



**VERSE BY VERSE MINISTRY**  
INTERNATIONAL

*TEACHING THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD*

# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson 1

### Chapter 1:1-20

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- Welcome to a new VBVM study through the book of Revelation, perhaps the most challenging study in the Bible
  - As we begin tonight, I'm sure it won't surprise you to hear me say that we need to approach our study of this book very carefully
    - Certainly, every book of Scripture requires careful observation and systematic interpretation
    - But the study of Revelation requires even more rigor for reasons that should be obvious
  - The book of Revelation stirs up tremendous controversy, and we can find many conflicting interpretations of its meaning
    - Those differences of opinion may lead us to doubt whether we can find the truth in the midst of so much confusion
    - For that reason, many Christians avoid a study of this book at all
    - But those conflicting opinions and all the controversy is merely proof that the enemy is at work to keep us away from this truth
  - As we will see tonight, the Lord gave us the book of Revelation so that we would understand important things
    - Our God isn't a God of confusion, so we should approach this book with an expectation that we can and will understand it
    - But at the same time, we need to acknowledge the Lord expects us to approach this book with preparation and care
    - And to explain what I mean, let me give you a simple analogy
  - Imagine you selected a large novel from the shelves of a book store, opened it for the first time but turned to the last chapter
    - And you began reading the final chapter...how much of the action would you be able to follow?
    - Wouldn't you be thoroughly confused by what you read? And more importantly, wouldn't you *expect* to be confused?
    - Of course you would, which is why you would never dream of reading a book that way (assuming you wanted to understand it)
- That's how you need to understand the book of Revelation...it's the last chapter of a novel called "The Bible"
  - The Bible consists of sixty-six books which are like chapters in a story about Jesus
    - The story starts with Creation and the Fall
    - Then it moves through history, introducing characters and describing events that explain God's plan of redemption
    - And in the final chapter (i.e., Revelation), all the loose ends are wrapped up and the story comes to a climactic conclusion
  - Because the Bible is truly one story, we can't open the final book of the Bible expecting to understand it unless we have a good appreciation of what comes before
    - The book of Revelation relies heavily on imagery and symbols that are

- introduced in earlier books of the Bible
  - And the text is written assuming we are familiar with the Bible's themes, storylines, and characters in the earlier 65 books
  - So if we don't have that background, we will be lost
- But I doubt most of us have done that background study yet, so how are we going to get through this study together? That's where I come in
  - My job is to bring the background from the other 65 books into this study so we can decode the meaning of Revelation
  - This Revelation study has been described as a study of the entire Bible masquerading as a study of Revelation
  - But that's the only way to understand this book
- The second way we need to approach the book is with an appreciation for the rules of interpretation
  - Because rules protect us from ourselves...from our biases, blind spots and mistakes
    - That's why I begin a study of Revelation differently than any other book study I conduct
    - I start with some ground rules for how to study apocalyptic literature like the kind represented in this book
  - So let's begin with what *not* to do when studying this book
    - We need to appreciate that not everything we want to know will necessarily be available in every reading
    - The Lord is revealing the truth of this book to us progressively based on His purposes in our life
    - There are concepts in Scripture that build upon earlier concepts
    - And until you understand the earlier concept, the Lord may withhold a later concept
  - So don't try to fill those gaps in knowledge by guessing or assuming or running with the first idea that comes to mind
    - That's not a legitimate way to interpret the Bible...the truth of what the Bible says is not a matter of guessing or assuming
    - We either know what it says or we don't, and it's ok to say we don't know
  - That's better than guessing, because when we guess we think we know the truth and we stop looking for an answer
    - In reality, we've got it wrong but we don't know it
    - But even worse, should the Lord choose to bring us the real answer someday, we don't receive it
    - We reject this new information because we assume it's wrong, since it didn't agree with the answer we already have
  - We can avoid this entire problem by simply following rules of interpretation without exception

- And if we can't work out a solution, we leave the question unanswered and wait for another day
    - There aren't many places where the answers will allude us but we will acknowledge them when they do
- So what are guidelines we want to follow in interpreting Revelation (and every study)?
  - First, we will follow a basic rule of historical, grammatical hermeneutics
    - It's called the Golden Rule, and it says that when the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, we seek no other sense
    - We don't go searching for mysterious meanings when the plain meaning makes sense unless the context tells us to do otherwise
    - In other words, we don't run wild in speculating on what the text *might* mean
    - We remain constrained by the text itself seeking to understand what the author *actually* meant
  - So we will interpret the text taking each word at its ordinary, usual meaning unless the text itself tells us to do otherwise
    - And just because sometimes that meaning will blow our minds doesn't mean we reject it for something we prefer
    - We take it at face value and trust that with time and further study the text will prove to us how it is true
    - This rule tends to eliminate most errors in interpretation all by itself
    - And when we fail to respect this rule we end up with an over-spiritualized and incorrect interpretation
  - Secondly, we must recognize that symbols are always interpreted by Scripture itself
    - We never need to guess at the meaning of important symbols because the answers are in the Bible somewhere
    - And finding the meaning in Scripture is a matter of following three simple steps
  - First, we look for the symbol's meaning in the immediate passage, and most often that's where the answer is found
    - If we don't find the answer in the passage, we go backwards in the book to find the answer
    - And if we don't find an interpretation in the same book, we go backwards in the canon of Scripture to find it
- So with that background, let's dive into the first chapter of the book and get our bearings

**Rev. 1:1** The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must soon take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond-servant John,

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

**Rev. 1:3 Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it; for the time is near.**

- The book of Revelation is actually a letter, and like any letter it has an author and an intended audience
  - But unlike any other letter in the Bible, this letter has a unique chain of custody
    - It begins in v.1 as the revelation of Jesus Christ, and the Greek word for revelation can also be translated “apocalypse”
    - It’s apocalyptic literature, a type of Scripture heavily dependent on symbols to explain future events
    - And no other letter in the New Testament is said to be the direct revelation of Jesus Christ
  - Furthermore, we hear this revelation passes through a remarkable chain of custody
    - It starts with God giving this Revelation to Him (meaning Jesus), which tell us that “God” refers to the Father
    - So the revelation we have in this book went from the Father to the Son
  - And the Son shows this revelation to His bond-servants
    - A bond-servant is the New Testament term for the followers of Jesus, and it literally means a slave
    - And between us and Jesus there were a couple more steps in this chain of custody...
- The revelation goes from the Father to Jesus to His angel
  - The word angel literally means “messenger”, and that’s the primary role angels play in Scripture
    - The word angel is singular here, so we don’t know which angel is in view here
    - But as we study through the book, we will see angels featuring prominently as messengers
  - Finally, the angel(s) will communicate the details to John we’re told
    - John is the Apostle John, as church history records it
    - Since the text does not mention which John, then the logical assumption we make is that the Lord expected us to know
    - And the John most familiar to the early Church would have been the Apostle John
  - Why is this chain of custody so elaborate and specific? To encourage our trust in the extraordinary contents of the letter
    - Just as it is today, the early Church was inundated with false teaching – especially with teaching regarding the return of Jesus
    - After Jesus departed the earth the Church expected His quick return, so much was being said about that return
    - Some were saying it had already happened or was about to happen, while

others were saying it would never happen

- So here we have the definitive explanation of His return and all that happens before that moment
  - And to ensure that the Church accepted this testimony as true, we're given the chain of custody to validate the contents
  - We can trust the author because it's the Apostle John, who was called into service as an Apostle by Jesus
  - And we know John received it accurately, because it came from Jesus' angel, who got it from Jesus, who got it from the Father
- Then notice in v.1 we're told that Jesus "shows" this revelation to His bond servants
  - By "show" the text means that the details of the events are played out before John's eyes rather than explained in words
    - Furthermore, John says in v.3 that this letter is his testimony to all he "saw"
    - This is a fascinating detail, because it means the events aren't explained... they are just displayed
    - And herein lies some of the reason that this book generates so much confusion
  - Jesus says "show" and John says "saw" because the details of this letter weren't transmitted in a narrative form, as writing
    - They were communicated to the Apostle visually, so John related what he saw by describing the visions
    - John must put into words what he sees, though obviously he doesn't understand what he's seeing at times
    - And he didn't try to interpret the meaning of the images for the most part
    - He just told us what he saw, and he leaves the interpretation of the meaning to the Holy Spirit
  - So as a result of this methodology, the description of events is clouded in mystery
    - Rather than explaining what will happen, the book leaves the reader to make sense of the meaning of what John saw
    - This also serves to obscure the meaning from those who aren't intended to understand, the unbeliever
- Finally, in v.3 John says that those who read and those who hear the words of this prophecy and heed the things written in it will be blessed by God
  - This is the only book of the Bible that contains a promise of specific blessing to a believer
    - It would seem the Lord knew we might be hesitant to study the book, and so He gives us added incentive to do so
    - To receive that blessing, John says we should read (or hear) the book and heed (or observe) it
  - To heed or observe the book means to take it to heart, accepting what is written as true and looking forward to what it foretells
    - But notice also what John does not say...he doesn't say we must understand

it in order to be blessed

- Our understanding of the book will vary, and yet the blessing is equally available to all
- We simply need to dive in, reading it and accepting it as true like all Scripture
- The blessing is unspecified, but when the God of Heaven says He will bless you, don't underestimate what that means
  - When God said He would bless Abraham, he exceeded all expectations
  - We should desire that blessing, because the whole point of it is to encourage our interest in studying this work
- And with that opening, we now dive into the introduction of the revelation itself

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

**Rev. 1:5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us and released us from our sins by His blood —**

**Rev. 1:6 and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

**Rev. 1:7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen.**

**Rev. 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”**

- The human author of the letter, as we heard earlier, is the Apostle John, but he acts as a secretary of sorts taking dictation from Jesus and sending it to us
  - He says in v.4 that he is writing to the seven church that are in Asia
    - This reference to seven Asian churches makes more sense once we get into Chapters 2 & 3
    - But we can begin to understand it now simply by observing the use of the number “7”
  - Numbers feature prominently in the book of Revelation, so we need to understand how we arrive at the meaning of numbers in the Bible
    - We're not talking about a “bible code” or some other mystical manipulation of the text
    - We're simply talking about careful observation...paying attention to how the Lord uses a particular number
  - For example, the Lord uses the number seven frequently in the Bible
    - And as we observe the way He uses it, we discover that the Lord has assigned a meaning to the number
    - The number seven represents a complete, perfect result

- Just as the number “100%” represents the whole, so you can think of the number “7” in the Bible as God’s way of saying 100%
  - So John says this letter goes to “seven” churches, but we know there were far more than seven communities of believers in the world
    - And certainly the Lord wasn’t only interested in communicating to these seven communities
    - Jesus was speaking to the entire church throughout history
    - And so He chose seven churches to receive this letter to represent all of the church (100%)
    - Nevertheless, these particular seven Asian churches were important as well, and we will see why in the next two chapters
- Next, notice the greeting John gives from all three members of the Godhead beginning with the Father Who “is, was, and is to come”
  - This refers to the eternal existence of God Who has always been and will always be
    - No matter how terrible the events of this book, they are merely moments in time
    - The God we worship is eternal and if He is always the same, then we can know that terrible events must give way to great things
    - Notice He repeats that statement in v.8, which is to emphasize not to get swept away in worry or fear over what you read here
  - The Seven Spirits before the throne of God
    - We know there is only one Spirit of God and the number seven means 100%
    - But we will address why we’re saying 100% of the Spirit when we get to Chapter 4
  - And then we have Jesus, Who is called the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead and the ruler of the kings of the earth
    - These three descriptions refer to the three periods of Jesus’ ministry as the Second Person of the Godhead
    - Prior to His advent, Jesus was the One Who witnessed to the existence of God through the Creation and the word of God
    - As Paul says in Colossians 1

**Col. 1:16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him.**

- At His appearing, Jesus became the firstborn of the dead, having been the first to die and resurrect into a body of glory never to die again
  - As Paul goes on to say in Colossians

**Col. 1:18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in**



**everything.**

- And following His Second Coming to earth, Jesus will rule the earth as king in a day to come
  - And this book tells us how we move from the second to the third period of history
  - And in fact, it shows us the Church's part in that plan, as v.5-6 tells us
- While we await, we are a kingdom of priests, who serve the lost world
  - We are the ones who have been released from our sins by the blood of Jesus
  - His death paid for our sin, so that we might be free to serve Him because we no longer worry about earning God's approval
- Instead, we now serve Him as priests of a Kingdom to come
  - Priest are intercessors, bridging a divide between people and God
  - So we are priests who intercede for the lost, representing Christ to them so that they might come to believe in Him
- With that, John begins to relate his story to you...

**Rev. 1:9** I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

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

**Rev. 1:11** saying, "Write in a book what you see, 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."

**Rev. 1:12** Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands;

**Rev. 1:13** and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

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

**Rev. 1:15** His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.

**Rev. 1:16** In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.

- The John of this letter was a John well known to the readers of the day in which this was written
  - We know that because John calls himself "your brother" and fellow partaker in the experiences of the early church
    - If this writer had been anyone other than John the Apostle, he certainly would have been more specific in his description

- Because to simply say “John, your brother” immediately suggests the Apostle John and no other
  - Furthermore, John says he was imprisoned on a Mediterranean island of Patmos because of his testimony of faith in Jesus
    - That detail agrees with early church tradition that records John as having been exiled to this island by the Romans
    - John ministered in Ephesus, which was just a short distance from Patmos
  - So all data points to this being the Apostle John, and early Church fathers reported that this letter was written very late in the first century
    - Probably as late as 95 AD, which means it was the last work of the Bible chronologically
    - We know from the Gospels that John was probably the youngest disciple, because of his place at the Last Supper Passover table
    - So that means John was probably in his early 80s when he wrote the book
  - Early church fathers report that John was eventually freed from Patmos and allowed to return to Ephesus after Domitian died
    - If so, then we imagine he delivered this letter to the church when he returned to the mainland
    - Which is how we have a copy now
- At that time, John says he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, but in the Greek the phrase “Lord’s day” is written as an adjective, as in a lordy day
  - So when combining “in the Spirit” with a “lordy day” John seems to have been experiencing an especially spirit-filled day of prayer or otherwise
    - And it’s in that prayerful attitude of submission to the Spirit that he receives a special visitor
    - It starts with a voice behind Him, a voice like a trumpet
    - It must have startled him because imagine someone sneaking up behind you and blowing a trumpet at you!
  - Nevertheless, the loud trumpet conveyed speech that John understood, and the first words John heard were instructions to write
    - John hears he must write a book of what he “sees” and send it to the seven churches
    - Notice again, he records what he sees (not hears) and he sends it to “the” seven churches, not just to some churches
    - The seven churches named here are all in Asia Minor, present-day Turkey, but we will look at each in detail in Chapters 2 & 3
  - And now only at this point does John have a chance to turn around to see where this voice is coming from
    - It must have taken him a second or two to regain his senses after that trumpet blast and realize that this was really happening
    - And then as he turns, his mission to report what he “sees” begins with a remarkable vision of the One speaking

- The first thing John notices is seven lampstands
  - The lampstands aren't described in detail, but when the Bible mentions a lampstand absent any additional detail, we must assume a menorah
    - The seven branched lampstand that God instructed Israel to construct for the tabernacle is the only kind of lamp in the Bible
    - So if the Bible says lampstand and nothing more, we should assume what the Bible assumes
  - And there are seven of them, which is that perfect complete number again
    - So we know these objects are supposed to represent something to us, but what?
    - Remember our rule about interpreting symbols? Where do we look first? In the same context
    - So let's wait to see if we get our answer here before we go searching elsewhere
  - Standing in the middle of the lampstands is a figure, and it's clear He is the focus of the vision
    - The description begins with the phrase "one like a son of man"
    - That phrase clearly points us to Jesus, but in the context it simply means someone who looks human yet not exactly
  - And at first the figure looks very human...with a robe down to His feet and a girded sash around the waist
    - These details are reminiscent of a person of authority, particularly a priest or king
    - But the "not exactly" becomes clearer as we get to the description of the Person's features
- His hair is white as wool and like snow, while His eyes are like a flame of fire
  - Now there have been times when I could describe my wife as having eyes that looked like flames of fire, but this is different
    - And the description goes on to say feet that were like bronze in a furnace, red hot and glowing
    - And his voice was like the sound of a huge torrent of water rushing as in a canyon or over a waterfall
    - And the figure is holding seven stars in one hand and out of his mouth came a two-edged sword
    - And His face is shining as bright as the sun (imagine trying to look directly into the sun)
  - How do we interpret all these details? We follow our rules
    - First, we glance down the chapter and in v.20 we find that the objects in the vision are explained for us

**Rev. 1:20** "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.**

- Here's a prime example of how symbols will be explained in context
- The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the lampstands symbolize the seven churches
- In speaking about angels, the writer of Hebrews says this

### **Heb. 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?**

- We know that seven means 100%, so the imagery here is easy to understand
- The stars represent the angels serving all those in the church under Jesus' control
- And a lampstand represents illumination and the light of the truth reaching into the darkness
  - Certainly that's the mission of the church generally, and each believer individually
  - We are to be the light of the world, and the light of the truth shines from within us
  - So Jesus walks among His whole church signifying His authority to oversee, minister and rule it from Heaven
- But what about the details of Jesus' appearance? There is no immediate explanation of these details so what do they mean?
  - As our rules require, we go back in the Bible looking for other examples to explain it to us
    - For example, we find this description in Daniel :

**Dan. 7:9 "I kept looking  
Until thrones were set up,  
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;  
His vesture was like white snow  
And the hair of His head like pure wool.  
His throne was ablaze with flames,  
Its wheels were a burning fire.**

- And again in Daniel:

**Dan. 10:4 On the twenty-fourth day of the first month, while I was by the bank of the great river, that is, the Tigris,**

**Dan. 10:5 I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a certain man dressed in linen, whose waist was girded with a belt of pure gold of Uphaz.**

**Dan. 10:6 His body also was like beryl, his face had the appearance of lightning, his eyes were like flaming torches, his arms and feet like the gleam of polished bronze, and the sound of his words like the sound of a tumult**

- So we see that John's description is consistent with those of Daniel
- Then we go to Isaiah and find several of these details brought together for us and explained

**Is. 11:1** Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,  
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

**Is. 11:2** The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,  
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
The spirit of counsel and strength,  
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

**Is. 11:3** And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,  
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,  
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;

**Is. 11:4** But with righteousness He will judge the poor,  
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;  
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,  
And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

**Is. 11:5** Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,  
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

- It's clear from the passage that this is a description of Jesus, the shoot that springs from the stem of Jesse
  - And the Spirit will rest on Jesus, but notice the Spirit is mentioned seven times
  - And we remember that the seven Spirits of God were mentioned earlier in this passage of Revelation 1
- And then we're given explanations for details John gave us here
  - Jesus judges or discerns what is right and true by what He sees not by what He hears
  - True discernment rests on what may be known firsthand, through investigation and knowledge of the truth
  - Righteous judgments can't rely merely on what is heard, because rumors and gossip are often if not always misleading
- And Jesus will strike the earth with a rod from His mouth
  - That is, by what comes from His mouth He slays the wicked
  - And His righteousness and faithfulness are pictured by a belt around His waist girding Him
- Finally, we go to the Psalms

**Psa. 93:1** The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty;  
The LORD has clothed and girded Himself with strength;  
Indeed, the world is firmly established, it will not be moved.

**Psa. 93:2** Your throne is established from of old;  
You are from everlasting.

**Psa. 93:3 The floods have lifted up, O LORD,  
The floods have lifted up their voice,  
The floods lift up their pounding waves.**

**Psa. 93:4 More than the sounds of many waters,  
Than the mighty breakers of the sea,  
The LORD on high is mighty.**

- The sound of many waters represents the unrivaled might and power of God through His word
- God brought the universe into existence merely by the word of His power, so clearly it's the ultimate power in the Universe
- So putting all this together (plus summarizing other details) here's what Jesus' appearance says to John and to us
  - Jesus is glowing white symbolizing purity and holiness
    - His robe represents His role as priest and king and His sash represents faithfulness
    - His eyes of fire symbolize piercing discernment
    - His face shines like the sun, representing the light of truth and His pure holiness
    - His glowing bronze feet represent judgment, as in the way fire tests the quality of metals
  - And they also represent His bringing wrath against sin

**Is. 63:3 “I have trodden the wine trough alone,  
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.  
I also trod them in My anger  
And trampled them in My wrath;  
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,  
And I stained all My raiment.**

- So we have Christ appearing to John in a form that is consistent with God's appearance elsewhere in the Bible
- And the details remind us of God's character traits, which is not surprising
- But what's most striking about Jesus' appearance, however, is the way John responds to it

**Rev. 1:17 When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last,  
Rev. 1:18 and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.**

- John says that as he saw these things, He fell at Jesus' feet like a dead man

- To fall like a dead man means to be completely immobilized, lifeless, we might say scared stiff
- This response is not uncharacteristic of other men who have been brought into the presence of God

**Josh. 5:13** Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, “Are you for us or for our adversaries?”

**Josh. 5:14** He said, “No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?”

**Ezek. 1:28** As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.

**Dan. 8:15** When I, Daniel, had seen the vision, I sought to understand it; and behold, standing before me was one who looked like a man...

**Dan. 8:17** So he came near to where I was standing, and when he came I was frightened and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Son of man, understand that the vision pertains to the time of the end.”

- But we know John was with Jesus for three years, and they had a close relationship as John says in His Gospel
  - John hasn’t seen Jesus for 60 years, so we would expect their reunion moment to be a joyful scene
  - Instead, John is terrified and that tells us that Jesus’ appearance during the time of Gospels was a unique period of history
  - We’ve seen that before His incarnation Jesus appeared in the same way John describes here and it terrified humanity
  - And this vision is showing us that Jesus is now again to be seen in His glory
- So the time Jesus spent as an ordinary man on earth was a unique time in which He appeared in an incredibly humble way, as Paul says

**Phil. 2:5** Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,  
**Phil. 2:6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

**Phil. 2:7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

**Phil. 2:8** Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming

**obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

**Phil. 2:9** For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

- It's easy to assume that the way Jesus appeared in His first coming is the way we will know Him when we see Him too
- But Revelation 1 was given to us to remind us that the eternal Creator exists in a glorified form and that's how we will know Him
- He is to be worshipped and known for Who He is...and even someone like John felt the awesome presence of God and fell to His face
- In this detail, we're learning that every chapter in the book of Revelation contains a prophetic aspect
  - Even though the scene described here took place in the past (in the first century), nevertheless it still stands as prophecy even now
    - The image of Jesus exists into eternity and is prophetic because we do not as yet see Him in this way
    - Yet this is Jesus' appearance now in Heaven and it will be His appearance as He returns to the Earth at His Second Coming
  - In fact, take a sneak peek at what Revelation says Jesus looks like at the very moment of His return to Earth

**Rev. 19:11** And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

**Rev. 19:12** His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

**Rev. 19:13** He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

**Rev. 19:14** And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

**Rev. 19:15** From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

- Here we find many of the same details again, confirming this is the Jesus we serve now and in the future
  - So take down your paintings of the blue eyed, blonde haired Jesus with the movie star good looks
  - Jesus is more than you can even imagine and it's an awesome, fearful vision
- In response to John's fear, Jesus recognizes that John doesn't recognize Jesus
  - Jesus says do not be afraid and then describes Himself
  - He says He is the first, the last, and the living One, the One Who was dead and is now alive forevermore



- In other words, Jesus describes Himself not by temporal qualities (like His earthly incarnate identity) but by His eternal characteristics
  - He was God before He was man and He remains God even after His death and resurrection
  - So that's His eternal identity even as we continue to celebrate His work on earth in dying for our sin
  - In fact, His earthly name Jesus (Yeshua) will not be His eternal name according to Revelation 19:12
- So we end tonight looking at the task John is given by Jesus

**Rev. 1:19 “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.”**

- John is to write what he sees according to a three part outline Jesus gives John here
  - The outline moves from past tense to present tense to future tense
    - First, the things John had seen (meaning up to that moment)
    - Secondly, the things which are
    - Finally, the things that happen after the things that are
  - The first part of this outline seems easy enough, since Jesus speaks in the past tense even as He stands before John
    - And to that point, the only things that had already happened were the events of the scene in Chapter 1
    - So the things John saw must refer to the events of Jesus' appearing to John, which we have just studied
    - So congratulations, you have just completed one third of the book of Revelation!
  - So the moment Jesus spoke these words, everything that happened prior to that moment are the things John saw (past tense)
    - And therefore, the things that “are” must be the things that come next in the book
    - But wouldn't that mean that the things that “are” would be history for us now, 2,000 years later?
    - Wouldn't they be the things that “were” for us today?
  - Not necessarily, because we have another anchor to consider in this outline
    - The third point in Jesus' outline is the things that come after the things that are (the things after these things)
    - If we could determine where in John's letter those later things began, then we would be able to divide the book into thirds
- So we know Chapter 1 is the things John saw, and we know that Chapter 2 must begin the second part of the things that are
  - And if we scan forward in the book, we come to a telltale phrase at the start of

## Chapter 4

**Rev. 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold...**

- The phrase “after these things” conspicuously starts the fourth chapter
- That strongly suggests that the letter’s final third begins at that point
- And if that were true, then that would mean the second third fits in between, in Chapters 2 & 3
- Reinforcing that conclusion is the uniqueness of those two chapters
  - Chapters 2 and 3 are seven letters written to the seven churches mentioned earlier
  - And after Chapter 3, the narrative changes dramatically to discussing marvelous things in heaven and dramatic events on earth
- That strong change in the story following Chapter 3 supports the conclusion that this three-part outline corresponds to:
  - Chapter 1 is the things John saw
  - Chapter 2 & 3 are the things that are
  - And Chapters 4-22 are the things that happen after the things that are
- We still have a mystery to solve as to how the letters to churches that existed 2,000 years ago can be the things that “are”
  - So next week we dive into part 2 and make sense of why those letters represent the things that “are”



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 2A

## Chapter 2:1-7

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- A proper study of Revelation is not an exercise in mysticism or speculation
  - It's a practice of careful observation of text combined with a systematic searching of Scripture
    - Last week in Chapter 1 we saw just how systematic our study could be when we observed what John wrote
    - First, we noticed that John was told to write what he sees, not what he is told
  - And that detail explained why this book is so challenging to understand
    - Normally, interpreting the Bible means interpreting explanations
    - But in this case, John simply provides descriptions of events that he sees
    - Which means we must first make sense of what he describes, and then we have to interpret the meaning of his visions
  - This style of Scripture puts a premium on our skills of observation and on our knowledge of Scripture generally
    - Our observation skills will help us make sense of the scenes John describes to us
    - And our knowledge of the Bible comes to bear on interpreting the visions
  - And that's the second thing we learned last week...the meaning of the symbols used in this book will be found somewhere in Scripture
    - If the meaning of a symbol is important to the story, then the Bible will have explained it somewhere for our benefit
    - And often that explanation will be found in the immediate context
- And then third and finally, we learned that the book itself has a very simple but important structure that will guide our understanding
  - That structure is provided in an outline that Jesus gave to John in Chapter 1
    - The outline is found in v.19, and we broke it down last week
    - But we had some unfinished business in it, so let's go back and begin our study tonight there

**Rev. 1:19** “Therefore write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after these things.

- John was told by Jesus to write this book in three parts
  - The first part was: write the things which you have seen
  - The second part is: write the things which are
  - And the third part is: write the things which will take place after these things
- Last week we identified the chapters of the book that correspond to each of these parts
  - And we did that through simple observation beginning with the tense of the verbs Jesus used
    - The first part Jesus called the thing which John had seen

- Jesus used a past tense verb, so Jesus was referring to things that John had already seen by the time we reach v.19
  - What had John seen by the time of Chapter 1:19?
    - The obvious answer is the things that took place prior to that verse, which are the things John described in Chapter 1
    - In other words, Chapter 1 is the first part of the book, the things John had seen
  - And what did John see? He saw Jesus in His resurrected, glorified form
    - And he saw the lampstands and the stars in Jesus' hand
    - He described all that he saw and how the vision came to him
  - And in all these details, John gives authority to what he writes, which was the point in Part 1
    - Beginning with the chain of custody and John's identity as an apostle and then moving to how John encountered Christ
    - Finally concluding with Jesus' appearance and His direction to John...by all these details we have confidence to accept John's testimony
    - If we accept the validity of Scripture at all, then we have equal reason to accept the truth of John's account
- Now we move to the things which are, and like Part 1 it's easy to identify which chapters are associated with Part 2
  - The second part must start in Chapter 2, since Part 1 only included the things that John had seen before v.19
    - So where does Part 2 end and Part 3 start in the text of Revelation?
    - The simple answer is that if we could identify where Part 3 started, then by a process of elimination we would know
    - By definition Part 2 ends where Part 3 begins
  - As we saw last week, there is an obvious clue in the text that tells us where Part 3 starts:

#### **Rev. 4:1 After these things I looked...**

- Jesus called Part 3 “the things which will take place after these things”
- And then we find those key words to start Chapter 4, which is not a coincidence....it's the marker we're supposed to notice
- They tell us that Chapters 2 & 3 are Part 2; the things which are
- But the term “are” poses some confusion for us at this point
  - That present-tense verb seems to suggest Jesus was showing John things that were only relevant in John's day
  - But that's not true...based on the outline Jesus gave us, the things of Part 2 must remain relevant until Part 3 begins
- Logically, the things which “are” (Part 2) will continue to be true (i.e., remain “are”)

until the things that will take place (Part 3) start

- Furthermore, when we look at what Chapters 2 & 3 contain, it makes more sense that Jesus called this section the things that “are”
- Because in these chapters we have letters written to the church, that is to you and me
- So Jesus’ counsel given to His church must remain true and in effect for as long as His church itself remains
  - So in John’s day, the letters Jesus wrote to the Church are the things that “are” for the church
  - Likewise, the letters Jesus wrote to the Church are the things that “are” for the church today
  - Only after the events described in Chapters 4 and onward begin can we say that the things that “are” have finished
- So let’s move into Part 2 and understand Jesus’ counsel to His Church, the things which are, seven letters written to seven churches of John’s day
  - Beginning with an understanding of how we must approach the interpretation of these letters
    - Based on how these letters are structured and what they contain, we must use three, complimentary methods of interpretation
    - All three methods are valid and each provides us with unique insight Jesus wanted us to have
  - First, we must read these letters literally, taking them exactly for what they say
    - They are real letters, written by Jesus through John’s hand
    - They had real audiences in mind, men and women who lived in John’s day
    - These letters made their way to their intended audiences in Ephesus, Smyrna, and elsewhere exactly as Jesus intended
  - And the things Jesus spoke to each of these churches were literally true for each community
    - Ephesus was standing fast against false teachers
    - Smyrna was suffering persecution, and so on
    - In that sense, the letters are specific and historical
  - But as we just learned, the letters are not merely historic in focus
    - The letters continue to have present-day significance (“are”) for the Church, even 2,000 years later
    - Moreover, we remember that Jesus gave us exactly seven letters, and the number seven in the Bible stands for 100%
    - So these letters were written to the entire church, not merely seven communities in ancient times
  - So we must also understand that these letters also speak to situations and perspectives that remain true throughout the time of the church
    - At every moment, somewhere in the world we can find a church community



- Eschatology refers to the study of the end of the age
  - And these letters point us to that time
  - How? They connect the dots between the events of John's day and the events of Christ's return
  - They tell us how Christ moves the world from His first coming to His Second Coming
- And that's why Jesus called this period the times that "are" because they remain present day until we reach the events of the end
  - The first century church was in the same situation we are in now
  - Just as they were waiting for Christ's return so are we today
  - Chapters 4-22 detail how the final events of this age will go, how Jesus will return and what comes after that
  - While Chapters 2 and 3 explain the events that must take place between the first century and the end times
- But in the way Jesus has crafted this prophecy, it wasn't immediately apparent to the Church that we should see the letters in this third sense
  - The eschatological quality of the letters remained hidden from the church for most of the past 2,000 years
  - Only in the past 150 years or so has the prophetic interpretation taken hold in the church
  - And let me show you why Christ intended it to be that way
- As we examine each of the letters, we're going to notice that the letters follow a very specific pattern
  - Each letter will have certain elements, and these elements are consistent across all seven
    - From that pattern, we will begin to see how each letter represents a period of church history
    - In other words, the entire period of time of the church residing on earth is represented by these seven letters
    - Not only does the number "7" symbolize 100% of the church, it also represents 100% of the church age on earth
  - We can represent the seven parts of the church age with a simple graphic
    - Each of the letters represent some length of time during the age of the church on earth
    - And collectively, all seven letters describe the total time (100%) of the church's existence on earth prior to Jesus' return
  - Looking at these letters in advance, we couldn't possibly know how long each of the seven periods would last
    - In fact, we couldn't even know that these letters represent periods of history at all
    - But with hindsight we can see how the contents of the letters align with events in history



- And by matching details of each letter with events in history, we can find the breaks between each letter
  - We can recognize the events that bring one of the seven periods to an end and the next one begin
- So a third way to interpret the letters is prophetic, recognizing that the letters stand for a period of history
  - And this perspective leads us to three fascinating conclusions
    - First, it explains why the prophetic interpretation eluded the church for most of the past 2,000 years
    - Because it required hindsight to appreciate it
    - Only by the nineteenth century did scholars start to notice the pattern and see the connection to the church age
  - Secondly, this perspective suggests that just as the Church had a beginning (at Pentecost) so it will have a conclusion in some sense
    - If Ephesus started the church age then Laodicea ends it
    - Which leads us to questions like how and why is the church ending and what does that mean for us?
    - And what comes next? The book of Revelation answers those questions
  - Finally, once we recognize that the church age has only seven stages, it becomes possible to understand how close we are to the end
    - If you told me we were living in stage 3 or stage 4, I would know we have a lot of time remaining until the end of the age
    - And yet that notion runs contrary to Scripture, doesn't it?
    - We can think of verses that remind us to be always prepared for the return of Christ because it is always imminent
  - And that's why this method of interpreting the letters to the churches was not revealed to the church until the nineteenth century
    - Because we are the period of the church age that needs to know about this pattern
    - And as we begin to study the letters you will soon see why
- So let's move now into the letters themselves, and the first one we study will set the pattern for all the rest

**Rev. 2:1** “To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this:

**Rev. 2:2** ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false;

**Rev. 2:3** and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary.

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

**Rev. 2:5** ‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place — unless you repent.

**Rev. 2:6** ‘Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

**Rev. 2:7** ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’

- These seven letters are highly structured, and that structure repeats from letter to letter, and it makes it easier for us to study
  - The churches have names of cities, and the letters begin with salutations
  - Then Jesus offers commendations, condemnations, exhortations, promises and warnings
- So we will take each letter apart according to this structure and examine each letter from all three perspectives
  - We will look at each from the literal, historical perspective
  - The universal, timeless perspective
  - And finally, from the prophetic, eschatological perspective
- And we start with the name of each church and its historical setting
  - Ephesus was a port city located on the Mediterranean Sea
  - Its name meant “desirable” or “desired”
  - It was one of the chief seaports connecting the Eastern and Western ends of the Roman Empire
  - The tremendous flow of goods through this port helped make the city very wealthy
- Seaports bring ships and ships bring sailors and travelers, so this city featured many temples devoted to many Roman gods
  - The largest was the temple to Artemis or Diana filled with prostitutes
  - And in the midst of this hustling, bustling city we also have one of the largest most influential churches in the first century
  - It counted Paul, John and Timothy among its leaders over the years and it features prominently in Acts and the Epistles
- Jesus addresses the church by calling Himself the One with the seven stars in His right hand, walking among the seven golden lampstands
  - Here we see another of the key patterns in the letters, where Jesus assigns an element from John’s description in Chapter 1 to each church
    - The specific element Jesus selects for each church tells us something about that church’s situation
    - In this case, Jesus assigns the symbols of stars and lampstands
  - From our study last week, we learned that the imagery of stars represents angels

- under Christ's authority ministering to the saints
    - And the lampstands represent the church's role to represent the truth of Christ to the world, bringing light into darkness
    - The imagery of Christ standing in the midst of the lamps and holding the stars indicates His ruling authority over the Church
  - So the not-so-subtle reminder to Ephesus seems to be that Jesus is in charge and He still has His hand on the wheel
    - The Church is His and He commands it even from Heaven
    - He wants the church in Ephesus to keep that in mind, and it becomes clear as we look at what Jesus says to the church
  - Jesus starts with a commendation for this body, saying they toil away in perseverance doing deeds of one kind or another
    - Furthermore, they cannot tolerate evil men who come calling themselves apostles but are not
    - They test such men and find them to be false, so Jesus commends them for their commitment to true authority
    - Finally, they persevere and endure for the sake of the name of Christ without growing weary
- This church certainly seems to be a good example, and we can make a universal application to every church
  - Every church should test those who come in authority or teaching
    - In the case of someone calling himself an apostle, the test was whether they possessed the power of an apostles
    - Apostles were men commissioned by a personal appearing of Jesus Who appoints apostles personally
  - In the first century, an apostle possessed unique power and authority
    - Apostles had miraculous powers and authored Scripture according to the leading of the Spirit
    - Christ appointed the first twelve while He was alive, and He appointed more after He resurrected
    - But Jesus stopped appointing Apostles sometime in the first century, and the final apostle to die was John
  - And during that time, false men tried to call themselves apostles in the hope of obtaining positions of power over the church
    - But churches like Ephesus were careful and attentive to teaching, knew better than to buy such claims
    - If a man couldn't produce the miraculous signs common to all apostles, then the church knew these men were not true
    - They tested them, and when the men couldn't pass the test, they were put out of the church
  - Though apostles are no longer walking the earth, we still need to follow Ephesus' example in testing those who offer to teach us or lead us

- No one is perfect, but we look for good fruit in their lives and we test their teaching to the Bible
  - And when we do this, we please Christ, just as He commended those in Ephesus for the same
- Notice in v.6 Jesus says they hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans
  - Scholars debate the meaning of this statement
    - We know the name means “victorious over the people”, which suggests a movement to conquer the congregation
    - So many believe the Nicolaitans were introducing the heresy of a ruling class in the church called clergy
  - But the Bible never suggests nor supports such a separation
    - There is no such thing as clergy vs. laity
    - The body of Christ is one, and we are all priests the Bible says
  - Yes we have leaders in the church, but they are not especially holy nor do they guard the way to God for us
    - They simply serve the body in their gifting as we do in our gifting
    - They have authority and we respect that authority, but as individuals they are not set apart from the rest of us
  - Finally, we can learn a lesson from Ephesus’ perseverance and endurance in the work of serving Christ
    - Jesus notes they have deeds, and they accomplish these deeds consistently and without growing weary
    - That is a high compliment, because that’s a hard thing to do
    - Many of us are eager to jump into serving Jesus, but the real test of service is in sticking with that work
  - The Bible says endurance is the key ingredient to spiritual maturity and eternal reward

**James 5:11** We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord’s dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful.

