or persecution?
7. Why are the sins listed in verse 8 so terrible in the sight of God?

UNIT VII. LESSON 4: THE NEW WORLD OF THE LORD: REDEMPTION
(Revelations 21:9 – 22:5)

- Understanding:* The student sees the contrast between the imperfect and never completely satisfying joys of this world and the perfect and eternally satisfying joys of heaven which are ours through the redemption in Christ Jesus.
- Attitude:* The student gains a deeper appreciation of and a greater longing for the precious fruits of Christ's redemption in heaven.
- Action Pattern:* The student studies and analyses the various symbols – gates, measurements, jewels – depicting the glory of heaven and thereby increases His appreciation of its preciousness.

LESSON SUMMARY

In this lesson we get a second picture of “the new world of the Lord,” but more from the angle of redemption rather than of creation, as in the previous lesson. The imagery is an allusion to chapters 40-48 of the Book of Ezekiel, except that in Ezekiel we have more a picture of the church militant, whereas Revelation presents the picture of the church triumphant.

One of the same seven angels “who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues” carried John away to “a great, high mountain” and showed him “the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.” Either this same angel or one of the other seven angels “who had the seven bowls” had carried John “into a wilderness” and had shown him “Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations,” Revelation 17:1, 5. Once again John sees Jerusalem and Babylon in sharp contrast, cf. Revelation 19:7 and 21:2.

Jerusalem has “the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel.” The city is surrounded by a very high wall. Angels stand as watchmen at the twelve gates, cf. Isaiah 62:6. Each gate carries the name of one of the tribes of Israel, indicating this is the city of God's people of the Old Testament. But it reaches beyond the Old Testament as is indicated by the fact that each of the twelve foundation stones carries the name of one of the apostles, cf. Ephesians 2:20.

The angel who is showing John the city has “a measuring rod of gold” and begins to measure the height and the breadth and the length of the city. The measuring reveals that the city is built according to squares and cubes which symbolized completion and perfection in the ancient world. John mentions specifically that the measurements conform to both man's and angel's standards. Even more than the Holy of Holies of the temple which was also built as a perfect cube (1 Kings 6:20), this is the innermost sanctuary of God's dwelling.

Next, attention is called to the precious nature of the building materials, cf. Isaiah 54:11-12. “The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass.” All the foundation stones had the special adornment of a precious jewel, the listing of which reminds one of Exodus 28:17ff; 39:10ff; Ezekiel 28:13. Every gate was one solid precious pearl and the main street was “pure gold, transparent as glass.” Rather than considering each jewel and precious metal individually, it is best to view the entire composite as one glorious precious picture of the riches of God for His redeemed people.

Now John's attention is directed to the inner part of the city and he notices immediately the absence of a temple. There is no need or place for a temple because “the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” are personally present, of whose presence the temple was only a symbol. The brilliance of God's presence also makes any light from the sun or the moon unnecessary, cf. 1 John 1:5. Since all nights are eliminated, the gates of this city are continually open and people of all nations come at all times to bring their best to worship God and the Lamb. No unbelievers, “nothing unclean,” can in any way gain

access to the city. Only those can enter "who are written in the Lamb's book of life," cf. Revelations 3:5 and 13:8.

The inner part of the "new Jerusalem" reminds one of the Garden of Eden restored. Flowing through the city is "the river of the water of life, bright as crystal," cf. Genesis 2:10-14; Ezekiel 47:1-12. Next to the river, there is "the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit," Genesis 2:9, 10; Ezekiel 47:12. "The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." There will no longer be any crying or pain, Revelation 21:4. Nor will there be anything on anyone evil or accursed in this holy city. Instead of the temple, "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." This divine presence will elicit worship and praise from the inhabitants of heaven who have God's name on their foreheads and stand before Him as His grateful servants, 1 John 3:2. All night and darkness will have vanished, "for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

NOTES

v. 9. Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."

v. 9. This harks back to chapter 15:7 where the seven angels are given the seven bowls. Angels commanded to bring God's judgment upon the wicked can serve as messengers of love and blessing to God's people. Here the angel wants to show John "the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." This is in direct contrast to the harlot in chapter 17:1. This is the church in her holiness and glory pictured not only as the "bride" but also "the wife of the Lamb," cf. Ephesians 5:25-27.

v. 10. And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

v. 10. In chapter 17:3 to see the harlot John is carried into the wilderness, but here to see "the holy city Jerusalem," John is carried to "a great, high mountain." This is an especially glorious sight, I Corinthians 2:9, 10, because it originated and comes down "out of heaven from God."

v. 11. having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

v. 11. The brilliance and beauty of the glory of God upon it, Isaiah 60:1-3, are so great that the symbolism of jewels is used to describe it. Its radiance is like "a most rare jewel," "like a jasper," yet not opaque, but clear as crystal, perhaps, symbolizing purity rather than transparency in this instance.

v. 12. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed;

v. 12. John sees the city surrounded by "a great high wall" indicating the complete separation of those "written in the book of life" from those who remained the servants of the devil. Three times the number "twelve" appears: "twelve gates," "twelve angels," "twelve tribes," showing the roots of "the holy city Jerusalem" lie in the Old Testament people of God, the Children of Israel, cf. Ezekiel 48:30-35.

v. 13. on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates.

v. 14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

v. 15. And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls.

v. 16. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal.

v. 17. He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's.

v. 18. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass.

v. 19. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, verse 20, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

v. 21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made

v. 13. Yet it reached beyond Israel in every direction: three gates each faced east, north, south, and west.

v. 14. And the picture extends even farther. There are twelve foundation stones each of which carries the name of one of "the twelve apostles of the Lamb," Ephesians 2:19-22. Cf. also Psalm 48:12-14.

v. 15. John sees a golden measuring stick in the angel's hand. This is also symbolic because actual measuring with a stick of a city of such great dimensions would take an exceedingly long time.