**Heb. 10:35** Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward.

**Heb. 10:36** For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised.

- So Ephesus is an example to us of discernment, unity and endurance
  - But all was not perfect in that church, because Jesus had some critiques to offer also
    - And in one of the most iconic and chilling statements in all the Bible, Jesus

- says this church had left its first love
    - The statement is so intriguing and at first it seems easy to understand
- Clearly, the “first love” of the church must refer to Jesus, since what other love comes before a believer’s love for Jesus?
  - Yet, we wonder how this could be true for a church that persevered for Christ’s name?
  - They resisted false teachers that tried to divide them, and yet they forgot what the church was all about?
  - How exactly did they lose their first love?
- The letter gives us a couple of clues to help us understand the situation, beginning with the description of Jesus
  - Jesus reminds the church He is the one ruling His church
  - And He ministers to His church by means of angels under His authority
- So we find this interesting dichotomy: the church was very resistant to false leaders and to those wishing to establish a special class of rulers
  - Yet Christ felt the need to remind them He was in charge
  - It would seem that their resistance to being led by false leaders had evolved into an unwillingness to be ruled by Christ either
- They left their first love in the sense that a teenager turns from obedience to defiance
  - They move from depending upon and appreciating a parent’s care and support, to chafing under that parent’s authority
  - They have left their first love in the sense that they forgotten the early days of that relationship and have taken it for granted
- A second clue to support this conclusion is found in the remedy Jesus gives the church in v.5
  - Jesus tells them to remember where they have fallen, and do the deeds they did at first
    - They are to think about their missteps and repent of those past mistakes
    - The call to repent means to reconsider their current path, back up and move in a better way
  - Jesus’ remedy is especially interesting when we remember He just commended them for their deeds so we know they were active
    - And yet that activity wasn’t the right activity, it wasn’t motivated by their love for Christ
    - In other words, somewhere along the way, this church community lost sight of why Christ put His church on earth
    - They left their first love, and church became about something other than Jesus and His Gospel
    - They were very busy and they endured in that work for the name of Christ, but they lost sight of why the work mattered

- Jesus is talking about one of the greatest threats to the mission of the church: the self-satisfied Christian
  - Being self-satisfied means finding satisfaction in the life you have rather than in the life Jesus desires we have
  - A self-satisfied Christian isn't necessarily someone who doesn't come to church to get involved in ministry
  - Remember, Ephesus was doing many deeds, Jesus said
- A self-satisfied Christian has forgotten Jesus is in charge, both of the church and of your life
  - You come to church every week, park in the same spot, say hello to the same people, sit in the same pew
  - You sing the same songs, recite the same prayers, hear the same vague motivational sermon every week, give the same amount of money
  - It's comfortable, it asks nothing of you and it's under your control
- And you've left your first love...you've forgotten why you do this thing we call church
  - Churches that leave their first love are churches that start clinics or schools as a means of outreach to the lost
    - But in time the work becomes merely about healing physical wounds or teaching earthly knowledge
    - They forget about the mission
  - And on an individual level, it looks like church programs that forget to share the Gospel
    - Or Bible classes or small groups that never actually read the Bible
    - Or men's and women's groups that fill their calendars with potlucks and horseshoes and never talk about Jesus
    - It's the mission of sharing Jesus with the world that's the reason we even get together in the first place...that's our first love
  - Think back to where you have fallen...when did it all just become about fellowship, routine and appearances?
    - And if you are a ministry leader or church employee, when did it just become about a job and a paycheck?
    - You may be busier than ever, but it's been a long time since Jesus has been controlling your calendar or setting your priorities
    - Your walk as a Christian is on automatic pilot, and Jesus says He has that against you
  - Remember He runs the Church, and since you are a member of the body, He runs your life too
    - But are you following Him? Are you listening to the Spirit?
    - When we follow Jesus, He brings us from horizon to horizon, from trial to trial, triumph to triumph
    - Following Jesus is never boring or routine, because Jesus won't let us find self-satisfaction...He wants us to grow

- Jesus is so serious about this concern that He tells His church there will be a penalty if they fail to heed His call to repent
  - In v.5 Jesus says I am coming to you to remove your lampstand out of its place unless you repent
    - We know the lampstand is a symbol representing the church itself
    - So to remove a lampstand must mean to bring a certain church body to an end
    - And since this church was the church of an entire city, Jesus is threatening to bring the church in that city to an end
  - Jesus wanted Ephesus to act in keeping with their name: desired
    - Jesus wanted the church to desire Him as Paul says:

**1Cor. 2:1 And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.**

**1Cor. 2:2 For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.**

- There are a lot of things we can desire in our church life, but we can't leave Jesus behind and expect to continue serving Him
- So what happened? Did the church of Ephesus repent?
  - We can only assume not, because by the beginning of the second century, the city was in steep decline
  - Silt began to build up in the famous and busy harbor port causing the harbor itself to retreat from the city
- As the harbor moved farther and farther away from the city, it eventually lost its main source of income
  - And with the death of trading, the city was eventually abandoned
  - The ruins of Ephesus are now located miles inland rather than on the coast
  - As Jesus promised, He would bring an end to that lampstand, which reaffirms that He walks among His churches ruling
- Nevertheless, Jesus tells us that no matter what may happen to the Church in any one place, our personal relationship with Jesus doesn't change
  - In v.7 Jesus calls to all believers (those who have ears to hear) saying that the Spirit affirms to us that we will eat of the tree of life
    - Here's another pattern in all the letters...they all end with an encouragement to all believers to look forward
    - No matter what else may go wrong on earth in our various churches, our eternal future is secure
    - And in that eternal future, we will receive all that has been promised
  - In each of the seven letters, Jesus makes reference to some detail from the eternal realm that we will know in the future
    - Here it's a reference to the tree of life that we will all eat from in a day to come

- Rather than address the detail here, I'll save that for Chapter 22
- So we've looked at the first letter from a literal, historical perspective and from a universal, timeless perspective, but what about the prophetic perspective?
  - How does this church represent the first period of the church age?
    - Well first, it's easy to say this church represents the first age of seven since it's the first letter
    - That would mean that this is the letter that represents the nature of the church from the start of the church until some later point
  - We know the church officially started at Pentecost, based on the definition of a Christian Paul gives us in Romans

**Rom. 8:9** However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

**Rom. 8:14** For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

- Those who have the Spirit of God living inside them are Christian, and sons and daughters of God
- And all who have the Spirit of God are considered part of one body called the church

**Eph. 4:4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

**Eph. 4:5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

**Eph. 4:6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

- All those indwelt by the Spirit of God are part of the church
  - When you come to believe that Jesus is God and that He came to live and die as a man to save you from your sins
  - By His death He paid the price God demands for your sin and by His resurrection He proves He can give you eternal life
  - By your faith in that Gospel you are born again spiritually
  - And as a downpayment of that eternal future, God sends His Spirit to live in you joining you to all other believers in one body
- So the letter to Ephesus gives us a general overview of how the church collectively evolved in its earliest days
  - It started with its first love, fully aware that it was all about Christ and eagerly awaiting His return
    - Remember this commentary from Acts:

**Acts 2:41** So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.



**Acts 2:42** They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

**Acts 2:43** Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

**Acts 2:44** And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

**Acts 2:45** and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

**Acts 2:46** Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

**Acts 2:47** praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- That's what it looks like when someone is living for Christ
- And in the first years of the church, people were living like there was no tomorrow on earth
- Because they expected Jesus to return right away, and when Jesus' return is first on your mind, then you give little thought to this world
  - They were spending their time continually in prayer, continually together, sharing all they had in common, selling possessions
  - That's the behavior of someone who knows it's all about Jesus
- But over time, as the church began to realize that Jesus' return might take longer than they assumed, things changed
  - And it had to...the church had to exist in the world
  - Which means it had to strike a balance between looking forward to an eternity with Jesus and living for today
  - That was the whole point of the Church remaining behind while Jesus departed... that we would witness to the world

**John 17:15** "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

**John 17:16** "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

- During the first century, the early church mirrored the things Jesus says to Ephesus in this letter
  - Generally, the church held to sound teaching, since the Apostles themselves were alive, teaching and leading the church
    - They resisted false doctrine while preserving the Apostles' writings to eventually form the NT canon
    - They did impressive works in moving the Gospel outward in a short time
    - The church spread as far as Rome and even Spain before the end of the first century

- It was also a church of perseverance against Jewish persecution and did not grow weary under their attacks
  - When Jewish persecution broke out in Jerusalem the church moved into the Diaspora
  - And later when Roman persecution broke out under Nero, the church maintained its witness even to the point of death
  - Though false teachers tried to infiltrate the church and establish unbiblical leadership at times, the church held strong
  - So the positive things Jesus said of Ephesus were generally representative of the nature of the early church overall
- But as the century progressed and the final apostle died, the church began to change in ways that also mirror Jesus' negative comments
  - Jewish Christians largely died out while pagans, Romans began to convert and enter the church by the thousands
  - These Gentile believers were far more willing than their Jewish predecessors to mix Christianity with Roman culture
- As a result, the church became a fixture of Roman society
  - In cities like Ephesus, the church found a place alongside Roman temples and government
  - And the believers remained fairly immature and carnal
  - We can see this clearly in the letters Paul wrote to one of the most Gentile and Roman churches of that day, Corinth
  - The believers were self-satisfied, busy building the church but much in the same way Romans built Roman society...
  - ...simply for its own sake
- So what did Jesus do to shake things up in His church? In Ephesus, the Lord took away the church's place
  - And for the church as a whole, the Lord took away the church's place of privilege and security in the Roman Empire
    - The Lord allowed sustained, widespread persecution to enter the church and it broke the church free from its self-satisfaction
    - No longer was the church complacent and comfortable nor could it find a place in Roman society
    - Instead it went underground and those who were not truly Christ's quickly gave up the game
  - What remained was a true, committed body that suddenly remembers what being a slave of Christ meant
    - And what it meant to suffer for Christ
    - And that leads us to the second church, the one called Smyrna, which means "death"
  - So what period of history do we assign to this first church letter?
    - The start date is easy, since it's the first period of the church and the church

started at Pentecost

- I'm going to use round numbers, since the exact dates is not known nor is it important
    - So we can say the Church started around 30 AD
  - But when does it finish? There is no exact science to selecting these dates
    - The goal is to anchor our dates by some historical event that ties to the detail of the letters
    - What event can mark the end of the first age of the church?
  - We know that the key shift between the first and second period is the rise of persecution
    - And when we study Smyrna next week, we will see that shift clearly
    - But there is no one day when persecution started, so we don't have a clear marker
- But there is one marker that clearly marks a turning point for the earlier church: the end of the apostles
  - When John died, the final apostle was gone and for the first time the church was without apostolic leadership
    - In their place we had something far more important and powerful to lead the church: the word of God
    - The apostles were the New Testament prophets who produced the New Testament canon
    - And once the last apostle, John, had written the final book of Scripture (Revelation) the need for apostles ended
  - Moreover, John's death at the end of the first century also coincided with the reign of terror brought by the Emperor Domitian
    - It ushered in a terrible period of Roman persecution that waxed and waned for the next two centuries
    - So based on those details, we can date the first period of Church history foretold by Jesus' letter to Ephesus to 30-100 AD
    - And we can call this period the Apostolic Age
  - So the age that bridges the church from Christ's First Coming to His Second Coming begins with the period of Ephesus
    - And next week we move to the second, third and fourth periods



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 2B

## Chapter 2:8-29

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- Let's dive right back into our analysis of the seven letters of Revelation
  - As we do, let's begin with a review of the framework we established last week for interpreting the letters properly
    - We are using three complimentary methods of interpreting the letters
    - All three of these perspectives are necessary to gain a full understanding of what Jesus gave us here
  - The first was a literal, historical approach, reading the letters as they were written in their day, taking them for what they say at face value
    - We have seven literal churches (or communities of believers) living in the first century in Asia Minor
    - They were experiencing a variety of circumstances, they exhibited a variety of behaviors
    - And Jesus gives them a variety of instructions including commendations, critiques, warnings, and encouragement
  - The second way we will approach these letters is in a universal, timeless approach, recognizing Jesus wrote to the whole church not just seven
    - The symbolic meaning of the number seven told us that Jesus intended these letters to apply to 100% of the church
    - So as we read what they say we must consider how they apply to the church today, specifically to us personally
  - Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we must consider the prophetic, eschatological meaning of these letters
    - Jesus selected these seven churches and arranged them in a certain order to represent the church changing over time
    - In total these letters tells us that the history of the Church will exist through seven periods
- I represented this third view of interpretation using a graphic that I will continue to use as our roadmap through the letters and even beyond
  - And the contents of the letters will bear out the prophetic interpretation
    - We will be able to look back over the past 2,000 years to see a correlation with the things given in the letters
    - Before that history was written, we wouldn't have been able to see this pattern nor recognize how the letters were prophetic
    - Only in hindsight did scholars come to realize that the letters worked in this way
  - That quality of the letters explains why they are included in the book of Revelation in the first place
    - Jesus didn't give us these letters to reveal the history of the Church *in advance*
    - On the contrary, He gave us these letters to show us the history of the Church after it had already taken place
    - And in that way, these letters function as a clock measuring time
    - But they aren't counting time up, but instead they are counting down time

- Secondly, the prophetic aspect of these letters confirms to us that Jesus truly is in control of His Church
  - He told us in advance what would happen to His Church
  - And now with the benefit of hindsight we see clearly He has been steering His Church through thousands of years of time
  - And if Jesus can control history so precisely, then we have confidence to know He is in control of the future too
- So the prophetic quality of these letters is the most important reason they are found in the book of Revelation
  - They are intended to alert the Church to the approaching end of the Church age
    - Only those living at the end of the age will be able to decode the meaning of these letters and benefit from that knowledge
    - And being near the end, that generation also needs assurance that what happens next is also according to God’s plan
  - So let’s go to the second letter, as we continue to follow the pattern we established last week in our study of the first letter to Ephesus
    - Starting with observation of the literal, historical setting

**Rev. 2:8** “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this:

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

**Rev. 2:10** ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

**Rev. 2:11** ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’

- As we learned last week, these letters are very structured, and the structure repeats from letter to letter, which helps us interpret them
  - Starting with meaning of the city’s name, Smyrna
    - The name is a transliteration of the Greek word *smurna* which is the word for myrrh
    - Myrrh is a natural gum or resin that comes from a Middle Eastern tree used to make a fragrant ointment
    - Myrrh was most commonly associated with death and burial since it was a primary embalming spice used to prepared dead bodies
  - Today Smyrna is called Izmir and it’s still a thriving city in Turkey
    - But in Jesus’ day it was just another Roman city, full of pagan temples, most notably a temple to the emperor Tiberias

- That made this town the heart of emperor worship in Asia Minor, and as such it became an early persecutor of Christians
  - Roman law at the time prohibited any religion except emperor worship
    - Judaism was the only religion granted an exception due to the stubbornness of Jews to conform
    - For a time in the first century, Romans viewed Christians as an offshoot of Judaism, so the Church enjoyed the same protections
  - But before the end of the century, the Church had become predominantly Gentile
    - As a result, the Romans came to see the Church as distinct from Judaism and a threat to the Empire
    - Furthermore, the Jews rejected and persecuted Christians thereby becoming allies with the Romans against the Church
    - Smyrna seems to have been on the forefront of this transition from tolerating Christianity to persecuting believers
    - Among those martyred in Smyrna was the early church bishop, Polycarp, a man disciplined by John himself
- Looking at the letter, we can see Smyrna's record of persecution reflected in Jesus' words to this church, beginning with the description of Jesus
  - Jesus says He was the first and last, the One Who was dead and has come to life
    - Remember, Jesus addresses each church with a detail taken from John's description of Jesus in Chapter 1
    - The detail Jesus selects reflects what He intends to say to that church
  - In this case, the connection is obvious...a church destined for persecution should remember that death is not the end of us
    - Jesus died too, so He knows what it's like to face the death of the body
    - And then He rose again, proving He has the power to bring life back from death
    - And He has promised that those who believe in Him will experience the same transformation
    - So just as Jesus faced death obediently, so should Christians knowing death will not be the end of us
  - From there Jesus moves to acknowledging that this church is suffering tribulation and poverty
    - The tribulation was likely a result of Jewish opposition to Christianity though later the Romans joined in
    - And their poverty was closely connected to the persecution
  - Most manual labor trades in Roman society were tightly controlled by powerful trade unions
    - Membership in the unions was required to work in your trade
    - These unions worshipped pagan gods and participation in ritual worship and sacrifice was required as part of union membership

- A Christian who refused to worship the trade union's god would be set out of the union and unable to work leading to poverty
- Jesus blames the church's troubles on Jews who were not really Jews but were instruments of the devil, a synagogue of Satan
  - Jesus' words give you a clear indication of how Jesus views those of Jewish background who do not recognize Him as Messiah
    - They were Jewish but Jesus says they are Jewish in name only

**Rom. 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.**

**Rom. 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.**

- They may have been born of Abraham but they haven't done the deeds of Abraham, specifically they have not believed
- Abraham believed in God's promise of a Messiah, sight unseen, yet the Jews of that day hadn't received the Messiah in Person
- So the Lord sees those who aren't for Him to be those who are against Him, just as Satan is against Jesus
  - There are only two kinds of people in the world from God's point of view
  - We are either believers in Jesus or we are His enemies

**1John 2:22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.**

**1John 2:23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.**

- So Jesus says He knows the true heart of those persecuting the church, and yet Jesus doesn't say He will stop the persecution
  - Likewise, Jesus says He knows they have poverty, but He doesn't say He will remove it from them
  - Instead, He says they are actually rich...how is that true?
- Jesus is saying that their suffering and tribulation is earning for them Christ's approval and that approval will result in treasure in Heaven
  - They may be poor on earth, but because they endure that trial well and turn it into a witness, they will be rewarded by Christ
  - But that reward will not be on earth, because the rewards we await from Jesus are not given to us until we are resurrected
  - And that's far preferable since Heavenly rewards do not wear out and cannot be taken from us unlike earthly benefits
- Jesus is reminding the church to have eyes for eternity, to see your life and



circumstances from an eternal perspective

- Don't get caught up in what you can obtain here or in avoiding unpleasant experiences here and now
- Endure them and turn them to a witness and ministry as the Lord allows, and as you do that you are earning treasure in Heaven

**Matt. 5:11** “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

**Matt. 5:12** “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Notice in v.10 Jesus tells the Church how to make the most of these circumstances
  - He says not to fear the situation, even as they face death for their faith
    - Fearing death is an impediment to pleasing Jesus because it gets in the way of obedience and eternal reward
    - Fear of death causes us to make bad choices, selfish choices, that are the opposite of faith
    - And that fear is ultimately pointless, since we know that death isn't a bad thing for a Christian...Paul says to die is gain for us
  - This church couldn't let fear drive their response to their circumstances, but instead they should enter into their suffering with confidence
    - They are enduring tribulation and poverty, but the Lord isn't going to remove those things
    - Instead, He tells the church how to endure them with their witness intact
    - Jesus' goal for the church wasn't in preserving their earthly comfort or lengthening their earthly life
    - His goal was encouraging their earthly witness for His glory, and through that obedience they maximized their eternal reward
- He warns them that prison awaits and after a short time, where their faith would be tested, then would come death
  - Roman prisons were not places of permanent confinement
    - Romans had no incentive to house prisoners for long periods of time, after all, why give free food and clothing to criminals?
    - Romans would conduct swift trials, usually, and the punishment would follow quickly
    - A less serious penalty might include a fine or scourging or other torture
    - A more serious crime would mean death
  - Therefore, the deadline of 10 days is consistent with the time for the Roman justice system to bring a verdict and carry out a sentence
    - It may have been the time required to be transported into a Roman amphitheater where they would be fed to lions
    - But the number “10” in the Bible is also symbolic of testimony, so Jesus is

hinting at an opportunity for testimony

- In other words, the coming persecution would lead to the death of believers in Smyrna, and Jesus wasn't going to change that
  - It was Jesus' will that the church in Smyrna be martyred for His name's sake
  - And that opportunity was a blessing for those Christians because of what was at stake
  - If they made the most of the opportunity to be a witness in death, they stood to gain great things in Heaven
  - As Jesus Himself promised us:

**Matt. 5:10** “**Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**”

- The key, Jesus says, is that the church face this coming trial faithfully
  - Faithful in this context doesn't refer to the issue of salvation
    - These believers are already saved by their faith and nothing can change their eternal destiny

**Rom. 8:38** **For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, Rom. 8:39 nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

- Paul says nothing in death or in life can separate us from Christ
- Nothing on earth, under earth or in Heaven will separate us from Christ
- Bottom line: there is no such thing as being separated from Christ
- So being faithful in this context refers to the believer's behavior in the face of persecution
  - What does that believer say and do in response to the persecution?
  - Do they agree to worship a pagan god to escape death? Do they recant faith in Jesus to avoid torture?
- If they made those choices, their relationship with Jesus wouldn't be at risk – but an eternal reward would be
  - Specifically, Jesus says if they remain faithful through that short trial they would receive the crown of life
  - So naturally we wonder what is the crown of life?
- What if we were tempted to conclude that the crown of life was salvation itself?
  - The only reason to make that assumption is the word “life” which might lead us to assume it refers to our eternal life in Christ
    - But if we make that assumption, we are not using the rules of interpretation we discussed on the first night

- And as a result of bad interpretation, we paint ourselves into an unbiblical corner
- First, a crown is a symbol and therefore we need to look at how the symbol of crowns is used throughout the Bible
  - Time doesn't permit us to go through that process here
  - But if we did we would find that the Bible never uses a crown to refer to salvation
- In fact, the Greek word for crown is *stephanos*, which refers to the wreath that the Greeks awarded to olympic athletes
  - In other words, a crown is an award for good performance
  - And every use of the crown symbol in the New Testament is associated with good works for Christ, as it is here

**2Tim. 4:7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith;**

**2Tim. 4:8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.**

- So the consistent meaning of the symbol of a crown precludes the interpretation that the crown of life is salvation
- Furthermore, the Bible never suggests that salvation is earned or secured by our efforts
  - Salvation is only ever described as a free gift given, which we receive apart from works
  - So not surprisingly, salvation is never described as a crown
- What is a crown then? Crowns are symbolic representations of our eternal reward, and different crowns are awarded for different acts of faithfulness
  - The crown of life is given to those who endure persecution faithfully as we see here
    - James confirms this interpretation

**James 1:12 Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.**

- And Paul also tells us that our performance in serving Christ determines the crown we receive

**1Cor. 9:24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win.**

**1Cor. 9:25 Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all**

**things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.**

- So Smyrna was told that persecution was coming and it would lead to death at the hands of Jews who persecuted the church
  - But if they were faithful to Christ during their suffering, these believers would receive an eternal reward
  - And their reward, symbolized by the crown of life, would be eternal compensation for their short suffering
  - And when you compare 10 days of suffering to enjoying a heavenly reward for eternity, the trade off seems pretty good
- Finally, the letter ends with a promise that those who overcome will not be hurt by the second death
  - Now remember I said that each letter ends with an assurance to the believer that their eternal future is secure
  - No matter what happens to that church or how they respond to their circumstances, nevertheless they will always be with Christ
- We see that here clearly, because the term “to overcome” is a New Testament term for salvation by faith in Jesus

**1John 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith.**

**1John 5:5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?**

- So Jesus tells the church that those who are saved (who overcome) will not be hurt by the second death
- These believers would experience the first death, the death of the body, but their faith would keep them from the second death
- This confirms that a lack of faithfulness in the face of persecution can't touch their eternal life
- So what about the prophetic value of this letter? We already know that Smyrna is the church of persecution or “death” and that reflects the history of the church
  - Following the first century, the church entered a period of persecution under Roman opposition lasting more than 200 years
    - This period began more or less with the emperor Domitian in AD 96 and continued until the early fourth century
    - There were ten emperors during that time who undertook persecution against the church
    - Prophetically, it seems the ten days of waiting mentioned in the letter also alludes to the ten emperors who attacked the church
  - The history of the church following the apostolic age, therefore, mirrors the events of the second letter

- And therefore, we conclude that the second letter represents the second period of the church, the period of persecution
- The dates for that persecution being in AD 100 (the division with the prior period)
- And where do they end? They end with the beginning of the next period, which has a clearly-identifiable moment
- Which will be found in the next letter to Pergamum

**Rev. 2:12** “And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this:

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

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

**Rev. 2:15** ‘So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

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

**Rev. 2:17** ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.’

- The name Pergamum comes from two Greek words, *pergos* and *gamos*
  - *Pergos* means a tower or citadel, like a powerful fortress
    - And *gamos* means matrimony or sexual union
    - So the two words together mean “married to a powerful institution or fortress”
  - Pergamum was a powerful city for many centuries and the seat of authority for the Roman province
    - The governor of Asia lived in this city and as governor, he held the “right of the sword” under Roman law
    - That meant he had the authority to decide when to apply capital punishment and to decide life and death
  - The city was a preeminent city of artistic and intellectual power in the region, with a library rivaling the one in Alexandria
    - It was steeped in Hellenistic culture, including having many pagan temples, monuments and cults dedicated to gods
    - The city featured an altar to Zeus, the son of Dionysis, and the Augustan Temple

- It was also famous for the Asclepeion school of medicine, founded in the 4th century BC and famous as a place of “healing”
- The imagery Jesus uses to describe Himself to this church is as the One with the two-edged sword
  - A two-edged sword is a common expression in ancient times meaning a sword used for execution of criminals
    - As such it came to represent the authority of the seat of government in holding people accountable for their crime

**Rom. 13:4 for [government] is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.**

- So when Jesus describes Himself to this church in this way, the implication is that of judgment and correction
- This church is making serious mistakes and Jesus is going to bring justice for them
- But first, Jesus acknowledges the good things the church had done
  - In v.13 Jesus says I know you dwell where Satan’s throne is, which is certainly a scary notion
  - The city's dominance as a place of pagan worship meant it was a particular evil setting
  - And in particular, the city was home to a satanic cult that worshipped a snake idol called Esculapius
  - So spiritually speaking, this church was working in a very dark, challenging place
- Furthermore, the church was standing firm in the face of persecution, and Jesus cites the example of a man named Antipas
  - His name means “against all” and suggests he was a witness who stood opposed to the pagan, satanic worship in the city
  - He seems to have been martyred for his opposition, and despite the persecution the church remained firm in their confession
- But that’s where the good news ended for this church, and now Jesus lists His complaints
  - In v.14 Jesus says some in the church held to the teaching of Balaam
    - Balaam was not a literal character in Pergamum in that day
    - Instead, Jesus uses the name of an Old Testament character to describes the kind of behavior taking place in the city
  - Balaam was a prophet of God and his story begins in Numbers 22
    - Though he was a prophet of God (and therefore a believer), he was a corrupt, greedy man
    - When one of Israel’s enemy’s offered the prophet money if he would curse Israel, the prophet agreed to the deal
    - Though he tried to carry through with the plan, the Lord prevented him from

speaking a curse against Israel

- In the New Testament, both Peter and Jude use the phrase “the way of Balaam” to refer to a believer who trades faithfulness to God for money
  - A person who follows the way of Balaam will place stumbling blocks before God’s people
  - Because of their greedy motives, they will be moved to teach things that aren’t true hoping to manipulate
  - And by their manipulation, they please people, hoping to be enriched from their lies
  - So, the error of Balaam is loving money and as a result, turning to a form of spiritual prostitution
- In Pergamum, these “Balaams” were teaching the church that it was OK to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of sexual immorality
  - Jesus says these teachings were placing stumbling blocks before His people, and it’s easy to see how that would happen
    - Whenever someone tells us it’s OK to do what we like to do, we’re happy to hear that
    - So when a teacher in the church says God is OK with sexual immorality or doing something else we shouldn’t, we like that
    - We like that so much, we move our attention to that person and away from those who tell us things we don’t prefer
  - The Bible calls this tickling ears, and it always revolves around these same behaviors
    - First, a shepherd who cares more about his own earthly comfort and pleasures than the eternal future of his flock
    - Secondly, a teaching that encourages believers to follow after their lusts, whether greed, sexual or otherwise
    - And third, a congregation more interested in satisfying their flesh’s desires now than receiving spiritual blessing in eternity
  - Notice in v.14 the Lord says there are “some” on the church who hold to this pattern of false teaching
    - This group are part of the church, yet they go after the false teaching rather than after the truth
    - Some were going after the teaching of Balaam and some after the Nicolaitans
- We remember the Nicolaitans from last week...these were men teaching that the church should observe a distinction between members
  - They tried to introduce the idea of clergy vs. laity, that some in the body should be designated as a distinct order
    - And that these orders within the church should possess special spiritual distinction or authority
    - The Nicolaitans were responsible for corrupting the biblical idea of the priesthood of the believer

- Instead of all believers being priests, as the Bible says we are, these false teachers began designating only some as priests
  - Over time this teaching distanced the believer from Jesus, corrupting or stumbling believers into thinking that God was behind the teaching
    - And as the church began to move away from the scriptures, and into fleshly practices, it must be corrected
    - Jesus says in v.16 that the church must repent or else He will come and make war with the word of His mouth
    - The sword of His mouth is the word of God, but the symbol suggests an execution or cutting off of this church
    - And probably more specifically, the leaders who are directing the church into these unholy practices would be taken away
  - Finally, the Lord says to the believers in the church that there is no cause for personal alarm despite the church's troubles corporately
    - The overcomer is the believer, and that person will receive hidden manna and a white stone with a new name
    - The hidden manna was intended to contrast with meat sacrificed to idols
    - While the church might be chasing their flesh's desires, the believer would see his or her soul satisfied in the end
  - And the white stone is especially interesting because of a particular practice at the medical school in Pergamum
    - Patients visiting the school followed a certain ritual, where they entered the front to worship in the hope of healing
    - And after they received their "treatment" they exited out the rear of the building where they picked up a white stone
  - They wrote their name on that stone as well as the disease they had supposedly been healed of and left it as a testimony
    - These stones were monuments to false gods and false healing
    - But Jesus says true believers will have a lasting memorial to their spiritual healing
- So how does this letter compare to the third period of the Church?
  - This church begins after the church of persecution, so we should ask what event brought Roman persecution to an end?
    - It happened in AD 313 when the Emperor Constantine experienced a vision on the battlefield
    - And as a result of his vision, he declared that Christianity would be the official religion of the Roman Empire
    - In that moment, the church was married to a powerful institution, a fortress called Rome (*pergamum*)
  - Persecution stopped but new problems quickly emerged for the church
    - Since Constantine ordered the church to be the state religion, everyone had to participate in the church



- Every Roman citizen immediately became “Christian” by order of the Caesar, and every child born was immediately considered Christian
  - Infant baptism began and mass conversions were the order of the day
- How many of those forced converts were truly believers in Jesus Christ? We can’t know, but certainly many were not
  - Instantly, the church opened its doors to millions of Romans bringing pagan practices and pagan doctrine into the institution
  - They brought unbiblical ideas like temple priests, statues of idols, infant baptism, and various other mystical influences
  - And in time these influences crowded out Biblical practices
- The church was still there, of course, and the Gospel was still being preached, but that message was now competing with pagan voices
  - Constantine and the rest of Roman authorities became the Balaams by which Satan set stumbling blocks before believers
  - And Roman political authority infiltrated the church creating a perfect environment for distinctions in rank ultimately leading to clergy
  - And because every Roman citizen was automatically considered “Christian”, the church was flooded with unbelievers
  - And though some converted to the faith certainly, many others never did
- So as hundreds of thousands of pagans assembled in the church, worship of idols, various cult practices and other heresy entered too
  - But Jesus says He was coming with a sword to end it, and end it He did
    - The church had married the Roman Empire
    - But since the church itself wasn’t going to come to an end, the Lord brought the Roman Empire to an end
  - Rome was overrun by German hordes and the western part of the empire fractured into areas controlled by provincial church rulers
    - So this was the church of Constantine, 313AD-600AD, leading to the end of the Roman Empire
    - That brings us to the final letter for tonight

**Rev. 2:18** “And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this:

**Rev. 2:19** ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first.

**Rev. 2:20** ‘But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

**Rev. 2:21** ‘I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.

**Rev. 2:22** ‘Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.

**Rev. 2:23** ‘And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.

**Rev. 2:24** ‘But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them — I place no other burden on you.

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

**Rev. 2:26** ‘He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, **TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS;**

**Rev. 2:27** **AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES,** as I also have received authority from My Father;

**Rev. 2:28** **and I will give him the morning star.**

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

- Thyatira is another city in Asia Minor (Turkey), and the meaning of its name is a bit of a mystery
  - One suggestion made by some scholars is “unending (or perpetual) sacrifice” while Strong’s Concordance suggests “odor of affliction”
    - It was another Roman city full of pagan worship with the principle deity Apollo Trimnaeus
    - He was said to be the son of Zeus and he was worshipped alongside the emperor god Apollo
    - Both these gods were considered sons of other gods
  - Thyatira had more trade and craft guilds (or unions) than any other Asian city and like Smyrna, each guild was dedicated to a patron god
    - During the regular guild meetings, meat sacrificed to the guild god was served
    - Often orgies were part of the meal
    - Refusing to participate in these meals could result in banishment from the guild and the inability to earn a living
  - Looking at the letter, the description of Christ taken from Chapter 1 emphasizes Jesus’ eyes of fire and His feet of glowing bronze
    - These symbols reflect the same meaning but in different ways
    - Eyes of flame or fire in the Bible represent all-seeing, a piercing vision capable of discerning all things
    - Feet of glowing bronze represent the fires of judgment
    - The testing of metal in fire to know if it's pure
  - So taken together, the images testify to Christ’s perfect judgment about everything and the authority to judge it righteously
    - Here again, that’s not a very encouraging way to start the letter to His church

- For reasons connected to the earlier letter, Christ continues to remind His church He is a Judge of His Church
- But also like Pergamum, Jesus first offers a positive comment about the church
  - In v.19 He says the church in Thyatira is a church known for its good works and love for one another
    - In fact the church has apparently increased in good works over time, becoming better organized and more active
    - More people are being fed, more people are being housed, more people are being taught, more people are receiving good works
    - They are working hard and pious it would seem
  - Jesus is certainly a proponent of His church doing good works for His people and for humanity in general
    - But those good works cannot be divorced from the core mission of the church, which is to share the true Gospel
    - Saving souls through the preaching of the Gospel is the ultimate – and best – measure of the church’s obedience to Jesus
    - And to preach the good news properly, the church must know and teach that truth accurately
  - But this church has lost sight of that mission and the degree of critique that follows makes that clear
    - Beginning in v.20, the letter turns negative and offers one of the lengthier condemnations in all the seven letters
    - Jesus begins by saying He has against them that they tolerate the woman Jezebel
  - The original Jezebel was a Phoenician wife of the evil king Ahab
    - She persuaded her weak and godless husband to commit many immoralities in the Northern Kingdom of Israel
    - As a result, her name has become eponymous for any evil-hearted, manipulative woman leading weak men
    - There’s a reason parents almost never consider the name Jezebel for their baby daughters
- There is a lot of speculation concerning the identity of Jezebel and how she influenced this first century church
  - But like the mention of Balaam in Pergamum, we should understand Jesus is using this woman as a type
    - Just as today, women in that day weren’t called Jezebel
    - So Jesus is using the name to refer to the kind of influence present in the church
  - So there were women in Thyatira acting in similar ways, corrupting the church through an ungodly influence
    - Notice this negative influence has returned to an old favorite
    - Believers were being persuaded to eat the meat sacrificed to idols in the

- temples or guild suppers
  - And also to engage in the immoralities that accompanied those meals
    - Clearly this was wrong, as Paul himself had written against the practice in his earlier letters to Corinth
- Christ says he gave time for the woman to repent, but she didn't want to cease her immoralities
  - She calls herself a prophetess, meaning she claims to hear from God
  - So like Pergamum, the church in Thyatira was infiltrated by a false influence that was leading the believers astray
  - In Pergamum, it was a Balaam, a believer motivated by greed to spread false teaching
  - In Thyatira, it was a Jezebel, an unbeliever with an evil heart seeking to do the enemy's will
- The Lord says He's been waiting for the "Jezebel" to repent but she doesn't want to turn from her immorality
  - So the Lord's piercing judgment will come upon the church, and a time of trial and testing will follow
    - In v.22 the Lord promises to throw the false leader on a bed of sickness
    - And all who followed her will go through a tribulation until they repent of their deeds in corrupting the church
  - The result of this bed of sickness will be the death of many, including children
    - The woman's "children" probably refers to her followers who will also die by a pestilence
    - In the day of the letter, we must imagine some illness came as Christ predicted
  - And since this letter was circulated among all churches in John's day, the other churches would have seen the illness as fulfilling Jesus words
    - And when that happened, it would have struck fear into the church
    - Notice in v.23 Jesus says all the church will know that He is the One Who searches minds and hearts
    - Jesus knows what is going on in His church, down to a person
    - We like to think we're able to hide our sin, even in the church, and that may be true for people...but the Lord knows and He cares
- With such a devastating judgment coming to that church, Jesus once again reassures those believers that the judgment is not personal and they are secure
  - He says in v.24 that those who do not hold to the false teaching of the Jezebel can breathe easy
    - Jesus will not place more burden on them because they have been burdened enough already with Jezebel in their midst
    - The false teaching is even being called the deep things or deep secrets of Satan

- So the church had moved to the point of teaching things that were outwardly recognized to be from the enemy
  - So we've moved from Pergamum where believers were promoting bad teaching to Thyatira where unbelievers were in charge of teaching
    - We went from distorted biblical doctrine to outright satanic practices
    - And in both cases Jesus is stepping in to correct what He sees with perfect judgment
  - In the meantime, as the church awaits this devastating pestilence, Jesus tells them to hold fast to what they have
    - And what they have is a testimony against the Jezebel and a determination to maintain the truth
    - And Jesus reassures the believer in Thyatira that they can be assured they will one day rule with Jesus in the Kingdom
    - He will give them authority to rule and the morning star, which is a reference to Christ Himself in the Kingdom
  - Ruling in the Kingdom is one of the promises Christ makes to all believers
    - Our future with Him is a real future of substance, of living on earth sinlessly, with possessions and a life we will enjoy
    - And it includes a job ruling over the world with Jesus
    - We will talk extensively about that future when we get to the end of this book
- So to finish tonight, how does this letter foretell the fourth period of the church in history?
  - This letter corresponds to the period of history in which the church was dominated by the Roman Catholic institution
    - That institution rose out of the ashes of the Roman Empire itself
    - Remember this church period follows the period of Pergamum when the church and the Empire were "married"
    - When the Roman Empire began to dissolve around 600 AD, it disintegrated in stages over many centuries
  - Initially, it split into two empires East-West with the west ruled from Constantinople and the East ruled from Rome
    - Then slowly over about 1,500 years these two halves fractured more into the nations of Europe and the Middle East
    - But as the Roman Empire crumbled, a power vacuum existed
    - And the only unifying world power capable of filling that vacuum was the church itself
    - So the new power became the Roman Catholic Church, which wielded power across the new borders
  - The church went from being in bed with a powerful government to becoming a powerful government
    - So during Thyatira, the church is the government for Europe

- The popes battled opponents, kings were disposed and crowned and crusades were ordered
- The church ruled the world, except it wasn't ruling spiritually
  - It was ruling politically, and its leaders made whatever compromises necessary to maintain power
    - Even still, the works of the church expanded greatly, as the church itself took over responsibility for social services
    - But these works were largely devoid of the true mission of the Gospel
  - Conversion wasn't a matter of faith but of political necessity
    - And after centuries of unbelievers being forced into the church from birth, now the leaders themselves were unbelieving
    - The teaching included the deep things of Satan, things that led believers into false practices that obscured the Gospel
  - During this period of history, the Catholic church introduced many heresies and spiritual immoralities that persist today:
    - Justification through works rather than faith alone
    - Worship of idols and images
    - Celibacy of priests (Nicolaitan teaching)
    - Confessing sins to an intercessor other than Christ
    - Purgatory, Indulgences, Penance, Worship of Mary
  - So just as the original Jezebel introduced false practices by manipulating a weak leader so does the church during this period
    - Likewise the Jezebel of the Thyatira period is the Catholic church
    - Which gained its authority through a marriage to the Empire during the Pergamum period
    - And now during Thyatira's period it uses its influence over government to force false teaching into the church everywhere
- Obviously, Jesus isn't going to stand for this to happen in His church, though as He says He did give the church time to repent
  - As Jesus promised, the Thyatira church began at around 600 AD, and continued for at least a thousand years
    - It was centered in the Eastern Orthodox church in Constantinople and in the Roman Church in Rome
    - By the thirteen century, the effects of this Jezebel had already influenced the entire Christian world
  - Eventually, the penalty came just as Jesus said it would, Jezebel would be made sick, and together with her children, would suffer pestilence
    - It would be a great tribulation, and when we look at history, we see this judgment fulfilled during this period of church history
  - In the late 13th century, Jesus' judgment of a terrible pestilence came as the Black Plague

- Interestingly, the Black Plague began in two cities: Constantinople and Rome
- It first appeared at the dawn of the fourteenth century starting in Constantinople
- It resulted in nearly 40% of that city dying as a result
- And the stench was everywhere, according to ancient reports, just as the name Thyatira suggests (odor of affliction)
- The disease spread next by cargo ships to Sicily and it quickly moved north into the rest of Italy becoming centered in Rome
- By the mid-fourteenth century all Europe was infected, and it killed as much as 60% of Europe's population
  - As a result, it severely and permanently weakened the Catholic Church in Europe
  - Since priests and monks were often pressed into service in caring for the sick, they were among the worst hit
  - That left the leadership of the church devastated
  - And fear of the disease led people to refuse to attend mass leading to great financial loss for the church as well
- One of the lesser known effects of the Black Plague was that it helped give rise to the Reformation
  - As the church leadership weakened, the church's hold over government and society weakened too
    - That allowed freer thinking to rise up and ultimately it gave Martin Luther the opportunity to challenge the authority of the church
  - So we mark the end of the time of Thyatira to the fulfillment of Jesus' judgment of pestilence and the resulting end of Catholic hegemony
    - So this period dates from 600 AD to the Reformation of 1517 AD



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson 3

### Chapter 3:1-22

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- We continue to roll through the letters to the churches
  - We are examining the letters from a historical, universal and prophetic point of view
    - That is, we understand that these letters were written to a specific audience in a specific time
    - We also understand these letters speak to aspects of the church throughout its existence on earth
    - And finally, we see that the letters are prophetically revealing the nature of the church as it evolves and changes over time
  - Once we understand that the letters prophetically represent the arc of the Church Age, we see why they are the times that “are”
    - For as long as the Church is around to read these letters, the times are still in the period of “are”
    - The Church is the second point in Jesus’ outline
    - So only when the Church Age is over do we move past the times that “are” and into the things after that
- With that, let’s continue our march through the history of the Church moving now to Sardis

**Rev. 3:1** “To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.

**Rev. 3:2** ‘Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God.

**Rev. 3:3** ‘So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.

**Rev. 3:4** ‘But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.

**Rev. 3:5** ‘He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

**Rev. 3:6** ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

- We continue to follow our structured approach to studying the letters, beginning as usual with the name
  - The meaning of the name Sardis is difficult to track down, but some scholars have proposed “those escaping” or “remnant”
    - It was a city of Asia Minor and capital of Lydia, 60 miles northeast of Smyrna
    - Sardis was an important commercial center
    - Among its claims to fame, the city was said to be the place where the process of dyeing wool was invented
    - It had massive temples and a very fertile soil that made it very productive

- Though today the city is in ruins in Turkey, in its time it was a strong fortified city
  - The ancient city was built on a mountain and was protected by a virtually impregnable watch tower and fortress and triple walls
  - Though many attackers tried to take the city, few succeeded
  - A legend associated with Sardis tells the story of how one army succeeded in capturing the city
- A local slave in the city noticed one of the guard soldiers on the city wall lose his helmet over the wall down the hillside
  - Thinking the helmet lost, the slave was surprised to see the same soldier appearing a short time later out of the hillside
  - The soldier climbed down to retrieve his helmet, climbed back up the mountain, disappeared into the rocks
  - He then reappeared a short time later back at his post on the citadel walls, helmet in hand
- Seeing this, the slave realized there must be a secret entrance into the city through the mountainside
  - So in 214 BC, when Antiochus the Great lay siege to the city, this slave was captured
- The slave offered to tell the invading forces of that secret entrance into the city in exchange for his safety
- With the help of the slave, Antiochus conquered the city through the secret entrance, like a thief in the night
- Turning to the letter, the description of Christ to this city was that Christ had the Seven Spirits of God and the seven stars (or angels)
  - The emphasis on the whole (i.e., 7) Spirit and the angels of the churches communicates the authenticity of the church
    - Sardis was a true church yet it also weak in one key way
    - He says He knows their deeds, but what Jesus knows, He says, is that Sardis doesn't have any deeds to speak of
    - They have a name, they are alive, but they are dead in terms of deeds
  - Sardis fell victim to the warnings found in James' letter, in which he says:

**James 2:20 But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?**

- We are saved by faith alone, but our faith without accompanying works is useless...to God
- But a faith by itself (that is without works) is dead and useless

**James 2:17 Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.**

- So Jesus tells this church they have the name of Christ, but they lack the deeds of

Christ, and as such they are dead

- Again, Jesus means it in the same way James does
- The faith of every believer is a gift of God intended to produce glory for God
- And the way we are supposed to fulfill that purpose, Scripture says, is through our works
- When we lack works, our faith is still there, but it's not fulfilling its purpose

**Eph. 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**

- That's why Jesus says He has not found their deeds complete in His sight
- They have not as yet fulfilled Christ's purpose in their ministry
- More specifically, their work is incomplete in the sight of Jesus' God, which means the Father
- The Father alone judges whether our service to Him meets His expectations, and until we satisfy Him, we still have work to do
- This church became comfortable with faith alone, possessing salvation but without interest in spreading it to others
  - Sardis is an example of the church with creeds but no deeds
    - Churches can reach the point where doctrine and belief exists for its own sake
    - We begin to think that merely standing for the truth, believing the truth, and teaching the truth are enough for Jesus'
    - Those things are necessary to pleasing Christ, but they are not sufficient
  - The Christian walk is supposed to be as much practice as theory
    - Believers are supposed to care about truth and getting the Bible right
    - But if our faith remains an intellectual pursuit we are doing nothing for the glory of Christ
    - Our possession of the truth without action becomes cause for conviction rather than praise
  - The Sardis type of church is literally the opposite of the Thyatira style church
    - In Thyatira, the church had many great impressive works, which were growing and reaching more and more people
    - But their works were divorced from the truth of Scripture, so they lacked spiritual power
    - Physical works are supposed to lead to opportunities to share the truth of the Gospel, just as Jesus did in His ministry
    - Instead, Thyatira's works simply trapped people in a system of religion that polluted the soul with heresy and demonic teaching
  - Now we have a church holding to the truth of the faith yet failing to put that truth to work for the benefit of others
    - In Sardis the truth was disconnected from outward expressions of the love of

Jesus which limited the reach of the Gospel

- Thyatira was using works to justify heresy while Sardis was using truth to justify laziness
  - Jesus commands this church to wake up, to strengthen what remains
    - To wake up out of a stupor of ignorance and apathy means to rediscover the mission of the church
    - Strengthening what remains suggests that some in the church still had a heart for the mission
    - So Jesus says take that remnant and build upon it, magnify it, or else it will eventually die out
  - There is a fundamental truth about church life we can see at work all around us
    - Churches that serve themselves, that care only about what's said inside the building, eventually die
    - While churches that take the message outside the walls, that seek to share what they have with others, grow
    - And it's Jesus' desire that His Church be a body that goes out with the truth seeking to serve people
    - Without that desire, the future of that church will be in doubt
- Jesus then gives them the recipe to finding that strength...and it's simple: remember what you received and heard
  - As a church, Sardis was still young enough in that day to remember how their faith first arrived
    - Sardis was saved because someone (an apostle) came one day bearing a message
    - That arrival was a singular moment of joy for the city, for it marked the arrival of God's forgiveness and mercy
  - Surely, they remember that kindness and sacrifice of that apostle? They remember what it felt like to hear the good news for the first time?
    - The relief and joy...the release of guilt and burden...the expectation of a new, eternal future
    - If you can remember that moment in your own life, then you have all the reason you need to go out
    - So Jesus says if they remember what they heard and how they received it, they would find the desire to serve in the same way
  - If they fail to wake up, Jesus will enter their stronghold like a thief when they don't expect
    - A thief in the night does his work when we are asleep
    - And by the time we awake, it's too late...what we had is gone
    - So it would be for this church...they would find themselves in an empty house if they didn't wake up
    - The Spirit will take the mission somewhere else leaving behind only a shell: empty cathedrals, empty choir lofts, empty creeds

- Lastly, Jesus gives His usual encouragement to those in Sardis who were still working well despite the issues in the church
  - In v.4 Jesus says they are some who have not soiled their garments for they walk in white and are worthy
    - A white garment in the Bible is a picture of salvation, which we see clearly in v.5
    - Those who overcome (a term for salvation found in 1 John) are those who wear white (pure) garments
  - The white garment represents our spiritual cover provided by Christ’s atoning work, as Paul says:

**Gal. 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

- And conversely, the unbeliever is described as someone lacking clothing altogether

**2Cor. 5:2 For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven,**

**2Cor. 5:3 inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.**

**2Cor. 5:4 For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.**

- Paul says we don’t want to be naked but clothed with the dwelling from heaven (our eternal glorified body)
- So white garments represent the covering we receive from Christ, while unbelief is pictured by nakedness or the lack of spiritual cover
  - So what does Jesus mean that a few in the church of Sardis have not “soiled” their white garments?
    - In this context, an unsoiled white garment is a believer’s good testimony
    - Remember, the person is already clothed, they already possess a garment which pictures salvation
    - So an unsoiled garment means they are worthy to walk with Jesus (that is, to be identified with Him), Jesus says in v.4
  - So the condition of the garment speaks to the condition of a Christians’ witness (i.e., their outward appearance)
    - We get confirmation of this interpretation later in this book

**Rev. 19:7 “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”**

**Rev. 19:8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

- Revelation 19 says a garment that is bright and clean represents the righteous acts of the saints
  - Simply said, we put on Christ by our faith alone, but how well we display Christ to the world depends on our acts of service to Him
  - This church only had a few unsoiled believers, so many had a bad testimony and were poor reflections of Christ
  - They were saved by faith, but that testimony was soiled by a life that didn't live up to what faith expected
- Yet Jesus ends reminding the church that no matter what penalty the Lord might visit upon that church, the individual believer was secure
  - Those who overcome will have white garments and Jesus will not erase their name from the book of life
  - And Jesus will confess them before His Father Who is in Heaven
- The phrase “I will not erase your name” often concerns and confuses believers
  - First, the book of life is the Bible's term for the Heavenly roll in which are recorded the names of every human being who is saved
    - Elsewhere in Revelation we're told that the Lord recorded those names in the book before the foundation of the earth
    - So the book's contents isn't determined by events on earth...the book and its contents were set before there was an earth
    - And Psalms 69 tells us that only the righteous are recorded in this book, meaning believers
  - But here we have Jesus talking about “erasing” and even the psalmist asks God to blot out the names of the wicked from the book
    - How do we understand these two comments? Can names come and go from the book?
    - The short answer is no, and to understand these two comments, we need to possess a better sense of Jewish writing
  - Poetically, it's a common technique in Jewish writing to emphasize a certain truth by negating its opposite
    - So in the psalm, the unrighteous are said to be blotted out of the book as a way of saying they will not be found in the book
    - The psalmist isn't literally saying that the names of unrighteous people were once in the book but then were taken away
    - The book couldn't be called the book of life if it contained the names of the unrighteous before the earth existed
  - The psalmist was simply negating the opposite as a way of speaking
    - Similarly, Jesus is emphasizing a believer will always be found in the book of life by saying He will not erase their name
    - Simply put, no believer can be erased from the book of life, and Jesus assures us of that truth here (I will NOT erase)
- So what is the prophetic interpretation of this church period?

- We know this church follows the Catholic period, and the name of the church confirms it as the Reformation Church
  - The name means escaping or perhaps remnant, like a group escaping out of apostasy and away from a heretical institution
  - The Spirit shifted away from one institution and to a new institution, reflected in Jesus saying He has the seven Spirits
  - The seven Spirits refers to the whole of the Spirit of God, so after 1517 AD the Spirit was no longer abiding in the Catholic Church
- And the Reformation truly reformed the Church
  - It brought a recommitment to Biblical truth and proper doctrines of the Church
  - The true Gospel of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone was restored
  - And during this movement, most of the worst heresies of the Catholic Church were eliminated
  - Though some false practices remained purely out of tradition, like clergy-laity distinctions and infant baptism
- But one of the often-overlooked consequences of the Reformation was an abandonment of evangelism and a diminished emphasis on works of charity
  - Perhaps because Catholicism preached salvation by works using social works to spread their religion, the Reformers took an opposite approach
    - The Reformers emphasized God's sovereignty and biblical doctrines at the expense of seeking the lost and personal works
    - In fact, Martin Luther was so put off by talk of good works that he doubted the inspired credentials of the letter of James
    - James said faith without works was dead, which Catholics used to defend their false theology
    - So in his Bible translation, Luther moved the book of James out of the New Testament canon and relegated it to an appendix
  - So out of the Reformation came a culture that was alive in name only, having reflexively turned away from Catholicism's good works
    - And when a church stops preaching the importance of serving Christ in good works, we produce lazy Christians
    - We produce believers with a soiled testimony who have not completed their works in the Father's eyes
- So did the judgment Jesus threatened come to pass upon this church? Did they wake up or did the thief come?
  - For the first 100 years, the Reformation was dominated by a handful of state churches (Lutheran, Anglican, Presbyterian)
    - But in 1648, the Thirty Years war between Protestants and Catholics ended with the Peace of Westphalia
    - This treaty established the basis for modern Europe

- Among its many tenets, the Peace established that Christians were permitted to worship when and where they please
  - It protected Christian expression in greater forms and the Reformation Church lost control of its own creeds
  - As a result, new Protestant faiths began to emerge
- Finally the works of faith were re-ignited in a new generation as the Reformation church gave birth to a worldwide awakening of faith
  - Where the Church awoke, a new vibrant period of works began
  - And where the Reformation Church remained asleep, the thief came and took the Spirit elsewhere
- So the Peace of Westphalia gives us a date to mark the end of this period: 1517-1648
- Now on to Philadelphia...

**Rev. 3:7** “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this:

**Rev. 3:8** ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name.

**Rev. 3:9** ‘Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie — I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you.

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

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

**Rev. 3:12** ‘He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

**Rev. 3:13** ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

- The name of the church means brotherly love, and it was founded by the king of Pergamum: Attalus II, Philadelphus of Pergamum
  - He was given the title Philadelphus because of his love for his brother Eumenes, who was the previous king of Pergamum
    - Today Philadelphia is known as Alasehir in Turkey
    - It was a small but prosperous commercial center in the early church
  - The main disadvantage of living in Philadelphia were the earthquakes which frequently damaged the city
    - In 17 AD, a strong quake rocked the city, and many were too scared to return



- for fear of being crushed by the falling columns
  - A large number of citizens decided to remain in the surrounding countryside, and this pattern happened off and on
  - That pattern held back the growth of the city but at the same time, it created a culture of persistence and determination
- Looking at the letter, Jesus describes Himself as the One Who is holy and true
  - Jesus sanctifies His Church and He is the embodiment of the message, and He is the one with the key of David
    - These references remind the church of the centrality of Jesus to the mission and message of the Church
    - And when we carry Jesus before us in our work, He can open any door
  - The key of David refers to David's role of working in the gate of the temple court in the Kingdom
    - The book of Ezekiel says that in the Kingdom David will preside over the court of the Temple and he has the key to the temple
    - In that day the temple court will be open to believers from the first day and remains there throughout the time of the Kingdom
  - So to say Jesus has the key of David tells us Jesus has the authority to grant access to the mercy seat in the temple
    - The mercy seat in the Holy of Holies in the Temple is the place of forgiveness
    - It's the place where the atoning blood of Jesus is applied to cover our sin
    - So it becomes a picture of salvation itself, which means Jesus has the key to forgiveness
    - And when Jesus opens that door, nothing can shut it and until He shuts it, it remains open
- As with everything else we've seen in the letters, Jesus shows Himself to be in complete control of where the Gospel is going and where it will be received
  - Jesus determines the time and place where the message of the Gospel will be received and the enemy can't stop it from happening
    - To say the door has been opened is a tremendous encouragement to any church with a heart to reach the lost
    - Knowing Jesus is in the business of saving souls, not us, means we can go out boldly without concern over success or failure
    - Because we know the result is entirely in Jesus' hands
  - But conversely, Jesus also closes doors at times
    - Which means there will be moments, circumstances, individuals, even seasons when our efforts don't produce
    - And this too is a decision of the One with the key of David to hold back opportunity for a time
  - Knowing that Jesus opens *and* closes is critically important to staying motivated in our mission of witnessing

- We can go out in the first place because we know Jesus is saving people, opening doors before us, so what's to lose?
  - Because when our efforts go nowhere, we can't be tempted to blame ourselves or give up either
  - Instead, we just acknowledge His sovereignty, recognizing He opens and closes, so we dust off our sandals and move on
- Historically, the church in Philadelphia was a small church, in keeping with the stunted city growth, but it was a strong, faithful little church
  - Perhaps the threat of death and the uncertainty of disaster created a good environment to teach about the Rock of Jesus
    - And of course, it would have opened opportunities to minister to people in need, which established relationships for the Gospel
    - In that way, the church in this city becomes the model church when it comes to evangelism
    - They worked in ways that Sardis did not, serving the people and always sharing the news of Jesus
  - But equally important, Philadelphia was careful to take note where Jesus wasn't working
    - Jesus says in v.8 they have a little power, emphasizing they recognized that apart from Jesus they could do nothing
    - This wasn't a church trying to work in their own power...they abided in Him operating with humility
  - As a result of their faithfulness to Jesus and to the mission of the church, they are one of only two churches that receive no condemnation
    - Along with Smyrna, Philadelphia was a church that pleased Jesus
    - Smyrna remained faithful to death in the face of persecution while Philadelphia remained true to the mission of witnessing
    - Jesus sure seems concerned about how well believers turn our lives into a witness to His name, doesn't He?
- Interestingly, these two churches also shared another thing in common: they both were persecuted
  - Both were attacked by the synagogue of Satan, which suggests a movement of Jewish persecution against the church
    - It's no coincidence that the two churches in this list with the strongest witness were also the two persecuted
    - When you stand out for the Gospel and for Jesus, you will be attacked
    - And when you are persecuted, it refines us, purifies us, tests and approves us, and as a result you will be equipped to please Jesus
    - That's why Jesus says rejoice when you're persecuted because your reward in Heaven is great
  - Notice in v.9 Jesus promises that though they are being attacked, He will defend them, but notice how that defense will take place

- But if I asked you in advance how Jesus might defend from persecution, you probably imagine Raiders of the Lost Ark
    - The Spirit of God comes forth in power to vanquish the bad guys by melting their faces right off
  - But the Lord's ways are not Hollywood's ways
    - The Lord doesn't vanquish the Church's enemies, He converts them
    - In v.9 He says those persecuting the Church will come and bow down before them and know Jesus loved them
    - Jesus will give the Philadelphia church the power to convert their Jewish oppressors as He did with Saul
  - And the result will be that those who once persecuted Christians for what they professed will come to understand that God loved them
    - And then they too will receive that message themselves
    - The point is when the church has a heart to reach out, they will see fruit in every situation even in the face of persecution
    - Persecution still comes and all the more as we obey Jesus, but He will turn it to good in time
- As a result of their faithfulness, the Lord promises to preserve the church in this city from an hour of testing
  - We believe this refers to the city being spared the persecution that came to the other cities of Asia Minor in the reign of Domitian
    - But also notice Jesus speaks of this hour impacting all who dwell on the earth in v.10
    - That is one of the clearest references we have in all the letters to alert us to the prophetic nature of each one
  - Because there was no worldwide testing of all humanity in the day of Philadelphia, we must assume this is speaking of things in the future
    - That comment was an important clue to show us that these letters contained a hidden prophetic interpretation
    - And the Bible does describe a coming worldwide testing of all humanity and we will study that period after we finish the letters
- Jesus ends His letter with a promise that He comes quickly, and they should hold fast to their gains so that no one may take their crown
  - He's reminding them that they are rewarded at the end of the race, when they come before Jesus, so don't stop running until the end
    - Paul says we receive the prize at the end of the race
    - And John reminds us not to lose what we gain while we wait

**2John 8 Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.**

- So we know Jesus is encouraging the believers in Philadelphia to keep it up so they

might be fully rewarded

- Finally, the inevitable encouragement to the believer that their eternal future is unshakable
  - They will enter the temple of God (in the Kingdom) and never go out any more
  - Unlike Philadelphia where citizens were too afraid to re-enter buildings, the believer will enter a city that cannot be shaken
- So what period of church history does this letter represent? First, we know it begins after the church of Reformation; the church absent works
  - For about 100 years after the Reformation, there was virtually no missionary work within the church
    - At that time, each European nation adopted a certain Protestant (or Catholic) denomination as the state religion
    - In those countries no other Christian groups were permitted, and any that tried to form were severely persecuted
  - Everyone born in a given country was automatically baptized and considered a Christian of that denomination
    - All Germans were Lutheran, English were Anglican, Scottish were Presbyterians, etc.
    - And any attempt to establish an alternative Christian group in those nations was severely persecuted
    - So when everyone is “born” a Christian, why evangelize?
  - But in 1648 Jesus set His Church free with the Peace of Westphalia, which ended the 30 Year War between Protestants and Catholics
    - In the decades after the Peace, the church experienced a remarkable rebirth – a worldwide missionary movement
    - Countless small, splinter groups of churches formed throughout Europe breaking away from established state denominations
  - Soon these new Spirit-led churches (as well as copy-cat false churches) experienced severe persecution
    - What Catholics did in persecuting Reformers, now the Reformers began doing to these newly formed Christian groups
    - What the Reformed Churches did in displacing Catholicism, so the Missionary Church movement did to the Reformed churches
- Soon Pilgrims, Anabaptists and others fled persecution and headed to the New World
  - Men like Jonathan Edwards began the Great Awakening on the North American continent
    - Other missionaries reached Central and South America, Australia, and Asia
    - In the span of about 300 years the church spread faster than at any time since the first century
  - Interestingly, the first Jewish evangelistic movements were initiated, in keeping with Jesus’ promise that the Jews would bow down
    - Obviously, Jesus opened a door for these evangelists

- And though they were weak (not being the established state church) nevertheless they succeeded stupendously
  - For a time Philadelphia re-established the true, outward witnessing church Jesus intended for the world
    - And it had a great impact by holding to what was holy and true
    - And as a blessing, the Lord says He will spare it from the hour of testing coming to the entire world
- In prophetic terms this means it would not be the final church of the Age...there must be one more church to end the age
  - And the hard question is, when do we see this church starting?
    - When does the church of Philadelphia end?
    - To understand that, we need to go to our final letter

**Rev. 3:14** “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this:

**Rev. 3:15** ‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.

**Rev. 3:16** ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.

**Rev. 3:17** ‘Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,” and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked,

**Rev. 3:18** I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

**Rev. 3:19** ‘Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.

**Rev. 3:20** ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.

**Rev. 3:21** ‘He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

**Rev. 3:22** ‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”

- The name Laodicea means “people ruling” or “judgment of the people”
  - The church was a prosperous commercial and administrative center in the Roman Empire
    - It was the richest city in its district, and when the city was destroyed in 60 AD, it refused to accept Imperial aid
  - Refusing such aid was unheard of since the cost to rebuild was usually beyond the reach of a city’s own resources
    - But Laodicea was so wealthy, it could fund the work itself

- The desire to do so was a reflection of their desire to remain independent of Roman authority and its self-sufficiency
  - Among its many industries, three stand out historically
    - Laodicea was known for banks, linen and woolen industry and a medical school
    - The banks held the money of the district and profited greatly from the income
    - The woolen industry produced some of the finest wool cloth, and it was particularly known for a rare black wool
    - The medical school also contributed to the commerce of the city, selling a well-renowned eye salve for various eye diseases
- Looking at the letter, the description of Christ takes the phrase “faithful and true Witness” from John’s first chapter
  - Jesus also describes Himself as the Beginning of creation, which is a reference to the Alpha and Omega in Chapter 1
    - Why this reference?
    - As we’ll see in a minute, a testimony of Jesus’ truth and of Creation are both an essential to understanding this church
  - Jesus’ comments to the church again begins looking at their works
    - He says He knows their deeds, that they are neither hot nor cold
    - In earlier letters Jesus was concerned with the number or quality of their deeds because of how those deeds reflected on Jesus
    - But notice this time Jesus’ concerns are for how the deeds reflect upon the people themselves
  - Notice Jesus says in v.15 that “you” are neither hot or cold, though He wishes they were either hot or cold
    - Instead, they sit between these two conditions in a lukewarm state
    - And as a result, Jesus says He will spit them out of His mouth
    - The more literal way to translate Jesus’ words would be to say I will “vomit” you out, so it’s not a gentle word
  - Jesus’ choice of words puzzles us a little...what does it mean to be hot and cold in this context?
    - And making it harder, Jesus says He prefers either hot or cold to their current condition of lukewarm
    - We don’t see a solution in the immediate verse, so we keep moving to get more context
- Then in v.17 we get the context we need to understand Jesus’ concern
  - Jesus admonishes them for seeing themselves as rich and in need of nothing, which was a false view of their situation
    - In reality, the church in Laodicea was wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked
    - Immediately we realize we must take Jesus’ words to be hyperbole or

metaphor, not literal

- First, we know the church in Laodicea was actually quite prosperous, not poor
  - And we know the believers living in Laodicea were not universally blind, and they did not walk around naked at all times
  - Much less did the church think it was clothed while actually naked, etc.
- Therefore, we must understand that Jesus was not speaking about their church's literal, physical condition
  - Instead, Jesus is speaking of their spiritual condition
  - Spiritually speaking, Jesus says the church was wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked
- What do these terms mean when used to refer to spiritual conditions?
  - A quick study of the other passages in the Bible gives us only one conclusion
  - First, we remember what nakedness means, because we saw that earlier: lacking Christ's atoning covering
- And similarly to be poor or wretched or blind, all stand for the condition of a person before faith:
  - Blindness pictures the inability to see spiritual truth
  - Wretchedness refers to the unclean spiritual state of an unbeliever
  - And spiritual poverty refers to the failure to share in riches of Christ in the Kingdom
- So the church of Laodicea is condemned by Jesus for a state of unbelief, yet they tell themselves they have everything they need
  - They are wealthy and in need of nothing, and unlike Jesus, this church isn't speaking in purely spiritual terms
    - The church in Laodicea was very wealthy like the whole of that city, and as such it lived a very luxurious lifestyle
    - That was particularly out of keeping with other churches of the day
  - Yet their physical prosperity blinded them to their spiritual poverty
    - Even as they lived self-satisfied and secure in their earthly wealth, yet they remain in jeopardy of spiritual judgment
    - And at this point we ask how can a "Church" be unbelieving?
    - And the answer comes from a broader understanding of the church as a whole
  - From an earthly perspective there was an institution in the city of Laodicea called the church
    - People met in buildings, sang songs, prayed and conducted other services
    - And to anyone who observed these things, they would say "there is the church of Laodicea"
  - But from a spiritual perspective, that building full of people actually consisted of two different groups
    - There were believers in the room and unbelievers

- The true believer is the one who has been indwelt by the Holy Spirit, according to Romans 8
    - But the Spirit is invisible for we can't see who has the Spirit and who doesn't
    - And outward signs are tricky...it's easy for someone to imitate what they see Christians doing and fool us into thinking they believe too
  - So Jesus writes to this church talking about unbelief because apparently there was a large contingency of unbelievers congregating within
    - Such that Jesus' chief concern with the body as a whole was this rise of unbelief
    - The presence of unrecognized unbelief in the body is the single most dangerous problem any church can have
    - Christians are naturally wary of the influence of satanists or other non-Christians
  - But we naturally lower our guard when someone says they are Christians like us
    - And yet if it turns out they aren't truly saved, we have now allowed a wolf in sheep's clothing into the church body
    - And that is a terrible situation for both sides
    - For the believers in the church, the influence of unbelievers in the body leads to apostasy and compromise
    - For the unbeliever, living side-by-side with believers leads to a false sense of security
- Now we see what Jesus meant when He said He would rather the church be hot or cold
  - Hot suggests a believer while cold suggests the opposite, an unbeliever
    - We understand why Jesus wants someone to be hot (believing) but why would he also prefer cold (unbelieving)
    - The key is to remember that Jesus says He prefers either of these two states to lukewarm
  - In other words, it's better to be cold (an acknowledged unbeliever) than to be lukewarm, thinking you're a believer when actually not
    - At least if someone is an acknowledged unbeliever they might be yet converted one day
    - But the lukewarm church goer doesn't even realize what they don't have
    - This is where you get those who declare to Jesus

**Matt. 7:21** “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter.

**Matt. 7:22** “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’

**Matt. 7:23** “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.



- Or as Jesus says here, those who are in the church but do not belong to Jesus by faith will be spit out, or vomited out of His mouth
  - The city of Laodicea was situated in a valley surrounded by mountains, with two streams of mountain waters flowing into a valley at Laodicea
    - One stream of cold and refreshing water came from the southeast near a place called Denizil
    - A second source was a hot spring near Herapolis that produced an undrinkable sulfuric water used for medicinal baths
  - In Laodicea, the two streams combined, producing a foul tasting lukewarm water
    - Drinking that water would result in vomiting, since it was poisonous
    - When Jesus says that He would vomit them out of His mouth, they understood the meaning clearly
- Not surprisingly, there is no commendation to this church (the only church with nothing positive said), and in v.18 Jesus gives an exhortation to this church
  - Each recommendation is a spiritual remedy to cure the heart condition of the church
    - First, Jesus advises them to purchase (obtain) from Christ gold refined by fire so they might become rich
    - Gold refined by fire pictures our eternal treasure which Christ qualifies us to receive
  - Secondly, they should buy white garments to clothe themselves
    - Once again the garments refers to the robes worn by believers which picture Christ's atoning work
    - They are naked spiritually, meaning unbelieving, in contrast to the believer with insufficient works who had "soiled" robes
    - So this too is an allusion to placing faith in Jesus
  - Finally, they need eye salve to see, and seeing in spiritual terms means to come to a knowledge of God's truth
    - Each of these remedies draw from the major industries in the city
    - Jesus is emphasizing how this church relies on its worldly prosperity as its measure of worth
    - But it's using the wrong measure...it should have been looking to Heaven for its measure of success
- Jesus gives the church an exhortation, a challenge to change and repent
  - He says the ones who are truly the Lord's will know reproof, correction and discipline
    - Which is a way of saying that luxurious, easy, safe living isn't the standard for successful Christian living
    - Instead, the course that gives us the most reassurance is one of training and conviction

### **Heb. 12:6 FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,**

**AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”**

**Heb. 12:7** It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ...

**Heb. 12:11** All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

- Following the exhortation, in v.20 Jesus calls this church to faith in Him
  - Those who hear His voice and open the door (of their heart) may receive Him and possess what they have been missing
  - And for those who do so, salvation awaits, pictured by dining at the table with Jesus in the Kingdom
- Finally, for those who were of faith, the overcomers, Jesus says I will extend the great privilege of ruling with me in the Kingdom
  - So that even in this church of unbelief, true belief still existed and would still endure
  - No matter how lost this church became, the true believer was always in Christ’s care
- By now, it should be obvious that the seventh church will be the last period in the Church age, the times that “are”
  - And it should be equally obvious that this is the age we live in now, which I call the Apostate Church
    - Apostasy means to fall away, to abandon something that was previous accepted
    - But the sense here is not with respect to a certain individual coming to true faith and then leaving the faith
    - The Bible is clear that a person who is born again is forever a new creature in Christ and spiritual rebirth cannot be reversed
  - We’re talking about the church overall changing from that of predominantly believing to predominantly unbelieving
    - So earlier the church was Philadelphia, a faithful, believing church
    - But now it has fallen away from the Lord and His word and is no longer a believing church
    - As an institution, it is apostate having left the truth
  - Paul taught that this falling away or apostasy within the church would mark the last days of the age

**1Tim. 4:1** But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

**1Tim. 4:2** by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

**1Tim. 4:3** men who forbid marriage and advocate abstaining from foods which God has created to be gratefully shared in by those who believe and know the

**truth.**

- It comes because of doctrines of demons (false teaching) promulgated by deceitful spirits indwelling liars is seared in their conscience
  - These are false teachers who are influenced by demons to say what they say and lead the church astray
  - This is exactly Jesus' concern for a lukewarm church: unbelievers masquerading as believers to introduce false teaching
- One of the signs of the end of the age and the apostasy is the trend to advocate abstaining from certain foods
  - The key issue here is the wealth of the church in the last days
    - Like Laodicea, the Apostate Church has so much wealth that people can afford to be picky eaters
    - And in that pickiness, the enemy takes advantage and begins to assign spiritual meaning to food, making it a false god
  - While we shrug our shoulders at this concern, wondering what's the big deal, that in itself tells us we are Laodicea
    - The luxury of being picky in our food selection is a modern phenomenon of wealthy cultures
    - Never before in history has such pickiness been possible for the church as a whole, but it is today
    - So this detail is meaningful for how it points us to our day and no other day in history
  - Paul gives us more detail about the apostate church in 2 Timothy

**2Tim. 3:1 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.**

**2Tim. 3:2 For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,**

**2Tim. 3:3 unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,**

**2Tim. 3:4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,**

**2Tim. 3:5 holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.**

- These traits have existed in the world to varying degrees from the time of Cain
  - But Paul says the last days will be known for these things
  - Simply put, they no longer become the exception, they become the rule
  - And looking through the list, it's hard to imagine a world dominated by these traits...or is it? This is our world!
- The last days, the time of the Apostate Church, will also (not coincidentally) be an age of excess and brutality and perversion

- And what brought these things to pass? Where did the church go so wrong?
- Paul alludes to the cause in 2 Timothy again

**2Tim. 4:1 I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:**

**2Tim. 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.**

**2Tim. 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,**

**2Tim. 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.**

- Myths and doctrines of demons brought about this falling away in the church, but what are these false teachings specifically?
  - The clue is found in the way Jesus addressed the Laodicean church in the beginning
    - Jesus said He was the beginning and end of Creation the True witness
    - Jesus is referring to two important, bedrock beliefs of His Church that were lost at the end of the last century
  - The transition from the Missionary church to the Apostate church began principally as a result of two movements
    - First, the end of the 19th century brought the arrival of Biblical criticism
    - This movement began in Germany with the teaching that Scripture was not inerrant
    - On the contrary, scholars argued that the Bible must be understood as an imperfect work of men
    - Therefore, it must be interpreted loosely and without regard for historical views, and in fact its literal meaning was not important
  - These schools taught men to question the authorship of books of the Bible, and other details long before accepted as truth
    - In the U.S., seminaries began to interpret Biblical doctrines in light of natural laws and human reason and scientific discovery
    - These new thoughts caused divisions and disagreements in the church
    - And at that point, compromises were made to doctrine because unity was considered more important than fighting for the truth
- Quickly, pulpits were filled with pastors trained at these “progressive” seminaries, leading to the disappearance of orthodox Biblical teaching
  - The trends continues today and has only worsened in the past decades
    - Now humanistic principles, self-help and pop psychology is preached in place of God’s word
    - Jesus refers to this trend in declaring Himself to Laodicea to be the faithful

and true Witness

- He is the truth and He witnesses to the Father
- Secondly, the rise of Evolution in the 20th century weakened confidence and reliance on scripture in many denominations and their congregations
  - As Peter promised in 2 Peter 3, people began to reject the biblical account of Creation
    - A worldwide belief in a fairytale called Evolution which directly contradicted Scripture gave fuel to doubt in the Bible
    - It was all the easier to claim that the Bible wasn't to be taken literally than to fight the world's belief in Darwin
  - And when the Bible can't be trusted for how it say things began, then it can't be trusted for how it says it will end
    - And without a beginning nor an end to worry about, life becomes only about the here and now
    - And God and His word becomes an afterthought
  - Because the Church left behind the True witness of God's word and the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of Creation, it left behind Jesus
    - And in leaving Jesus, the last days church becomes an apostate human institution void of true faith in many corners
    - Interestingly, the name Laodicea means people ruling, and it's a reference to our time in two ways
  - First, it's a reference to democracy, the dominate form of government in the last days – a clear marker of our times
    - And secondly, it refers to the hearts of people ruling themselves rather than being ruled by Christ, another clear marker
    - The Apostate Church runs from the beginning of the 20th century and is still ongoing...but for how much longer?



VERSE BY VERSE MINISTRY  
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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 4A

Daniel 2:1-16, 25-45;  
Age of the Gentiles

(Part 1)

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- Our study of Revelation enters a new and important section of study tonight
  - And before we begin that section, we need to revisit our outline, the one Jesus gave to John in Chapter 1
    - Jesus told John to write this prophetic book in three parts
    - First, John wrote the things “he saw” (past tense), which referred to the brief events of Chapter 1
    - Secondly, John wrote the things that “are” (present tense), which we refer to as the letters to the churches in Chapters 2 & 3
    - And thirdly, John was to write the things that must happen after the things that are (future tense), which are Chapters 4 and on
  - So far we’ve studied Parts 1, the authentication of the book, and Part 2, the history of the Church Age found in the letters to the churches
    - Each of the seven letters represents a period of time during the existence of the church on earth...seven periods in total
    - Yet each description is very brief...so brief that it can’t possibly give us enough information to act upon
    - Furthermore, the Church couldn’t appreciate the prophetic quality of these letters until the benefit of hindsight
    - So the prophetic value offered by these letters went unused for most of the last 2,000 years
  - So why did Jesus give the Church this prophetic roadmap if it wasn’t going to be understood nor appreciated in its day?
    - The answer is because these letters weren’t given so that the early Church could know its future
    - They were given so that the Church of the last days could awaken to its present circumstances
    - So that those who will be alive right before the events of Chapters 4-22 would recognize the significance of their day
  - And therefore, we are living in the privileged period that has been called to understand the signs of the times and to be ready for them
    - But in order for us to fulfill that mission, we must understand not only our present circumstances but also our history
    - Specifically, we must take our understanding of the Church and its seven periods of existence and place it in a larger framework
  - The Church comes into existence at a certain point in history and it has a certain course and an appointed end as well
    - And of course we desire to know what comes next, and the outline of Revelation tells us more is coming after the Church
    - But first, we must understand what came before the Church
    - Because the events that lead to the start of the Church also explain what comes afterward
- And to answer those questions, we must venture outside the book of Revelation and

into other Scripture

- Beginning with an understanding of two important terms: “age” and “last days”
  - Age (*aion* in Greek) is a long but finite time in God’s program of history
  - Ages follow one after another, and the division between ages serve as important milestones in God’s program
  - We can see how ages follow one another in a comment by Jesus from Mark 10

**Mark 10:29** Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake,

**Mark 10:30** but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.

- Jesus says we live in one age now, and in the age to come we will experience eternal life in our glorified bodies
- So the ending of our current age leads to the beginning of the next age coinciding with us receiving glorified bodies
- The Bible uses a second term in relation to God’s program for history: the “last days”
  - The last days refers to the final period of an age which signals the approach of the next age
  - But this term can be confusing because we assume last days will be brief, like a 2-minute warning at the end of a football game
- But that’s not correct, because the last days are not necessarily a short period of time...for example

**James 5:3** Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!

**Heb. 1:1** God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

**Heb. 1:2** in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- So last days are the culminating period of an age, yet James told the Church in the first century that they were in the last days
  - They were storing up treasure on earth in the “last days”
  - And the writer of Hebrews referred to his present time as “these last days”
  - Since we know it’s been 2,000 years or so since those letters were written, clearly the last days can last a long time
- So what makes them the “last days?” According to Hebrews, last days are when all



revelation is complete and no more mile markers remain

- Hebrews says that in the past the Lord provided revelation and insight in bits and pieces
  - So as long as there was still yet revelation remaining, we could know that we were not yet in the last days...more was planned
  - Most importantly, until the Messiah had been revealed, the age couldn't end
  - Because His appearing was the focus of the age and the culminating event
- So the writer said now that Jesus has appeared and the canon of Scripture is complete, the stage is set for the end to come
  - And therefore we are in the last days of this age
  - Our age can conclude without further warning and at any time
  - But even still, the last days run for an unknown period of time, which we now know is 2,000 years and counting
- Knowing how ages and last days work in Scripture, we naturally come to ask a series of questions
  - Questions like, what is this age? When did it begin? Does it have a name? What's its purpose? When does it end? What comes next?
    - The answers to all these questions are given in the Bible...just not in the book of Revelation
    - Revelation 4-22 tells the story of how this age gives way to the next
    - So as we move out of the times that "are," it's especially important we understand this age before we get to the next
  - And the first questions we need to answer are what is this age called and why did God establish it
    - Jesus gives us this answer in a passage about the end times in Luke 21

**Luke 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

- Jesus refers to a period of history called the "times of the Gentiles"
- The word translated signs is *kairos* which can also be translated age
  - So Jesus called our age the "age of the Gentiles"
  - Gentiles refers to all non-Jews, which means Jesus says we live in an age when Gentiles have a greater position than Israel
- And more specifically, Jesus says that Gentiles will have two specific advantages over the Jewish nation in this age
  - First, the Jewish people will suffer under persecution by Gentiles, being scattered out of their land suffering death and captivity
  - Secondly, the Jews' capital city would be "trampled" by Gentiles
    - "Trampling" implies defilement and control of the city of Jerusalem, at least

to some degree

- So if this age will be marked by Jewish persecution by Gentile authorities and a trampling of Jerusalem, we have several things to consider
  - Obviously, our age, which includes the time of the church according to Jesus and to the New Testament writer, had a beginning
    - So there must have been a time in the past when these two things were not true
    - There must have been a time *before* Israel began to be persecuted by Gentiles and before the city was defiled
    - If we can identify that time in history then we will find the start of this age
  - And by the same token, when this age ends, these two things must also end
    - That is, the persecution of Jews by Gentiles will end and the city of Jerusalem will no longer be subjected to Gentile trampling
    - So if we can determine when these things cease, we will know the end of this age
  - And there is one book of Scripture that gives us both of these points and much more in between
    - The book is called the Revelation of the Old Testament, and in a real sense it's a prologue to the Book of Revelation
    - It's literally impossible to understand the book of Revelation without understanding this Old Testament book
    - It's the book of Daniel
  - Studying the entire book of Daniel is very helpful to understanding Revelation, but there are a handful of chapters that are essential
    - In particular, Chapters 2 & 7 are the chapters that explain the Age of the Gentiles
    - Jesus gave the age its name in Luke, and we learn the details of how this age ends in Revelation
    - But Daniel gives us the beginning of the age and a spectacular overview of all that this age will contain
    - And we will refer back often to what we learn tonight and in the next few weeks
- We're going to move through the first part of the chapter quickly to set the scene

**Dan. 2:1** Now in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was troubled and his sleep left him.

**Dan. 2:2** Then the king gave orders to call in the magicians, the conjurers, the sorcerers and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood before the king.

**Dan. 2:3** The king said to them, "I had a dream and my spirit is anxious to understand the dream."

**Dan. 2:4** Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic: “O king, live forever! Tell the dream to your servants, and we will declare the interpretation.”

**Dan. 2:5** The king replied to the Chaldeans, “The command from me is firm: if you do not make known to me the dream and its interpretation, you will be torn limb from limb and your houses will be made a rubbish heap.

**Dan. 2:6** “But if you declare the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts and a reward and great honor; therefore declare to me the dream and its interpretation.”

**Dan. 2:7** They answered a second time and said, “Let the king tell the dream to his servants, and we will declare the interpretation.”

**Dan. 2:8** The king replied, “I know for certain that you are bargaining for time, inasmuch as you have seen that the command from me is firm,

**Dan. 2:9** that if you do not make the dream known to me, there is only one decree for you. For you have agreed together to speak lying and corrupt words before me until the situation is changed; therefore tell me the dream, that I may know that you can declare to me its interpretation.”

**Dan. 2:10** The Chaldeans answered the king and said, “There is not a man on earth who could declare the matter for the king, inasmuch as no great king or ruler has ever asked anything like this of any magician, conjurer or Chaldean.

**Dan. 2:11** “Moreover, the thing which the king demands is difficult, and there is no one else who could declare it to the king except gods, whose dwelling place is not with mortal flesh.”

- The nation of Babylon invaded the southern kingdom of Judah and captured the city of Jerusalem around 600 BC
  - That was the first time the city had fallen to a foreign invader since King David declared Jerusalem to be the Jewish capital
    - Babylon eventually attacked the city three times and each time it did more damage and took more of the city captive
    - Nebuchadnezzar succeeded where others failed because the Lord granted him permission to take the city
    - Babylon’s invasion and destruction of the city was part of a much larger plan that God was working for the benefit of Israel
    - Yet the king didn’t understand his role in God’s plan until years later, when one of his Jewish captives, Daniel, explains it to him
  - Daniel was among a contingent of Jews that the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, took captive as slaves and led back to Babylon
    - The first chapter of Daniel’s book recorded Daniel’s flight to Babylon and how he came to serve the king in his court
    - Daniel was raised up by the Lord to influence the king and protect Israel while in captivity
    - And Daniel 1 tells us that the Lord gave Daniel wisdom ten times better than all the magicians of Babylon
    - And in Daniel 2, we see that wisdom on display as Daniel solves a riddle for the

king

- In v.1 we hear that in Nebuchadnezzar's second full year as king, he had dreams
  - God has given these visions to the king intentionally, yet the Lord also made sure the king couldn't understand the dreams on his own
    - The Lord withheld the meaning from the king to ensure the king would reach out for explanation
    - So Nebuchadnezzar calls in all his counselors in Babylon seeking their advice
  - These men were called to give an interpretation, but first the king proposed a test to make sure they were telling the truth
    - He wisely required that the men tell him both the dream and the interpretation
    - Normally, a leader would describe the dream first, then the advisor offered an interpretation
    - Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar had seen this before and wasn't very impressed, so this time he wanted dream and interpretation
  - Predictably, the counselors object to the new rules, since it makes their job much harder and will expose any fraud
    - When these men protest, the king sees right through their scheme and calls their bluff
    - He says if they can't tell him something he already knows (i.e., the content of the dream), then how can he trust the rest?
  - In their protests they claim that only gods could reveal the things that the king seeks to know
    - And that is precisely the conclusion the Lord wanted Nebuchadnezzar to reach
    - Specifically, this was a dream that came from the Lord so it was a dream that only the Lord could interpret
    - And the Lord willed to reveal it through Daniel
- Which sets up the entrance of our hero

**Dan. 2:12** Because of this the king became indignant and very furious and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

**Dan. 2:13** So the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they looked for Daniel and his friends to kill them.