v. 16. The emphasis is on the foursquare nature of the city and on its being a perfect cube, both symbols of completeness and perfection. This holy city is exactly as God wants it to be, even as the Holy of Holies of Solomon's temple, 1 Kings 6:20, which was a symbol of heaven, Heb. 9:24.

v. 17. The angel also measures the wall which in verse 12 is called "a great high wall" but its height is not inordinately great, when compared with the other dimensions. The angel, as a fellow-servant with men, cf. chapter 19:10; 22:9, uses "a man's measure." The height of 144 cubits (12 x 12) infers perfection. Its purpose is not protection because all enemies have been overcome but limits the number of those included in the holy city.

v. 18. Everything is precious and glorious: the wall of jasper and the city of pure gold.

v. 19-20. Every foundation stone glistens with a beautiful jewel: jasper, sapphire, agate, emerald, onyx, carnelian, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprase, jacinth, amethyst; such variety and such unusual stones that not all of them can be accurately and individually identified. That is not necessary. The impression and impact of priceless worth and beauty are the important thing. Jewels like these could only be found in the highpriest's breastplate, Exodus 28:17ff. In heaven all priests of God can enjoy them forever.

v. 21. Each gate was "made of a single pearl." Nowhere on earth have pearls of that

of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

v. 22. And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.

v. 23. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

v. 24. By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it,

v. 25. and its gates shall never be shut by day – and there shall be no night there;

v. 26. they shall bring into it the glory and honor of the nations.

v. 27. But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

size been found which demonstrates again the surpassing glory of heaven. Even as does the statement, "And the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass."

v. 22. All this brilliance and splendor could be cold and lifeless but John sees the real beauty of the city when he looks inside and sees that the temple, the Old Testament symbol of God's presence, has been replaced by the personal presence of "the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb."

v. 23. God's immediate presence also makes sun and moon unnecessary. They were created by God "to give light upon the earth," Genesis 1:14-18. But such light is meaningless now, "for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb," John 1:4, 8:12.

v. 24. In chapter 19:19ff, "kings of the earth" tried to fight against the Lamb and were destroyed. Here we see the blessing upon "kings of the earth" who bowed before the Lamb and became trusting believers, Isaiah 60:1-11. They walk by the light of the Lord and "bring their glory" in adoration of the Lamb.

v. 25. There is no longer any night there and, therefore, no need for the gates to be shut to keep enemies and criminals from breaking in. This is security and freedom at its best.

v. 26. All that is excellent and helpful and God-pleasing and God-glorifying will be perfected and perpetuated in heaven forever.

v. 27. But not all on earth now will be in heaven later. "Nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood." No unbeliever will be admitted, Mark 16:16; Matt. 25:41. "Only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life," cf. chapter 3:5; 13:8, may enter.

CHAPTER 22

- v. 1. Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb
- v. 2. through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.
- v. 3. There shall no more be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall worship him;
- v. 4. they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads.
- v. 5. And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.
- v. 1. "The holy city of Jerusalem" will be the eternal home of "those who are written in the Lamb's book of life" and it will be a refreshing place, reminding one of the Garden of Eden, Genesis 2:8-9. A sparkling stream of water, "bright as crystal," will add to the refreshing character, cf. Genesis 2:10. This river will have its source in "the throne of God and of the Lamb." It will be "the water of life," never failing and forever supplying life to those who drink therefrom.
- v. 2. The river flows through the heart of the city and is bordered by "the tree of life," actually "the wood of life" which, no doubt, is a collective term for a number of trees supplying rich fruit each month. There is, therefore, an unending supply of fresh, nourishing fruit of life for all to enjoy, Genesis 2:9-10; Ezekiel 47:12. Even the leaves serve a useful purpose, they are "for the healing of the nations." "Death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more," Revelation 21:4.
- v. 3. Once again it is emphasized that there is no room here for anything or anyone wicked or accursed. They could never endure here because "the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it." Only those will be here who love God and the Lamb and serve and worship this their God.
- v. 4. They are privileged to do what God told Moses man could not do, Exodus 33:20, namely, "they shall see his face." They shall enjoy this free, constant, blissful access to Him, because "his name shall be on their foreheads," signifying that they are His elect who have been glorified by Him, Romans 8:30. They have come home and shall be in His kingdom of glory forever.
- v. 5. In words similar to chapter 21:23, it is emphasized once more that all night and darkness will have vanished forever. "They need no light of lamp or sun." God will be all in all to them. In Him they have all light and all rights. "And they shall reign for ever and ever!"

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Find as many fruits of Christ's redemption in this "new world of the Lord" as you can in this lesson.
2. Why do you think such imagery and symbolism as jewels and trees and water and light are used to describe the bliss of heaven?
3. Here on earth kinship, social, and civil ties often bring us close to unbelievers. This vision shows there will be complete separation. Will this cause heartache to believers? Explain your answer.
4. Find symbolism in this lesson to demonstrate that the joys of heaven will be pure, perfect, satisfying, and eternal.
5. Will believers ever get bored or tired of the bliss of heaven? Find pictures in this lesson to support your answer.
6. Mention all the various comparisons you can make between the Garden of Eden and the picture of heaven in this lesson.
7. What are the elements in this vision that strengthen the longing for heaven most in your heart?

UNIT VII. LESSON 5: COME, LORD JESUS! Revelation 22:6-21

- Understanding:* The student sees the imminence of Christ's return and recognizes the importance of being prepared for His sudden coming.
- Attitude:* The student lives with longing for the return of Christ and joins in the prayer of all Christians, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"
- Action Pattern:* The student studies the Scriptures faithfully that in doctrine and practice he will neither add to nor subtract from "the words of the book of this prophecy."

LESSON SUMMARY

The formal visions depicting the history of the church in the world really came to an end with chapter 22:5. What follows here is a type of epilog relating back to chapter 1:3 where a benediction is pronounced upon those who read, those who hear, and those who keep what is written in this book. There the words were added: "for the time is near."