**Dan. 2:14** Then Daniel replied with discretion and discernment to Arioch, the captain of the king's bodyguard, who had gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon;

**Dan. 2:15** he said to Arioch, the king's commander, "For what reason is the decree from the king so urgent?" Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter.

**Dan. 2:16** So Daniel went in and requested of the king that he would give him time, in order that he might declare the interpretation to the king.

**Dan. 2:25** Then Arioch hurriedly brought Daniel into the king's presence and spoke to him as follows: "I have found a man among the exiles from Judah who can make the interpretation known to the king!"

**Dan. 2:26** The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen and its interpretation?"

**Dan. 2:27** Daniel answered before the king and said, "As for the mystery about which the king has inquired, neither wise men, conjurers, magicians nor diviners are able to declare it to the king.

**Dan. 2:28** "However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days. This was your dream and the visions in your mind while on your bed.

**Dan. 2:29** "As for you, O king, while on your bed your thoughts turned to what would take place in the future; and He who reveals mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

**Dan. 2:30** "But as for me, this mystery has not been revealed to me for any wisdom residing in me more than in any other living man, but for the purpose of making the interpretation known to the king, and that you may understand the thoughts of your mind.

- Daniel offers to give an interpretation to the king, both to save himself and his friends but also to glorify the Lord
  - Daniel must have felt the Lord was leading him into this moment, and so he seized it by promising that his God could interpret the dream
    - And as Daniel meets the king he gives us an important detail about the context
    - Daniel says this prophecy concerns things that will take place in the future, and specifically in the latter (or last) days
    - So this dream tells the story of our current age, including the period of time that we currently occupy – the last days
  - The dream comes in four parts, and the first part follows

**Dan. 2:31** "You, O king, were looking and behold, there was a single great statue; that statue, which was large and of extraordinary splendor, was standing in front of you, and its appearance was awesome.

**Dan. 2:32** "The head of that statue was made of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of bronze,

**Dan. 2:33** its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay.

**Dan. 2:34** "You continued looking until a stone was cut out without hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and crushed them.

**Dan. 2:35** "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver and the gold were crushed all at the same time and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them was found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

**Dan. 2:36** “This was the dream; now we will tell its interpretation before the king.

**Dan. 2:37** “You, O king, are the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, the strength and the glory;

**Dan. 2:38** and wherever the sons of men dwell, or the beasts of the field, or the birds of the sky, He has given them into your hand and has caused you to rule over them all. You are the head of gold.

- First, we note the obvious: the dream concerns a statue, and this statue has divisions or parts that are quite strange
  - The parts are like different statues stuck together to form a single entity
  - And we notice that the statue’s materials change from gold to silver to brass to iron and pottery
  - And these materials decrease in value while increasing in strength
- Daniel describes the divisions of the statue from head to toe, and then he describes what brings the statue to an end
  - A stone, uncut by human hands, descended from above, like an asteroid, and struck the statue at the feet
  - Though it struck at the feet, nevertheless, the statue was completely destroyed and obliterated leaving nothing
  - The stone remained, however, and it grew to a giant mountain that filled the entire earth
- This is the dream, and obviously despite its simplicity, no one could imagine its meaning simply by hearing the description
  - It could mean almost anything but it has a specific, assigned meaning given by God
  - So unless we know and accept the Lord’s own interpretation, we will not have the correct understanding
  - That’s why it required God provide the decoder ring for the dream
- Turning to Daniel’s interpretation, he first gives the meaning of the first part, the head of the statue
  - Daniel says the head of gold at the top of the statue represented Nebuchadnezzar as ruler of Babylon
    - Daniel tells the king that his power to conquer the nations of the world was a direct result of Israel’s God giving them into his hand
    - And the Lord’s decree was even more comprehensive than the king may have imagined
    - By God’s decree, Nebuchadnezzar ruled over every inch of the physical earth
    - Jeremiah confirms Daniel’s words:

**Jer. 27:5** “I have made the earth, the men and the beasts which are on the face of the earth by My great power and by My outstretched arm, and I will give it

**to the one who is pleasing in My sight.**

**Jer. 27:6** “Now I have given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and I have given him also the wild animals of the field to serve him.

**Jer. 27:7** “All the nations shall serve him and his son and his grandson until the time of his own land comes; then many nations and great kings will make him their servant.

- Now, we know Nebuchadnezzar didn't travel to every inch of the globe during his time as king, so can he be said to rule the entire earth?
  - God assigned to Nebuchadnezzar the authority to rule the earth, regardless of whether Nebuchadnezzar exercised that authority
  - For a time in history, this one man was ruling all the earth and nothing could have challenged him during that time
- But at the same time, this rule wasn't going to last forever, for what God gives, He takes away
  - And in a day appointed by God, Nebuchadnezzar's rule would end
  - More than that, Babylon's dominance would end as well
  - And then in a time assigned by the Lord, another power would rise up and take what Babylon had
- In v.39 Daniel continues his interpretation

**Dan. 2:39** “After you there will arise another kingdom inferior to you, then another third kingdom of bronze, which will rule over all the earth.

- Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that another kingdom will arise to replace Babylon and then a third kingdom will replace the second one
  - Before we look at the second and third kingdoms, let's understand how this narrative relates to the statue
  - The head of gold stood for the kingdom of Babylon, and then the silver breast and arms stand for the second kingdom
- So each of these parts represents a kingdom that replaces the prior part in history
  - Therefore, the statue represents a timeline of history, running from head to toe
  - No two parts can exist at the same time, because one part must end before the next part begins
  - So the statue represents a timeline for our age, this age that Jesus called the age of the Gentiles
- And now we know it begins with the head, with Nebuchadnezzar's rise to power
  - And that matches what Jesus said in defining the age itself
  - He said it would be an age marked by the defeat, enslavement and scattering of the Jewish people
  - And it would be an age in which Gentiles trampled over the city of Jerusalem

- That's the definition of our age, and the very first time any of those things happened was in 605 BC when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah
  - So literally, Babylon's invasion of Israel began our current age
  - And that beginning is represented in this statue by the head of gold
- So where does our age go next?
  - Daniel says the silver, second kingdom will be inferior to Babylon
    - The inferiority of the second kingdom is represented by the lesser value of silver as compared to gold
    - We can understand why silver is less than gold, but what does that say about the second kingdom it represents?
    - How will the Babylon's conqueror be less than Babylon?
  - To understand this question, we must know which kingdom replaced Babylon in history, since Daniel doesn't name it
    - And to determine which kingdom replaced Babylon, we should establish criteria for what qualifies a kingdom to be considered
    - The criteria to be one of the kingdoms in the statue is found in the definition of the age itself
  - First, each kingdom must be a Gentile kingdom, for this is an age of Gentile dominance Jesus said
    - Secondly, each kingdom must be the most powerful kingdom on earth in its day, since it replaces the previous world power
    - Thirdly, each kingdom must defeat its predecessor
    - And finally, it must assume control over Jerusalem
  - In effect, we're saying that each world power in this state must hold two properties: Babylon and Jerusalem
    - Since the first world power was Babylon, then it stands to reason that the kingdom to replace Babylon must defeat the capital city
    - And of course, Jerusalem is always to be trampled
- So now we look at history, and we find only three more kingdoms that meet these criteria, which makes understanding Daniel's interpretation easy
  - The second kingdom is that of the Medo-Persians, who replaced the kingdom of Babylon in 550 BC
    - This kingdom was formed by the alliance of the Medes and Persia, represented by the two arms of the statue
    - Some have taken to drawing the arms crossed to represent the union of these two powers, though Daniel never says how the arms are set
  - Medo-Persia grew in power until it challenged and defeated Babylon under Cyrus the Great
    - The kingdom was strong enough to defeat Babylon, but according to the statue it was less majestic
    - Medo-Persia was less majestic than Babylon because the Medo-Persian king



- was not as powerful as Nebuchadnezzar
- He had checks on his own authority that the Babylonian king did not suffer
  - In particular, the Medo-Persian laws stipulated that a king could not reverse the decisions of prior kings
  - So the rule of a Medo-Persian monarch was like silver compared to Babylon's gold, because it wasn't as absolute
  - Nevertheless, the Medo-Persians will defeat the Babylonians and the Age of the Gentiles marches onward
- In v.39 Daniel also says that a third kingdom will assume power over the world
  - That kingdom will replace the second, and will likewise exhibit lessor majesty in its rule
    - Based on our criteria above, the next kingdom to qualify for the statue was the Hellenistic Empire of Alexander the Great
    - Alexander extended the Greek empire out of central Europe and into the East, defeating the Persians in 330 BC
  - He is represented by bronze because the leader of the Greek empire was far less powerful than either the Medes or Babylonians
    - He competed with the leaders of city-states within the empire and with land aristocracy
    - Ultimately, the sovereign enforced his control through a powerful military that could impose his will
    - So while the Greek King was strong enough to defeat the Persians, he ruled with less power over his subjects
  - Notice that this section of the statue begins with the belly, as a single piece but as the period ends, it's divided into two thighs
    - And that detail also reflects the nature of the Hellenistic Empire of Alexander the Great
    - Alexander the Great died barely four years into his reign but not before he had conquered much of the known world
  - At that point, he had no heirs, so his kingdom was dissolved into four parts assigned to his four generals
    - Two generals in the Western end of the Empire formed an alliance against the two generals in the East
    - This created an east-west political divide that still exists to this day
  - The concept of the Western world and the Eastern world originated in this division, and the statue's legs reminds us of that historical effect
    - Just as the legs never rejoin in the statue, so will this East-West divide remain through the end of the age
    - Even today we still speak of the East and West politically
- Daniel's interpretation sped past the second and third empires because they were not important details in this timeline
  - They must be covered, of course, but only because they occupy points along the

path that leads us to more important things

- Primarily, they lead us to the fourth kingdom and to the end of the statue
- The fourth kingdom gets the most treatment in Daniel's interpretation

**Dan. 2:40** “Then there will be a fourth kingdom as strong as iron; inasmuch as iron crushes and shatters all things, so, like iron that breaks in pieces, it will crush and break all these in pieces.

**Dan. 2:41** “In that you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it will be a divided kingdom; but it will have in it the toughness of iron, inasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with common clay.

**Dan. 2:42** “As the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of pottery, so some of the kingdom will be strong and part of it will be brittle.

**Dan. 2:43** “And in that you saw the iron mixed with common clay, they will combine with one another in the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, even as iron does not combine with pottery.

- The final kingdom features the least valuable and most brittle materials, which is reflected in the tendency to break and crush into pieces
  - This kingdom replaces the prior kingdom but it does so in a unique way
    - Rather than holding territory together as did the previous kingdoms, this one conquers by breaking and crushing into pieces
    - Just as clay and iron do not stick together, this kingdom's various pieces combine for periods of time and then break apart again
    - Some of these pieces will be stronger than others, resulting in an empire that is unbalanced in power
  - Nevertheless, this combining and separating pattern does not mean the kingdom itself ends at any time
    - It continues to exist throughout the time it experiences this confining and breaking process
    - Collectively, the loosely associated pieces of this fourth kingdom serve the same function as the previous kingdoms in the statue
    - They persecute, enslave and scatter Israel while trampling under Jerusalem
  - What kind of earthly Kingdom fits this unique set of details?
    - We know from history that the next Gentile power to follow Greece was the Roman Empire
    - Roman Republic defeated the Hellenistic Empire in 168 BC
    - Rome eventually defeated Judea in 63 BC and took control of Jerusalem and Babylon
    - And Rome continued to expand even over the next several centuries
  - As Rome conquered, it transitioned from a republic to a monarchy ruled by Caesars
    - Yet it added territory by assimilating cultures and lands without changing the



- Daniel doesn't explain what the ten toes represent here but we do get our explanation in Daniel 7
- But for now let's understand how this age ends by understanding how the statue comes to an end

**Dan. 2:44** “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever.

**Dan. 2:45** “Inasmuch as you saw that a stone was cut out of the mountain without hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold, the great God has made known to the king what will take place in the future; so the dream is true and its interpretation is trustworthy.”

- Finally, the last piece of the puzzle, the stone falling from the sky
  - Daniel says the stone that fell and crushed the statue is itself a new kingdom
    - The kingdom represented by the stone is not connected to the prior Gentile kingdoms
    - We see this because the arrival of the stone coincides with the destruction of the statue
  - We know the statue represents the Age of the Gentiles so by definition the stone's destruction of the statue means the end of this age
    - And the stone sets up a new kingdom, a new age to replace the prior age
    - Therefore, those features that defined the Age of the Gentiles must also change
    - For example, in the Age of the Gentiles Israel was scattered, so in the next age Israel must be regathered in their land
    - In the Age of the Gentiles, Israel was persecuted by Gentile nations, so now it must be safe and secure
    - And in the Age of Gentiles, the city was defiled by Gentiles, but in the next age it must be free of Gentile defilement and attack
  - So we know that this coming kingdom represented by the stone cannot be another Gentile Kingdom
    - Just as in the statue, whatever replaces the prior dominant power must itself become the dominant power
    - So as the Age of Gentiles ends, we will enter an age when the Jewish nation will be dominant
  - Daniel confirms this assumption for us in v.44 when he says this new kingdom will end all other kingdoms on earth
    - Furthermore, this new kingdom will endure forever...no more transitions, hence the end of the statue
    - And this kingdom will be set up by God Himself

- This time God Himself will be the King on Earth and He personally sets up the Jewish Kingdom that replaces those Gentile powers
  - Daniel says that uncut stone represents some arrival that puts an end to the Age of the Gentiles
    - Notice that arrival comes from the God of Heaven and the stone falls from above
    - Furthermore, the stone was uncut by human hands reminding us of a requirement in the Law of Moses:

**Deut. 27:5** “Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron tool on them.

**Deut. 27:6** “You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God;

- The Lord commanded that Israel only use uncut stones for His altar
  - The use of natural, unworked stones signified that our atonement could not be earned through our own works
  - The altar of sacrifice would be a place where only God’s work (i.e., the Creator of the stones) was applied
- Likewise, the uncut falling stone represents the work of God, and since it falls on the statue, we conclude that it comes from the sky (i.e., Heaven)
  - It grows into a mountain that fills the earth, and when used symbolically in Scripture, mountains represent kingdoms
  - And here we see that pattern confirmed, since Daniel says the mountain represents a kingdom filling the earth
  - Furthermore, that kingdom will endure forever, never to be replaced
- So what future Kingdom is centered on Israel, follows after this age is over, and begins with a “rock” uncut by human hands falling from Heaven?
  - The only conclusion that fits the data is the Kingdom Jesus promised to set up at His Second Coming
    - Notice the stone falls “on the feet” of the statue, indicating that the coming of Christ happens at the end of this age
    - Therefore, Jesus is the rock returning to earth at His Second Coming
    - And the mountain is the Millennial Kingdom He establishes for Israel after His return
  - It will be a Jewish Kingdom, in that Jesus is Jewish and the Kingdom was promised to Israel
    - It will replace all other ruling authorities on Earth
    - It brings an end to the Age of the Gentiles and ushers in a new age on Earth
    - And it will result in the fulfillment of God’s promises to Israel to grant them an eternal Kingdom in their land
  - As we stand here in history, the coming of that rock is the next milestone in God’s

prophetic plan for this age

- That's why the writers say we are in the last days now
  - Everything Daniel said would happen in the Age of Gentiles has come to pass exactly as Daniel predicted
  - Only the events of the very end remain, and so we are in the last days waiting for the end to come
- Where do we go next? We need to augment our understanding of the Age of the Gentiles with a few more pieces of information from Daniel 7
- Then with a full appreciation of this age, we can move back to Chapter 4 of Revelation
  - And from there we begin to add more pieces to the puzzle for how this age proceeds into the things that must happen after these things



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# Revelation 2020 - Lesson 4B

## Daniel 7 & 9; Age of the Gentiles (Part 2)

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- So far in our study we've moved through the first two sections of the book of Revelation, according to how John divided it for us
  - First we studied the things John saw, which were recorded in Chapter 1
    - In that chapter John saw a vision of the resurrected Jesus and he received his commission to write what he sees
    - From that chapter we learned that the contents of this revelation are trustworthy
  - Then we studied the the things that “are,” which were the seven letters to the churches found in Chapters 2-3
    - These letters included a prophetic side that foretell the seven phases that the Church passes through during its time on earth
    - As we studied those seven periods, we learned that we are currently living in the seventh and final period: Laodicea
    - We are part of the apostate church, where false teaching and unbelief are rampant
  - So the times that “are” describe the period of history while His church exists and it serves as a link between Parts 1 and 3
    - The church bridges the period from the first century when John received this Revelation
    - Until the events that take place after these things, meaning the events that follow the Church age
    - Those times have yet to begin and that's where we're going next...to Part 3
- But before we moved forward in time, we began a journey backward in time to understand ages and last days
  - Because to understand how God brings our age to an end, we must first understand how – and why – He began the age
    - And as we learned, the background on our present age is found in the book of Daniel, particularly in Chapters 2 & 7
    - We studied Chapter 2 in our last class, and tonight we open with a study of Chapter 7
  - Both chapters describe the Age of the Gentiles, a period of history God established to judge His people Israel
    - The name reflects the purpose of the age: it's a period of history when Israel will be under judgment
    - Understanding this period of history is essential to understanding the events in the book of Revelation
    - Because the events of Revelation are the culmination and fulfillment of this age
    - And time and time again in this study, we will refer back to what we learn in these chapters
- Jesus told us in Luke 21 that our current age is called the Age of the Gentiles and it would be marked by three circumstances for Israel



- The Age of the Gentiles stops with the reversal of the three factors that began it
  - First, Israel would be subjugated to Gentile powers
  - Secondly, the Jewish people would be scattered outside their land exiled in other nations
  - Thirdly, the city of Jerusalem would be conquered and occupied (to varying degrees) by Gentiles
  - For as long as these three things remain true, the Age of the Gentiles continues
- Daniel 2 was the overview of the age told by a statue that represented a timeline of the four kingdoms that would dominate in the age
  - The first was Babylon, the second was the Medo-Persian Empire, the third was the Greek Empire
  - And the fourth kingdom began when Rome conquered the Greek Empire
- The last image in the dream is a rock fallen from heaven, uncut by human hands, that destroys the statue
  - It falls at the feet of the statue, representing an end of the timeline and an end to the age of Gentiles (and Gentile domination over Israel)
  - And establishes a new kingdom that fills the whole earth
- This pictures Jesus coming to Earth to finish the Age of the Gentiles and establish a Jewish Kingdom
- Main thing to realize from Daniel 2, is that as long as we are waiting for Christ, we are in a period of Gentile domination over Israel
  - What fixes that is not political peace in the middle east, but rather Jesus' return
    - In the Kingdom Age, Israel will be the chief nation on the earth, all Jews will live in their land
    - And Jerusalem will be holy and protected from Gentile defilement – now the home of Jesus
- Tonight we move a step closer to understanding why what we've just studied is important
  - We know that the fourth kingdom is the one that really matters because it brings us to Jesus
  - Plus, it is the one we are in today so it does and should have our attention
- And as it turns out, that's the purpose of Daniel 7, to give us additional detail on the Fourth Kingdom and how it ends

**Dan. 7:2** Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

**Dan. 7:3** "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.

**Dan. 7:4** "The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

**Dan. 7:5** “And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’

**Dan. 7:6** “After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

- Because of Daniel 2, we can summarize Daniel’s vision in this chapter
  - Like Daniel 2, this vision is a depiction of the Age of the Gentiles and the details confirm it clearly
    - But instead of a statue showing a timeline of the age, we now have animals which represent the nature of each period
    - And the animals line up neatly with the earlier chapter
  - First, we start with a lion, which like the head of gold in our statue represents the nation of Babylon
    - The national symbol of ancient Babylon was a lion with wings
    - And in the ruins of ancient Babylon, archeologists have unearthed a lion statue with wings (missing)
    - The lion stands like a man and has a mind of a man, which symbolizes the man at the start of this age: Nebuchadnezzar
    - We will return to this detail later
  - Secondly, there is a bear with three ribs, which represent the Medo-Persians
    - The kingdom was the result of a uniting of Medes and Persians
    - But the Persians were by far the dominant force in the union represented by the bear standing lopsided
    - The kingdom reached its zenith by conquering Lydia, Babylonia and Egypt - the three ribs devoured by the bear
  - The third animal represents the third kingdom, the Greek Empire
    - The Greek empire moved swiftly, like a leopard, completing its expansion in barely four years
    - Therefore, a leopard with wings represents the absurd speed of the Greek conquest
    - And the four heads and four wings represent the kingdom split into four parts upon the death of Alexander the Great
- Finally, we get to Daniel’s description of the fourth kingdom

**Dan. 7:7** “After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

**Dan. 7:8** “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little

**one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.**

- And like in Daniel 2, the fourth kingdom breaks the pattern
  - We remember from Daniel 2 that the fourth kingdom began with Rome but becomes an alliance of Gentile powers over time
  - Collectively, these bits and pieces of what was once a single kingdom conspire to achieve the purposes of the age
  - They subjugate Israel, scattering the people outside the land and maintain control over Jerusalem
- While in the case of the first three animals Daniel referred to real animals, in this case he was at a loss for a comparison
  - This animal was simply dreadful and terrifying
  - And like the statues, this fourth beast crushes and breaks apart the previous three kingdoms
- But now we get additional information about this kingdom beginning with the ten horns on this beast
  - And in addition to the ten, we now find there will be an eleventh, who emerges from out of the ten
  - And notice this eleventh horn is personified
  - He has eyes and a mouth of a man
  - This reminds us of Daniel’s description of the lion, standing like a man with a mind of a man
- Also remember that Nebuchadnezzar was the only man granted power over the whole earth
  - We’re seeing a pattern that the ones who comes at the end is like the one who comes at the beginning
- When this eleventh horn appears, he will uproot three of the original ten and then take his place as the leader of the group
- Before we look at this extra horn, let’s finish the vision

**Dan. 7:9 “I kept looking  
Until thrones were set up,  
And the Ancient of Days took His seat;  
His vesture was like white snow  
And the hair of His head like pure wool.  
His throne was ablaze with flames,  
Its wheels were a burning fire.**

**Dan. 7:10 “A river of fire was flowing  
And coming out from before Him;  
Thousands upon thousands were attending Him,  
And myriads upon myriads were standing before Him;**

## **The court sat, And the books were opened.**

- The end of the age happens with the Ancient of Days seated on His throne in ruling and judgment
  - We remember that the statue ended in the same way, with the rock (Christ) Who comes from Heaven to set up the Kingdom
  - So now Daniel finds his attention drawn to that fourth beast, so that's where the rest of the chapter goes as we expected

**Dan. 7:20** and the meaning of the ten horns that were on its head and the other horn which came up, and before which three of them fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth uttering great boasts and which was larger in appearance than its associates.

**Dan. 7:21** “I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them

**Dan. 7:22** until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.

- The ten horns reminds us of another “ten” in the statue, that of ten toes
  - Because the statue gave us a timeline, we know the toes represent the end of the Age of the Gentiles
  - So we bring that knowledge forward here to understand that these ten horns also represent the end
- Daniel wants to know about the ten horns, but even more so about this eleventh horn

**Dan. 7:23** “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.

**Dan. 7:24** ‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

**Dan. 7:25** ‘He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

**Dan. 7:26** ‘But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

**Dan. 7:27** ‘Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’

- Once again, we are told that the fourth kingdom crushes and breaks into pieces the prior kingdoms
  - So this fourth period of the age is a period of fracturing and dividing the world into pieces
  - But these pieces will expand to devour the whole earth, uniting into a single kingdom
- And eventually, it will be led by this eleventh ruler for a times, time and half a time
  - This obscure reference to a period of time is one of several places we see a clear connection to Revelation
    - This term appears only here and in Revelation, and if it were not for Revelation, we wouldn't be able to interpret its meaning
    - But in Revelation we learn that this term means 3.5 years (come back to this later)
  - So this world ruler will gain complete control over the earth for that period of time
    - But after the 3.5 years, the leader's authority and dominion will be taken away by the saints of the Highest One at His appearing
    - And this new kingdom will be everlasting
  - So to summarize, we have confirmation of what we learned in Daniel 2, that the Age of Gentiles will consist of four kingdoms
    - The fourth kingdom is by far the most important because it brings us to the end of the age and the arrival of Christ
    - At the end of the age, the world is ruled by ten rulers that eventually become 1 man ruling the world with seven others
  - There are some important details we've just learned that we need to remember:
    - We have 10 kingdoms before the eleventh ruler can appear
    - This enables us to debunk theories others have as to the identity of this eleventh ruler – as we don't have the 10 yet
    - The Second Coming of Christ awaits these things
  - So Daniel 7 helped to confirm the kingdoms laid out in Daniel 2
    - Emphasized importance of the fourth kingdom
    - Reveals how the fourth kingdom ends:  $10 \text{ leaders} - 3 = 7 + 1$
  - So let's superimpose all we've learned in Daniel thus far onto a single chart
    - The Age of Gentiles is a long period of history that begins with Nebuchadnezzar and runs until Christ's Second Coming
    - There are four stages and the final stage is the key piece in the puzzle since it ushers in the eternal age and the Kingdom
    - The end of this age is marked by an upheaval in rule such that the entire planet will be under the authority of ten kings
    - And during the final 3.5 years, the ten are overtaken by a single man who disposes three and persecutes believers

- He rules until Christ's return
- The first three kingdoms have come and gone, so we now have historical dates we can add to our overview
  - And these dates tell us that the church age exists entirely within the fourth kingdom
    - And that fact leads us to a fundamental question: how long will the church exist within this period?
    - Will it exist until the end of the age or will it end prior to the end?
  - We learned in Part 2 of John's outline of Revelation that the church will experience seven periods in its existence and we are in the seventh now
    - So we know we're approaching the end of the church age
    - But that doesn't tell us what the relationship is between the end of the church and the end of the age of the Gentiles
    - We're lacking details about the timing of the events that end the age
  - Thankfully, Daniel 9 gives us the timing of those events and let's us put the church in the proper perspective
    - We'll study that timing in four sections beginning with Daniel's mistake

**Dan. 9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans —**

**Dan. 9:2 in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the LORD to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years.**

- Daniel is in the first year of Darius of Median descent, which tells us that the Babylonian empire has fallen to the Medo-Persians
  - This happened about 69 years after the nation of Israel had been taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar
    - Daniel is now an old man having spent most of his life in Babylon
    - And on this day he's reading "the books" meaning the books of Scripture, and among those books he's reading Jeremiah
  - It's interesting to see the prophet Daniel reading the prophet Jeremiah, and it reminds us that everyone benefits from reading Scripture
    - Even a prophet needs to read other prophets
    - And in fact, Jeremiah was a contemporary of Daniel, so it shows how quickly Scripture was understood to be inspired
    - Daniel is acknowledging Jeremiah's writing to be Scripture just a few decades later
  - But as Daniel reads Jeremiah he makes a mistake in interpretation
    - Another moment of encouragement: If Daniel can misinterpret Scripture, so can we...but we must be open to receiving correction from God

- Daniel reads that the number of years appointed for the completion of Jerusalem’s desolation was 70 years

**Jer. 25:11** ‘This whole land will be a desolation and a horror, and these nations will serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

**Jer. 25:12** ‘Then it will be when seventy years are completed I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation,’ declares the LORD, ‘for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and I will make it an everlasting desolation.

- Remember, when Nebuchadnezzar finished invading the land, the city was literally desolate
- The walls were down, the temple was razed and every Jew was set outside the land... none remained according to Ezekiel
- Jeremiah says the desolation of Jerusalem was to last seventy years, and that must have triggered Daniel to remember another Scripture
  - Notice Daniel says he was reading in the books (plural), so he was consulting other Scriptures too
  - He was probably reading Leviticus 26
  - In that chapter, the Lord promised to set Israel outside the land if they disobeyed the land sabbath requirement

**Lev. 26:32** ‘I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it will be appalled over it.

**Lev. 26:33** ‘You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste.

**Lev. 26:34** ‘Then the land will enjoy its sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies’ land; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths.

- In the law, the nation of Israel was required to allow the land to go unplanted every seventh year
  - This allowed the land to rest, which improved future harvest
    - To ensure the people had enough food in that seventh year, the Lord provided a double harvest in the sixth year
    - But in time the people forgot the law and farmed all seven years
  - This disobedience went on for a time...a long time...for 490 years until Israel owed the land 70 sabbath years of rest
    - And the Lord promised in Leviticus 26 that He would put Israel outside the land for 70 years as penalty and to let the land rest
    - After the land had “enjoyed” its seventy years of rest, then the people of Israel would be permitted to return to the land
  - So Daniel put 2 and 2 together and concluded that Israel’s 70 years in Babylon was

the appointed time for that penalty

- And since the 70 years was about to end, then his people were about to be set free and allowed to return to Israel
- And Daniel was correct in that assumption
- In a couple of years, Darius would be replaced by Cyrus, and Cyrus would issue a decree allowing Israel to return to the land
- Jeremiah did specify that the period for the land rest was 70 years, but Daniel assumed too much about that period
  - Specifically, Daniel assumed that the 70 years was the entire time for the Age of the Gentiles represented by the statue
  - Daniel assumed that once Israel had paid its penalty in Babylon and returned to the land, the Kingdom would arrive as well
- And we know this because of what Daniel does next....

**Dan. 9:3** So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.

**Dan. 9:4** I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed and said, “Alas, O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and lovingkindness for those who love Him and keep His commandments,

**Dan. 9:5** we have sinned, committed iniquity, acted wickedly and rebelled, even turning aside from Your commandments and ordinances.

- Daniel launches into a long confessional prayer at this point, praying not only for himself but for the entire nation
  - He’s expecting the Age of the Gentiles to end and the Kingdom to begin
    - And to help move that process along, Daniel enters into confessional prayer
    - Why did he feel the need to pray in that way?
    - Because of something Daniel remembered from elsewhere in Leviticus 26

**Lev. 26:40** ‘If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me —

**Lev. 26:42** then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.

- In Leviticus 26 the Lord calls Israel to confess their sins against Him for violating the Old Covenant, including ignoring the land sabbath
  - They must confess their sin and the sin of their forefathers’ disobedience in acting in hostility against God
  - Hostility refers to Israel’s rejection of Jesus in His first coming



- If a future generation of Israel makes these confessions, then the Lord will remember His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
  - In other words, when Israel repents of violating the Old Covenant, they will receive the promised Kingdom
  - The Kingdom promise is found in the Abrahamic Covenant
  - And here the Lord sets the timing for Israel to receive that covenant
  - The Abrahamic covenant is unconditional...Leviticus 26 simply defines the timing of its fulfillment
- So as Daniel read these words, he correctly recognized that the 70 years of Israel's captivity in Babylon was penalty for their ignoring the land sabbath
  - But he also mistakenly assumed that those 70 years marked the end of the Age of the Gentiles and the coming of the Kingdom
    - So Daniel begins to engage in the national confessional prayer hoping to usher in the Kingdom
    - Daniel has the right idea but the wrong timing
  - The end of the age of the Gentiles will, in fact, end with the nation of Israel turning to God and confessing their sin as Leviticus requires
    - But that moment didn't happen in Daniel's day, obviously...it still hasn't happened
    - So Daniel's mistake prompts the Lord to correct Daniel's mistake by sending the angel Gabriel to give Daniel the correct view
    - And in the process, we gain answers to our questions about the timing of the end of the age and its relationship to the church

**Dan. 9:20** Now while I was speaking and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God in behalf of the holy mountain of my God,

**Dan. 9:21** while I was still speaking in prayer, then the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision previously, came to me in my extreme weariness about the time of the evening offering.

**Dan. 9:22** He gave me instruction and talked with me and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you insight with understanding.

**Dan. 9:23** "At the beginning of your supplications the command was issued, and I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed; so give heed to the message and gain understanding of the vision.

- As Daniel was praying, the Lord dispatches Gabriel to give Daniel insight with understanding
  - Here's the correct understanding of God's plan for the Age of the Gentiles

**Dan. 9:24** "Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and

## prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

- Gabriel tells Daniel that seventy weeks has been appointed for Daniels’ people, not merely 70 years
  - But seventy weeks can’t be right...it’s less than 70 years
  - And that confusion is the result of an unfortunate translation choice in my English Bible
- The literal word in Hebrew is *shavat*, which is literally translated “sevens”
  - So Gabriel said that the time for Daniel’s people and for the city of Jerusalem would be 70 sevens = 490
  - But 490 of what?
  - Days, weeks, months or years?
  - Really the only conclusion is years
- Gabriel bursts Daniel’s bubble saying that the Age of Gentiles would last 490 years
  - But how can that be true? We’ve already passed 490 years and yet the age is still ongoing?
    - We haven’t seen the ten kings, we haven’t seen a single world leader running the entire world
    - And we certainly haven’t seen the Lord return to set up His Kingdom
  - It turns out the 490 years is counted in a unique manner, and Gabriel gives us the way to count those years in the next passage

**Dan. 9:25** “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.

**Dan. 9:26** “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.

**Dan. 9:27** And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

*It’s important to consult the slides that accompany this course to understand how to interpret this passage but what follows is a summary:*

- Daniel’s 70 sevens are counted in three blocks
  - The first block runs from the issuing a decree to rebuild the city until the rebuilding is complete
  - That first section lasts 7 sevens or 49 years

- The second block runs contiguously from the rebuilding of the city until Messiah
  - That second block is 62 weeks or 434 years and ends with the Messiah being “cut off”
  - We now understand that being cut off refers to Jesus’ death on the cross
  - The total years from the decree until the Messiah’s death will be 69 sevens or 483 years
- At that point we still lack a seven-year period to bring the Age of the Gentiles to an end
  - In v.27 we see that final seven year period beginning with a covenant
    - But interestingly, that event is not connected to the prior block of time
    - There is no connecting word suggesting that the beginning of that final block is contiguous with the prior 69 sevens
  - So that means the final seven begins at some unknown moment
    - Which implies there is a break or pause in the timeline
    - This makes sense since we know that many more years have passed
- In v.27 we’re told that the pause or break ends with the signing of a covenant between the one and many for one seven year period
  - Once that covenant is signed, the pause ends and the final seven years begins
    - At the end of that seven year period, the “one” meets a complete destruction and the age ends
    - So who is the “one” and the many in this covenant?
  - The “many” must be Israel, because the effect of the covenant is to allow grain offering and sacrifices
    - Only the Jewish people engage in those practices
    - So it’s logical to assume that Israel is the many entering into an agreement to that effect
    - And there is a “one” who will broker that deal with Israel
  - Since the “one” was not specified in the text, it must refer to someone already known to Daniel
    - And since this is happening at the end of the age, it leads us to conclude that the “one” will be the little horn
    - That one comes upon the scene and eventually takes over the world 3.5 years before the end of the age
    - When that eleventh horn strikes a covenant with Israel, the clock starts and the age enters its final 7 years
- Now where does the church fit into this plan?
  - Paul tells us in Romans 11 that the pause in that timeline is made necessary by the church

**Rom. 11:7 What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;**

**Rom. 11:11** I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

**Rom. 11:25** For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

- At Christ’s first coming, the nation was hardened by the Lord apart from a remnant of believers
  - But this God-intended stumble for Israel was not intended to bring them to ruin
  - Instead, they were hardened (prevented from receiving Christ) so that salvation could come to the Gentiles
- And God was just in hardening His people in this way because of the Old Covenant terms
  - That covenant agreement (which Israel voluntarily entered) required penalties from the nation if they failed to keep the Law
  - Those penalties manifest as the Age of the Gentiles, culminating in a final seven year period under the authority of a single Gentile
  - This age is specifically for Israel’s sake because of the terms of the Old Covenant
- The Lord is using that agreement to hold Israel under judgment for a time while the Gospel goes to Gentiles, the Church Age
  - So the Age of the Gentiles is extended for an unknown period of time during this pause while the Lord makes room for the church
  - And only after the fullness (or complete number) of those in the Church comes does the Lord return to finish His word with Israel
- Also, we learn that the 490 years counts the time after the land sabbaths
  - Remember, Jeremiah said Israel would be outside the land long enough for the land to enjoy a complete sabbath for 70 years
    - So while they were in Babylon no one farmed Israel’s land
    - That seventy year period represents 10 sevens
  - Then the decree was issued to let Israel return and rebuild the city, and this began the countdown on the seventy sevens
    - So the seventy sevens were appointed for entirely different reasons, and those reasons were given to us by Gabriel as well

**Dan. 9:24** “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

- Those six reasons become a topic for a future discussion, but for now it’s enough to

know that the 490 counts a different set of goals

- Altogether the two combined equal the length of time for the Age of the Gentiles: 80 sevens
  - Ten is the number of testimony, and for 10 sevens the nation was outside the land
  - That was a testimony that God would give the land its sabbath
  - And seven is the number of completion
  - So 70 sevens will be used to complete the end of Israel's sin under the Old Covenant
- And altogether, the total is 80, and the number 8 is the number for new beginnings
- So let's review what we've learnt from Daniel
  - The Age of the Gentiles is a period of time judging Israel for their disobedience under the Old Covenant
    - Began with Babylon
    - Concludes with a single world leader
    - Lasts for 490 years, but includes a pause period
    - When the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, then the final "seven" may begin
- Next week we start to look at the "things that take place after these things"
  - But first we will take one last look at the break between the Church Age and what follows, so we can understand how the Church Age comes to a conclusion (and why)
    - And we will look at the start of the final seven of Daniel's 70 sevens



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 4C

## Chapter 4:1-6

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- Having finished our background work in Daniel 2, 7, and 9, we are ready to return to the book of Revelation
  - The last time we were studying in the book itself, we finished Chapter 3 and the seven letters to the church
    - This was the section that Jesus called the things that “are”
    - That section taught us about the Church Age, a period of history still ongoing
  - The Church occupies the last days of a present age that Jesus called the Age of the Gentiles
    - That age is centered on Israel and on Jerusalem
    - According to Jesus in Luke 21, the age is defined as a period of history when three things will remain true for Israel
    - Israel is under threat of Gentile attack, scattered outside their land and their city is trampled by Gentiles
  - That led us outside the book of Revelation for a while to Daniel to study the age in detail
    - We learned the age started in 605 BC with Nebuchadnezzar’s conquest of Jerusalem
    - It progresses through four different kingdoms and eventually it comes to its end with the Second Coming of Christ
    - At the very end, the age experiences dramatic events including the consolidation of all authority on earth to ten rulers
    - And then finally to one world leader who persecutes believers and opposes God before coming to his end at Christ’s hand
  - Daniel also told us that this age had a time limit of 70 seven-year periods
    - But that 490-year period wasn’t contiguous...Daniel told us that it included a break or pause of an unknown period
    - That break will finally end and the final seven years of that Age will play out
    - We are currently living in that pause, and as Paul told us, the pause was necessary to make room for the Gentile church
    - So we are living in the pause created for us, but sooner than later the pause will give way to Daniel’s final seven and the age will end
- But the book of Revelation has three parts, not just two, and that third part will now become the main focus of our study
  - Jesus called Part 3 “the things that take place after these things”
    - It tells of the events that take place after the church age has ended
    - These chapters tell the story of Daniel’s final seven year period before Christ’s Second Coming
  - And before we move into those chapters, what should we call Daniel’s final seven, this final period of the age?
    - The period goes by numerous names in the Old and New Testament
    - But one of the more common terms in the New Testament is the “day of the

Lord”

**2Pet. 3:10** But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

- Peter describes the day of the Lord as a surprise when the world endures great destructive forces
- Paul describes it this way:

**1Th. 5:2** For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.

**1Th. 5:3** While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.

- Like Daniel earlier, Paul confirms this is a dark day of destruction that comes upon the whole earth
- And it is also a surprise to all who dwell on the earth
- One term for this period found in the Old Testament stands out:

**Jer. 30:7** ‘Alas! for that day is great,  
There is none like it;  
And it is the time of Jacob’s distress,  
But he will be saved from it.

- This is a time specifically intended for Israel (Jacob), Jeremiah says
- And we remember from Daniel 9:24 that this seven year period was specifically part of a plan for Israel and Jerusalem
- So the final period of seven years is the day of the Lord, Israel’s final accounting and in the Church, and it’s come to be known by one name more than any other –
  - It’s commonly called the “tribulation,” which means affliction or anguish
    - The Hebrew root word means to compress or constrict, like grapes in a press
    - It’s also the most common term used for this period of time in the New Testament
  - The seven year Tribulation can be subdivided into smaller periods, which we’ll do later in a lesson introducing the Tribulation
    - But for now we need to understand how we transition from the Church Age into Daniel’s final seven years of tribulation
    - Chapters 4 & 5 provide that transition
    - They are one continuous scene, but we will take it in sections



**Rev. 4:1** After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.”

**Rev. 4:2** Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in heaven, and One sitting on the throne.

**Rev. 4:3** And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone and a sardius in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald in appearance.