Now before he concludes this letter-type book, John emphasizes the importance and urgency of what he has written. Three times John quotes Jesus as saying, "I am coming soon," chapter 22:7, 12, 20. He emphasizes the reliability of what he has written by quoting the assurance of Christ to him, "These words are trustworthy and true." He is the same Lord who by His Holy Spirit guided and inspired the prophets of the Old Testament, cf. 1 Corinthians 14:32, and now gave these visions to John, thereby "to show his servants what must soon take place." Then He adds, "And, behold, I am coming soon." Cf. chapter 3:11; 16:15; 22:12, 22:20. Immediately, there follows the sixth beatitude. One more remains, chapter 22:14. The previous ones were: chapters 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6.

Now there follows a brief confession by John that, being overwhelmed by the things he heard and saw, he fell down to worship the angel who revealed these great things to him, but the angel declared himself to be "a fellow servant" and told John to worship not him but God, cf. chapter 19:10.

Next, we hear Christ Himself speak, telling John not to do what Daniel had been commanded to do, Daniel 8:26; 12:4.9, namely, to shut up and to seal the revelation. John is to broadcast what he has seen and heard, "for the time is near." It is time to make it clear to all: the evildoers and the filthy, as well as the righteous and the holy, what they may expect if they stay on their present paths. Soon the day of judgment will be here and there will be no appeal from the judgment pronounced because He who is the Judge is Alpha and Omega. He has absolutely final authority. The deciding factor in the judgment will be whether those who appear before the Judge have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, chapter 7:14, or whether they have lived on in the sins of unbelief; Matthew 8:12; 22:13. As a final call to repentance and faith Jesus identifies with man as He calls Himself "the root and the offspring of David," but He is also "the bright morning star," man's only hope for the future.

There is a jubilant and expectant response to the words of Christ by all those influenced by the Holy Spirit. They are the members of the Holy Christian Church, here called "the Bride," and all those who will heed the message of the Spirit and the Church. They are those who satisfy their thirst with the water of life. All these join in encouraging one another with the invitation, "Come."

John is so excited about the message of "the prophecy of this book" and so convinced of its trustworthiness, chapter 22:6, that he adds two earnest and fervent warnings against any additions or deletions. God has spoken and man dare not tamper with God's message. His eternal destiny is at stake. As if to back up John's threat, we hear the final word of Jesus which has been expressed again and again throughout the visions and prophecies of Revelation: "Surely I am coming soon." The one good and proper response is: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." Until that blessed moment, the waiting and expectant church lives

confidently under the benediction with which Revelation closes: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen."

NOTES

v. 6. And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.

v. 7. And behold, I am coming soon." Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.

v. 8. I, John, am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me;

v. 9. but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren, the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."

v. 10. And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

v. 6. Who is the antecedent of the pronoun, "he?" Some think it is the angel. It seems best, however, to refer this directly to Christ in view of the statement, "I am coming soon." in verse 7. "These words are trustworthy and true" because they are the words of Jesus who in chapter 3:14 is called "the faithful and true witness" and in chapter 19:11 is again called "Faithful and True." The Lord is the God who uses "the spirits of the prophets," 1 Corinthians 14:32, to communicate His Word and will to people. Whether God uses an angel or prophets or John "to show his servants what must soon take place," ultimately it is all His revelation through His Holy Spirit to the "spirits" of those who communicate the message.

v. 7. Here the central message is the imminence of His coming again, a message that has run as a golden thread throughout Revelation, cf. chapter 3:11; 16:15; 22:12; 22:20. This makes the beatitude which follows (very similar to the first one, ch. 1:3) especially meaningful.

v. 8. Now John identifies himself by name and declares himself a personal witness to the words and the visions. In fact, he admits being overcome by them, as he was once before, chapter 19:10, to such an extent that he began mistakenly to worship the angel who was the communicator.

v. 9. The angel tells John not to do this because he is a creature of God even as John and the prophets and all Christians. Angels are servants, Hebrews 1:14. Only One deserves worship, therefore, the angel says clearly, "Worship God." Response to revelation must honor the author, not the medium.

v. 10. Now John hears Jesus speak again. Perhaps John would know and remember that Daniel had been told, "Shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days," Daniel 8:26. Cf. also Daniel 12:4. Therefore, John is told to do the opposite, "for the time is

v. 11. Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.”

v. 12. “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done.

v. 13. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

v. 14. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

v. 15. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood.

v. 16. “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star.”

near.” Times have changed since Daniel’s day, Jesus is coming soon.

v. 11. Jesus adds a solemn warning to the wicked and a strong encouragement to the believers. This reminds one of Matthew 13:30: “Let both grow together until the harvest.” Cf. also Paul’s similar statement in 2 Timothy 3:13.14. All men must realize there is a judgment to come.

v. 12. This judgment is emphasized by Christ Himself with an allusion to Isaiah 40:10. We must live in the constant awareness of the end, 1 Peter 4:7; 2 Peter 3:8-14.

v. 13. Jesus lists His credentials as God and Judge. *Alpha*, first letter of the Greek alphabet, and *Omega*, last letter of the Greek alphabet, are used to show that “all things were created through him and for him,” Colossians 1:15-16. He is truly “the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” All judgment is in His hand, Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10. His pronouncement of eternal bliss or eternal doom is final.

v. 14. Here is the last of the seven beatitudes in Revelation (ch. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7). God’s people are truly blessed at present already because they are clean in God’s sight through Jesus’ blood, John 1:29; Isaiah 1:18; 1 John 1:7. They live in the assurance that they have “the right to the tree of life” and they can enter the holy city of Jerusalem above “by the gates,” cf. Revelation 21:12.13. Cf. John 14:1-3.

v. 15. Hell is described as “outer darkness” in Matthew 8:12. Such is the doom (“outside”) of the wicked: “dogs,” term used to designate Sodomites in Deuteronomy 23:18 and “evil-workers” in Philippians 3:2; the others listed designate sins that express unbelief and defiance of God, Revelation 21:8; John 8:44.

v. 16. Here Jesus identifies Himself as the Speaker and as the One who commissioned the angel to bring “this testimony for the churches.” This designates Jesus as the Savior, Matthew 1:21. The testimony He tells the angel to bring is that of salvation to all who believe. Jesus adds other identifications. He

says He is "the root and the offspring of David." He is the "root" of David which some interpret to mean that David found his origin in Him, Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:42-46; Acts 2:34-36; and others take to mean He is a descendant of David, Isaiah 11:1. The second term "offspring," certainly shows Jesus is human, descended from David, Romans 1:3; Matthew 1:6. In Him all Messianic hopes are fulfilled. He is Lord of lords and King of kings, Revelations 17:14; 19:16. He is "the bright morning star," Numbers 24:17, our great hope for the future.

v. 17. The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let him who hears say, "Come." And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.

v. 17. This verse indicates a very positive and excited response from a Spirit-filled church: "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come.'" As the church issues its happy invitation, people are urged to join in the chorus. Those who hunger and thirst for the righteousness of the Lord as revealed in His Word are urged to partake of "the water of life" freely without money and without price, Matthew 5:6; Isaiah 55:1; Revelation 22:1.

v. 18. I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book,

v. 18. John now adds strong personal advice. He knows he has declared the whole counsel of God, Acts 20:27, as God revealed it to him. He earnestly warns everyone never to meddle with the revelation of the Lord. The Lord has spoken through visions and prophecies. There is nothing man is allowed to add. He who dares to tamper with this revelation will meet the terrible doom of the "plagues described in this book," cf. Deuteronomy 4:2.

v. 19. and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

v. 19. A similar warning is given against eliminating any part of this revelation of God. He who does will lose the beautiful inheritance God has in store for him: "his share in the tree of life and in the holy city." John is convinced what he has written is God's true and unchangeable inspired Word, full of power against those who would molest it in any way, Hebrews 4:12-13.

v. 20. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

v. 20. As a summation and a climax of all that has been revealed, Jesus Christ, "who testifies to these things," reminds everyone once more: "Surely I'm coming soon." John and the entire waiting church responds eagerly: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." They are confident this is the truth and they will live their life in that hope.

v. 21. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

v. 21. Revelation ends as a letter or epistle, the same style in which it began. John wishes "the grace of the Lord Jesus" upon all the saints, even as Paul does at the end of these letters, Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 16:23; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18. Grace is that unearned and undeserved gift of God in which we stand here on earth, Romans 5:1-2, and through which we finally are granted the bliss and joy of heaven, Ephesians 2:8.9; Titus 3:7.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How often is the imminence of Christ's return indicated in this lesson? Quote the instances.
2. To what extent should Christians be encouraged to pray for the end of the world?
3. Why does the angel tell John not to worship him?
4. Find all the references to Jesus in this lesson and mention what aspects they emphasize of the person and nature of Jesus.
5. Do you find that jubilant and expectant note, expressed by the words, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus," in the church today? Give reasons for your answer.
6. Why does John so seriously warn against adding or subtracting to "the words of the prophecy of this book?"
7. Is the last verse of this book sufficient for Christian living and dying until Jesus comes again? Explain your answer.

UNIT VII. LESSON 6: AND HE SHALL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER!
(Revelation 1:1 – 22:21)

- Understanding:* The student learns that the Holy Christian Church will continue to exist and flourish even in the face of Satanic opposition and persecution and will triumph eventually in the bliss and glory of heaven.
- Attitude:* The student lives his life in the firm conviction that Jesus Christ is the victorious and triumphant Lord of lords and King of kings and that His Kingdom is established forever.
- Action Pattern:* The student will read and re-read the Holy Scriptures in the light of the triumphant victory note of the Book of Revelation.

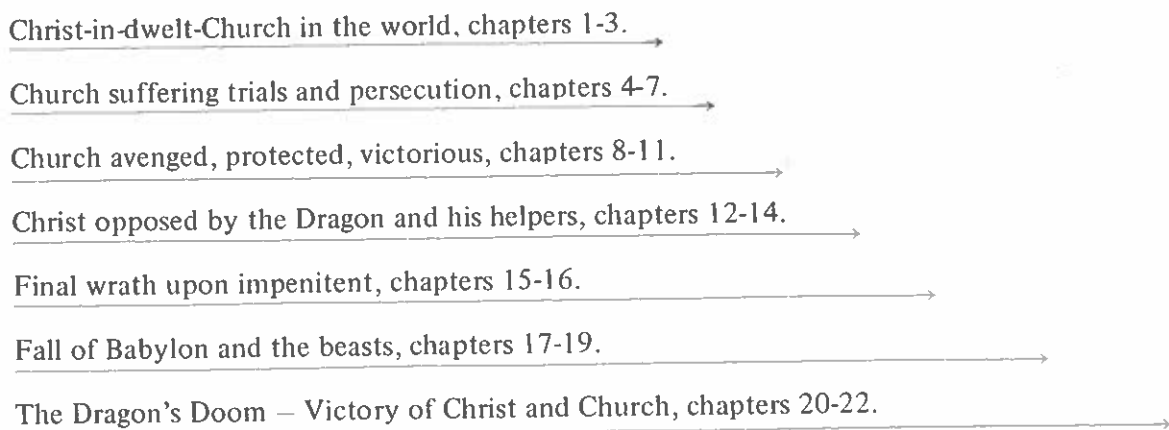
LESSON SUMMARY

John, a favorite disciple of Jesus Christ who outlived all the other apostles, fell under the judgment of Roman Emperor Domitian. He was banished to a small island, Patmos, in the Aegean Sea. Here he was granted a series of visions and received the direction: "Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter," Revelation 1:19.