**Rev. 4:4** Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.

- This is an amazing scene and the most detailed description of the Lord’s throne room found in the Bible
  - All three members of the Godhead are present in these two chapters
    - And throughout the scene we see exclamations of praise for God
    - It will begin with “Holy, Holy, Holy”, and then three times God is declared worthy of honor, power, judgment and glory, etc.
    - And that’s followed by a fourth declaration of honor and glory at the end of Chapter 5...it’s nonstop praise for God
    - We can’t overstate how worthy our God is to receive praise from His creation, and in Heaven there will be no doubt
  - John says a door is open to Heaven and Jesus calls John to come up (to Heaven)
    - We know it’s Jesus calling because John says it’s the same voice he heard earlier, the one like a trumpet
    - And we know the scene is set after the Church Age has ended
    - Jesus says He is showing John what must take place after these things, meaning after the things of the church
    - And the details within this scene serve to confirm for us that the Church Age has ended
- The first thing John sees is the Father God, seated on a throne, and Chapter 4 focuses on the Father
  - God the Father is described as appearing like jasper and sardis
    - Jasper is the ancient term for a diamond
    - And the sardis stone was first mined in the city of the same name, and it’s fiery red in appearance
    - So the two together suggest a bright, dazzling, fiery light around the Father along with an emerald green rainbow
    - This vision is similar to the one Daniel saw of the Ancient of Days in Chapter 7
  - But elsewhere John tells us in 1 John 4:12 that no one has seen the Father at any time

- So like Daniel, we know John witnesses a vision prepared for Him
  - It's a representation of the Father, not the Father's actual appearance
  - The point is to give John something He can understand so as to communicate a message to him through this vision
- And that story centers on events taking place around the throne, beginning in v.4 with twenty-four elders praising the Father
  - They are seated on thrones of their own, they are wearing white garments, and they are adorned with crowns on their heads
  - The word elder is always used in connection to human beings who lead God's people
  - Israel had elders over them since the time of Moses and the Church is led by elders, of course
- So in calling these characters "elders" John is indicating that they are human beings
  - And this is the first time "elders" are described as present around the throne of God
  - In earlier visions of God's throne given in Isaiah, Ezekiel and Daniel there is no mention of elders
- These twenty four elders wear clothes that symbolize righteousness by faith
  - The Bible says that by our faith we have received Christ's righteousness

**2Cor. 5:21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.**

- And figuratively speaking, we are said to put on Christ's righteousness as if wearing clothing

**Gal. 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

- And remember, earlier in studying the letter of Sardis we learned that white garments represent the works of the saints

**Rev. 19:8 It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

- So these men are believers present in the Heavenly throne room
- Secondly, they are sitting on thrones indicates they have ruling authority
  - And we know that Jesus says that the Church saints will have positions of authority to reign in the Kingdom with Jesus

**Luke 22:28 "You are those who have stood by Me in My trials;**

**Luke 22:29** and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you  
**Luke 22:30** that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- Later in Revelation 20:4 we're told that the saints will receive thrones to judge in the Kingdom

**Rev. 20:4** Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

- Thirdly, they are wearing crowns John says, and the Greek word he uses for crown is *stephanos*
  - That Greek word specifically describes an award for excellent performance
  - It's the same Greek word used for the wreath given to an athlete who competes in the Greek Olympic Games
  - And as such, it lines up with other Scripture that says crowns represent the eternal rewards available to believers

**1Cor. 9:25** Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

**2Tim. 4:8** in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

- So crowns are tokens representing believers' eternal rewards that eventually become our inheritance in the Kingdom
- These elders represent the leadership of the church throughout the centuries
  - Obviously, over 2,000 years, there have been far more than 24 elders in the church
    - But the Lord couldn't show John every person who has ever served as an elder in the church
    - So the Lord showed John a certain number to represent all leaders
  - We would expect the Lord to use "7" to represent 100%, but here He uses 24 to represent all the leaders of the church
    - The number 12 represents government or leadership over God's people (i.e., 12 tribes govern Israel, 12 apostles governed the church, 12 months govern the year, etc.)

- And doubling a number means to emphasize or make complete the concept behind that number
    - So double 12 (24) means all the leaders of the church
- Next, in v.5 John describes seven lamp stands burning fire around the throne of God
  - John explains that these lamp stands represent the seven Spirits of God
    - Like the Father, the Spirit of God is not visible, so if the Spirit makes His presence known to us, He must take some other form
    - He often appears as fire or a dove or in this case a lamp stand
  - But here He's described as the "seven" Spirits of God, similar to the way Isaiah describes the Spirit in 11:2 using seven characteristics
    - Once again, we know the number seven means 100%
    - So seven lamp stands of fire is a symbolic way of saying 100% of the Spirit is present in the throne
    - Obviously, the Spirit being a spirit is present in all places at once, yet in the same way, the Spirit can also choose to be nowhere for a time
  - So if 100% of the Spirit is present in Heaven, then it means He is nowhere to be found on earth at this moment
    - And if the Spirit is not present on earth for any time, then the Church cannot be present on earth at that time either
    - For Jesus made clear that His presence would remain with the Church until the end of the Age
- Therefore, by what John witnesses the suggestion is that the entire church must be present in the throne room
  - And the structure of Revelation gives support to this conclusion
    - We note that this scene immediately follows Part 2, the things that "are" in Chapters 2-3
    - So as we enter Chapter 4, we know that the times that "are" (i.e., the Church Age on earth) has ended and new things have begun
    - The outline of the book of Revelation itself confirms that the time for the Church on earth is over
  - And if all the leadership of the church is present then surely all the Church under its care is present
    - And if the entire Holy Spirit is present, then the entire body of Christ must be present
    - Though we don't hear of the multitudes of the Church saints, the 24 elders and the lamps lead us to that conclusion
- But that conclusion brings important considerations, and so we would really like additional proof before we move forward in that view
  - And two key details in the description of those 24 elders give us firm proof that the Church has left the earth and is in this scene
    - To understand those two details, we need to step out of the book of Revelation for a moment

- We need to look at what other Scriptures teach about the end of the Church Age
- Beginning with understanding another key term: the coming of the Lord
  - Like the “day of the Lord” this term is easily misunderstood
  - It sounds like the Second Coming of Jesus, but when viewed in proper context, we find it’s talking about something else

**James 5:7** Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.

**James 5:8** You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near.

**James 5:9** Do not complain, brethren, against one another, so that you yourselves may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing right at the door.

- In v.8 James says the coming of the Lord is near and ever present
  - But those words were written in the first century, long before the events of the Church Age much less Daniel’s final seven year period
    - So James couldn’t be talking about the Lord’s Second Coming
    - That event was not possible in James’ day, nor even is it possible in our day today since we still have need for more to happen
  - So we know that there is an ever-present possibility of the Lord’s return for the Church and in John 14, Jesus promised this would happen

**John 14:1** “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me.

**John 14:2** “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you.

**John 14:3** “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

- Jesus tells the disciples that in His Father’s house are many dwellings
- The “Father’s house” is a reference to the Heavenly realm, the same scene we just observed in Revelation 4
- In that place, Jesus says there is plenty of room for His disciples
- Jesus tells His disciples that He will leave them for a time so that He may be where the Father is and prepare a place for them
- And Jesus says we can be sure that He will return for us one day
  - His return for the Church takes a very certain form
  - Jesus comes to receive us to Himself so that where he is we may be also
  - In other words, Jesus will take the Church off the earth and bring us back to the throne room of God

- This promise is very different than the Second Coming of Christ described elsewhere in Scripture
  - Daniel tells us that Jesus' return will be followed by a Kingdom on the earth where Jesus rules with us
    - But here we have a promise to return just long enough to receive the Church to Himself and bring us back to heavenly dwelling places
    - This is a different event than Jesus' Second Coming with an opposite outcome to the Second Coming
  - Instead of Jesus on earth ruling a Kingdom, we find the Church in Heaven with Jesus
    - That's an event not mentioned at all in Daniel and not connected to the events of the Age of the Gentiles
    - In John 14 Jesus is promising something in addition to what we know is coming according to Daniel
  - Furthermore, the timing of these two events is very different
    - The New Testament also tells the Church that the coming of Christ is ever possible and not dependent on any other event
    - James said Jesus is right at the door and was telling his first century readers to expect Jesus at any time
  - But we've seen how the Second Coming of Jesus awaits the end of the Age and is dependent on other events happening first
    - For example before Christ returns, the Age of the Gentiles must play out to conclusion
    - So that among other things, ten kings must take control over the world and later give power to a single man who rules the entire earth
    - Those things haven't happened yet, so the Second Coming isn't possible yet
  - But the coming of the Lord for the Church is always possible because it's not dependent on anything
    - So there is a promise for the Church to be removed from the earth in a day to come
    - And we know this promise must precede the end of the Age, because at the end of the Age Jesus comes to earth to remain
    - Moreover, we will be with Jesus in that moment, because Daniel says we receive the Kingdom

**Dan. 7:27 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'**

- So a day is coming before the Second Coming of Christ when Jesus returns, collects the Church and returns us to Heaven
  - That day is not connected to the end of the age and could happen at any time

- And that fact brings with it some important considerations which inform our understanding of the scene in Revelation 4
- First, we know when that day comes, we enter into the throne room of God with Jesus, for that's the promise in John 14
- Secondly, we also know that if we are to enter the throne room of God, we must leave behind our current sinful bodies
  - Because Paul tells us that our present earthly bodies are corrupted and therefore may not enter into the heavenly realm

**1Cor. 15:50** Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

- Our present, corruptible body cannot inherit the kingdom of God or enter the presence of God
  - That's why when we die, our body stays behind and only our spirit enters the Heavenly realm
  - But we're not destined to live eternally without a body
- On the contrary, the Bible teaches that we will one day be resurrected, into an eternal sinless physical body

**1Cor. 15:42** So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body;

**1Cor. 15:43** it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;

**1Cor. 15:44** it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

**1Cor. 15:47** The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

**1Cor. 15:48** As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly.

**1Cor. 15:49** Just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we will also bear the image of the heavenly.

- There is a new heavenly body coming for every believer, and this new body is necessary to inherit the kingdom of God
  - So when Jesus returns to collect the Church and bring us back to Heaven, He must give us a new eternal body at that time
  - The manner of our resurrection is described in two passages:

**1Th. 4:13** But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope.

**1Th. 4:14** For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

**1Th. 4:15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

**1Th. 4:16** For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

**1Th. 4:17** Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.

**1Th. 4:18** Therefore comfort one another with these words.

- The movement here matches John 14
  - Us on the ground
  - Jesus coming down to meet us partway (in the clouds) to receive us
  - We move from there with Him
- Let's note for a moment in v.17 Paul says we will be caught up (as opposed to resurrected)
  - In the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible, this term is translated *raptura*, which becomes the word *rapture* in French
- Many have adopted the word rapture to describe the moment the Church is caught up to be with Jesus
  - That term reflects that we are changing into the new body without passing through death first
    - They are resurrecting but not actually since they didn't die...they are rapturing or being caught up
    - When this happens, we meet our brothers and sisters in the clouds and return to the Heavenly throne room with Christ
  - Paul gives us a little more detail in 1 Corinthians

**1Cor. 15:51** Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

**1Cor. 15:52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

**1Cor. 15:53** For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.

- The coming of the Lord involves a two part process beginning with the Lord descending from Heaven
  - There will be a shout, and the word in Greek is *keleusma*, which means a military order
  - Therefore, the removal of the Church begins when a heavenly order is issued



- Secondly, there is a trumpet call, and the mention of a trumpet connects this moment to the Feast of Trumpets or Rosh Hashanah
  - This feast is a picture of the Rapture, and it fits between the Feast of Pentecost and Yom Kippur, which is a picture of Tribulation
  - This reaffirms our understanding of the timing of the Rapture
  - It happens after the beginning of the Church (Pentecost) and before the start of Tribulation
- And at that signal, the dead in Christ rise (resurrect) first
  - And then secondly, those Christians who are still alive on earth are instantly changed into a new eternal body
- In fact, the writer of Hebrews says that no saints will be made perfect (i.e., receive a new glorified body) before the rest of the saints

**Heb. 11:39** And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised,  
**Heb. 11:40** because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect.

- The writer says that the Old Testament saints never gained the promises of the Kingdom in their lifetime
  - That delay was necessary because they could not be made “perfect” apart from us, the Church saints
  - The writer is setting forth a biblical principle concerning glorification (or being made perfect)
- A saint from a given group cannot receive his or her new, perfect body apart from the rest of that group
  - So the Lord resurrects all Old Testament saints into new bodies together at the same time
  - And the Lord resurrects all Church saints together at the same time as well
  - And in particular, Paul confirms this in 1 Thessalonians 4 speaking about our resurrection moment when Christ comes for the Church

**1Th. 4:15** For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.

- In explaining how we receive our new resurrected bodies, Paul says that all believers dead or alive receive new bodies together
  - So no Christian receives a new body apart from the rest of the Church
  - So the coming of the Lord for the Church is also the moment we are resurrected to receive new physical bodies
  - For that is the only way we can see Jesus’ promise to bring us to His Father’s

house fulfilled

- The second implication of Jesus' promise in John 14 is that the coming of the Lord is also the moment we receive our eternal reward
  - Because the Bible says that our reward is assigned to us at our resurrection
    - First, understand that all Christians face a moment called the Judgment Seat of Christ

**2Cor. 5:9** Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.

**2Cor. 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- We all appear before Christ for judgment at the same time, so the judgment seat moment happens only once
  - Therefore, all believers are judged one by one in that moment and each receives his or her reward at that time
- Furthermore, the Bible says that this moment is connected to our resurrection moment
  - Earlier in James 5:9 we read that the Judge is at right at the door and soon to arrive
  - James was saying that the Lord comes bringing judgment for the Church
  - Paul echoes these points

**1Cor. 4:5** Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

- He says that the Lord's coming will bring with it a judgment for all believers
  - And that judgment is for the result of assigning to each person praise from the Lord
  - So it's not a judgment for condemnation (see Romans 8:1), but rather it's a judgment for determining reward
- And speaking of his own reward in that moment, Paul says:

**1Th. 2:19** For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?

**1Th. 2:20** For you are our glory and joy.

- Paul said the church in Thessalonica was a testimony to his good work
- And therefore, Pauls said that church would become a "crown" for Paul, symbolizing a

believer's reward

- But notice Paul connected his own reward not to the moment of his death but at the Lord's coming
- And still other passages connect Jesus' return with judgment and reward

**Rev. 22:12** “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

**1Cor. 4:5** Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God.

**1Pet. 1:6** In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,

**1Pet. 1:7** so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

- So the New Testament writers all agree that the Church is rewarded at the revealing of Jesus when He appears to resurrect the Church
  - So even if we die today, we don't receive our reward until the rest of the Church receives theirs at the resurrection
    - So all Church saints are resurrected together and all will be judged in the same moment
    - So that all receive their reward together
  - Returning to the scene in Revelation 4, we can now see proof that the Church has been removed from the earth prior to that moment
    - The 24 elders are seated on thrones, wearing robes and have heads supporting crowns
    - These details tells us they possess human bodies
    - They are not merely souls present in Heaven, but are present in physical bodies
  - Paul told us earlier that only the heavenly body can enter the heavenly realm
    - So if they possess bodies, then these believers must possess the new eternal body
    - And if they possess the new eternal body, then they have experienced the resurrection
    - And if even one believer possesses the new eternal body, then the entire church has been resurrected
    - And if the entire church has been resurrected, then the Lord has come for the church and removed it from the earth

- And if the church has been removed and resurrected then it has also received its reward
- These conclusions fit all the data we have in this scene
  - The 24 elders are present in the throne room in new glorified bodies, with their rewards and with all the Holy Spirit present around the throne
    - And of course, this scene in Revelation follows the end of the things that “are”
    - And it’s the beginning of the things that must take place after the Church Age
  - We should ask why does the Lord take this step of removing the Church so dramatically before the end of the Age?
    - Well, remember the two terms we learn today
    - The day of the Lord, or rather Jacob’s troubles, and the coming of the Lord or we could say the resurrection of the Church
    - They are connected only in the sense that one makes way for the other
- Paul explains it this way

**1Th. 5:2 For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night.**

**1Th. 5:3 While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape.**

**1Th. 5:4 But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief;**

**1Th. 5:9 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

- Paul points out that the day of the Lord (the tribulation) is not a day that the Church will experience
- Yet Peter said in 2 Peter 3 that the day would overtake the entire earth
  - How can a day of destruction that impacts the whole world not also impact the church?
  - The only answer is the Church must be gone before that day comes
  - So removing the Church is necessary before the seven year period can begin
- The church in Thessalonica was disturbed by stories they had missed the coming of the Lord and were now experiencing tribulation
- Next, Paul says that the coming of the Lord cannot happen until the apostasy of the church and the man of lawlessness is revealed

**2Th. 2:1 Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him,**

**2Th. 2:2 that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed**

either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

**2Th. 2:3** Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

**2Th. 2:4** who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.

**2Th. 2:5** Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

**2Th. 2:6** And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.

**2Th. 2:7** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

**2Th. 2:8** Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

- Apparently the church knew these two events were connected
  - But Paul reassures the church again that the day of the Lord could not have started yet because certain things hadn't taken place
    - The man of lawlessness, the eleventh horn of Daniel 7, the man who rules the world at the end, hadn't yet been revealed
    - And he must be revealed early in the Tribulation period
  - And Paul goes on to say that until the One Who restrains his appearing must be removed first
    - So there is a "removal" required before the seven year period of Tribulation and the appearing of the Antichrist can begin
    - The Restrainer isn't specified here, but given what we know about the coming of the Lord, we can propose an answer
  - The Spirit of God living in the body of Christ on earth restraining the mystery of lawlessness
    - Once He is out of the way, the final seven years of the age can play out
    - So once again, the coming of the Lord and removal of the Church is a prerequisite for the start of the Day of the Lord
- From what we've learned, we find an interesting comparison between the day of the Lord and the coming of the Lord
  - This comparison puts the two events in the proper perspective
    - The day of the Lord is for Israel and for judgment
    - It awaits the final seven years of the age and the revealing of the antichrist
    - It brings to an end the Age of Gentiles
  - The coming of the Lord is for the church and for reward at the resurrection
    - It is always possible and near

- It happens before the lawless one is revealed and before the end of the age
  - And it brings to an end the Church age
- Elsewhere in Matthew 24, Jesus says one more thing about the timing of His coming, something that has puzzled students for a long time

**Matt. 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.**

- The mystery is solved by returning to John 14 and noting the language Jesus used in His description of His return
  - He refers to building dwelling places for us in Heaven
- Though Jesus *was* a carpenter, nevertheless we can’t imagine that He is presently occupied constructing condos in Heaven for us
  - Jesus was speaking in a figure of speech which leads us to ask why did Jesus choose *this* metaphor?
  - Jesus is using language associated with the traditional Jewish wedding ceremony
  - So while it isn’t familiar to us, it would have been very familiar to His disciples
- Jesus is comparing Himself to the groom in a Jewish wedding and He’s comparing the Church to a bride
  - And of course, we know the New Testament uses those same comparisons
  - The Church is called the Bride of Christ and He is our Groom
  - And now we see how that comparison can be useful in understanding God’s plan for the Church
- In that ancient tradition, a marriage was arranged by the family of the bride and groom
  - Specifically, the Father would send a servant to locate a suitable bride for his son
    - The servant visited the prospective bride and her family at her home
    - A negotiation followed, a price was paid and the covenant was established
    - At that moment, the bride and groom were betrothed though they had yet to meet
  - At that point, the servant returns to report his success to the father, who then directs his son to begin building a home for his bride to be
    - The son begins building an addition on to the father’s house, which will serve as his home
    - Only after he has finished building the addition to the satisfaction of the father can the son claim his bride
  - Meanwhile, the bride remains at her family home always ready for the groom to appear
    - She doesn’t know when he will come because it depends on the father’s judgment that the new addition is suitable
    - Therefore, she spent everyday in her wedding dress waiting to be claimed by

her groom

- Once all is ready, the son travels to the bride's home to claim her in a surprise appearing
  - They travel back together to the father's house where the marriage is formally completed and consummated
  - The two remain together in the marriage tent for a week
  - When the week is complete, the two travel back to the bride's house to celebrate with the bride's family
- It's easy to see how the details in this ancient tradition reflect aspects of God's plan for the Church
  - God the Father sent a Servant (the Holy Spirit) to the bride's home (the earth) to find a suitable bride for the Son
    - The Spirit locates the Bride one believer at a time, entering into a covenant by which we are betrothed to our groom
    - We are given gifts by the Spirit to mark the entry into the covenant, and the Father pays a price to gain us in Christ's blood
  - Then the waiting begins
    - We don't know when the Son is going to return for us
    - So we are called to remain spotless and clean, ready for our Groom to appear
    - The day and the hour of that moment is unknown
  - In fact, in Matthew 24:36 Jesus says not even the Son knows, which also fits the Jewish marriage ceremony
    - In the marriage ceremony, the son's opportunity to claim the bride depends on the father approving the new addition
    - Not even the Son knows when the Father will be satisfied, and so it is with the Bride of Christ



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson 5

Chapters 4:7-11; 5:1-14

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- As we usually do, we rejoin our study with a short review of the big picture
  - We're entering into Part 3, the things that happen after the Church
    - And in that time we're studying the seventieth seven of Daniel, which we learned last time is also known as the day of the Lord
    - It's a period designated for Israel's troubles as a response to breaking the Old Covenant
    - Its purpose is to bring Israel back to obedience and holiness as they enter the Kingdom
  - We can see clearly how the Lord uses that period for the benefit of His people in a couple of chapters in Leviticus
    - Chapter 25 says that Israel must observe a land sabbath every seventh year
    - And it also says that those who are dispossessed of their land must have that inheritance restored after 49 years
  - Then in Chapter 26, we find penalties for those who violate these laws
    - If Israel fails to keep the land sabbath, they will be put outside the land for 70 years (a penalty of 10x)
    - This was the time Israel spent in Babylon
  - And for Israel's failure to keep the Old Covenant, they will be oppressed in many ways and put outside their land as well
    - Daniel 9 tells us that those penalties will last 70 sevens or 490 years
    - But then at the end of that 490 years, the people will receive back their land as their inheritance (again, 10x penalty)
  - That's the Age of the Gentiles, and the final seven years will be the day of the Lord, the worst period of all
    - So the entire period of history beginning with Nebuchadnezzar and ending with Jesus' return is focused on Israel's judgment
    - And it comes in these two chunks as laid out in Leviticus and Daniel
    - The last of which is the seven year Tribulation
- Let's put this moment in perspective of our outline
  - Chapters 1-3 covered the church period, which itself is part of the larger period of Daniel called the Age of the Gentiles
    - Chapters 4 & 5 explain how we leave the times that ARE and enter into the things that follow
    - It began last week with our study of Chapter 4 as John witnessed the throne room of God
  - From the clues we were given, we concluded that the promised removal of the church from Earth had taken place
    - The church was present in Heaven, having received new bodies in the resurrection and their heavenly rewards
    - That was the coming of the Lord for the Church as promised in John 14
    - It's an event that is markedly different than the Second Coming of Christ in

that the flow of events is in the opposite direction

- We have come to calling it the rapture, but whatever you call it we know it can happen at any time
  - It's not connected to any other event in history, except that Paul told us it must happen prior to the wrath that is to come
  - That wrath will come upon the whole earth, Paul said, yet it won't come upon the Church
- And as we said, the only way something can come upon the whole earth yet not impact the Church is if we are gone
  - Therefore, Chapter 4 is given to us in the book of Revelation to make clear that the things that "are" have ended
  - The Church is no longer, having been moved into Heaven at the coming of the Lord
- But here again, the things after the Church Age are themselves still a part of the Age of the Gentiles
  - That Age continues until Jesus returns to the Earth
    - If we were to jump ahead to Chapter 19 of Revelation, we find a description of Jesus' physical return to Earth
    - So Revelation 19 gives us the end point of the Age of the Gentiles within this book
  - So by process of elimination, Chapters 6-19 describe events after the church has departed the earth but before the Lord's return
    - This is the next period of our study
    - The study of the events that end the age, which is the day of the Lord – a time of wrath
  - So let's take a brief look at the end of Chapter 4 and move into Chapter 5

**Rev. 4:5** Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God;

**Rev. 4:6** and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.

**Rev. 4:7** The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.

**Rev. 4:8** And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

- We read these verses last week though we didn't spend time considering them in detail

- For our purposes tonight we will focus on one interesting connection to the book of Ezekiel
  - The four creatures around the throne are cherubim, which is the highest class of angelic being
  - Cherubim are guardians of the glory of God, and the last time we saw them mentioned in the Bible was in Ezekiel 10
- In that chapter these guardians arrive in Jerusalem to escort the glory of God out of His temple in advance of the coming Babylonian attack
  - When the glory of God departed the temple, it was the last time God dwelled among His people Israel
  - His glory has not been present on earth with Israel since that day (apart from Jesus' appearing in His day)
  - Now we see them mentioned again, and they are still at God's side guarding His glory
- Interestingly, Ezekiel 10 takes place at the point when the Age of the Gentiles is beginning, just as Nebuchadnezzar arrives at Jerusalem
  - The Lord sent Babylon to attack so that Israel would fall and the Age of the Gentiles would begin
  - And He foreshadowed that coming destruction by removing His glory from the temple shortly before the armies arrived
- Now in Chapter 4 we enter into the final seven years of events that will bring the age to an end and allow the glory of God to return to a new temple
  - So just as the cherubim were used in Ezekiel to foreshadow the departure of God's glory from dwelling with a disobedient Israel...
    - Now they are shown again to foreshadow the return of God's glory to His temple to dwell among an obedient Israel
    - Notice the phrase they use in their worship of God
    - He is the one Who is to come, meaning to come into His Kingdom in glory
  - So this chapter is the preamble to the rest of Revelation, which tells the story of how the glory of God will return to earth and to Israel
    - But before that can happen, much will take place on earth and in Heaven, including much wrath
    - So that's where we go next, to the beginning of the wrath of God on earth during the final seven years of this age
    - That story opens in Chapter 5

**Rev. 5:1 I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals.**

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

**Rev. 5:3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it.**

**Rev. 5:4** Then I began to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it;

**Rev. 5:5** and one of the elders said to me, “Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals.”

**Rev. 5:6** And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

**Rev. 5:7** And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

**Rev. 5:8** When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

**Rev. 5:9** And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

**Rev. 5:10** “You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth.”

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

**Rev. 5:12** saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

**Rev. 5:13** And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, “To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.”

**Rev. 5:14** And the four living creatures kept saying, “Amen.” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

- I read Chapter 5 in total because it helps to set the scene in your mind’s eye
  - Obviously, Chapter 5 continues the scene begun in Chapter 4, so we have John still in the throne room of God
    - The Father is on the throne as before with the elders and four living creatures present
    - And we can assume the Seven Spirits of God are also still present
  - And now we see a new character, the Lamb
    - If there was any doubt as to His identity, He is also called the Lion of Judah and the Root of David
    - So obviously, this is Christ, and although Jesus was always there, only now does John mention Him
    - So all three Persons of the Godhead are present in the scene

- But from this point forward in the book of Revelation, all focus remains on Christ alone
  - The chapter opens with the Father on the throne holding a book
    - The Greek word for book is *biblion*, and in John's day a *biblion* was not a bound volume of pages like books are today
    - A *biblion* was a scroll or rolled up parchment
  - Typically, important scrolls, like legal documents, would be sealed where the edge of the rolled scroll ends
    - The scroll would be sealed shut with wax seals, and in this case we're told the scroll was affixed with seven such seals
    - The number seven means 100% again, so this is a complete sealing of the scroll...no one has opened it or knows its contents
- So what is this scroll? The only clue we is found is in the description John gives us
  - John says it has writing on both sides, and in that day scrolls were usually written on one side only
    - Only certain legal documents were required to have writing on both the inside and outside of the rolled up parchment
    - In particular, land deeds were often annotated in this way
  - When land was sold or awarded in Israel, a deed would be drawn up describing the land and the terms of the sale or use of the land
    - Those details were written inside the document, and the scroll was sealed
    - But any transfer of property within Israel was temporary at best
    - The law required land to revert back to its original owner at the Jubilee year
  - In the meantime, a land deed granted a transfer of the land for a time according to the terms of the deed
    - The deed scroll was sealed to ensure no one could tamper with the document or change the terms of the agreement
    - And a summary of the terms of the deed were written on the outside of the scroll so that others could know what was agreed
  - If there was any doubt raised over the authenticity of the summary, the seals could be broken by a magistrate
    - And then the full deed could be inspected to verify the terms of the sale or transfer
    - However, once the seals were broken on the deed, it was considered complete or finished and brought to an end
    - So in the event that seals were broken for any reason, the deed ends and a new agreement must be struck
- Since the scrolls is said to contain writing on both sides and with what we know about Revelation overall, it's reasonable to conclude this is a land deed
  - Which leads us to ask, a land deed for what land? And the obvious answer is for the land of Israel

- In 605 BC the Lord set Israel outside their land and under Gentile oppression
- Moreover, He gave their land over to Gentiles to trample it to varying degrees for the past 2600 years and counting
- This period of history, the Age of the Gentiles, is a time when the land of Israel has been deeded (so to speak) to Gentiles
  - But a time is coming when the Lord ends that land deed and returns the land to its rightful owners, Israel
  - Just as God promised Israel back when He began this age

**Ezek. 11:16** “Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Though I had removed them far away among the nations and though I had scattered them among the countries, yet I was a sanctuary for them a little while in the countries where they had gone.””

**Ezek. 11:17** “Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.””

**Ezek. 11:18** “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it.

**Ezek. 11:19** “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

**Ezek. 11:20** that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

- But breaking the seals on a land deed was reserved for a magistrate or judge with the authority over the land
  - In past times, it would be a local leader with authority over an area within Israel
  - But who has authority over the whole of Israel and all the land promised to God’s people?
- John hears a strong angel in the throne room asking the same question in v.2
  - Who is worthy to open the book and break its seals?
    - Or to put it another way, who is able to end the Age of the Gentiles and return Israel’s land to the rightful owners?
    - And at first, the answer is that no one was found
    - Notice it’s no one “in heaven, on earth or under the earth”
  - Now at first that seems hard to believe since the Father is in Heaven and surely He is worthy
    - But the term worthy doesn’t mean “good enough” it means appropriate or deserved
    - Remember, God the Father gave Israel’s land to the Gentiles in the first place
    - And therefore, the Father couldn’t break the seals, because to do so means He would be breaking His word in that agreement

- So we need someone authorized to Judge the matter rightly, someone authorized to inspect the terms of the agreement
  - And once the agreement is inspected, it comes to an end
  - And in its place, a new agreement must be struck, one that establishes a very different arrangement with the land
- So initially John is told that no one is able to Judge an agreement established by God the Father, and John is moved to tears at the prospect
  - Because it means that the land of Israel will never again return to Israel, or so it seemed to him
    - But there is One Who could rightly Judge an agreement established by God, and that would be our Mediator
    - If God were to take human form, He could rightly Judge His own agreement with humanity for He could represent both sides
  - And notice that in vs.5-6 John is told by one of the human elders in Heaven that the Lamb has overcome so as to open the scroll
    - Notice in v.6 Jesus is describes a Lamb standing “as if slain”
    - The phrase “standing as if slain” is *histemi hohs spazo*
    - It is an idiom or figure of speech in Greek meaning back from the dead or we would say resurrected
  - So John describes Jesus as the resurrected Lamb of God
    - Furthermore, Jesus has seven horns and seven eyes
    - The text tells us these details represent the Spirit of God sent out into all the earth (all-seeing, all-ruling)
    - That detail suggests that the Spirit of God has returned to the Earth to resume His ministry after having removed the Church
  - Then John is told Jesus is worthy to open the scroll because He has overcome
    - To overcome means to have been victorious over something or someone
    - And Jesus himself tells us what He gains victory over

**John 16:33** “These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

- He overcame the world, which is a way of saying He defeated the ruler of the world

**1John 2:14** I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

- So Jesus has overcome the devil, and we know how He did this:

**Heb. 2:14** Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,  
**Heb. 2:15** and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

- Jesus' death and resurrection overcomes the enemy's dominion on the earth
  - And in so doing, Jesus took away the enemy's only weapon against us – death – and rendered it null and void
  - In that way, Jesus has become qualified (“worthy”) to Judge the world

**Acts 10:42** “And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

- So the Father's deeded over Israel's land to the enemy and the Gentile world for a time, and now the Judge of the world has authority to inspect that deed
  - By His death and resurrection, Jesus is worthy to play mediator between God and man – and to Judge
    - So Jesus comes to the Father in v.7 and removes the book from the Father's hand
    - We get the sense of authority being transferred from the Father to the Son
  - Therefore, the events that follow are the first moments of Christ exercising His authority to Judge the world
    - And in particular, to open the land deed for Israel and render it void and finished
    - As He does so, the land will revert to its original owner, which is God
    - Who eventually will award that land to Israel as He promised to Abraham He would do
  - But this scroll has seven seals, so opening it is a process, not a moment
    - And as Jesus opens each scroll in Heaven, certain events will play out on earth
    - That will be the pattern of Chapters 6-19...events in Heaven trigger events on earth
    - And it all starts with Jesus opening this scroll
- In vs.8-10 the cherubim around the throne break out into a song of praise, accompanied by musical instruments and bowls of incense
  - Besides confirming the Lord approves of musical instruments in worship, it demonstrates how we participate in praise of God even now
    - The bowls contain the prayers of the saints, which have risen before the throne of God and are part of worship
    - So our prayers literally become content to the worship of God in Heaven



- And the song they sang confirms that Christ's authority to take back the world and Israel from the enemy is based on His sacrificial death
  - He purchased with His blood many peoples and nations
  - And together they have become a kingdom and priest for God
- The song alludes to where these events are headed, to the establishment of the Kingdom in place of earthly kingdoms
  - We are the citizens of that future Kingdom
  - So in God's economy He created the citizens of the Kingdom before He established it physically on earth
  - And He made us to be priests in preparation for the Kingdom's arrival
  - We are intercessors who bring a knowledge of God to the world
  - Ultimately, we will reign upon the earth with Jesus
- Finally, the scene ends with an incredible moment of praise for God
  - John looks up to see that the throne room was actually filled with an uncountable number of angels and the rest
    - And together they all are worshipping the Lamb at the moment of His coming into His Kingdom
    - And notice this praise rings out from every thing in Heaven, on the earth, under the earth and on the sea as Paul promised
    - Every living thing, including those in the sea and even the dead unbelievers in Hell all praise Jesus
  - Paul told us in Philippians that this is the destiny for all Creation, and Revelation 5 tells us it comes to pass at the dawn of the Kingdom
    - As the final seven years of Daniel's seventy sevens begins, the Creation is put on notice that Jesus is to be praised
    - And yet obviously, those on earth praising Jesus aren't universally converted
    - And those in Hell aren't saved...because when Jesus' worthiness to receive praise is self-evident, it won't be based on faith
- In the next chapter, Jesus will begin breaking the seals, and with each one, the world convulses in expectation of the coming end of the age
  - John is going to witness that process from Heaven and then report what happens on each as a result
    - That process will continue throughout Chapters 6-19
    - By this pattern, we come to understand that Jesus is the direct cause of the events on earth
    - He is exercising His authority from Heaven in preparation for His return to Earth where He will exercise authority in person
  - Chapter 6 can be frustrating for Bible students because it describes the opening events of Tribulation in such limited detail
    - It leaves us with many questions concerning the exact nature and meaning of the events taking place

- As we've seen before, the reason the details aren't given in Chapter 6 is because they are elsewhere in Scripture
- Revelation is simply making us aware of where they fit into the overall program of end times events
  - So if we want to know the details, we must consult the earlier Scripture
  - We will take time to do that homework both before and during our study of Chapter 6
  - Beginning tonight with a brief overview of the signs of the times
- Specifically, we need to gather as much as we can from outside Revelation concerning how these last seven years will play out
  - Then armed with that detail, we can understand Revelation better
  - First we go to Isaiah 2

**Is. 2:12 For the LORD of hosts will have a day of reckoning**

**Against everyone who is proud and lofty  
And against everyone who is lifted up,  
That he may be abased.**

**Is. 2:13 And it will be against all the cedars of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up,**

**Against all the oaks of Bashan,**

**Is. 2:14 Against all the lofty mountains,**

**Against all the hills that are lifted up,**

**Is. 2:15 Against every high tower,**

**Against every fortified wall,**

**Is. 2:16 Against all the ships of Tarshish**

**And against all the beautiful craft.**

- This language is both poetic and literal

**Is. 2:17 The pride of man will be humbled**

**And the loftiness of men will be abased;  
And the LORD alone will be exalted in that day,**

**Is. 2:18 But the idols will completely vanish.**

**Is. 2:19 Men will go into caves of the rocks**

**And into holes of the ground**

**Before the terror of the LORD**

**And the splendor of His majesty,**

**When He arises to make the earth tremble.**

**Is. 2:20 In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats**

**Their idols of silver and their idols of gold,**

**Which they made for themselves to worship,**

**Is. 2:21 In order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs**

**Before the terror of the LORD and the splendor of His majesty,**

**When He arises to make the earth tremble.**

**Is. 2:22** Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils;  
**For why should he be esteemed?**

- Isaiah describes a time of terror on earth directed at all the proud on earth and those who are abased or ungodly
  - God will make the earth tremble to humble all mankind for their pride, arrogance and ungodliness
  - Notice in v.22 God will stop regarding man, stop allowing breath in his nostrils, for why should mankind be esteemed?
  - This will be the final reckoning for this age of mankind
- So this coming time of terror is for the whole earth, but it is made necessary because of the Old Covenant God gave Israel
  - Moving now to a passage we've mentioned before

**Jer. 30:4** Now these are the words which the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah:

**Jer. 30:5** For thus says the LORD,  
 'I have heard a sound of terror,  
 Of dread, and there is no peace.

**Jer. 30:6** 'Ask now, and see  
 If a male can give birth.  
 Why do I see every man  
 With his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth?  
 And why have all faces turned pale?

**Jer. 30:7** 'Alas! for that day is great,  
 There is none like it;  
 And it is the time of Jacob's distress,  
 But he will be saved from it.

**Jer. 30:8** 'It shall come about on that day,' declares the LORD of hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves.

**Jer. 30:9** 'But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

- Jeremiah's passage gives us an excellent overview on the nature of the Tribulation and its focus on Israel
  - The coming time for Israel and Judah is a period of terror
    - It's so bad it will cause men to writhe in pain as if men were giving birth, holding their loins
    - It's a unique day and there is none like it
  - But ultimately it's a time for Jacob (or Israel) to experience distress or affliction
    - God is inflicting this on Israel specifically though it impacts the whole earth as

well

- Yet in v.7 Jeremiah says that in the end, Israel (the nation) will be saved out of it
  - This time of trouble ultimately sets Israel free of the yoke of sin and their slavery imposed by God during the Age of Gentiles
    - In its place, Israel will live free in their Kingdom with their King
    - And with David resurrected over them as well
- From these first two passages, we already see a consistent pattern, of God promising a terrible world-wide calamity
  - It impacts the whole world but it's for Israel
    - It comes not to destroy Israel (not fully) but to save them
    - Knowing this, we understand all the more why Paul said the Church was not appointed to experience this coming tribulation
  - We were not appointed to wrath...because someone else was appointed to receive it: Israel
    - And when we say Israel, we mean those unbelieving Jews who will be alive on that future day
    - Believing Jews will have been raptured with the Church and will not experience the wrath intended for the rest of the nation
    - The unbelieving Jew is still required to experience God's wrath, because the unbelieving Jew is still bound to the Law
  - And it's Israel's law that requires this penalty
    - Let's go back to the beginning, where all this began...

**Deut. 29:10** “You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel,

**Deut. 29:11** your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water,

**Deut. 29:12** that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today,

**Deut. 29:13** in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**Deut. 29:14** “Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, **Deut. 29:15** but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today

- At this moment, the nation is standing on the edge of the Promised Land, having spent the previous forty years in the desert
  - Moses speaks to a new generation of Israel, and commands them to obey the Covenant that was established between God and their fathers
    - But to make sure this generation understands the Law, Moses repeats it all to

them in this moment

- And then he asks this new generation of Israel to obey it, which they do
- And in v.10 Moses explains that even as this generation stood in this moment to accept this covenant with God, they represented a nation
  - In effect, the entire nation of Israel from all time was standing before God in that moment
  - In vs.14-15 God says this covenant will apply not only for those standing in that day but for all future generations
  - Even those Jews who were not yet born were being bound by this covenant
- So that literally every single Jew who has ever been born into the nation would be bound by this covenant
  - This was not an individual covenant, this was a national covenant or we could say a multi-generational covenant
  - Every Jew born after this day was bound to this covenant even though they never personally agreed to keep it
  - Much as a newborn child in the United States is bound to keep the laws of our nation, so were children of Israel bound to their law
- And in this law were promises of blessing for obedience and promises of judgment for disobedience

**Lev. 26:1** ‘You shall not make for yourselves idols, nor shall you set up for yourselves an image or a sacred pillar, nor shall you place a figured stone in your land to bow down to it; for I am the LORD your God.

**Lev. 26:2** ‘You shall keep My sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary; I am the LORD.

**Lev. 26:3** ‘If you walk in My statutes and keep My commandments so as to carry them out,

**Lev. 26:4** then I shall give you rains in their season, so that the land will yield its produce and the trees of the field will bear their fruit.

- The Lord reminds the nation not to have idols, to keep God’s sabbaths and care for His sanctuary
  - Then the Lord begins to outline the consequences of obeying the covenant
  - He begins by stipulating as in a contract what the duties of the people of Israel would be under this agreement
- Namely, they must keep His statutes and commandments and carry them out fully
  - And if as a nation they keep the covenant, then the Lord describes the blessing they will experience as a nation
  - I won’t read the entire passage, but in vs.4-13 the Lord provides a list of national blessings
  - Including living in peace, without beasts in the land, with great harvests, enemies vanquished and in perfect security

- But in this covenant, there are also penalties for failure to keep the covenant
- In v.14, the conversation changes to the negative

**Lev. 26:14** ‘But if you do not obey Me and do not carry out all these commandments,

**Lev. 26:15** if, instead, you reject My statutes, and if your soul abhors My ordinances so as not to carry out all My commandments, and so break My covenant,

**Lev. 26:16** I, in turn, will do this to you: I will appoint over you a sudden terror, consumption and fever that will waste away the eyes and cause the soul to pine away; also, you will sow your seed uselessly, for your enemies will eat it up.