John did this, and by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote the Book of Revelation. The Book is written in the style of a letter, addressed to the early Christians under Roman rule specifically, but also to all Christians of all times, generally. The overall theme of the book is: "Jesus Christ, God blessed forever, is the victorious and triumphant Lord of lords and King of kings and His Kingdom is established forever."

The purpose of Revelation is to assure the Christians of all generations that the church of Jesus Christ will continue in the face of the most terrible tyranny, opposition, and persecution, and, thus, to strengthen their faith and hope during the trials and troubles they must endure. History and prophecy are combined in apocalyptic manner to establish the fact of the absolute sovereignty of Christ and of the indestructibility of the Christian Church. The primary emphasis is upon the ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ. He lives! He rules throughout all history! His Kingdom is everlasting!

Revelation is best understood as a Biblical book with seven broad cycles beginning either with the life of Christ or the beginning of the Christian Church and being completed by the coming of Christ for judgment of the world. Each cycle becomes more comprehensive and decisive as the history of the church moves on. The line-graph below may help to illustrate the scope of the seven cycles:



UNIT I

Christ addresses seven letters, each to an existing church in Asia Minor. Each letter contains seven elements: command to write, identification of Christ, diagnosis, commendation or condemnation, exhortation, call to attention, and a promise. The seven churches addressed are these: Ephesus, the church which left its first love; Smyrna, the church urged to be faithful unto death; Pergamos, the church faithful in doctrine but loose in discipline; Thyatira, the church tempted to compromise; Sardis, the church of the "living death"; Philadelphia, the church which kept the faith; Laodicea, the church of which there was nothing good to say.

UNIT II

This is a beautiful vision of heaven. God sits in majesty on His throne holding a book sealed with seven seals which no man or angel can open. Only Jesus is granted the right to open the seals. As he does this, four horsemen ride out with affliction on the earth. One hears the cry of the martyrs, and as the sixth seal is opened terrible disturbances arise on earth. The believers, all of them without exception, who "washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb," are in blissful security and glory with Jesus in heaven.

UNIT III

Now the seventh seal of the scroll is opened and seven trumpets are sounded. As a result of the sounding of the first four trumpets, man's physical environment is severely disturbed and shaken. After the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets demoniac powers appear, aping the powers of heaven. An angel of judgment appears with his right foot on the sea and the left foot on the earth, asking John to take and eat the "little book" the angel holds in his hand. John does so. It is sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly. Then John is given a measuring stick to measure the temple but not the court of the Gentiles. There John sees two witnesses to God persecuted and killed by the wicked and left to lie on the street for ridicule. But, after a short time, the witnesses come to life, the seventh trumpet sounds, and victory for God's Kingdom is proclaimed.

UNIT IV

Now, we come to the heart of the Book of Revelation, as the dragon appears to kill the child that is being born of a woman. Both woman and child escape into the wilderness. A dreadful fight ensues between Michael, an angel of heaven, and the dragon. Michael wins and the dragon is cast upon the earth. The dragon pursues the woman again. He is aided by two beasts, one with a deadly wound that was healed, and its number is 666. The other beast has prophetic skill to foster the wicked plans of the dragon. But the Lamb appears on Mt. Zion, and the 144,000 loyal followers of the Lamb receive the victory earned and accomplished by the Lamb and proclaimed "in the midst of heaven" by the angels.

UNIT V

Here a vision of heaven is seen and marvelous songs of victory are heard. These are to comfort God's people during the period when seven bowls of wrath and judgment are poured out upon the unbelievers. With all the punishment and pain, the wicked are not moved to penitence but respond only with bitter blasphemy.

UNIT VI

This vision introduces the great and horrible harlot, a miserable caricature of the bride of Christ, the Holy Christian Church. The harlot is drunken with the blood of saints and martyrs of Jesus. The name given to the harlot is Babylon, reminiscent of the ancient idolatrous capital of the world. She gets the support of many kings and powers on earth but, eventually, goes down to miserable defeat and destruction. The cry goes out, "Babylon, the great, is fallen, is fallen," and her desolation is described in most dismal terms. In contrast, the vision concludes with the beautiful and happy marriage feast of the Lamb, while all the wicked are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

UNIT VII

In the final vision, there is a personal encounter between Satan and Christ. First, the devil is bound for a thousand years, but then loosed for a short time. After that there follows the final and complete judgment of Satan and those that were his followers. "Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." In contrast to such judgment and gloom, a new heaven and a new earth are seen where all is joy and perfection and glory. Here complete and perfect communion with God is restored and bliss reigns eternally. Revelation ends with exhortations to watchfulness because Jesus says emphatically, "I am coming soon"; to which the church eagerly responds: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Can you briefly recall visions and statements in Revelation that emphasize the theme that Jesus Christ is the Triumphant Lord?
2. What emphases in Revelation give you trust and confidence that the Holy Christian Church will endure in spite of all opposition?
3. Mention ways in which the study of Revelation has helped you in further Bible study.
4. Could you think of instances in life, today, where specific aspects of the Book of Revelation might be very applicable?
5. What is the most profound impression the Book of Revelation has made on your faith and life?
6. Will you read the book of Revelation again and recommend it to other Christians?
7. Has the Book of Revelation given you any new impressions of heaven or hell or life after death?

EXAMINATION ONE

INTRODUCTION through UNIT III, chapters 1-11

I. Indicate whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE:

- _____ 1. The title of this book is THE REVELATIONS OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.
- _____ 2. "Apocalypse" is a word derived from the Greek which is a synonym for "revelation."
- _____ 3. All other apocalyptic literature, beside Revelation, is not inspired by the Holy Spirit.
- _____ 4. John, the writer of Revelation, was the brother of James and an apostle of the Lord.
- _____ 5. The island of Patmos is in the Mediterranean Sea near Caesarea.
- _____ 6. More than half of the verses in the Book of Revelation contain an allusion to the Old Testament.
- _____ 7. Ephesus was the city in which the temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was found.
- _____ 8. Philadelphia is the most favored of the seven churches in Asia.
- _____ 9. Incense is always a symbol of God's wrath in Revelation.
- _____ 10. The opening of the seven seals does not reveal Jesus' gifts of peace as much as His power to send trouble on earth.

II. Match these theories of interpretation of Revelation:

- _____ 11. All events of Revelation have happened.
- _____ 12. Revelation gives an account of the last part of the sixth era and all of the seventh era of church history.
- _____ 13. Revelation gives a general prophetic and symbolic picture of church history from the time of Christ to Judgment Day.
- _____ 14. All except the first three chapters of Revelation lie in the future.
- A. Dispensational
B. Church Historical
C. Praeterist
D. Futurist

III. Match these symbolic numbers as used in Revelation:

- | | | |
|-------|--|------------|
| _____ | 15. Signature of totality or completeness. | A. Four |
| _____ | 16. Signature of God. | B. 144,000 |
| _____ | 17. Signature of deficiency. | C. Six |
| _____ | 18. Signature of world or creation | D. Three |
| _____ | 19. Signature of the church | E. Twelve |
| _____ | 20. Signature of magnitude and totality | F. Fifty |
| | | G. Seven |
| | | H. Hundred |

IV. Match the name of the city where the church fits the descriptive term. The same name of a city may occur more than once.

- | | | |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| _____ | 21. The church which kept the faith. | |
| _____ | 22. The lukewarm church. | A. Ephesus |
| _____ | 23. The church faithful in doctrine but loose in discipline. | B. Smyrna |
| _____ | 24. The church of the open door. | C. Pergamos |
| _____ | 25. The church urged to be faithful unto death. | D. Thyatira |
| _____ | 26. The church which left its first love. | E. Sardis |
| _____ | 27. The church tempted to compromise. | F. Philadelphia |
| _____ | 28. The church of which there was nothing good to say. | G. Laodicea |
| _____ | 29. The church in the "city of Diana worship." | |
| _____ | 30. The church in the city known for its library and parchments. | |

V. Underline the correct answer in each of the following:

31. The word which best describes the Nicolaitins: murmurers; uncircumcised; libertines; idol-worshippers
32. The quality Jesus values the most in the seven churches of Asia Minor: liberality; faithfulness; intelligence; friendliness

33. The lampstand pictured in Revelation I is: Christ; an angel; a pastor; a congregation
34. The Roman Caesar ruling at John's time of persecution was: Caligula; Domitian, Nero; Augustus
35. One of the tribes not listed in Revelation VII is: Judah; Levi; Benjamin; Dan
36. A term that does not refer to Jesus Christ in Revelation V: Lion of Judah; Root of David; The One on the Throne; The Lamb
37. "Bowls full of incense" are identified as: blood of martyrs; prayers of saints; sacrifices of Christ; judgments of God
38. Unbelievers are pictured as responding to God's judgments with: blasphemy; penitence; faith; contrition
39. In the Greek the basic meaning of the word "martyr" is: death; witness; blood; cross
40. John is directed to "measure the temple of God." This shows God's: care and concern, exactness and accuracy; anger and wrath; honor and glory

VI. Fill in the missing words:

"I am the Alpha and the _____", says the Lord God.
41

"Be faithful unto _____, and I will give you _____ of life."
42 43

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the _____ says to the _____."
44 45

"I am coming soon; _____ what you have, so that no one
46 47
may seize your _____."
48

"O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how _____ before thou wilt judge and
49
and _____ our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?"
50

Then one of the _____ address me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in
51
_____ robes, and whence have they come?" I said to him, "Sir, you
52

_____." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of
53

great _____ ; they have _____ their robes and made them white
54 55
in the blood of the _____. Therefore, are they before the _____
56 57
of God, and _____ him day and night within his _____ ; and
58 59
he who sits upon the throne will _____ them with his presence.”
60

VII. Match the following in Revelation IV to VII: (no term can be used more than once)

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| _____ 61. Sitting on the throne | A. Holy Spirit |
| _____ 62. Worthy to open the scroll | B. Believers of O. T. & N. T. |
| _____ 63. Round the throne was a rainbow | C. God the Father |
| _____ 64. Twenty-four elders | D. The devil |
| _____ 65. "I wept much." | E. The martyrs |
| _____ 66. The bright red horse | F. Jesus Christ |
| _____ 67. Four living creatures | G. Death |
| _____ 68. They cried, "How long?" | H. God's mercy |
| _____ 69. The pale horse | I. War |
| _____ 70. Those that hunger no more | J. All Creation |
| | K. Washed robes in blood of the Lamb |
| | L. John |
| | M. Famine |

VIII. Indicate whether these statements are TRUE or FALSE:

- _____ 71. When John ate the scroll the contents were sweet in the mouth and bitter in the belly.
- _____ 72. The symbolism of 42 months is the same as 1260 days in Revelation.
- _____ 73. If we carefully interpret Revelation, we can predict every major future event in church history.

- _____ 74. Throughout history there will be an orderly development of the kingdom of God according to His predetermined plan and under His direction and control.
- _____ 75. In Revelation VIII the ominous silence indicates that for a moment God does not know which way to act.
- _____ 76. The little scroll in the angel's hand in Revelation X is the same scroll in God's hand in Revelation V.
- _____ 77. Christians can live their discipleship with a spirit of victorious certainty and gratitude.
- _____ 78. Each vision is a cycle extending from the early history of the Christian church through to Judgment Day.
- _____ 79. No Christian martyr remains dead forever.
- _____ 80. The devil still has an opportunity to repent from his wickedness and be saved.