**Lev. 26:17** ‘I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.

**Lev. 26:18** ‘If also after these things you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

- The description I read continues through v.39, and in fact, God devotes over twice as many verses to the curses as He does to the blessings
  - Notice the Lord begins by reiterating that these curses will come upon the nation as a whole
  - And they will come unless the nation as a whole carries out all the commandments in the Law
- So if one Israelite fails to keep even one commandment, then the entire nation will see all the curses
  - And there are some interesting curses in this list including God allowing Israel’s enemies to rule over them (ie. The Age of Gentiles)
  - And He will scatter them among the nations and many of Israel will perish in those nations so that they become few in number
  - Also He will lay waste to their cities bringing seven plagues against them including pestilence and famine
- These things will come unless Israel keeps the Law perfectly for all generations
  - So what are the odds they were going to meet the terms of this covenant and receive the blessings?
  - It would be impossible for even one person to keep this covenant perfectly, which is the requirement, much less all the nation
- How can every Jew in Israel remain perfectly compliant with the entire Law?
  - It’s obvious that the nation was destined from the beginning to experience the curses
  - And since this is the word of God, all of these curses must take place, not just some
- And as we go down the list, we can see that many have already come to pass

- But we can also find some that have yet to come true, like the seven plagues
  - So if these curses must happen to Israel yet some have yet to happen, we should expect to see more in the future
  - Some of these curses will be found in later chapters of Revelation, which is why we're looking at this passage first
- We need to understand that events of tribulation are not random chaos or violence
  - They are specific fulfillment of things promised for Israel as part of the covenant of Moses
  - God is going to uphold His side of the covenant, to keep the terms of this agreement
- Furthermore this covenant was made with a nation, not an individual
  - So whatever happens under the terms of this covenant – whether good or bad – must happen to the entire nation at once
  - The penalties are not handed down on an individual basis
  - Just as all Israel went into Babylon (including Daniel and Ezekiel) so will all Israel experience the tribulation
- Only if a Jew has come out from under the Law may they escape the penalties of the Law in tribulation
  - How does a Jew come out from under the Law? By faith in Jesus so that Jesus takes the curses for him or her
  - And having taken the curse for us, we then are no longer under the curses of the Law

**Gal. 3:10** For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”

**Gal. 3:11** Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

**Gal. 3:12** However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, “HE WHO PRACTICES THEM SHALL LIVE BY THEM.”

**Gal. 3:13** Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us — for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE” —

- So Jews who believe in Jesus in our time become part of the Church, and as such they are saved from the wrath to come
  - But what of the Jews in Tribulation? How can they escape the wrath?
  - Earlier we read in Jeremiah that the time of Jacobs' troubles would eventually result in Israel being saved by it
  - So how does that happen?
- Let's look once more at Leviticus 26

**Lev. 26:40** ‘If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me —

**Lev. 26:41** I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies — or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity,

**Lev. 26:42** then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.

**Lev. 26:43** ‘For the land will be abandoned by them, and will make up for its sabbaths while it is made desolate without them. They, meanwhile, will be making amends for their iniquity, because they rejected My ordinances and their soul abhorred My statutes.

**Lev. 26:44** ‘Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God.

**Lev. 26:45** ‘But I will remember for them the covenant with their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God. I am the LORD.’”

**Lev. 26:46** These are the statutes and ordinances and laws which the LORD established between Himself and the sons of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai.

- At the end of the curse, the Lord inserts this “loophole” which offers to remove the curse of the Law from Israel
  - He says that even though the nation disobeys the terms of the Old Covenant, they may still be restored
  - But the nation must confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers
  - And in v.41 the Lord says if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled
- If Israel does these things, then the Lord will invoke the terms of a different covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant
  - By the terms of that earlier covenant, the Lord will not reject the nation
  - The earlier covenant promises Abraham’s descendants the blessing of the Kingdom unconditionally
  - So by “remember” the Lord simply means He will bring to pass that covenant at the moment the nation confesses
- So within the terms of the Old Covenant, the Lord has embedded a loophole that invokes the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant
  - And in this way, the Lord uses the Old Covenant to bring about the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham
    - The Old Covenant brings curses that ultimately are used to bring Israel to faith in their Messiah
    - And in coming to faith, the nation comes out from under the Law



- And in that way they follow the example of Abraham who believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness
- So this is ultimately how the Old Covenant becomes a tutor to lead the nation to Christ

**Gal. 3:19** Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made.

**Gal. 3:20** Now a mediator is not for one party only; whereas God is only one.

**Gal. 3:21** Is the Law then contrary to the promises of God? May it never be! For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law.

**Gal. 3:22** But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

**Gal. 3:23** But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.

**Gal. 3:24** Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.

- But here's the most interesting part...the Old Covenant is a national covenant
  - So this loophole requires that the entire nation participate in the confession moment
    - The nation must recognize their sins and the sins of their forefathers
    - Remember, this is not a personal salvation covenant...this is not a provision calling for personal salvation
    - Personal salvation doesn't require confessing our forefathers' sins too
    - Rather, this is a special provision calling upon Israel to make a national confession of repentance
  - And now we understand that Tribulation (as part of Daniel's 70 sevens) is the last piece of this plan to bring an end to this covenant
    - The tribulation is the culmination and final fulfillment of the curses promised to Israel under the Old Covenant
    - And at the conclusion of that period, Jeremiah says the result will be that Israel will be moved to a confession and be saved
    - He means the nation will be saved out of the turmoil of Tribulation and into the safety and security of the Kingdom
  - Moses foretold exactly this outcome in Deut 30

**Deut. 30:1** “So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you,

**Deut. 30:2** and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,

**Deut. 30:3** then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

**Deut. 30:4** “If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back.

**Deut. 30:5** “The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

**Deut. 30:6** “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

**Deut. 30:7** “The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you.

**Deut. 30:8** “And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today.

- Notice that Moses says that when all these things have come upon you – both blessings and curses...
  - Moses acknowledges right up front that the nation will not keep the covenant
    - And as a result, all the curses are inevitable, but then again, all the blessings must also come, Moses says
    - So there must be a day when the entire nation of Israel lives in accordance to the terms of the Old Covenant perfectly
  - How can we ever expect an entire nation of people to live the law of Moses perfectly?
    - Moses says in v.2 that can only happen when the nation obeys the Lord with all their heart and soul
    - Then there will be a gathering back into the land where they will prosper and serve the Lord
  - Furthermore, they will have circumcised hearts and their descendants will also have circumcised hearts
    - We know that phrase refers to a believing heart, but even a believing heart doesn't guarantee perfect living
    - So this isn't just a believing Israel, this is a glorified Israel, an Israel of resurrected, glorified people who live without sin
    - So Moses says that there is a future for Israel that is glorious in keeping with the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant
  - But this glorified future can only happen to Israel after all the curses have come upon the nation first
    - The period of Tribulation is the final phase of those curses which must come to Israel
    - And the tribulation period ends the age of the Gentiles and ushers in the arrival of the Lord

- How does Tribulation bring about this national confession of faith?
  - We will examine the details of Tribulation in coming weeks
  - For now, we can just conclude that the reason Israel must experience Tribulation is because the Old Covenant requires it
- Now to end the evening, let's ask why did God institute such an elaborate plan to establish Israel in the Kingdom?
  - Why did God need the Old Covenant in order to establish Israel as a nation according to the Abrahamic Covenant?
    - The answer is the Church
    - Remember, this final period of curses upon Israel can't happen until the Church is taken out of the way
    - But that begs a question of why did the church even get in the way in the first place?
    - Paul tells us in Romans that Israel was set aside for a time so that the Gentiles might have the opportunity to receive mercy
  - But if God was to be just in denying His people the opportunity to receive the Messiah in His day, He needed a basis to do that
    - His just cause for denying His people Jesus was the Old Covenant, which Israel freely agreed to keep
    - The terms of that covenant permitted God to set Israel outside His blessing until the curses have been completed
    - The Age of the Gentiles was still underway when Jesus came to Israel
    - So they could not receive Jesus in that day for the curses had not yet run their course
  - But God will return to them and grant them mercy one day as He also promised

**Rom. 11:25** For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

**Rom. 11:26** and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

**“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,  
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”**

**Rom. 11:27** **“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,  
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”**

- The return of Jesus to Israel is the moment He removed sin from Israel and keeps the covenant terms
  - Which covenant is Jesus keeping when He comes and brings Israel a clean heart?
  - He is keeping the terms of the Old Covenant in Leviticus 26 which promised that outcome for Israel when they confess
- So our study of Tribulation is fundamentally a story of how the Lord fulfills the Old Covenant terms for Israel

- Including how He brings the nation into a national confession
- And how that confession brings Israel into the Kingdom



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson 6

Olivet Discourse (Matt  
24:1-8), Rev 6:1-4

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- Tonight we begin our examination of the events of Daniel’s 70th seven, better known as the seven-year Tribulation on earth
  - This is the culminating period of our current age
    - In this period of history to come, the Lord will carry out a series of world-shaking judgments
    - According to Daniel 9, its purpose is focused on the Jewish nation and their Old Covenant
  - So naturally much of what we can learn about this period is found in the Old Testament itself
    - Israel was warned repeatedly by their prophets of a coming period of judgment
    - This time of tribulation would bring the nation to its knees and ultimately to Christ
    - And that’s its ultimate purpose...to bring the nation of Israel to a recognition that Jesus was and is their Messiah
  - And as we prepared to enter this part of the book, we studied the transition from the Church Age to this final seven year period of history
    - First, we learned Tribulation is the final seven years of the age immediately prior to Christ’s Second Coming (Daniel 2 & 7)
    - Which told us that the Second Coming of Christ cannot be imminent...it must wait for tribulation to finish
  - Then we learned that the Church’s time on earth would end prior to the beginning of these events
    - First, the book of Revelation tells us that the Church Age (the things that “are”) must end before the next things begin
    - Secondly, we learned last week that these events are appointed for Israel by means of their Old Covenant
    - And since the Church is not party to that covenant, we are not appointed to that wrath, Paul says
- Finally, we saw John in Heaven witnessing Jesus preparing to open the scroll, the land deed, since He has the right to judge over the land of Israel and the world
  - The opening of the scroll will drive the events of Tribulation ahead, as those events are described in Chapters 6-18
    - As we move into Chapter 6 tonight, we have one more question to explore, one that holds a great amount of interest for Christians today
    - And that question centers on the timing of the end
  - We already learned that the timing of Jesus’ Second Coming can be known precisely...it will be seven years after the signing of a covenant
    - Daniel 9 told us that a covenant will be signed between a certain world leader and Israel’s leaders to permit Israel to have a temple
    - That covenant kicks off the start of Tribulation, Daniel’s final seven year period

- And we know that the Church must be removed prior to that time, but the timing of our removal (i.e., the rapture) is a complete mystery
  - Not even the Son Himself knows the day or hour of His coming for the Church...only the Father knows, Jesus said
  - But despite the fact that the church's removal date is unknown, we do know it's closely tied to the start of Tribulation
  - Because according to the outline of Revelation, the end of the church Age takes us into the things that happen after
- So if there are signs that the end of the age is upon us, then it would also be an alert to the Church that our removal is approaching too
  - And as it turns out, the Bible does tell us of signs that we should look for to indicate the end of the age
  - We find them in a passage in Matthew 24

**Matt. 24:1 Jesus came out from the temple and was going away when His disciples came up to point out the temple buildings to Him.**

**Matt. 24:2 And He said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Truly I say to you, not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down."**

**Matt. 24:3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"**

- This scene occurs two days before Jesus' trial and death
  - Jesus arrived in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and since then He's been spending days teaching in the temple court
    - At night He leaves the temple and the city to spend it in Bethany on the other side of the Mt of Olives
    - That's where He's headed on this night, eastward toward the Mt. of Olives
  - Jesus was probably thinking about the end of His life and what He must endure, but the disciples were oblivious to what was about to happen
    - So they were sightseeing, remarking on the impressive Temple building
    - Keep in mind, that Herod's temple was one of the most impressive construction projects ever undertaken in all history
    - The massive foundation stones are so large that we still have trouble conceiving of how they were constructed and moved so precisely
  - And that building took a long time to finish...it wasn't completed until nearly 40 years after Jesus' death...only to be destroyed a few years later
    - So naturally these men are so fascinated with it
    - But as they point out the building to Jesus, He responds with very serious words
  - Jesus provocatively says that this massive building would be torn down, stone by

stone

- That would be like someone telling us that the World Trade Center towers in New York would be turned down brick by brick
  - It was so hard to believe, and yet if it were true, it must mean that the end of the world had come, or so it would seem
- So Jesus' comment resulted in the disciples going silent for the rest of the walk to Bethany
  - But once they get to their resting place, the men decide they have to know more about these matters
    - So they ask Jesus a series of questions
    - Their questions become our outline for the passage that follows in Matthew 24 and 25
  - In v.3 Matthew records three questions
    - When will these things (i.e., the temple destruction) happen?
    - What will be the sign of your coming?
    - What will be signs of the end of the age?
  - In Luke's account of this conversation, he records an additional question

**Luke 21:7 They questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”**

- Luke adds an additional detail to the first question
  - They wanted to know the signs that the temple destruction was about to take place
  - Probably because they wanted to get out of the way when it happened!
- So putting both passages together, we end up with the following questions
  - 1. When will the temple destruction happen?
    - 1A. What are the signs of the temple's coming destruction
  - 2. What will be the sign of your coming?
  - 3. What will be signs of the end of the age?
  - We will not cover questions 1, 1A in this study (*see Matthew study for those*) and Question 2 is covered later in this study
- What follows in Matthew 24 are Jesus' answers to those question, but in order to interpret them properly, we must notice two important details
  - First, Jesus adds an additional question that the disciples didn't think to ask
    - Jesus inserts a commentary on what are NOT signs of the end making for a total of five questions (1, 1A, 2, 3, 4)
    - This makes sense, especially when you notice the types of signs Jesus gives
    - Several of the signs are easily confused with ordinary, everyday events



- The second thing we must note is that Jesus doesn't answer these questions in the same order they are asked of Him
  - Instead, Jesus chooses to provide His answers in a different order which better suits Jesus' purpose
  - Specifically, He answers them in the order of (4, 3, 1, 1A, 2)
  - The context of the chapter reveals this different order, but only if we're paying careful attention to the text
- So Jesus then begins to answer the question the disciples didn't ask, what are not signs of the end

**Matt. 24:4** And Jesus answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you.

**Matt. 24:5** “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will mislead many.

**Matt. 24:6** “You will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end.

**Luke 21:8** And He said, “See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not go after them.

**Luke 21:9** “When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.”

- Jesus' first warning is that no one in the Church be misled into believing that Jesus had already returned
- It will happen that many will come in Jesus' name saying they are the Christ
- And they will succeed in misleading many, but we shouldn't be misled
- So people saying that Jesus has come are *always* going to be wrong, and so we can *always* ignore them
  - When Jesus does come back, He will bring us with Him, so we can't miss it
  - Therefore we can safely ignore such nonsense and it's not a sign of the end
  - False Messiahs are a constant presence in this age
- Next Jesus says don't be worried over wars or rumors of wars
  - There will be constant wars and rumors of wars in this age
  - But the mere presence of war is not a sign of anything
  - And rumors that a war will start between Iran and Israel or Russia and Israel or anyone are meaningless and should be ignored
  - These things are not yet the end and the end does not follow immediately
- So then Jesus begins to answer their questions, starting with question #3, what are the signs of the end of the age
  - Because of our Daniel study, we now understand what Jesus and the disciples meant when they said the “end of the age”

- They were speaking about the age that Daniel defines for us, the Age of the Gentiles
- So Jesus now begins to tell us what signs will announce that this current age is coming to its end

**Matt. 24:7 “For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.**

**Matt. 24:8 “But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.**

- The signs of the end of the age will act like birth pangs, Jesus says
- So we should understand a little of how birth pangs work if we are to appreciate how these signs will work
- First, we know that birth pangs are painful, as my wife can verify
  - They are intensely painful contractions that interrupt normal life for the woman
    - So are the signs of the end of the age...they will be painful experiences for the world
    - And they will interrupt normal life in every imaginable way
  - Secondly, we know that birth pangs can start very mildly, even imperceptibly
    - Some women can think that their birth pangs aren't real at first
    - So it will be with the signs of the end of the age
    - They will start mildly, and many will not notice or recognize the significance of them
  - Then thirdly, we know that birth pangs increase in severity as time progresses
    - The contractions get stronger and stronger
    - So it will be with the signs of the end of the age as the signs repeat themselves over and over
    - But as they repeat, they will get stronger and the more severe the damage will become
  - Fourthly, birth pangs increase in frequency, that is they get closer together
    - The closer together the contractions, the closer the woman is to the end
    - So it will be with the signs also, as they repeat closer and closer together
    - And that increasing frequency is a sign that the end is approaching
  - Finally, they ultimately lead to the birth of a new life, and that's where we are headed too in these signs
    - As the pains on the earth increase and the end approaches, so does Christ's return and the start of the Kingdom
    - At that point, a new world and a new life for Israel and all believers will begin
- So that's the comparison Jesus offers for the signs of the end of the age, and now let's look at the specific signs
  - In v.7 Jesus says that nation will rise against nation and kingdom against

kingdom

- This term sounds a lot like war, yet Jesus said not to look for war
    - There must be something different about this war
  - The answer comes from understanding this phrase in its historical context
    - In Jesus' day, this term was used in the culture as a euphemism for a certain type of war
    - The term means "world war" or a war involving all nations and kingdoms on earth
  - This is a rare and unique type of war, and in fact prior to the 20th century it had never happened before
    - In 1914 Europe entered into war but because of pacts and alliances, that war eventually dragged most of the earth into the fight
    - Altogether, 88% of the world's nations participated in WWI at some level
    - This was the first time such a war had been fought
  - In fact this war was so unique that it was considered the "war to end all wars"
    - No one had seen such a thing before nor imagined it could ever happen again
    - But they were wrong because not long after WWI we had WWII
    - That war was stronger, worse than the earlier war, involving 95% of the world's nations, like birth pangs would predict
  - Now we know why Jesus specifically ruled out wars in His earlier answer
    - He didn't want us mistaking "ordinary" war for the unique world wars that would mark the end
    - We've seen two so far, which means we have entered the period of the end and we should expect to see worse...far worse
- The next sign of the end of the age is famine in various places
  - Now famine is also common on earth, so to understand this sign we must consider it in light of the birth pang comparison
    - When the end of the age approaches, famines won't just be common, they will become the norm
    - And they won't just impact some people, but everyone
    - That's what Jesus means by "various places" – He means in places you weren't expecting to see it happening
  - And they will be more severe and painful than anything we've seen before
    - So it will be by the increasing severity and frequency that people can see famines as a sign of the end
    - But remember, in the beginning of birth pangs, they can be so mild that it's hard to notice
    - And so it will be with famine...the initial stages of this sign may be subtle and overlooked, at least at first
  - Today, there are indications that famine is growing in severity and frequency and impacting more people than ever before

- Even some industrialized nations have begun to experience food shortages for various reasons
  - Food prices are steadily increasing and supplies are running short
  - Inventories in grocery stores are also limited and dependent on regular resupply
  - As we move further toward the end, this sign will only increase
- Finally, Jesus says look for earthquakes to increase...and since measuring earthquakes is a science, it's easy to track the fulfillment of this sign
  - A search at the USGS website reveals trends in earthquakes in the U.S. and worldwide over the past century or more
    - The data shows a general rise in earthquake activity worldwide in recent decades
    - In particular, the number of high intensity earthquakes in the U.S. have increased dramatically in the past three decades
  - States like Oklahoma and Arkansas have seen unexplainable rises in earthquake activity on an order of magnitude
    - These not normal variations and they have scientists stumped
    - And in looking at the previous decades compared to the prior century, the rise is especially dramatic
  - The average number of high intensity earthquakes per decade in the prior century was 110 and remained consistent from decade to decade
    - But in the first decade of the 21st century the number increases to over 150
    - And in the second decade of this century we've already recorded 165
    - This is a 43% increase over the steady pattern of the 1900s
- So world wars, famine and earthquakes tells us we're near the end of the age, and they will follow a pattern of birth pangs, getting worse as time goes on
  - So what does that tell us about what to expect in the Tribulation?
    - We should expect to see these signs getting far worse
    - And in fact that's what we find as we look at the first events that start the Tribulation
    - Those first events will be more of the same as these signs, though far worse
  - So altogether before the Tribulation begins, we have seven signs that the world will receive to know they are at the end of the age
    - Jesus gave us World Wars, famines, earthquakes in the Olivet Discourse
    - And earlier we learned about the church experiencing apostasy
    - And Daniel said there will be ten kings ruling and a covenant signed with Israel to allow sacrifice
    - And of course, we know the Church will be removed at the resurrection
  - But then there are two more signs that precede the Tribulation and announce the end of the age is near
    - First, Ezekiel tells us of the coming regathering of Israel

**Ezek. 20:33** “As I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you.

**Ezek. 20:34** “I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;

**Ezek. 20:35** and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face.

**Ezek. 20:36** “As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,” declares the Lord GOD.

**Ezek. 20:37** “I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;

- Ezekiel says that the people of Israel will be regathered from where they were scattered
  - And they will re-enter the land of Israel
  - And they are regathered specifically so that they might be there to endure the coming Tribulation
  - It will be a time of judgment against the people of Israel as when the Lord dealt with their forefathers in the desert
- And as a result of being made to pass under the rod of chastisement, the people of Israel will come back into the bond of the covenant
  - The covenant in view here is the Old Covenant, which is the agreement that mandates these penalties
  - So once again, we have evidence that the Tribulation is intended for Israel
  - So in preparation for that judgment, they are regathered
- Finally, Malachi tells us that a mysterious Old Testament character will return to Israel before the Tribulation

**Mal. 4:1** “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says the LORD of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”

**Mal. 4:2** “But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

**Mal. 4:3** “You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says the LORD of hosts.

**Mal. 4:4** “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

**Mal. 4:5** “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

**Mal. 4:6** “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the

**hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.”**

- Malachi tells Israel that a day of fire, burning and judgment is coming to the earth, which is a reference to the devastation of Tribulation
  - In v.5 the prophet calls this time the “great and terrible day of the Lord”
    - We learned earlier that the day of the Lord refers to the Tribulation
    - So we know this is a reference to that seven-year period
  - And Malachi says that he will send the prophet Elijah before that day
    - Elijah was perhaps the most revered prophet of the Old Testament
    - His life ended in a mysterious way, leaving the earth in a chariot of fire without having experienced physical death
  - That leads to much speculation about why God treated Elijah so uniquely
    - And Malachi tells us that the reason is because Elijah’s ministry on earth isn’t finished
    - He will return to Israel to restore the hearts of fathers to children and children to their fathers
  - This cryptic phrase refers to Israel inspired by Elijah’s appearance to return to orthodoxy
    - Today Jews are generally not following the Law and certainly aren’t sacrificing animals as required
    - Without a temple, they can’t sacrifice, but even if they had a temple today, few would embrace the notion
    - In fact, if mass animal slaughter took place again at the temple, we can imagine that many Jews would picket in protest
  - And yet the reestablishment of a temple and of sacrifice will be very important in the last days
    - The Tribulation itself begins because Israel strikes a deal with a certain man to regain access to their temple mount to sacrifice
    - Unless Israel signs such an agreement, the Tribulation can’t begin and the age can’t end
    - And if Israel isn’t interested in sacrifice, then they won’t be interested in the opportunity to build a temple
  - So the Lord brings Elijah back to His people to motivate them to pursue the Law zealously again
    - Elijah will move the hearts of the people back to their “fathers” referring to the ancients of Israel like Moses and David
    - The people’s hearts will become like children in obedience to the Father, making a new commitment to the Law
    - The effect is a revival of orthodoxy among Jews worldwide with a new desire to seek for a temple and for sacrifice under the Law
    - That sets the stage for the signing of the covenant that starts the clock on the

final seven year period of the age

- So altogether we now have nine signs to look for that tell us we've reached the end of this age
  - Among all these nine signs, how many have already come to pass in our day?
    - We can count 5 of the eight as fulfilled or in the process of fulfillment
    - That leaves the ten kings to come to power and the church to be removed
  - And of course, the final sign is the covenant itself, since that will start the Tribulation
    - Interestingly that event isn't captured anywhere in the Bible
    - We simply know that it must happen because Daniel says so
  - And in Revelation 6 we see the effects of that moment though we don't see the moment itself
    - And that's where we go now into the start of Tribulation in Chapter 6
    - And by the way, the final question about Jesus' coming will be covered when we get closer to that moment in our study
    - And because I like roadmaps, it's time to introduce a new roadmap for our study of the Tribulation
- The Tribulation can be broken down into three parts: first half, middle and second half
  - Each part plays a distinct role in the events of the seven years
    - The first half is covered in Chapters 6-9
    - The events of mid tribulation (the dividing point in the seven years) are covered in Chapter 10-15
    - And the final events of the seven years called the Great Tribulation are covered in Chapters 16-19
  - We will study the book chapter by chapter, but we will also consider each section of the book according to these three parts
    - So we begin with Chapter 6 and the first half of Tribulation

**Rev. 6:1 Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come."**

**Rev. 6:2 I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.**

- John opens Chapter 6 with the word "then" (*kai*), which means this is the next thing he witnessed
  - So we need to remember the scene we left at the end of Chapter 5
    - Jesus is in the throne room holding the land deed to the Earth
    - As Jesus breaks the first seal, one of the four living creatures, says to John "come"
    - The meaning in this context is to look away from his immediate surroundings and gaze down upon the earth

- This begins a common pattern in the book of Revelation
  - John is witness to events in Heaven
  - He has been transported there in a vision, so he describes what he sees there
  - But the events that happen in Heaven will usually result in a response on Earth
  - So when the angels want John to record the resulting events on Earth, they tell him to “Come” meaning to come look at the effect
- The opening of the first four seals will each result in the appearing of a different horse on earth, each a different color and with a different effect
  - These horses and their riders are commonly called the four horsemen of the apocalypse
  - We have no reason to doubt that John saw horses just as he wrote, but it’s also apparent that these four horses are symbolic
  - The variation in color and the description of what they do confirm they represent other events happening on earth
  - This will become apparent as we look at each one
- Looking at the first horse, John says it’s white and it carries an unnamed rider - only addressed as “he”
  - The last time we saw an unnamed “he” mentioned in an apocalyptic passage about the end of the age was in Daniel 9

**Dan. 9:27 “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”**

- In that earlier passage, the “he” was a reference back to the little horn, the Antichrist of the last days
- So we need to see if there is any connection to this “he”
- John says the rider arrives with a bow, but curiously John never mentions arrows
  - That’s like someone pointing a gun without bullets
  - When someone waves a gun at you, you are intimidated because it suggests attack
- Since you don’t know if the person has the capacity to carry through with the threat, you must assume they can
  - So you’re persuaded to comply even though in reality they lacked the firepower
  - So in this case, the man with only a bow suggests someone who threatens harm but lacks the capacity to carry it out fully
- Next he also has a crown, a *stephanos*, which is a crown you earn or receive in recognition of your achievements
  - So he doesn’t have the crown of a natural born king, which in Greek would be the word *diadem*



- And we remember that Daniel told us that the eleventh horn would not be one of the original ten world rulers
- So in this case, a *stephanos* suggests a man of either military or political power
- And a white horse is traditionally the type of horse ridden by a military commander or conquering leader
- So the very first act of Tribulation will be Jesus setting loose a man upon the earth who goes forth conquering and to conquer
  - Going out implies out into the world over all, and conquering and to conquer implies he begins to take control but the process takes time
    - He doesn't finish his conquering in a moment, but he progresses toward that goal over a period of time
    - All these details work in harmony to what's happening on earth as the first seal is broken
    - The man earns his authority over a period of time but more by the threat of conquest than by actual military power
  - Since we know the Tribulation begins with the signing of an agreement brokered by a powerful world leader, this open seal fits perfectly
    - Here we have an aspiring world leader, who is not yet a king, but still possesses power to intimidate
    - And as he rides out conquering, his power base grows
  - Back in Daniel 9 we learned that this man would come from a certain people

**Dan. 9:26 “Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined.**

- The temple was foretold to be destroyed by the people of the prince who is to come
  - The prince who is to come is the same man as the “he” in v.27 (the Antichrist)
- So the Antichrist is of the same people as those who destroyed the temple, which was the Roman army
  - Since the Roman Empire dissolved, we can't identify the prince of this “people” except to say he must be a Gentile
  - He might also be European or Middle Eastern
- So when Jesus breaks the first seal, this man is launched on his career of conquest
  - And that moment begins with a signing of a peace covenant with Israel allowing them access to the temple mount
  - And it's not hard to understand how that would launch a man's world career
  - Imagine how the world would respond to a world leader who could broker peace in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs?
  - But it's clear that Jesus is the true power here...it's His breaking of a seal that makes the peace come, if only temporarily

- What else can we learn from scripture about this man who launches the world into Tribulation?
  - The Bible gives this coming world leader a variety of names, from seed of Serpent to a little horn, to a prince, to the lawless one
    - But the title we all know best is one that the Apostle John gave us in his letters
    - John calls this man the Antichrist, or *antichristos* which means one who opposes Christ
  - In light of how many different ways the Bible describes this character, we need to take a moment to understand who he is
    - Even John himself uses the term antichrist in at least a couple of different ways
- So let's begin with John's famous term

**1John 2:22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.**

- In this reference, John teaches that a person who denies Jesus is the Christ is the antichrist
  - So to say Jesus isn't the Messiah is to oppose Christ, and in that sense everyone who stands opposed to Jesus is a type of the antichrist
    - This is why Paul describes unbelievers as enemies of Christ until we are reconciled by grace
    - Or as Jesus says that those who are not with Him are against Him
    - Everyone who denies Jesus as Lord is acting as an antichrist
  - That's why in my English version, the translators chose not to capitalize antichrist in this passage
    - They knew John was talking generally
    - They understood he wasn't talking about The Antichrist
    - Next let's look at another mention by John

**1John 2:18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.**

- In this passage John uses both a singular and plural reference to antichrist
  - In the first instance, translators should capitalize the word Antichrist, though not all translations do so
    - This is not the same antichrist as the one John mentioned in the earlier verse because there he said many antichrists existed
    - Anyone who denies Jesus is Christ is an antichrist in that sense
    - But here John says Antichrist is coming yet he wasn't on the scene yet

- This is a singular antichrist - someone that the church was told to expect
  - But then in the second instance the word becomes plural again, and John says there are already many antichrists in the world
    - This reference is similar to the earlier one: people who deny Jesus is the Christ are the antichrists of our world
    - But John says the fact that these people exist is proof that we are in the last hour, or in the end times
  - How is the presence of so many who deny Jesus as Christ proof we are in the last hour?
    - Because in the time of David or Solomon or Isaiah or Daniel, you couldn't deny that Jesus was the Christ
    - No one knew who the Messiah was, so it was literally impossible to oppose Him
    - You can't deny that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ until Jesus of Nazareth is known
  - But after the Messiah has been revealed, the writers of the New Testament say we are in the Last Days
    - And in these last days, we can have antichrists – those who deny Jesus is the Christ
    - And ultimately, we will have one man who opposes Christ in a unique way and with unique power
    - This one man will be THE antichrist
- So there is an Antichrist to come and in the meantime we have antichrists who deny Jesus is Christ
  - That leaves us with a couple of final mentions by John

**1John 4:3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.**

**2John 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.**

- John now mentions the spirit of the antichrist, a spirit that is both in the world now and is coming, he says
  - This spirit is the cause behind every person who does not confess Jesus is from God
    - We know that the spirit of a person who does not confess Jesus as Christ is corrupt, fallen, and therefore unbelieving
    - And what other spirit is responsible for producing this unwillingness to believe the truth, both now and in the future?

- Look at the second verse from 2 John 7 to get your answer
  - Many deceivers have gone out into the world, but there is one Deceiver and spirit of the Antichrist
  - Clearly, John is talking about Satan, who is the spirit of the antichrist, both now and in the future
- Today Satan is the spirit of the antichrist in the sense that Satan is responsible for producing generation after generation of God deniers
  - Now that Christ has been revealed, Satan has a specific target for their denials
  - So he works in the hearts of the sons of disobedience, as Paul calls unbelievers, so they will oppose God by opposing Christ
  - He leads the world to deny that Jesus is the Christ
- But in a day to come, Satan will also be the spirit responsible for raising up one man above all others in opposing Christ
  - Paul tell us what this man will do as he rises to power

**2Th. 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,**

**2Th. 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.**

- Paul says that the day of the Lord - or Tribulation - will not come unless the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction
  - He is called a son because he is the son or seed of Satan
    - And he exalts himself above every so-called god or any other object of worship
    - That means he will claim to be a god above Muhammed, Buddha, or any other pagan god
  - Eventually, he takes the seat in the temple of God, displaying Himself to be God
    - Now we see some themes converging, because this reminds us of what Daniel 9 told us
    - This same man will be responsible for allowing sacrifice to restart on the temple mount
    - That results in Israel building a temple, which Elijah has helped encourage the nation to use
  - But Daniel told us in 9:27 that this man, who brokered the agreement with Israel, will go back on his agreement after 3.5 years
    - And Paul says he will decide at that point that he is god, so he even takes his seat in the temple of Israel
    - We will study this moment later in our study, but for now we simply need to understand the arc of this man's rise to power
    - He starts Tribulation as a man outside power but with the potential to shake

things up

- And he's backed by a very powerful adversary, no less than Satan himself
- The man's end is also foretold by Daniel, since we know that he is destroyed by the arrival of Jesus at the end of the seven year period
  - Paul confirms this in another part of 2 Thessalonians

**2Th. 2:5 Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?**

**2Th. 2:6 And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.**

**2Th. 2:7 For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.**

**2Th. 2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;**

**2Th. 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,**

- There is a Restrainer in the world preventing the rise of the Antichrist
  - The Holy Spirit stands between Satan and his desire to raise up a false christ through whom the enemy might gain the world's worship
    - God's purpose in causing His Spirit to indwell the believer during the Church age is partly a result of the need to hold back Satan
    - Prior to Christ's revealing in the man Jesus, Satan didn't have enough information to produce a counterfeit
    - So the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit wasn't required to stave off the rise of the Antichrist
  - He couldn't put himself in the place of the Christ until there was a Christ revealed upon which Satan could pattern his counterfeit claims
    - Satan has been waiting like the rest of the world to see the Christ revealed
    - And now that Christ has come, the Church acts as a barrier to prevent Satan from deceiving the world with an antichrist
  - This also tell us that the Church will never be in a position to identify this person
    - We shouldn't go around perpetuating false accusations that each new political world leader is the Antichrist
    - Scripture says he will not be revealed until the Restrainer has been removed
  - So Satan is focused on counterfeiting Christ's death and resurrection
    - But the Holy Spirit indwelling the Church is obstructing his plan until the Spirit and the Church are taken out of the way
    - At that point, the lawless one will make his appearance upon the world in accordance with Satan's activity and power
- Ironically, the rise of the Middle East "peace broker" backed by Satan only serves to bring the opposite of peace to the earth

**Rev. 6:3 When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come."**

**Rev. 6:4 And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.**

- Like the first seal, the opening of the second seal brings John a vision of another horse, of course, though a horse of a different color
  - This horse symbolizes something different, though it becomes apparent very quickly that the symbols are connected
    - The first white horse and rider symbolized the arrival of the Antichrist on the world's stage
    - And it conveyed the man's initial effect...he gained power by threatening war and intimidating other leaders
  - The horse was a symbol to communicate the arrival of something, or in this case someone
    - Similarly, the horse of the second seal also communicates the arrival of something on the earth
    - But the fact that it's another horse suggests we should see these horses as connected
    - Elsewhere in the seals and the other judgments of Revelation, we don't see symbols repeated but they are repeated here
    - So we should ask the question of how are these "horses" related?
  - The second horse is red, the color of bloodshed, and in v.4 we're told that the effect of this horse and rider is to take peace from the earth
    - So like the first horse, the second horse had a solo rider this time carrying a sword
    - And we know there is only one antichrist in the Tribulation, so that leaves us to conclude that this second rider isn't a second person
    - It's the same person as we saw on the first horse: The Antichrist
  - So the Antichrist's rise to power is progressing with each new seal
    - The first seal brought him on the world stage with the threat of war
    - And now the second seal has delivered on that threat with actual war breaking out
    - Men are slaying one another, as war erupts on earth, so this is WWII breaking out, a new birth pang
- Logically, it follows that the man who comes conquering and to conquer triggers wars
  - But we understand these events are being controlled in heaven by the Lord as He opens the seals
    - So the second seal is a second picture of the Antichrist as he consolidates power and begins to prosecute war on the world
    - He leads the world into widespread war and bloodshed, and of course we

know what war brings...

- Next time we conclude the seals and move into Chapter 7



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# Revelation 2020 - Lesson 7

## Chapter 6 & 7

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- The Tribulation, otherwise known as the day of the Lord, is underway
  - Last week we learned that this period of history is fast approaching because all the signs Jesus gave us have begun
    - We also know that the Lord has promised to return for us before this time begins
    - So we're studying it for the purpose of understanding what's coming for the world
    - And in that understanding, we're in a position to explain it to others, both to the church and to the world
  - Daniel told us that this seven-year period will begin when a man makes a covenant with Israel to permit Israel to sacrifice in a temple
    - That moment isn't recorded in Revelation, but we do see the events surrounding that moment
    - Specifically, we saw the rise of that man on the world stage, a mysterious world leader who comes with threats of war
    - And his arrival is depicted through the first series of judgments in Revelation 6
  - Jesus opened the first two of the seal judgments which focus on the Antichrist
    - The first seal corresponded to the Antichrist's rise to power
    - As Jesus opens a seal in Heaven, He is giving permission for the man of lawlessness to ascend to the position he desires
  - That man was pictured on a white horse, with a bow and a wreath or crown
    - As we learned last week, these features represented a military leader who threatens military attack though he hasn't the power as yet
    - Perhaps he launches a coup or raises a rebellion or by some other means he forces his way into a position of power
- Then the second seal Jesus opens moves the Antichrist a step further down his path of world conquest
  - The second seal pictured the Antichrist riding a red horse with a sword
    - This seal resulted in a world war around from the Antichrist's disrupting influence on world politics
    - The war results in widespread bloodshed as represented by the red horse and the sword
    - So the man who came to conquer has now initiated the conquering, at great expense to the world
  - These judgments may not sound especially devastating but think back to the worldwide devastation that World War II produced
    - And then remember that these wars are like birth pains, so that they get worse with each new war
    - So this war will be worse than WWII, perhaps because nuclear weapons will be involved
    - Imagine the bloodshed inflicted by world nuclear war

- And that leads us into the next seal judgment

**Rev. 6:5** When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, “Come.” I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.