IX. Match these terms:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| _____ 81. Wormwood. | A. Angel of the bottomless pit. |
| _____ 82. Apollyon. | B. One of the tribes of Israel. |
| _____ 83. Issachar. | C. Faithful witness at Pergamum. |
| _____ 84. Antipas. | D. Wicked woman at Thyatira. |
| _____ 85. Jezebel. | E. Name of a star. |
| | F. The Son of God. |

X. Fill in the missing words:

Revelation emphasizes the _____ disciple. The theme of the book is Jesus
86

Christ is _____ of kings and _____ of lords forever. The church
87 88

is presented under the picture of a _____ to indicate God's control regard-
89

less of what _____ the church may encounter. Again and again the
90

"_____ " is used. All _____ bows before Him who sits on the
91 92

_____. The heaping of the terms in the _____ emphasizes God's
93 94

sovereignty and _____ . All honor of those who _____ be-

95

96

fore the throne is derived from Him whom they _____ . Yet behind the

97

throne is the _____ , the symbol of mercy and grace.

98

The heart of this grace is expressed in the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ, the

_____ of God. Those in the kingdom can patiently _____

99

100

and courageously endure because God's promises are guaranteed by His love in Christ.

EXAMINATION TWO

UNITS IV to VII

I. Indicate whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE:

- _____ 1. The word "devil" never appears in the Book of Revelation.
- _____ 2. The word "Satan" means "adversary" or "opponent."
- _____ 3. Luther says Satan always remains "God's devil" which means he is always under limits set by God.
- _____ 4. Revelation demonstrates that the devil will be ultimately subdued by God.
- _____ 5. The victorious disciple is no longer tempted by the devil.
- _____ 6. The devil was originally created by God as a perfect angel.
- _____ 7. Many disguises are used by the devil in carrying out his wicked plans against men.
- _____ 8. Jesus used God's Word to meet the devil's temptations in Matthew 4.
- _____ 9. The devil might still destroy the Christian church before Judgment day.
- _____ 10. Eternal fire is prepared for the devil and his evil angels.

II. Match these. Use each letter only once.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| _____ 11. The woman with child | A. Anti-Christian power |
| _____ 12. Great red dragon | B. The church |
| _____ 13. Michael | C. An angel of heaven |
| _____ 14. Male child born | D. Roman rulership |
| _____ 15. First beast | E. Anti-Christian propaganda |
| _____ 16. Second beast | F. Jesus Christ |
| _____ 17. Number 666 | G. The devil |
| _____ 18. 144,000 | H. Rome |
| _____ 19. Babylon | I. God the Father |
| _____ 20. The Lamb | J. The redeemed saints of God |
| | K. Holy Spirit |
| | L. The Messiah |

III. Underline the correct word or terms or phrases:

21. The woman in her pangs of birth:
died; was killed by the dragon; gave birth to a male child
22. Michael and his angels fought:
the woman; the dragon; the male child
23. The dragon is also called:
& the Lamb; Satan; the king; the deceiver of the whole world
- 24.
25. The great dragon:
was killed; was wounded; was thrown down to the earth
26. The beast John sees has:
three; four; seven; ten heads
27. What do "all who dwell on earth" do to the beast?
fight it; feed it; worship it; curse it
28. Another angel "flying in midheaven" is:
Martin Luther; Apostle John; any Gospel messenger
29. The "three foul spirits like frogs" are:
three Roman Caesars; real live frogs; agents of the enemies of God
30. Babylon's doom is symbolized:
lightning striking; bombs bursting in air; a millstone cast into the sea

IV. Match these words and terms. The same letter may be used more than once.

- | | | |
|-------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| _____ | 31. Alleluia | |
| _____ | 32. Morning Star | |
| _____ | 33. Magog | A. Jesus Christ |
| _____ | 34. Bride | B. Enemies of God |
| _____ | 35. Offspring of David | C. The Christian Church |
| _____ | 36. Gog | D. God the Father |
| _____ | 37. Alpha | E. First Letter of Greek Alphabet |
| _____ | 38. Hades | F. "Praise the Lord!" |
| _____ | 39. Omega | G. The Holy Spirit |
| _____ | 40. Root of David | H. Last Letter of Greek Alphabet |
| | | I. Realm of the Dead |
| | | J. Old Testament Israel |

V. Indicate whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE:

- _____ 41. The destruction of the hostile powers is presented in reverse order to their introduction in Revelation.
- _____ 42. All the seven kings, mentioned in Revelation 17, have been clearly identified in Roman history.
- _____ 43. These seven kings are pictured as ultimately triumphing over the Lamb of God.
- _____ 44. Revelation 19 is the only chapter in the New Testament containing the word, "Hallelujah."
- _____ 45. The beast and the false prophet in Revelation 19 are thrown alive into the lake of fire.
- _____ 46. Historical research has clearly determined the beginning and end of the 1000 years in Revelation 20.
- _____ 47. Chiliasm is the Greek term for millennialism.
- _____ 48. During the millennium the devil is cast into hell, never to be released again.
- _____ 49. The picture of a millennium never occurs in the Old Testament.
- _____ 50. The Augsburg Confession rejects chiliasm as "certain Jewish opinions."

VI. Fill in the missing words:

"Write this: '_____ are the dead who die in the Lord _____.'" 52
51

"And I heard the altar cry, 'Yea, Lord God the _____, true and 53

_____ are thy judgments.'" 54

"They will make _____ on the Lamb, and the Lamb will _____ 56

them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings."

"_____ ! Salvation and glory and power belong to our _____, 58

for his judgments are true and just.

"And he seized the dragon, that ancient _____, who is the Devil and 59

Satan, and bound him for a _____ years." 60

VII. Indicate whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE.

- _____ 61. The name of every child of God is written in "the book of life."
- _____ 62. The "second death" is the eternal torment of hell which lasts forever.
- _____ 63. "A new heaven and a new earth" proves definitely that the old earth will be completely annihilated.
- _____ 64. "The lake that burns with fire and sulphur" is a designation of hell.
- _____ 65. When God says, "I will be his God and he shall be my son," He is referring to His relation to Jesus.
- _____ 66. "The holy city Jerusalem" is a symbolic reference to heaven.
- _____ 67. There will be no pain or crying or darkness in heaven.
- _____ 68. In Revelation 22 the angel permits John to fall down and worship him.
- _____ 69. The term "the bright morning star" pictures the victorious Christ as the disciple's hope for the future.
- _____ 70. The Book of Revelation ends on a note of blessed anticipation of Jesus' return.

VIII. Fill in the missing words in this summary of the Book of Revelation:

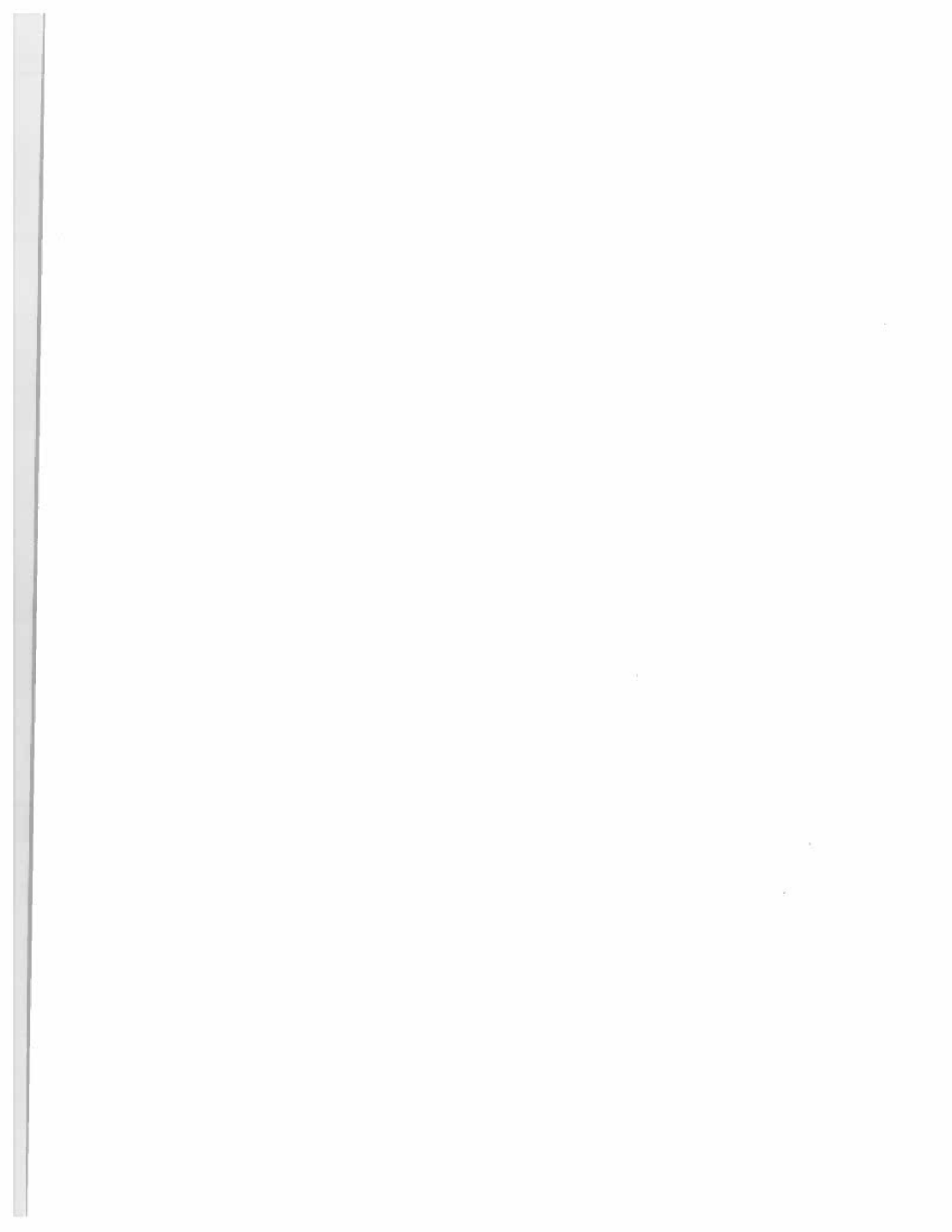
The overall theme of Revelation is: "Jesus Christ, _____
71 blessed forever,
is the _____ and triumphant Lord of lords and _____ of kings
72 73
and His _____ is established _____. The purpose of Revelation
74 75
is to assure all _____ of all generations that the _____ of Jesus
76 77
Christ will _____ in the face of the most terrible tyranny, opposition, and
78
_____, and, thus, to strengthen their _____ and hope during the
79 80
trials and trouble they must endure.
The primary emphasis is upon the ultimate _____ of the Lord Jesus Christ.
81

He _____ ! He _____ throughout all history. His Kingdom is
82 83
_____ !
84

Revelation is best understood as a Biblical book with _____ broad
85
_____ beginning either with the life of _____ or the beginning of
86 87
the Christian Church and being _____ by the coming of Christ for
88
_____ of the world. Each _____ becomes more comprehensive
89 90
and decisive as the history of the church moves on. In the final vision there is a per-
sonal encounter between _____ and Christ. First, the devil is bound for a
91
_____ years, but then _____ for a short time. After that there follows
92 93
the _____ and complete judgment of _____ and those that were
94 95
his followers. In contrast to such judgment and gloom, a new _____ and a
96
new earth are seen where all is joy and perfection and _____. Here com-
97
plete and perfect _____ with God is restored and bliss reigns eternally.
98
Revelation ends with exhortations to _____ because Jesus says emphatically,
99
"I am coming _____ "; to which the church eagerly responds: "Amen.
100
Come, Lord Jesus."

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