**Rev. 6:6** And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine.”

- Jesus continues opening the edge of the scroll and another seal separates, leading to a new phase of calamity on the earth below
  - Once more John is instructed to look down upon the earth to see what transpires
    - And as he looks, he sees a black horse with a rider holding scales in his hand
    - And again, the rider is unnamed and referenced only by the pronoun “he”
    - As we learned in the earlier two horses, the continuing use of a pronoun means that the character hasn’t changed
    - We’re still looking at the same person in each case, the same “he,” the Antichrist
    - So we’re still looking at the impact of the Antichrist’s rise upon the world as Jesus propels him up the ladder of power
  - This time his horse is black, and like the red and white horses, the color could symbolize many things
    - So we must consider its meaning in context, based on what’s said about this horse and the prior horses
    - Beginning with what this man on the black horse is holding: scales
  - Scales are common in our modern culture, and when used as symbols, they usually refer to justice – as in the scales of justice
    - But the context here isn’t of justice or fairness
    - So we need to look to a more ancient meaning for this symbol
- In ancient times the monetary system was based on bartering goods whose value was established by weight
  - So it was necessary to measure an exact amount in each transaction
    - And a scale would be used to establish and compare the value of an item for sale or a method of payment to a known value
    - So an object of a known weight would be placed on one side of the scale and another object placed on the opposite side
    - When the scale is balanced, then the two sides are equal in weight and therefore equal in value
  - Secondly, when coin money was used, the coins were weighed to verify that they contained the specified amount of precious metal
    - Without this check, people would shave small amounts of the metal off their coins to accumulate the metal for themselves

- Over time, the coins lost significant weight thus cheating merchants and the shaved material could be spent again
  - So a reference to the Antichrist holding the scales points our attention to the economic impact of this man on the world
    - And in the context it clearly symbolizes him impacting retail commerce
    - And it's easy at this point to see a pattern emerging
  - The threat of a military leader (white horse) becomes the trigger to start a war leading to bloodshed (a red horse)
    - And then following a great war bringing widespread death and destruction, we have the normal, expected consequences
    - The onset of war always has devastating effects on the economy of the world
    - And the worse the war, the worse the impact
- So the effect of WWII will be severe scarcity of goods and then naturally as supply decreases, prices increase
  - We see the price increase reflected clearly in v.6 as the world endures unprecedented inflation
    - John is told that a quart of wheat and three quarts of barley will each cost a denarius
    - A denarius was the backbone of the Roman currency system
    - The denarius was first introduced in 211 BC and contained 4.5 grams of silver
  - A day laborer in first century Rome typically earned one denarius per day before taxes
    - In John's day, a denarius bought around 12 quarts of wheat and 36 quarts of barley
    - A quart of wheat produces about 1.5 loaves of bread, or enough food to feed a family for a day
    - So a poor family could subsist for almost 2 weeks on a denarius worth of wheat or even longer if they bought barley
  - By comparison, a laborer working at minimum wage today earns about \$80 per day before taxes
    - A day's wage today if spent frugally can support a family with subsistence food for several days...maybe a week or more
    - But under the antichrist, the world experiences runaway inflation for even basic goods
    - As a result of the Antichrist's war, a denarius only buys 1.5 loaves of bread
    - That would mean a loaf of bread will cost about \$60 in today's money
    - And if bread costs \$60, how expensive will items like meat or cheese be?
- So we need to ask, what will be the impact of such hyperinflation?
  - The answer is obvious...panic, rampant crime, looting, and ultimately starvation for many
    - The Antichrist will produce these effects indirectly simply through the

- prosecution of war around the globe
  - War naturally brings pressure on the food supply, since it disrupts food production and distribution
- Also, armies consume large amounts of supplies, leaving precious little for the civilian populace
  - So the black horse symbolizes the death of many from war-induced hyper-inflation and the resulting global starvation
    - But as before, we trace this event to the opening of a seal, as the Lord permits these judgments to come upon the world
- Interestingly, two products are specifically excluded from the high prices: wine and oil
  - It's not clear why these are excluded and many have speculated for why that is
    - One answer I prefer is that these are chief crops in Israel, and they come from olives and grapes which represent Israel
- Therefore, it may indicate that the land of Israel is spared to some extent from the warfare
  - That makes sense since the Antichrist's rise to power comes from an agreement with Israel
    - So for now it seems that agreement is protecting Israel from the war ravaging the world

**Rev. 6:7 When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come."**

**Rev. 6:8 I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.**

- The fourth seal brings one more horse with a rider, so we know we're still looking at the step-by-step impact of the Antichrist's arrival
  - But this horse changes the pattern slightly because now the rider has a name: Death and following him is Hades
    - We're still looking at a horse with a rider and a series, so there is still a connection implied with the first three seals
    - But the naming of the rider and the addition of a follower adds some new mystery
  - The addition of Hades has led some to conclude that there are really five horses here, but that interpretation misses the larger picture
    - First, remember the pattern that was established with the first three seals
    - Each horse with a rider represented something that the Antichrist accomplished on earth
    - The nature of the horse and other symbols reflects his impact and each subsequent horse builds on the prior horse

- The rider of the fourth horse is death and Hades follows
  - Obviously, death and Hades aren't real people...death is a condition and Hades is a place
  - So the logical interpretation of the final horse is that we're seeing the final and ultimate effect of the Antichrist's rise to power
  - He will bring widespread death upon the earth
  - And the effect of death for an unsaved, unbelieving earth is entry into Hell or Hades
- And that conclusion is supported by the horse's color and by what we're told in v.8
  - First, the horse's color is described as ashen in our English version
    - In Greek the word for ashen is *chloros*, which is most literally translated green (from where we get the word chlorophyll)
    - The suggestion is of the color of a body many hours after death which could be described as pale green
    - This is not the natural color of any horse, so this color confirms for us that these horses are symbolic
    - So the ashen horse represents the stench and rot of many dead bodies left unburied
  - Secondly, in v.8 we're told that the overall toll of the war, famine, and pestilence resulting from the war leaves a fourth of humanity dead
    - By today's population count, we're talking about nearly 2 billion people dying in a world war
    - By comparison, the highest estimate of the dead in WWI was 22 million and the dead in WWII was 56 million
    - Clearly, the next war will result in an unimaginable devastation just as Jesus' birth pangs suggest
  - These deaths are the result of the culmination of the first four seal judgements as explained in v.8
    - Sword (meaning war, which was the first and second seals)
    - Famine (the result of war, which was the third seal)
    - Pestilence (the diseases that ordinarily follow famine and war, which is the fourth seal)
    - And even wild beasts, who for lack of food become more aggressive, which is also the fourth seal
- Looking back on the first four judgments, they are obviously connected together almost as a group
  - All are brought in a similar fashion: on symbolic horses and each judgment builds naturally upon the prior
    - From the perspective of those living on earth during this period, the events will appear to be entirely natural in their origins
    - There is no indication that the world appreciates that God is bringing these judgments as part of the final seven of Daniel 9

- We understand they are the result of the Lord's judgments, as He opens each scroll and so will the world soon
- Even the number of horses (4) tells us something about God's purposes
  - The number 4 is the number of the Earth in Scripture
  - So the first four judgments are designed to look like earthly events, not heavenly judgment
  - And though the world doesn't know it, these devastating events are simply the warm up act for the rest of Tribulation

**Rev. 6:9** When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained;

**Rev. 6:10** and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"

**Rev. 6:11** And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.

- The fifth seal breaks the earlier pattern of horses entirely, and in fact this seal also breaks the pattern of John being told to come look upon the earth
  - Instead, his attention remains on the scene in Heaven
    - John describes the altar, meaning it is a place of significance in the temple
    - An altar is a place of sacrifice, so the presence of an altar in heaven tells us this is the place of sacrifice
    - And in Heaven the only place of sacrifice is the Heavenly tabernacle
    - Hebrews 9 tells us that Christ is the High Priest presiding over this heavenly tabernacle and His blood was the sacrifice
  - Under this altar John sees the souls of martyrs, meaning these are the disembodied spirits
    - We know these cannot be church saints, since all church saints will have physical bodies after the Rapture
    - So these are human beings who died after the resurrection of the church, which means they died in the Tribulation itself
  - Secondly, they were killed because of the word of God and because they maintained their testimony
    - They are martyred for their faith, so clearly these are believers
    - But we know that all believers were removed from the earth when Jesus came for the Church at the resurrection
    - So that produces a new mystery
  - Finally, these souls are asking for justice for their death, so they are obvious

victims of an injustice on the earth

- Yet they are told that there will be more killed just as they were and until that number is complete, they must wait for justice
- So that means these are merely the first to be martyred and many more are going to experience the same before the end
- Taken these facts together, we can make several conclusions concerning these souls
  - First, these souls were believers on the earth, otherwise they wouldn't be in Heaven following death
    - That means that new faith has arrived on earth in the days and weeks following the Church's removal
    - That leaves us wondering how faith came back to the earth, especially since there are no believers to evangelize
  - Secondly, believers on earth during the Tribulation will be targets for persecution – even to death
    - They will be killed for their testimony, which must mean that a willingness to identify as a Christian is dangerous
    - Furthermore, these are merely the first of a larger number who must be killed for the same reason
  - What do we call these martyred saints that came to faith and died following the removal of the church from the earth?
    - Most call them Tribulation saints and as we will see during the course of our study, these saints endure hell on earth
    - So never has it been more true that death is a blessing for a believer than it is for these believers
  - And so we must understand that this seal is not a moment during the seven years but rather a summary of the seven years
    - In other words, when Jesus breaks this seal, He opens the door for His followers to be persecuted
    - Just as Daniel told us:

**Dan. 7:24** 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

**Dan. 7:25** 'He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

**Dan. 7:26** 'But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

**Dan. 7:27** 'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

- The persecution of saints isn't limited to a moment or a certain group, but as the text says there will be more coming
  - In fact, according to Daniel the martyrdom of the saints will be concentrated in the second half of Tribulation
  - So this seal judgment represents the death of believers in the Tribulation over all
- This seal provides a contrast to the fourth seal judgment
  - In the fourth judgment, death came to the unbelieving world
    - We know it was speaking only of death for the unbeliever since the destination for those souls was Hades
    - The indirect cause for their death was the Antichrist's leadership and the resulting chaos
    - But the true cause of their death was Jesus opening a seal to allow for that event to take place
  - And now by contrast, the fifth judgment shows death coming to the saints
    - Unlike those who go to Hades, these dead find themselves under the altar in the throne room of God crying out for vengeance
    - These two seal judgments are set against one another to make clear that both unbeliever and believer are dying in Tribulation
  - The circumstances of each group's death are very different just as the destinations for the souls are very different
    - But both the direct and indirect causes of the deaths are the same
    - The direct cause of both is Jesus opening seals which bring about the events on earth
  - And the indirect cause is the working of the Antichrist on earth
    - His ambition and aggression brings the war that kills billions of unbelievers
    - And his persecution of the saints, as Daniel told us, brings about the death of the believers
- So where do these saints come from if all believers were raptured prior to Tribulation?
  - We find that answer in the next chapter but first we need to move to the sixth seal

**Rev. 6:12** I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;

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

**Rev. 6:14** The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

- Now for the first time we see a seal judgment resulting in clearly supernatural changes on earth
  - And increasingly, the judgments that God brings to earth will take supernatural form



- There will be a series of unimaginable cataclysmic upheavals of nature, the physical earth and the heavens
- Like the OT prophets said, these events will be unlike anything that has come before
- But it's important to realize that in the very beginning stages of the Tribulation, the world will not see supernatural events
  - The natural events that God brings will be bad enough
  - But as the supernatural evidence piles up, the world will soon recognize that these events are coming from a God in Heaven
  - But that recognition will not have the result you might have expected
- The sixth seal brings earthquakes, devastation to the face of the earth, deadly objects following from the sky, and disturbances to the sun, moon and stars
  - The judgments of Tribulation come in three waves and at the end of each wave, we see this same climactic series of events
    - Some of these events resemble things that happen today, like earthquakes and winds
    - But of course, nothing we've ever seen will come close to the destruction the world will know during Tribulation
    - The magnitude of the devastation is simply unprecedented and frankly, impossible to imagine
  - So each series of judgments concludes with an awesome and terrifying display of God's earth shaking power, literally
    - In this case, the sixth seal judgment causes pronounced supernatural devastation
    - Besides a great earthquake, the sun, moon and stars see dramatic supernatural changes
  - First, the sun becomes black
    - This can't be a simple eclipse, for an eclipse would be expected and unthreatening and therefore not a judgment
    - It must be some other unexplained darkening of the sun which then produces meaningful devastation on the earth
  - Next the moon becomes blood red
    - The moon reflects light from the sun
    - So for the moon to reflect any color at all while the sun is giving no light of its own is miraculous
    - So the redness of the moon is a warning to the earth that something dramatic and supernatural is happening
- Next, we're told that the stars fall to the earth, but immediately, we have to rule out a super-literal interpretation
  - A star in the universe is actually a sun, and therefore due to size, a star cannot literally land on the earth (much less many stars)
    - On the other hand, the context won't permit us to interpret this use of star

purely symbolically as we did in Chapter 1 for angels

- The context here is of the sun, moon and stars (i.e., heavenly bodies) so we must stay in that context
  - That leads us to conclude that the word star is being used in the laymen's sense rather than in the scientific sense of a distant sun
    - From the perspective of someone standing on earth, it appears as if stars are falling to earth
    - Meaning these stars will be meteor showers striking the earth with devastating effects
  - Then John describes the sky splitting and rolling up like a scroll
    - And mountains and islands moving
    - And these things just boggle our minds
  - A movement of islands and mountains even a short distance would utterly obliterate anything on it or near it
    - The tremendous forces of such a movement would be like a child trying to push a sand castle tower a few inches out of place
    - The act of moving that sand castle even slightly would cause it to crumble and disintegrate
    - Likewise, the movement of these large bodies of land would leave anything on their surface as piles of rubble
- Some scientists have tried to understand what would happen if the sun suddenly stopped shining, and the effects match what we see here
  - The earth's temperature would plunge in a matter of days to 100° below zero in a few weeks
    - And plunging temperatures at the earth's surface would lead to hurricane force winds around the planet
    - And the atmosphere would undergo unpredictable and violent changes as temperature variations swing wildly
    - And sudden cooling of the earth's surface could draw heat from inside the earth's core to the earth's surface
    - That could produce severe earthquakes strong enough to move continental plates and release magma
  - Meanwhile, to escape the severe cold, mankind would be forced underground to find heat just as John reported
    - But the earthquakes would make that journey perilous
    - Notice in vs.15-16 everyone is underground: rich to poor, free to slave
    - Because without the sun, even the homes of the very rich can't handle the cold or earthquakes
    - And so they begin wishing for the fall of the rocks on their heads to put themselves out of their misery
- In response to these events, humanity finally begins to understand what's happening

- Where before the earlier judgments were interpreted as everyday human events, these judgments leave no doubt of their origins
  - In vs.16-17 the people say that they are experiencing the wrath of God and the Lamb
  - And the great day of wrath has come
- While it wouldn't take a genius to conclude that these things were the result of an unhappy god, it still begs a question
  - How did they come to understand it as the result of God and His Son, the Lamb?
  - That's a very specific understanding, and it would suggest that someone explained it to them – someone who knows Jesus
- So who is explaining these events to the world and who is explaining about Jesus especially since the Church has been removed in whole?
  - Now John takes a pause from describing the devastation of the judgments on the earth to answer that question

**Rev. 7:1 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, so that no wind would blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.**

**Rev. 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,**

**Rev. 7:3 saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”**

- John begins the seventh chapter saying then I saw, meaning this is the next thing he saw
  - That does not necessary imply that the things he's seeing here happen after the things of Chapter 6
    - And in fact, this is a concept we need to understand for the whole book of Revelation
    - The events of Tribulation are exceedingly complex and in many cases, multiple things happen at the same time
  - So in describing the period of Tribulation, John has no choice but to explain them one at a time
    - Nevertheless, in many cases the events happen simultaneously
    - The way we come to know that is by paying careful attention to the way events relate to one another
    - And in some cases, John will give us specific time references in the text to show us how events relate to one another
  - In this case, the context will show us that John is describing something that happens at the same time as the events of Chapter 6
    - Beginning with four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, which is

- euphemism meaning over the entire earth
      - These angels are said to be holding back the four winds of the Earth, which means they prevent wind from blowing anywhere
        - And also notice in v.2 a mention of the rising of the sun
        - And again in v.3 we're told that nothing on the face of the earth may be harmed until at least for a time
    - But just a moment ago, we heard the opposite, that winds were blowing, the sun was dark and the face of the earth was devastated
      - So clearly, the events of Chapter 7 predate the events of Chapter 6
      - Therefore, we come to see that this chapter is describing events that start at the beginning of the Tribulation
    - Specifically, at the beginning of Tribulation the Lord puts forth an order that the wind will stop blowing on all the earth
      - Now we understand that there was a supernatural judgment happening even before the fifth seal was opened
      - That judgment must have coincided with the signing of the covenant, and it would have produced its own devastation
    - Stopping all winds on earth would be devastating to life because the earth's weather and water cycle are driven by wind
      - Wind carries moisture off the oceans to the mountains
      - Moist air condenses over high altitudes as rain and snow, which fills streams and lakes and waters crops
      - Without wind, the world would experience devastating drought, famine and starvation
    - This detail reminds us of the earlier seal judgments, particularly the ones that brought an interruption in normal food production
      - These angels were likely involved in worsening the calamities of the earlier seal judgments, including in bringing famine
  - Then in v.2 we hear of a fifth angel ascending from the rising sun having the seal of the living God
    - We don't know who this angel might be, though he is obviously significant and has authority
      - And this fifth angel is giving instruction to the other four
      - And this begins a new pattern in the book of Revelation: the importance of angels in carrying out the judgments
    - We remember that the letter itself was delivered to John by angels and in the course of the vision, angels will escort or explain things to John
      - But they are also instruments to carry out the judgements themselves
      - So it appears that when Jesus opens a seal, for example, it leads to an angel doing something to effect that judgment on earth
    - However, in this chapter we learn that it's important to God that the devastation be carefully timed to prevent interrupting a sealing

- Specifically, in v.3 the four angels are told they cannot begin their devastating attacks on the earth until bondservants are sealed
- A bondservant is the New Testament title for a believer in Jesus Christ
- So now we learn how new faith returns to the earth following the removal of the church prior to the Tribulation
- These believers are to be sealed on their foreheads, we're told
  - Now, to be sealed is generally a way of saying being born again
  - As Paul says

**2Cor. 1:21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, 2Cor. 1:22 who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.**

- So we should conclude that this passage is describing God preparing to bring a group of people to faith
- But why the mention of their foreheads? I believe this is related to something that happens later in the book of Revelation
  - Later during these seven years it becomes mandatory for every human being to receive a distinguishing mark on their forehead
  - That mark means a person worships the Antichrist, and those who refuse the mark are killed
  - We will cover this more later, but I believe the mention of sealing the forehead here is to contrast what is coming later
- So to recap, at the beginning of Tribulation, the Lord stops all wind which begins to create significant difficulties on earth
  - Meanwhile, the Antichrist is rising to power leading to world war and more devastation
    - But as all this is happening, the Lord is at work bringing to faith a new generation of believers on earth
    - And then John tells us where this new generation will come from

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

**Rev. 7:5 from the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand were sealed, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand,**

**Rev. 7:6 from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand,**

**Rev. 7:7 from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand,**

**Rev. 7:8 from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, from the tribe of Benjamin, twelve thousand were sealed.**

- Here we have the infamous 144,000 of Tribulation you may have heard much about

- There has been so much speculation about this group of people, and most of it is utter nonsense because it's not bound by the text
  - For example, you may have heard the Jehovah's Witnesses or other non-Christian groups claiming they are the 144,000
  - Some argue over the nationality or origin of these people or the timing of their appearing
- But all the speculation is so unnecessary because the text itself answers all those questions clearly
  - First, this is a group of bond-servants who come to faith after the start of Tribulation
  - Which confirms that the Holy Spirit will be back on earth at work producing faith during this time
  - Or simply put, the Rapture is not the last chance for people to believe in Christ, though it's much better to believe before than after
- As Jesus said in John 3, the Spirit's presence is evidenced by His effect in the world
  - Just as when we detect the presence of the wind by watching its effect on leaves, we see the Spirit's work here
  - So if people are being brought to faith and sealed, then we know the Spirit is at work...these people are the product of that work
- Secondly, we know that no believer on earth today can be part of this group because all believers are removed prior to Tribulation
  - Also, these believers are taken from among twelve tribes of Israel we're told, so they are all Jewish
  - Anyone who is not descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob cannot be one of the 144,000
  - So anyone who places this group outside the time of Tribulation or says they are part of the church hasn't read the Bible properly
- Turning to the group, we are told they are taken in equal numbers from twelve tribes of Israel
  - This is an interesting detail since today only one tribe of Jews can still be identified: Levi
    - All other tribe identities have been lost for the most part
    - But God still knows and He will distribute His grace evenly among these tribes
  - Some have wondered why the tribe of Dan is missing from the list of twelve tribes
    - First, it is normal in Scripture for writers to maintain the symmetry of twelve tribes
    - But in reality there were thirteen tribes, since Joseph's family line was split into two sons adopted by Israel
  - Therefore, whenever the "12" tribes of Israel are mentioned in Scripture, one tribe must be missing to maintain symmetry
    - And generally, the missing tribe is sending a message

- Here it is Dan that is missing, and the best guess is that Dan's history of having introduced idolatry into Israel has marked them
    - Since they were the first to introduce false worship to Israel, they will not participate in introducing true worship during this time
    - That doesn't mean that no one from the tribe of Dan will be saved, only that they won't be counted in the initial 144,000
  - Later in Revelation we find a second chapter (14) devoted to these men
    - In that chapter we learn a few more things about them and their work
    - Specifically, we learn they are all men and will be virgins
- Why does the Lord start with Jews and with such an interesting number (12x12)?
  - First, salvation must always start with the Jewish people in every age, because that's the plan of God for the earth
    - As Jesus Himself said to the women at the well in John 4, salvation is of the Jews
    - God always brings salvation through the Jewish people first
    - The patriarchs were Jewish, the prophets were Jewish, the Apostles were Jewish, and of course the Lord was Jewish
    - The covenants were given to the Jews, the word of God came through Jewish writers and the temple service belongs to Israel
  - So everything we have regarding our salvation and relationship with Christ was made available to us through the Jewish people
    - Just as the Lord promised Abraham, that through his seed many nations would be blessed
    - And that pattern continues in the Tribulation
  - Secondly, what does the number 12 mean?
    - God governing through human leaders
    - So these men represent the new house of God on earth
    - They are leading in the new worldwide evangelistic effort
  - But more than that, what do we understand about the number 144,000 in the context of coming to faith?
    - Remember, these are literal numbers, not metaphor, so exactly 144,000 came to faith
    - And remember there were no believers on earth prior to them
  - So the unavoidable conclusion is that the Lord brought faith to these men, converting them all without human intervention
    - And He did it according to His choice so that exactly 144,00 men came to faith
    - And not just any men, but a specific set of men God appointed from certain tribes
    - The perfect number and circumstances testifies that God is the Author of our faith – both then and now
- So God brings these Jews to faith in Jesus and then calls them to be the first

evangelists of Tribulation

- And from this seed group, the world will experience a new wave of faith

**Rev. 7:9** After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;

**Rev. 7:10** and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

**Rev. 7:11** And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures; and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

**Rev. 7:12** saying, “Amen, blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

- John connects this passage to the earlier passage with the important connecting phrase “After these things...”
  - That phrase in Revelation suggests a cause-and-effect relationship
    - We last saw it at the start of Chapter 4, when it announced the end of the letters to the church and the arrival of the church in Heaven
    - So here again, it’s being used to connect the events of the first half of Chapter 7 to what follows
  - And the arrival of 144,000 evangelists on earth leads to a worldwide result
    - An uncountable crowd is seen standing before the Throne and the Lamb
    - If they are in Heaven, then we must conclude they are believers in the Lamb who have died
    - The palm branches they hold and the white robes they wear tell us that they are believers
  - They come from every nation and tribe, which instantly means they are a different group than the 144,000 themselves
    - This is a multinational group of believers which is just what Jesus predicts elsewhere when talking about the time of the end

**Matt. 24:9** “Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.

**Matt. 24:10** “At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another.

**Matt. 24:11** “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many.

**Matt. 24:12** “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.

**Matt. 24:13** “But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

**Matt. 24:14** “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.



- Jesus said that even as terrible things will begin to happen on earth, nevertheless the gospel will also go out
  - And it will go to all the nations and then the end will come
  - Jesus was talking about the events of Chapter 7
- John's connecting phrase in v.9 is the critical clue to tell us that this multitude was created by the actions of the earlier 144,000 Jews
  - In other words, the Lord brought 144,000 Jewish men to faith so that they would then serve Him in proclaiming the Gospel
  - And as they went out obediently, they in turn produced a huge crop of new believers from all over the world
- But now this multitude joins in the worship of the Lamb at the Throne, just as the resurrected saints did in Chapters 4 & 5
  - They are singing praise to the Father and worshipping the Lord
    - Obviously, they are not unhappy to escape the trials of Tribulation below
    - But this is true for all believers when we pass away...we enter into an existence that is far better than the one we leave behind
    - And that's true whether we are persecuted here or not
  - But the fact that they are in Heaven with John tells us two very important things
    - And in fact it's so important that we understand these things, that the angel asks John if he's getting it

**Rev. 7:13** Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?"

**Rev. 7:14** I said to him, "My lord, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

**Rev. 7:15** "For this reason, they are before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will spread His tabernacle over them.

**Rev. 7:16** "They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat;

**Rev. 7:17** for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes."

- When asked if he knows, John sidesteps the question probably because he's afraid to say the wrong thing
  - So he lets the angel explain it to him
  - And the answer confirms what we saw coming: these are those who have come to faith during the great tribulation
  - They no longer suffer at the hands of the Antichrist and they are being confronted by their Lord

- But in this details we learn two important things
  - First, it confirms that belief during the time of tribulation is deadly
  - Very very few believers will live to the end of Tribulation
  - The vast majority of those who come to faith in Jesus during the time of Tribulation will be martyred
  - And this is the far better outcome...it is better to die during Tribulation than to live to the end
- Secondly, this scene confirms that we're looking at events that run concurrently with the judgments of Chapter 6 and with future judgments
  - This is not a single moment during the seven years
    - This chapter tells the story of evangelism during the entire Tribulation
    - There will be evangelism for a time and there will be martyrdom for a time
  - Finally, let's take a step back and understand where we go next time, because there is still a seventh seal judgment waiting
    - But that seal doesn't work the way the prior six worked
    - The three waves of judgments that take place in Tribulation are called the seals, the trumpets and the bowls
    - Each has seven parts
  - But these three waves or series are connected together in a unique way
    - They are "nested" like Russian nesting dolls in that the seventh judgment of a given series is the entire next series
    - So the seventh seal judgment is the seven trumpet judgments
    - And the seventh trumpet judgment is the seven bowl judgments
  - So we haven't seen the seventh seal judgment as yet because when we do, we're actually seeing the start of the trumpet judgments
    - That's what we begin next time in Chapter 8



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 8-9

## Chapters 8 & 9

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- We've finished the first six judgments that Jesus brings upon the earth at the outset of the seven-year Tribulation
  - Before we move to the next wave of judgments, let's revisit our timeline for a moment
    - First, we remember that Revelation 6-19 tells the story of the final seven years of Daniel's 70 sevens
    - Also known as the time of Jacob's troubles or Tribulation on earth
    - It's a time of judgment promised for Israel in the Old Covenant, and the book of Revelation explains how it comes to pass
  - Then we moved into a study of the signs of the end of the age including the removal of the Church prior to the Tribulation
    - Those signs include world wars, earthquakes and famines
    - And these signs would progress like labor pains, Jesus said
  - Then over the past two weeks we have moved into the first wave of judgments in the Tribulation itself
    - As Jesus broke a seal on the land deed for Israel and the earth, events unfold on earth
    - The first four seals initiated the unveiling of the Antichrist upon the world stage
    - As he ascends to greater authority and power, he triggers world war leading to widespread death and devastation
    - With the consequence being a fourth of the world population, some 2 billion people, dying
- But there was the suggestion that the land of Israel is being spared from these initial disasters
  - And that seems to be related to the events of Chapter 7 and the breaking of the fifth seal
    - In Chapter 7 we learn that even before the Antichrist embarks on his rise to power, the Lord is at work preparing 144,000 men
    - He brings 144,000 Jewish men to faith so they may serve Him in reaching the world with the gospel
    - So even as the Lord is bringing wave after wave of judgment on the earth, He is also bringing mercy to millions
- By the end of Chapter 7, John sees the outcome of these men at work: an uncountable number of believers from everywhere on earth
  - They are present in Heaven which not only reveals the great success of the 144,000 but also indicated they were martyred
    - The fifth seal revealed the souls of these believers in Heaven seeking vengeance for their deaths
    - The Antichrist's appetite for waging of war is matched only by his ruthless persecution of believers during this time
    - And so we learned that the Antichrist's rise to power is responsible for both

the death of the unbelievers and believers

- Chapter 7 interrupted the narrative of the book of Revelation, but in reality the events of Chapter 7 coincide with the start of Tribulation
  - And they don't finish until the very end of the seven years
  - In this moment, John is given an overview of the evangelism of Tribulation so he could encourage that future generation
  - Believers in the time of Tribulation may read this chapter and realize that martyrdom is nothing to be afraid of
  - It's the plan of God and vengeance will come eventually
- I suspect this chapter will be a hallmark chapter for believers during the time of Tribulation
  - A type of Psalm 23 for those enduring the hell of those days
  - An encouragement to know that the trials will end sooner or later, and death is a blessed escape
- Then finally, the sixth seal marks the first time the Lord brings supernatural destruction upon the earth
  - He darkens the sun, makes the moon blood red, brings meteors raining to the earth
    - And He shakes the world with earthquakes so massive that every mountain and island is moved out of its place
    - For the first time, humanity comes to understand that the world destruction they are facing is coming as a result of an angry God
  - Which brings us to the next wave of judgments, called the Trumpet judgments
    - And as I explained last time, the seven trumpets judgments are the seventh seal judgment
    - So as Jesus opens the seventh seal, He sets in motion a cascade of additional judgments
    - So the breaking of the seventh seal means that the rest of the Tribulation judgments will take place inevitably

**Rev. 8:1** When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

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

**Rev. 8:3** Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne.

**Rev. 8:4** And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand.

- Chapter 8 opens with Jesus breaking the seventh seal, which results in a profound effect in Heaven

- John says there is a period of silence in Heaven for about half an hour
  - That period of silence serves to underscore how awesome and profound the coming judgments will be
  - The breaking of the seventh seal unleashes a series of judgments that we can barely imagine
  - The trumpet and bowl judgments are the culmination of all that the prophets have foretold
  - And they bring an end to every storyline of our age and trigger a new beginning for everyone and everything
  - And like childbirth, the beginning of that new age comes through a painful period of trial

**Dan. 12:1 “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.”**

- So all Heaven stays quiet for a time, perhaps for the first time since God created that place for Himself and His court
  - The phrase “about half an hour” is a curious for its vagueness
    - We know God’s word is always precise and every word is intended, so why is John so vague here?
    - Maybe he didn’t have a sun dial on his wrist to track the time more precisely
  - But I think the imprecision is intentional to avoid leading us down the wrong path in our interpretation
    - If John had written “there was silence for 30 minutes,” we would spend our time trying to figure out the significance of 30
    - But that wasn’t the point, so he left it vague so we would focus on the mere fact that what’s coming will be unprecedented
  - Then we see seven angels preparing to bring the next judgments, and the next wave of judgments have a unique style
    - The trumpet judgements are split between impacting the physical earth and the physical bodies of humanity
    - The first three will bring devastation to the earth (or what remains of it) so that life becomes increasingly harsh
  - While the second three make life utterly miserable for each person regardless of what part of earth they inhabit
    - Those final three judgments on the physical body of each person are so terrible they are called the “woe” judgments
    - The word “woe” is the Bible’s word for eternal condemnation, and so these judgments are a preview of eternal judgment
    - We’ll explain this further when we get to those judgments

- Meanwhile, before the judgments begin, God receives the prayers of the saints as pictured by incense before the Throne
  - We can assume these prayers are believers asking for protection, defense, and relief from what they are experiencing
  - And as we'll see when we look at the judgments, particularly the woe judgments, the Lord hears the prayers of His saints
- Finally, these judgments are announced with trumpets, because they serve as the final warnings of the age
  - The first set of judgments, the seal judgments, set the stage for the seven years
    - They didn't appear to come from Heaven, at least not at first
    - And in fact, only the sixth seal judgment tipped God's hand to let the earth's population know He was at work in these things
  - But now that the cat is out of the bag, the world has been put on notice that the end is near
    - And as we approach the midpoint of Tribulation, the Lord is announcing that end by these trumpet judgments
    - Each judgment is like a blast of a warning trumpet reminding the world that time is running out
  - The six trumpet judgments all happen during the first half of Tribulation, which we will see more clearly as we enter into the middle of Tribulation
    - That will leave just one wave of judgments remaining, the bowl judgments
    - They come near the end of the second half of Tribulation and they bring the age to an end
    - So these trumpet judgments represent the last chance for the world to come to faith before the very worst comes
    - We'll study this timeline more thoroughly later

**Rev. 8:5 Then the angel took the censer and filled it with the fire of the altar, and threw it to the earth; and there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.**

**Rev. 8:6 And the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound them.**

- Before the first trumpet is blown, there is yet more preparation in the form of a series of destructive world disasters
  - The entire series of trumpet judgments are preceded by displays in the heavens and another earthquake
    - We remember from the Olivet Discourse that earthquakes will continue to be the warning sign of the coming judgment
    - They will continue to increase in intensity and duration, and here we see yet another of them
  - And now the trumpets begin to blow and the judgments follow

**Rev. 8:7** The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up.

- At the sounding of the first trumpet, one third of the earth was burned up from a judgment of hail, fire, and blood
- This is clearly a supernatural judgment and it reminds us of the judgments upon Egypt in the Exodus

**Ex. 9:23** Moses stretched out his staff toward the sky, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt.

**Ex. 9:24** So there was hail, and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very severe, such as had not been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.

- This similarity between the first trumpet judgment and a plague of the Exodus is more than coincidental
  - Throughout the trumpet judgments we will see a loose parallel between Exodus and Tribulation because one pictures the other
  - And in typical Biblical form, those earlier judgments were a lesser version of the greater fulfillment seen in Tribulation
- In the Exodus account, Israel was in bondage to a foreign nation
  - And in these last days Israel will be in bondage to the enemy and to sin
  - In the Exodus, the Lord brought Israel out of earthly bondage through a series of supernatural judgments
  - And in the Tribulation, He will deliver Israel from spiritual bondage through a series of even greater judgments
- In the Exodus, Israel's freedom was made possible by the Law, as personalized by Moses leading the people into the wilderness
  - And in the Tribulation, the people will first return to the Law to worship in the temple, which will prepare them to receive Messiah
  - And in the Exodus, the people eventually found their way to the Promised Land led by Joshua (Yeshuah)
  - And at the end of the Tribulation, the people of Israel will eventually enter the Kingdom led by Yeshua, their Messiah
- So moving to the first judgment, John tells us that a third of the earth is burned up, but what does a "third" mean?
  - Should we suppose it is one contiguous area of the globe leaving the other two-thirds along, or is that third distributed evenly around?
    - As we go further into the judgments of Revelation, the answer becomes apparent
    - This is one contiguous section of the earth, one third of the face of the earth is



burned and has become uninhabitable

- This is the first in a series of judgments that whittle the earth away until only a small section remains
- The reason for that becomes clearer as we move ahead in these judgments and into the events of Chapters 17 and 18
- For example, the next Trumpet judgment continues that pattern

**Rev. 8:8 The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood,**

**Rev. 8:9 and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed.**

- John describes seeing something like a great mountain burning with fire falling into the sea
- We can't know what this "great mountain" will be and some have speculated that it's a huge meteor falling
- Or perhaps it's the fallout from a giant sea volcano
- But it's fair to assume that if it had been a volcano or meteor, then John would have recognized one of those things
  - But by the way John describes it, we should assume it's something altogether different and unnatural
  - John says the effect of the mountain hitting the sea is water turns to blood
  - But volcanos and meteors don't turn water into blood, obviously
- This is another judgment that reminds us of the Exodus account, except that the magnitude is far greater than just the Nile turning to blood
  - And we know that John is speaking literally about the blood because the effect is similar to what happened to the Nile
  - You'll remember that when the Nile turned to blood, it killed the fish which is what we would expect to see happen
  - And likewise, John says the ocean turning to blood results in all marine life in the ocean dying
- And the ships on that body of water were also lost
  - That detail really emphasizes the literal nature of this judgment because it's true to life
  - The specific gravity of blood is higher than water, and as a result it produces greater buoyancy
  - A ship floating on the sea would suddenly rise up higher when that water turned to blood
  - Riding so high would make the ship unstable and easily capsized
  - Plus, the ship's systems would be fouled by the intake of blood into vents and cooling systems

- Notice again John says this judgment impacted one third of the seas covering the earth
  - And once more, we conclude that the region impacted corresponds to a single continuous section of the ocean
    - It's literally impossible for just a third of a body of water to become blood, since it would quickly disperse
    - So the only practical way this could happen is if one body of water equal to a third of the world's water turned to blood
  - That reaffirms the interpretation I made earlier that the Lord is diminishing the usable area of the globe in stages to make a point
    - Over the course of the judgments of Tribulation, the Lord narrows the world's focus down to the region of the Middle East
    - The events of Tribulation will culminate in a battle that takes place in the territory between Jerusalem and Babylon
    - It will be a battle between west vs. east, good vs. evil, Jesus against Satan
- So in preparation for that climactic war, the Lord sets about to eliminate all life on the rest of the planet step-by-step
  - By the time the battle begins, the Lord will have eliminated the rest of the globe
    - There will be no one else and no where else that matters, so all attention is focused on the climactic war to end the Tribulation
    - First, the Lord burns up a third of the land, then turns a third of the oceans to blood and all creatures on land and sea die
  - We know Israel and Babylon remain intact and occupied at the very end of Tribulation
    - So we must assume the Lord begins the destruction on the opposite side of the planet and proceeds around from there
    - The judgments progressively consume more land and ocean until only the Middle East remains
  - Interestingly, the land mass directly opposite Israel is North and South America, and the ocean opposite Israel is the Pacific Ocean
    - and not coincidentally, North and South America represent exactly 30% of the earth's land mass
    - And the Pacific Ocean is exactly 30% of the world's oceans
    - So it's reasonable to assume that the first and second trumpet judgments bring an end to these regions on the earth
    - So don't put too much effort into saving the planet...it's not savable
- Now to the third trumpet judgment...

**Rev. 8:10** The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters.

**Rev. 8:11** The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were

**made bitter.**

- The third trumpet blows and with it comes the third and final judgment against the face of the earth
  - John says a great, burning “star” falls from heaven into the fresh waters on earth turning them bitter
    - This star has a name “Wormwood”, which has no other meaning in Greek so by the context we suppose it means bitter
    - And in trying to interpret the type of star here, we have to work through some possibilities
  - First, it can’t be a literal star, since a burning sun can’t fall upon the Earth and certainly wouldn’t only impact the fresh waters
    - The Earth would be totally consumed by any sun coming into contact with the Earth
    - As we saw in the sixth seal judgment in Chapter 6, this star could be a meteor, since it falls from heaven and is burning
    - But a meteor wouldn’t simply turn waters bitter, nor would it be able to impact a third of the fresh water around the planet
  - Thirdly, this star has a name, which is not typical in Scripture when describing inanimate objects like meteors
    - When a symbol is named in Scripture, it usually indicates a personage
    - Which brings us to the final type of “star” in Scripture: a symbolic representation for an angel
  - But in Scripture, angels can have two kinds of names
    - Angels can have names that glorify God, like Gabriel (*man of God*) and Michael (*who is like God?*)
    - Or angels can have names that suggest corruption and a fallen nature, like Wormwood or Abaddon (later in Revelation)
  - So this is likely a fallen angel (demon) sent by God to do His bidding and this demon’s effect is to poison a third of the fresh waters of the earth
    - God can use demonic agents for His purposes from time to time
    - And His use of a demon here to bring judgment to the earth is the first in a pattern involving the trumpet judgments
    - Angels and demons will feature more and more prominently in the execution of the judgments that follow

**Rev. 8:12** The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way.

- The theme of “thirds” continues with a third of the sun, moon and stars being

targeted in this judgment...but this can be a little confusing at first

- What does it mean that a third of the sun and moon and stars are darkened?
  - Does it mean that a third of these bodies are taken away, or that each body is reduced in light output by a third?
  - John's description seems to indicate a third interpretation
- John says each body shines for one third less time, so the lights are out one third of the time they would normally shine
  - He says the day would not shine for one third of it, and the night would not shine for one third of it
  - Cumulatively, that means the earth is receiving one third less energy from the sun and the stars
- This makes some sense, since the moon reflects the light of the sun
  - So while the sun turns off for one third of the day, it also turns off during one third of the day on the opposite side of the planet
  - That would result in the moon being off at the same time
  - So one third of the night and one third of the day would represent one third of a twenty four hour day
  - And likewise the stars ceasing to shine for a third of the night probably timed to coincide with the moon and sun
- The effect is a total blackout of all the universe for a third of each 24-hour period
  - Besides the obvious fear factor, this change would lead to a dramatic drop in temperatures on earth
    - It would be a nuclear winter scenario
    - Crops would fail, water sources would freeze, livestock would die
  - The world has already seen a fourth of the population dead from war, pestilence, and starvation
    - And then some unknown number of additional lives were lost when the North and South American continents were destroyed
    - And then more died when a third of the seas and the fresh water failed
  - And now the heavens bring less heat and light to the earth resulting in even more loss of life
    - And those who do survive find life harder and harder, and in total the effect is like a mini Hell on earth
    - The point is that as earth becomes increasingly inhospitable for human life, the world's population should think about what comes next
    - Meanwhile, the Antichrist continues conquering even as the world he desired becomes increasingly undesirable
    - And the 144,000 continue to bring the Gospel to a lost and evermore dying world ready to escape the judgments
- Finally, the trumpet judgments are suspended for a brief time to allow for another warning to the earth

**Rev. 8:13** Then I looked, and I heard an eagle flying in midheaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

- An eagle flies in mid-heaven, John says, and the term mid-heaven requires a moment of explanation
  - The Jewish people did not have distinct Hebrew words for these different places
  - The sky, outer space and the throne room of God were called by the same Hebrew word: *shamayim* meaning “heavens”
- So to distinguish between these three “heavens” the Jews numbered them counting from the earth and moving upward
  - The first heaven is the place where birds fly
  - The second or mid-heaven is the place of the planets and stars
  - And the third heaven is the place God dwells
- In this case, John says there was an eagle flying in the mid-heaven, which refers to outer space, outside our atmosphere
  - Obviously, we know that literal eagles cannot live in outer space
  - Furthermore this “eagle” speaks in a loud voice to announce to the whole world that more judgments are coming
  - So the term eagle refers to an angel, and John calls it an eagle probably because it moves back and forth, circling its warning
- The “eagle’s” warning declares that three final trumpets are coming and they will be woe, woe, woe to the earth
  - As I mentioned earlier, these judgments will be directed at the physical bodies of people instead of against the physical earth itself
    - And as the term “woe” suggests, it will be a most terrible period
    - It will be so bad that not even death is an escape for those suffering
  - The structure of these woe judgments is another of the “Russian nesting dolls” example I gave earlier
    - Just as the seventh seal judgment is all the trumpet judgments, so it goes here again
    - The seventh trumpet judgment is the seven bowl judgments
  - So the 5th, 6th and 7th Trumpet judgments are the woe judgments
    - The first two are the last two Trumpet judgments
    - And the third woe judgments are all the bowl judgments poured out
  - The third woe judgments, which are the bowl judgments, are like a greatest hits compilation of all the prior judgments
    - More water turning to blood, more attacks on the bodies of people, more disturbances of the sun, etc.
    - Those judgments will end the age

- But for now, let's look at the first woe judgment

**Rev. 9:1** Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.

**Rev. 9:2** He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

**Rev. 9:3** Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

**Rev. 9:4** They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

**Rev. 9:5** And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.

**Rev. 9:6** And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

- This woe judgment begins as the first four did with a trumpet sounding and so a fifth warning now unfolds and a star falls to earth
  - The context here makes it easy to see that the star here is another fallen angel, not a meteor or burning sun
    - Later in v.1 John describes this fallen star as “him”
    - And the actions of this “star” makes clear it is a person, not an object
  - So once again, the term star refers to an angel, and an angel that falls to the earth is a picture of a demon; a sinful, fallen angel
    - Later in v.11 we get the name of this demon, Abaddon or Apollyon
    - Apollyon means destroyer in Greek, which is why John gives us that clarification so we can know what Abaddon means (in the Hebrew)
  - So as I mentioned earlier, a negative name like this would confirm this is a fallen angel or demon called to serve God's purposes
    - The demon is given the key to the bottomless pit, John says, and that means he has permission to set those in the pit free
    - The pit is described as bottomless and it's accessed through the earth, since that's where this angel lands
    - The Greek word for bottomless, *abussos*, literally means abyss
- All these terms refer to the same place below the earth, a place that the Bible says is a prison for disobedient spirits
  - The most common term in the Old Testament for this place is Sheol or the pit

**Job 33:28** ‘He has redeemed my soul from going to the pit, And my life shall see the light.’

- According to Luke 16, Sheol is really two places, one for the souls of unbelievers and one for the souls of OT saints
  - Before Jesus, God held everyone who died here: saints in comfort and unbelievers in torment
  - After the Lord's resurrection, the souls of believers were removed and accompanied Jesus into Heaven
  - But the souls of unbelievers remained and are still there today, in the place called Hades or otherwise known as the pit
- But the New Testament also tells us that in this place is a special corner or prison where the souls of disobedient angels are held
  - Demons who are particularly evil are cast into this place to be confined for a time

**2Pet. 2:4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;**

**2Pet. 2:5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;**

**Luke 8:30 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.**

**Luke 8:31 They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.**

- The abyss or the pit not only holds the souls of departed unbelievers but also the spirits of rebellious angels
- Not all demons live in the abyss...most still roam free, but some were so terrible that God confined them to limit their rampage
- Now has come time for the Lord to permit these worst of the worst fallen demons to escape from their temporary confinement
  - This chief demon is given permission to let them loose, and it would seem that the Destroyer may be none other than Satan himself
    - He is the master of the demons, according to Matthew 25
    - And the fact that this fallen angel is called the destroyer adds weight to that interpretation
  - God gives this demon, whoever he is, a key to open the pit so that the demons inside can be set loose like rabid dogs
    - They come out of the pit raging, having been confined there for thousands of years
    - They are undoubtedly eager to wreck havoc on the earth
  - As the pit is opened, the smoke of this place rises to block the sunlight, John says
    - This confirms the Bible's constant testimony that Hell and the abyss are directly below our feet in the center of the earth

- Could the lava that erupts from the earth from time to time be connected to the activities of Hell in some way?
  - Before we laugh at this suggestion, remember that scientists have no understanding of what lies below the earth's surface
    - We haven't explored more than a few miles below the earth's surface
    - According to the Bible, the abyss or pit (or call it Hell) is a physical place of burning in the earth
    - It's unimaginably hot and utterly dark, and now that darkness spills out
- Once the pit is opened, John describes what he sees coming out of this place
  - He says he sees "locusts" descend upon the earth that have power like that of a scorpion given to them
    - Presumably, the giver of that power is God, since their escape was orchestrated by God as part of this judgment upon men
    - And their power comes with specific instructions and limitations
  - They cannot hurt the vegetation of the earth but only certain men
    - This is the opposite of normal locusts, since a true locust insect only harms vegetation
    - They cannot take the life of anyone, only torment them for a time
  - And there are a group of men that cannot be hurt by this judgment at all
    - Scripture says God will not appoint His children to wrath and He distinguishes between the godly and ungodly in His judgments

**2Pet. 2:9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,**

- So the men who have the seal of God are excluded from their attack, obviously referring to the 144,000 from Chapter 7
- And it must also apply to those who come to faith as a result of the 144,000
- They will not suffer this judgment, but since this is the first time we've seen an exception, we need to apply it carefully
  - This exception applies specifically to the attacks on the physical body of a person
  - So it's logical to assume that the prior judgments against the physical earth did impact everyone including believers
  - But now that the judgments are specifically targeting people in particularly terrible ways, the Lord is making distinctions
- The Lord has done this in the past when judging the world supernaturally
  - We know He saved Noah and his family before the flood and He saved Lot and his family before the brimstone in Sodom
  - And in the case of Israel, the Lord preserved the godly within
- John describes the torment these demons will inflict, and it's so terrible it's hard to comprehend



- Unlike prior judgments, these demons are not permitted to harm the earth at all, because now the target will be the body of every person
  - The demons will inflict painful stings for a total of five months
  - John says the torment will be like that of a scorpion sting, and scorpion stings are notoriously painful though rarely lethal
  - Some of the toxins in scorpion venom are so toxic they are used for chemotherapy to kill cancer cells
- The discomfort of this torment is magnified many times by its duration
  - The stinging lasts for five months, and it's not clear if a single sting lasts for that time or if the stinging is repeated endlessly
  - Imagine living for five months with scorpions continuously crawling under your clothing stinging you
- It's impossible to imagine the physical and psychological effects of enduring 5 months of such attacks
  - We know it lasts five months, but I suspect those who suffer this penalty will not know how long it lasts while they endure it
  - They would have to read and believe Scripture to know the length and so for them it may seem to be endless
- As we contemplate such a fate of endless stinging, we can see how it might lead a person to contemplate suicide
  - An otherwise sane person will be willing to end their own life rather than face another day of the pain
    - And the Lord anticipated this desire, so the judgment has a particularly horrible twist
    - The option to die by any means is removed by God during these five months
  - John says in v.6 men will eventually seek to end their lives rather than suffer through this judgment but God will supernaturally prevent it
    - It's intriguing to consider how God might accomplish this
    - Will he make people immortal? Like Superman?
    - What if a person throws themselves in a fire or blows themselves up with a bomb? How would they survive?
  - My theory is they are incapacitated to a degree that they simply cannot carry out such plans
    - They are simply writhing in pain all day all the time without relief and without the strength to do anything to harm themselves
    - John says that they will long to die, and the literal Greek word for long means to crave or desire
    - How much suffering does a person face before they crave death?
- We will come back to considering that questions, but first John describes these creatures

### **Rev. 9:7 The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and**

**on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.**

**Rev. 9:8 They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like the teeth of lions.**

**Rev. 9:9 They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.**

**Rev. 9:10 They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.**

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

- He's been calling them scorpions, but we already knew these were not true scorpions
  - First, they originated from the place of demons and dead souls
    - No matter how much you dislike scorpions, I can assure you that the pit is not the source for scorpions
    - However I do suspect that the pit is the source for poodles...
  - Secondly, they have stings that are nothing like ordinary scorpions
    - So there is obviously something supernatural about these scorpions
    - And when we consider John's description of them, it becomes apparent they are nothing like scorpions as we know them
  - These creatures look nothing like any locust we've ever seen
    - John says they look like horses prepared for battle, with heads like men, hair like women and teeth like lion
    - They wear crowns (*stephanos*) indicating they have authority in the demonic realm
    - They have wings that make a great noise and they have tails like scorpions with the power to hurt men
  - This part explains clearly why John used the word scorpion to describe the creatures
    - Their tails are their most prominent feature and resemble scorpions
    - But overall, this description confirms that we're looking at something other-worldly
- Some have tried to explain this in natural terms, as a helicopter or some other modern implement of war
  - Such speculation is not proper interpretation nor does it fit the context
    - Apache helicopters do not come out of the pit nor do they result in a 5-month long sting
    - And considering the amount of damage done to the earth by this point, it's inconceivable that any mechanical equipment is still functioning
  - We need to see the world as in ruins, technology is gone, no electricity, no running water, people reduced to vagabonds and refugees
    - And in the midst of that suffering, these demons inflict an even greater

suffering

- John is describing a demon horde released from the pit and their appearance is something terrible, like scorpions
  - Knowing they are demons answers another dilemma...
    - How could these scorpions manage to reach every last person on earth (at least those who aren't sealed?)
    - For example, why couldn't someone hide successfully from the invasion?
  - The answer is because these spirits are supernaturally capable of moving anywhere unconstrained by walls or other barriers
    - And they have knowledge and abilities beyond flesh and blood and are empowered to accomplish this mission by God
    - So they find everyone and torment everyone
    - We might also wonder if people can actually see these beings or are they invisible?
    - My guess is they are visible to everyone, so that the source of the woe judgment is apparent
- Finally, we have to ask the fundamental question of this judgment: why does God bring such a punishment upon men? What good purpose does it serve?
  - We might even be tempted to think it was cruel, especially that these people are forced to endure this torment without the ability to escape it
    - Well, if this is cruel, what would we consider to be mercy?
    - Should God let them die? And if they did die, what comes next for them?
    - They would move from a temporary state of torment into a permanent state of torment
  - So in that sense, presenting them from dying under these circumstances is actually a form of grace to them
    - In fact, this five month period is the first and only time in all human history since the Garden when death is impossible
    - For the first time since the beginning of humanity, there is not a single new resident of Hell for five months
  - God is mercifully preventing death for everyone so that He might give the ungodly a taste of what comes after death

**Luke 12:4** “I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

**Luke 12:5** “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

- Consider the nature of this judgment:
  - People being kept alive in unending torment, administered at the hands of demons
  - Does this description sound familiar?

- It's a great approximation of Hell...on earth
  - How many times have we wondered what the world would do if given a foretaste of the judgment of Hell?
  - Here's our chance to find out
- And even the number of months is proof that this is a sign of God's grace for the unbeliever
  - Because the number five is the number of grace in Scripture
  - But after five months the first woe judgment comes to an end but two more remain

**Rev. 9:12** **The first woe is past; behold, two woes are still coming after these things.**



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

# 10

Chapter 9:13-21, 10:1-  
11

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- Tonight we conclude the judgments that mark the first half of the Tribulation and move to the next major period of the seven years
  - We're studying the second wave of judgments called the Trumpet judgments
    - They are called trumpet judgments because each judgment is announced by the blast of a heavenly trumpet
    - The Lord uses trumpets as warnings, so each of these judgments serve as warnings to the Earth of the end
  - The first four trumpet judgments brought devastating damage to the physical earth
    - Third of the earth was burned up, a third of the oceans turned to blood and a third of the earth's fresh water turned poisonous
    - The warning implied by these judgments is obvious: the earth isn't going to last forever
    - The end is coming, and the world needs to prepare to see its Maker
  - Then beginning with the fifth trumpet, we moved into the woe judgments
    - The word woe means judgment, and so the final three trumpets will bring especially difficult times for humanity
    - Each judgment targets the physical bodies of the world's remaining population
    - The first of the woe judgments brought demons which were released from the pit to attack humanity for five months
  - All unbelievers on earth suffered continual stinging pain for five months without relief
    - And when the pain became too much to bear leaving mankind to seek death instead, the Lord prevented them from dying
    - This judgment gave unsaved humanity a preview of Hell without requiring mankind to visit the place
- And that's where we ended...one woe complete but two more to follow

**Rev. 9:13** Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

**Rev. 9:14** one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

**Rev. 9:15** And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind.

**Rev. 9:16** The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them.

**Rev. 9:17** And this is how I saw in the vision the horses and those who sat on them: the riders had breastplates the color of fire and of hyacinth and of brimstone; and the heads of the horses are like the heads of lions; and out of their mouths proceed fire and smoke and brimstone.

**Rev. 9:18** A third of mankind was killed by these three plagues, by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which proceeded out of their mouths.

**Rev. 9:19 For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; for their tails are like serpents and have heads, and with them they do harm.**

- Back in verse 12 we're told that the second and third woes must wait until the first woe is completed
  - So that tells us that these particular judgments are sequential, happening one at a time
    - The five months of stinging runs its course and ends, and then a second woe will begin sometime after that
    - Can you imagine the relief people felt at the removal of that penalty?
    - They have suffered what must have seemed like an eternity and probably didn't know if it would ever end and then it's gone
    - It's like seeing your life sentence commuted unexpectedly
  - But then a new woe comes, this time in the form of a great army of horsemen, led by four angels
    - As we did with the scorpions of the first woe, let's try to make sense of who these angels and horsemen are
    - And once again, the clues in the text point us in only one direction
  - We start with the origin of this judgment: a voice from the altar in Heaven ordering that certain angels be released
    - So we know God Himself is causing the action that follows
    - And He harnesses supernatural agents, angels, to bring about the events
    - So we immediately begin to see these events as supernatural and not natural, and the details that follow confirm it
  - Next, notice that the angels set loose were bound at a place on Earth, specifically the river Euphrates
    - Angels that are bound (or in captivity) always refer to fallen angels (demons)
    - And to be bound on earth further emphasizes they are fallen angels
    - And the location Euphrates confirms they are demonic, since Mesopotamia is the biblical home to Satan and his agents
- So the Lord begins the second woe judgment by releasing four demons who were bound and prepared specifically for this day
  - What does it mean they were prepared for this judgement?
    - In simple terms it means that the Lord bound them at some prior moment knowing what they might do if released
    - In other words, if they had not been bound, they would have been killing mankind already
    - It seems as if some of the fallen angels are worse than the rest, and these God has set aside for the day when they would be useful
  - But that phrase has a deeper suggestion, because we know the Lord creates all things

- So in a sense, we can say that in the day the Lord created these four angels, He did so knowing they would one day fall with Satan
    - And when they fell, they would become excessively violent and hateful, yet the Lord still went forward with their creation
    - And He did so because He intended to use them for this one moment during Tribulation
- These four demons go forth to kill one third of humanity by means of two hundred million horsemen, John says
  - In Greek it literally says two myriads of myriads, and a myriad is 10,000
    - John said  $2 \times 10,000 \times 10,000$  which is 200 million
    - We might reasonably ask John how he knew it was exactly 200 million horsemen, since it would be impossible to count so many
    - John anticipated the question, because he quickly adds that he heard the number of them
    - That little detail reminds us that we always take the numbers given in the Bible literally unless specifically told otherwise
  - We know the angels were demons, but what do we make of these horsemen?
    - This is another place where speculation often takes the place of careful observation of the text
    - Some have imagined a human army accomplishing the killing
    - And then they seek a place to find so many people in an army, to say nothing of finding so many horses
    - The answers they land on include the Chinese army among others
  - But they are looking in entirely the wrong direction because they have failed to simply read the text for what it says
    - First, notice the description of these “horsemen”
    - The riders have breastplates made of fire and brimstone and horses have heads of lions with smoke and brimstone coming from their mouths
    - Far as I know, the Chinese don’t outfit their soldiers this way
    - And seeing this as a description of modern warfare with tanks is just rampant speculation, not proper interpretation
  - Clearly, their appearance strongly suggests they are supernatural creatures just as the scorpions from the first woe judgment
    - Since they are led by demons, it only makes sense to conclude that these too are demons being led by their masters
    - This continues the pattern we noticed last week that as the judgments become more fierce, the Lord increasingly relies on demons to carry them out
    - Demons seem especially well-suited to producing great destruction, mayhem and misery
    - So they are naturally the agents of choice for the Lord to use in bringing a taste of Hell to the occupants of the earth



- If there was any doubt about their supernatural identities, look at the way they take life in v.19
  - They kill a third of mankind on earth with their mouths and tails, because their power is in their mouths and tails
    - Their mouths shoot forth fire and brimstone, like four-footed flamethrowers
    - And their tails kill like serpents, which presumably means they have a deadly bite
  - Here again, nothing in the text suggests we should take these descriptions to be symbolic representations of something else
    - Instead, we see them just as described, which means they are not of this world
    - And given their demon overlords, it only makes sense that these horsemen are 200 million demons sent to kill humanity
  - The Lord foretold the coming of this army in the Old Testament speaking through the prophet Joel saying

**Joel 2:1 Blow a trumpet in Zion,  
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!  
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,  
For the day of the LORD is coming;  
Surely it is near,**

**Joel 2:2 A day of darkness and gloom,  
A day of clouds and thick darkness.  
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,  
So there is a great and mighty people;  
There has never been anything like it,  
Nor will there be again after it  
To the years of many generations.**

- These opening verses confirm that Joel 2 is set in the time of Tribulation
  - The day of the Lord is the Bible's preferred term for the seven years of Daniel's seventieth seven
  - And it's a day of darkness and gloom and there has never been anything like it

**Joel 2:3 A fire consumes before them  
And behind them a flame burns.  
The land is like the garden of Eden before them  
But a desolate wilderness behind them,  
And nothing at all escapes them.**

**Joel 2:4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses;  
And like war horses, so they run.**

- In this day comes an army like war horses, but notice they are not horses
  - Joel says they have the appearance of horses

- And as they go, they have a consuming fire before them, which mirrors John's description of the horse's mouths
- And the land behind them burns like a flame, so as they pass by they leave a burning destruction in their wake
- And the land is like Eden before them, which is a reference to the fall of the Garden
  - These demons see the land like Satan saw Adam and Woman in the Garden, a place to be destroyed
  - And after they pass through the land, they leave it a desolate wasteland...nothing escapes them

**Joel 2:5 With a noise as of chariots**

**They leap on the tops of the mountains,  
Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble,  
Like a mighty people arranged for battle.**

**Joel 2:6 Before them the people are in anguish;  
All faces turn pale.**

**Joel 2:7 They run like mighty men,  
They climb the wall like soldiers;  
And they each march in line,  
Nor do they deviate from their paths.**

**Joel 2:8 They do not crowd each other,  
They march everyone in his path;  
When they burst through the defenses,  
They do not break ranks.**

**Joel 2:9 They rush on the city,  
They run on the wall;  
They climb into the houses,  
They enter through the windows like a thief.**

**Joel 2:10 Before them the earth quakes,  
The heavens tremble,  
The sun and the moon grow dark  
And the stars lose their brightness.**

- These horsemen pursue humanity relentlessly, climbing walls like soldiers, marching in line, never deviating from their path
  - The overall scene is of an unstoppable and disciplined force that sweeps across the land
  - They enter houses like thieves through windows
  - Clearly, regular horses do not enter this way, much less have flame thrower mouths and serpent tails
- Then Joel says that these judgment would be accompanied by natural calamities like earthquakes and celestial disturbances
  - This fits the pattern of what we're studying perfectly
  - And it confirms that we're looking at something supernatural and demonic

unleashed on humanity by God

**Joel 2:11 The LORD utters His voice before His army;  
Surely His camp is very great,  
For strong is he who carries out His word.  
The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome,  
And who can endure it?**

- Finally, Joel says this is the Lord's army, because as we know the Lord called for the four angels and the horsemen to begin their rampage on earth
  - This is the great and awesome day of the Lord, and Joel asks who can endure it?
    - Obviously, some will endure this judgment, but for a third of mankind it won't be endurable
    - The combined effect of these horsemen is to leave a third of mankind dead
  - Like the first woe that produced great suffering for everyone but no death for anyone, the second woe produces death for some and great suffering for everyone
    - Having exactly one third of humanity die seems designed to impact every human being either directly or indirectly
    - If one in three people on earth are dying around you (if not you yourself), then you are being touched by this event
    - Everyone is impacted one way or another, and the effect of such calamity will be worldwide mourning
  - This is a worldwide wake up call to the reality of the coming end of all things and the judgment that follows
    - Nothing brings questions of eternity to mind more powerfully than the death of a loved one
    - For the Christian, the mourning over the loss of someone we love is tempered by the knowledge that they are doing just fine
    - And in a short time, we will be where they are, and so we haven't lost them for long
  - But for the unbeliever, death is a wound with no relief, since there is no confidence in a better future and no hope for reconciliation
    - There is only loss and suffering and questions
    - And sometimes those questions will move hearts to consider the promises of the Lord found in Scripture
- And the Lord may use the suffering to bring a person to faith, so we wonder what will happen to a world of grief after the second woe?

**Rev. 9:20 The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, so as not to worship demons, and the idols of gold and of silver and of brass and of stone and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk;**

**Rev. 9:21 and they did not repent of their murders nor of their sorceries nor of**

### **their immorality nor of their thefts.**

- John says “the rest” (meaning the two thirds of humanity that wasn’t killed by the second woe judgment) do not repent and turn to the Lord
  - They continue to worship demons and idols, and they will not repent of their murders and sorceries and immorality
    - Notice the completeness of John’s statement...none who survived (i.e., “the rest”) repented
    - The indication is that 100% of the earth responded to these judgments without coming to faith
  - Yet we know that there *is* faith during this time, because the 144,000 are at work saving people and martyrs are dying
    - So how do we reconcile these two statements?
    - It’s easy when you remember what the Bible says about how faith comes in the first place

### **Rom. 2:4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?**

- Paul says it’s the kindness of God that leads us to repentance, meaning the grace of God working in our hearts prompts our faith response
  - So for those in Tribulation who are recipients of the grace of God, salvation will be the result
  - And these judgments are part of how God prepares their hearts to receive His grace
  - We know that difficult circumstances are often useful to God in bringing a person to the end of themselves
- But as we consider how much calamity the world has experienced thus far, we must consider what it means that “none” are moved to faith by it
  - Unless and until the Lord is at work in someone’s heart, the natural man will not turn to the Lord out of calamity
  - Even unprecedented judgments won’t convince the world to believe
  - Faith isn’t based in fear, or emotion, or even convincing proof
- Faith is a gift that comes from God Himself, according to Ephesians 2:8-9
  - And these judgments make clear the realities of man’s predicament
  - For if ever there were a time when trial and calamity could prompt faith, wouldn’t these circumstances qualify?
  - But the woe judgments simply affirm what we already know from Scripture
  - That apart from God’s work in the heart of the unbeliever, a person will never turn to God
- So at the conclusion of Chapter 9, the judgments of the first half of Tribulation have come to an end

- The seal and trumpet judgments are complete except for the final trumpet judgment, which are the seven bowl judgments
  - As we'll soon see in the next series of chapters, the seven-year Tribulation is now half over
  - And as a result of the first 3.5 years, about 50% of the earth's population is dead
  - One third of the earth is uninhabitable, and one third of all bodies of water are undrinkable and unnavigable
- But the worst is yet to come, as the final woe judgment is coming, which are the Bowl Judgments called the wrath of God or the Great Tribulation
  - But before entering into the events of the second half of Tribulation, Revelation enters an interim period
  - This period explains the events of mid-Tribulation
- The middle of Tribulation is simply a moment when we have experienced half of the 7 years of Tribulation, with half still to come
- This moment is so central as a time of great changes on earth so it deserves special attention in the narrative of Revelation
  - In fact, Revelation devotes four chapters to the events of mid-Tribulation
  - Plus there are additional chapters introducing and concluding the period for a total of six chapters for mid-Trib
  - So Chapter 10-15 are all mid-Tribulation related, which gives you an indication of how important this period is to the story
- But technically, the midpoint of Tribulation is just a brief moment, a point in time dividing the first 3.5 years from the second 3.5 years
  - That halfway point can also be expressed as 42 months or 1,260 days (on the Jewish calendar), times time and half a time
  - But when we say mid-Tribulation, we're not talking about a single moment but a period of time surrounding that moment
- It's an amalgamation of events that happen simultaneously, all stacked on top of each other
- So when we look at these 6 chapters we need to remember that they are happening at the same time
  - And we identify the chapters focused on the mid point of Tribulation by noting time references in each chapter
    - In every mid point chapter (other than the introductory and concluding chapters), we'll find a mid-point reference
    - Those chapters will contain one of three references to mid-Trib moment: times, time and half a time, 42 months or 1,260 days
    - Each of those comments means 3.5 years, which is an indication that we're at the middle of the seven years
    - Chapter 10 talks of what is coming in mid-Trib time, while Chapter 15 talks of what is coming next in Tribulation

- So let's move into the introduction to mid Tribulation

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

**Rev. 10:2** and he had in his hand a little book which was open. He placed his right foot on the sea and his left on the land;

**Rev. 10:3** and he cried out with a loud voice, as when a lion roars; and when he had cried out, the seven peals of thunder uttered their voices.

**Rev. 10:4** When the seven peals of thunder had spoken, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up the things which the seven peals of thunder have spoken and do not write them."

**Rev. 10:5** Then the angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land lifted up his right hand to heaven,

**Rev. 10:6** and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, WHO CREATED HEAVEN AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE EARTH AND THE THINGS IN IT, AND THE SEA AND THE THINGS IN IT, that there will be delay no longer,

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

- John says another strong angel comes down from Heaven, surrounded by cloud and a rainbow above him
  - This is "another" such angel because there was an earlier distinctive angel who descended from Heaven
    - In Chapter 7:2 a similar angel possessing the seal of the living God appeared in a similar way
    - This angel is like the first, but his appearance is different
  - His face was glowing like the sun and his feet were glowing like pillars of fire
    - This fearsome sight suggests an angel of great authority, and we wonder who it might be
    - Clearly, this angel must have a prominent place in Heaven
  - A clue to his identity is found in something he carries: a little book
    - The word for book in Greek is *biblaridion*, and the diminutive (small) version is a *biblos*, or small scroll
    - So John says the angel is carrying a little scroll, something smaller than the usual size of a scroll
  - When that angel reaches the earth, he is so large he places one foot on the sea and another on the land
    - This angel then cried out in a voice so loud and powerful John could only compare it to the sound of a lion's roar
    - If you've ever been in a zoo when a lion decides to let loose with a roar, you know how powerful and shocking that sound is

- In response to that sound, the Heavenly realm responds with seven voices of thunder
  - These voices must have revealed some deep truth to John because he was about to write what he heard
    - But he's ordered not to write it at all but to seal up what he's heard
    - This means to hide or keep secret what he's heard
  - This scene is odd in all its details, and so we are forced to ask what does it all mean? How can we make sense of it?
    - The scene is odd and mostly incomprehensible...unless you had studied a prior book of the Bible
    - Students of the book of Daniel will immediately recognize the scene from something they studied in Chapter 12
  - In that earlier moment we also find a strong angel who appears in a similar manner near land and water
    - And in that earlier moment, a different prophet is also told to seal up things to be revealed in the future
    - And therefore this scene is intended to draw our attention back to that earlier moment
    - And by that connection, we come to understand what's happening here
- So let's spend a little time in Daniel 12 tonight

**Dan. 12:1** “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

**Dan. 12:2** “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

**Dan. 12:3** “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.

**Dan. 12:4** “But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase.”

**Dan. 12:5** Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river and the other on that bank of the river.

**Dan. 12:6** And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, “How long will it be until the end of these wonders?”

**Dan. 12:7** I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.

**Dan. 12:8** As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, “My lord, what will be the outcome of these events?”

**Dan. 12:9** He said, “Go your way, Daniel, for these words are concealed and sealed up until the end time.

- Because we’re dropping into the final chapter of Daniel, let’s spend a moment understanding the context of the passage
  - The chapter opens up with the phrase “Now at that time...”
    - The time that Daniel is speaking about is the time being described at the end of the prior chapter, Chapter 11
    - At the end of Chapter 11, Daniel was explaining the rise and work of the Antichrist in conquering the world
    - That tells us that “at that time” refers to the time of Tribulation, and more specifically the time of the Antichrist’s rise
  - At that time, a powerful and strong angel, Michael, will arise which means to assume his assigned role or station
    - Michael will take his station in a period of great distress unlike any other, which is a reference to the Great Tribulation
    - The Great Tribulation is the name Jesus gives to the second half of Tribulation from Matthew 24

**Matt. 24:21** “For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

- As we move through the mid-Trib chapters, we will learn what makes the second half of Tribulation so great and terrible
- Meanwhile, Daniel’s description in v.5 of what he sees is similar to the description of John’s angel in Revelation 10
  - Daniel’s man in linen is hovering above a river while two other messengers stand on either bank of the river
  - John’s great angel descends over water and lands with one foot on land and one on water
- And in Revelation 10 John hears something spoken by thunder that he can’t reveal but must seal up for a time
  - And likewise, Daniel heard something from the angel but was told not to reveal it either but to seal it up instead
  - The two scenes are so similar it suggests a connection
- Specifically, Daniel’s moment is Part 1 and John’s moment is Part 2 of a single conversation with the same great angel
  - The angel that visits Daniel tells the prophet to prepare a scroll containing a prophecy of the end of the age
    - Daniel is told the wonders he hears about will go on for a time, times and half a time, which is 3.5 years
    - That’s one of our references to the mid-point of the seven-year Tribulation



- So we know Daniel was learning about the second half of Tribulation, the Great Tribulation
  - Daniel can't understand the wonders that take place in the Great Tribulation, so he asks for clarification in v.8
    - But the angel tells Daniel to seal up what he's heard, meaning he should write it on a scroll and seal it up until the end of the age
    - So in effect, the angel was telling Daniel here is what happens during the final days of the age of the Gentiles
    - Write it down and seal it up, because we can't reveal these details to the world until the last days begin
    - Remember, the last days of the age are the times of the Church, as we learned earlier in this study
- So where did that little book go? Moving back to Revelation 10, we find our answer among the second part of this conversation with the angel
  - Daniel's angel took the scroll that Daniel wrote and held on to it until it was time to give it to John in the first century
    - And that's what we see happening in Revelation 10
    - In v.2 John says the angel descends from Heaven carrying that little scroll
  - Then John hears things spoken he can't repeat, at least not yet, things concerning the very end of Tribulation
    - Meanwhile, the angel stands on the sea and land to praise the Lord for not delaying longer in the fulfillment of these things
    - What delay is he talking about? It's the delay that has ensued since the day of Daniel
    - The events of the Great Tribulation were first revealed to Daniel so long ago, but they were sealed
    - And even as they were later revealed to John, they are still yet to be complete
  - But in a future day, that great angel will arise and when he does, the events of the Great Tribulation will finally take place
    - And they will be fulfilled when that seventh trumpet is blown and the Bowl judgments come to pass
    - So it falls to John to reveal the details of the Great Tribulation that Daniel heard so many years earlier

**Rev. 10:8** Then the voice which I heard from heaven, I heard again speaking with me, and saying, "Go, take the book which is open in the hand of the angel who stands on the sea and on the land."

**Rev. 10:9** So I went to the angel, telling him to give me the little book. And he said to me, "Take it and eat it; it will make your stomach bitter, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey."

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

**Rev. 10:11** And they said to me, “You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings.”

- John is told to take the small scroll from the angel and eat it
  - Normally scrolls came on papyrus rolls and were not edible (or at least palatable)
    - But in this case, John is able to do what he is told
    - The angel says the book would be sweet in the mouth but bitter in the stomach
    - We can simulate the experience here at least a little
- The point is there is a bitter-sweet nature to prophecy about God’s judgment and the end of the age
  - For the prophet (and for his audience) there is a certain sweetness to receiving prophecy about the end
    - First, we find the topic attractive and even exciting
    - And since it’s explaining how we move beyond this age and into the next age, it’s very attractive to us
    - These are the good things of prophecy and they are certainly sweet on our lips and we speak about it
  - But as the truth of what that transition requires sinks in, it becomes bitter
    - Because the reality is that this world cannot move from its present age to the next without a whole lot of judgment
    - There are literally billions of souls that will face judgment for sin and they will endure a level of turmoil and distress never seen
    - And for the believers who live in this period of history, the distress will be equally great though for different reasons
  - So as a preparatory step to receiving the knowledge of the end of the age, John is first reminded that this is serious business
    - Then John is called to prophesy what he has received from Daniel
    - That prophecy concerns the state of affairs for many people over the whole world, referring to the events of the Great Tribulation
    - So what follows in Chapters 11-19 are the events that John receives from Daniel so to speak
    - And John now has the privilege of revealing what Daniel first heard but sealed
- Let’s finish by going back to Daniel 12 for one last bit of information

**Dan. 12:10** “Many will be purged, purified and refined, but the wicked will act wickedly; and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand.

**Dan. 12:11** “From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

- Earlier in Daniel 12:7 we learned that the events Daniel was recording on his scroll would last for a time, times and half a time
- We also know that Tribulation is started by the covenant talked about in Daniel 9
  - Between the Antichrist and Israel, allowing the people to return to sacrificing in a new temple of some kind
  - Officially beginning the 7 years of Tribulation
- Now Daniel 12 confirms that the midpoint of Tribulation comes 1,260 days after the signing of the covenant
  - We can see that the time on either side of the midpoint is the same
- v.11 defines the mid-point as when the Antichrist abolishes sacrifice at the temple
  - Affirming that the covenant is key to driving the timing of Tribulation
- You might spot that from the time of the abolishing of sacrifice until the abomination of desolation, there is still 30 days unaccounted for (1,290 days)
  - Over the next several weeks we will focus on the next four chapters
    - What goes on in the middle of Tribulation and why
    - How it relates to the covenant being broken
  - We'll return to that 30 day period when we study Chapter 19



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# Revelation

# 2020 - Lesson

# 11

## Chapter 11

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- Welcome to the mid-point of Daniel's Seventieth Seven, or as we call it, the Tribulation
  - We've reached the middle of the seven-year period designated to end this age and bring about Christ's Second Coming
    - It's a time the prophets have been speaking about for millennia
    - It's a time of unimaginable calamity, death, destruction, mayhem
    - And at the center of it is one man who takes over the world, the Antichrist
  - As we learned earlier, anyone who opposes Jesus is – by definition – an antichrist
    - And beyond that, we also learned that the spirit behind that opposition is always the same spirit, Satan
    - So while there are many antichrists on earth today and everyday, there will be one particular man who rises above them all
    - That man is the focus of our attention from this point forward in Tribulation
  - Last week we studied Chapter 10, which was a transition chapter leading us into the middle of the Tribulation
    - The mid-point of the seven years is so important that Scripture measures in three different ways
    - It's marked as times, time and half a time, 1,260 days and 42 months
    - We will find one of these references in all the chapters that describe the events of mid-Tribulation
- In Chapter 10, John received a small scroll from a powerful angel
  - That scroll was originally written by the prophet Daniel, but he was told to seal it up and hand it back to a powerful angel for safe keeping
    - Then in Chapter 10 that same angel handed the scroll to John and told him to eat it
    - Symbolically, John took in Daniel's prophecy so he could then share it with us
    - What was this special prophecy? Back in Daniel, we're told that this secret prophecy regards the second half of Tribulation

**Dan. 12:7 I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half a time; and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these events will be completed.**

- The Lord tells Daniel that the events contained in this secret prophecy would last 3.5 years
  - And at the end of those 3.5 years, Daniel is told the events of this prophecy would be completed
  - That tells us this prophecy deals with the final 3.5 years of the Tribulation, which is what we now go to study in Revelation
- And Daniel 12:7 also reminded us that the point of all this calamity was to shatter the power of the holy people

- The holy people refers to the people of Israel, and shattering refers to breaking their resistance to God and His word
- So as we learned before, the ultimate outcome of Tribulation is to bring Israel to faith and fulfill the promises God gave them
- And the events of mid-Tribulation and beyond put that plan in high gear
- Finally, remember that the events of mid-Tribulation are centered on the 3.5 year moment, but they span time on either side of that point
  - So what we study in chapters 11-14 are all happening at the same time
- And so at the very end of Chapter 10, John has now taken in the prophecy originally given to Daniel and he's commanded to deliver it to us

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

**Rev. 11:1** Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.

**Rev. 11:2** "Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.

- Although the disasters of Tribulation are focused on Israel, nonetheless the scale of what God does impacts every nation and tongue and even kings
  - But it's centered on one place, one region of the world, and that place takes center stage during the middle of Tribulation
    - John is taken to a Jewish temple and told to measure it and make note of who worship there
    - Interestingly, John is told to measure the temple but never gives us the measurements
    - So clearly, the size of the building is not the point here
  - The point is much more obvious...there is a temple in Israel again and it has worshippers around the altar
    - The temple of Israel was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, and it has not existed since that day
    - Though the orthodox Jews dearly desire to rebuild their temple, they have been unable to do so for nearly 2,000 years
  - But according to John's vision, there is a day coming when the temple will return in some form
    - And when it does, the nation will once again worship there before the altar of God
    - In the design of the temple, the altar sits outside in a courtyard around the building housing the Holy Place and Holy of Holies
    - That courtyard is itself surrounded by a wall separating Jews from Gentiles

- John is told to measure only the courtyard where the altar stands and the worshippers gathered but not the Gentile court
- Those instructions serve to focus our attention on three facts concerning mid-Tribulation
  - First, as we enter the middle Tribulation period we learn that the temple is operating in Israel and the Jewish people are worshipping there
    - So despite the war and supernatural calamities taking place during the first half of Tribulation, the temple continues to operate
    - That suggests strongly that the Lord has been sparing Israel from these disasters during this time
    - And if so, it would only serve to reinforce Israel's desire to return to their God and to worship at the temple
    - So while the rest of the world is in turmoil and cursing the name of God, Israel is at rest (to a degree) and in worship
  - Secondly, we learn that the existence of the temple doesn't mean the Age of the Gentiles has ended, at least not yet
    - Notice in v.2 we're told that the Gentiles continue to tread down the holy city
    - We remember that the Age of the Gentiles was defined by Jesus in Luke 21

**Luke 21:24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.**

- The Lord has placed Gentiles over Israel during this age, and as Daniel 2 & 7 taught us, this age won't end until Jesus' Second Coming
  - So even though we are only 3.5 years away from Jesus' return, still the city of Jerusalem remains trampled by Gentiles
  - And that trampling is about to get much worse
- Which brings us to the third and final important detail at the opening of Chapter 11... our mid-Tribulation reference
  - Remember last week I told you that the chapters of Revelation that deal with the midpoint of Tribulation will all contain a time reference
    - These chapters will each have one or more mentions of the midpoint using one of our three ways of measuring time
    - In this case, we see the mention of 42 months, which is 3.5 years
  - That reference tells us that this chapter is anchored to the middle of the seven years
    - And therefore it has something to say about how we move from the first half to the second half
    - But the question becomes how does this chapter relate to the mid point?
    - And to learn that, we must keep reading

**Rev. 11:3** “And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.”

**Rev. 11:4** These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth.

**Rev. 11:5** And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.

**Rev. 11:6** These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

- Abruptly, John begins describing a new scene involving two prophets
  - We were hearing about the temple, but now we’re suddenly talking about two prophets
    - These two topics may seem unrelated, but as we’ll see the two are closely connected
    - John says these men prophesy for 1,260 days, which is another of our three ways of describing 3.5 years
  - So John is connecting the operation of the temple with the ministry of these men
    - That during the time the temple stands (42 months), these men also prophesy in Israel (1,260 days)
    - So like the operation of the temple, the ministry of these two men is also closely connected to the midpoint of Tribulation
  - They are called the Lord’s two witnesses, and a witness is someone who testifies concerning the truth in some matter
    - And we’re reminded what the Law says concerning the necessity of witnesses prior to condemnation

**Deut. 19:15** “A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed.

- Before the Law condemned someone for sin, their offense must be confirmed by the testimony of at least 2 witnesses
- So the ministry of these two men serves the purpose of condemning the world for its sin prior to judgment
- We often talk of being witnesses for Christ, but don’t forget there are two biblical purposes in witnessing
  - One purpose is to bring a message of the truth so that a person might be convicted and repent and be saved by faith
  - But a second purpose of a witness is to testify concerning someone’s sin for the purpose of conviction and condemnation



- Their ministry seems to serve both purposes, but especially the latter
- They wear only sackcloth, which is the traditional garb of prophets mourning and suffering in Israel, and they have supernatural powers John says
  - Like the 144,000 in Chapter 7, many speculate on the identities of these two individuals
    - People love to conjecture over which Old Testament prophets these men might be
    - And some believe they are entirely symbolic, even going to so far as speculating that they represent the World Trade Center towers
  - But like the 144,000, all that speculation is completely unnecessary because the text itself tells us who they are
    - In v.4 John tells us these characters are men we've heard about before
    - They are the two olive trees and two lampstands before the Lord, John says, which is a clear reference to Zechariah 4

**Zech. 4:1** Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep.

**Zech. 4:2** He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it;

**Zech. 4:3** also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side."

**Zech. 4:4** Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?"

**Zech. 4:5** So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."

**Zech. 4:6** Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.

**Zech. 4:7** 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"'"

**Zech. 4:8** Also the word of the LORD came to me, saying,

**Zech. 4:9** "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you.

**Zech. 4:10** "For who has despised the day of small things? But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel — these are the eyes of the LORD which range to and fro throughout the earth."

**Zech. 4:11** Then I said to him, "What are these two olive trees on the right of the lampstand and on its left?"

**Zech. 4:12** And I answered the second time and said to him, "What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves?"

**Zech. 4:13** So he answered me, saying, "Do you not know what these are?" And I

said, “No, my lord.”

**Zech. 4:14** Then he said, “These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.”

- Zechariah was written shortly after Daniel and Ezekiel wrote their books, and it addresses similar topics
  - Specifically, the book is written to those exiles of Israel that returned to the land after the 70 years of exile was complete
    - Remember, the Lord designated that Israel spend 70 years outside the land to make up for ignoring the land sabbath
    - And then that 70 years of exile would be followed by another seventy sevens (490 years) for the Age of the Gentiles
  - But after the first 70 years, the people of Israel were allowed to return to the land, but there wasn't much waiting for them
    - And in particular, they lacked a temple since it had been destroyed by Babylon
    - It took 49 years for Israel to rebuild it
    - And in that time the Lord spoke to His people through several prophets including Zechariah
  - Zechariah's book speaks to Israel about the Lord restoring their fortunes while judging the nations around Israel that took advantage of her
    - In particular, the Lord assures Israel that His servant Zerubbabel will succeed in rebuilding the temple
    - This accomplishment will be done not by the man's might but by God's Spirit
  - And that temple will sit atop a plain on the mountain of God, and therefore do not despise the day of small beginnings
    - The Lord is alluding to the future of that modest temple
    - What Zerubbabel builds will eventually become Herod's Temple, one of the greatest structures of the world
    - And it will sit atop a flat plain built to hold the massive building
- But then Zechariah wonders about the lampstands and olive trees standing on either side
  - And the Lord tells Zechariah these are the two anointed ones but the phrase in Hebrew literally reads the two sons of oil
    - And these two men stand by the Lord of the whole earth
    - That phrase means that their ministry will have worldwide impact, meaning they literally impact every person on earth
  - It's hard to imagine how any one person could have a worldwide impact in ministry...not even Paul impacted every human being
    - And according to Zechariah their worldwide impact is connected in some way to the temple
    - And now in Revelation 11:4 were told the the two prophets of Tribulation will be the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy

- Back Revelation 11 we're told that these men have a supernatural protection that prevents their enemies from harming them
  - In fact, they can make fire come from their mouths to devour an enemy that tried to harm them
  - That's quite some superpower, and it leads us to wonder why are these men so hated that they need this defense?
- The next verse explains why...they also possess power to make life on earth utterly miserable for everyone
  - They can stop rain from falling on earth during the time of their ministry
  - Additionally, they can turn water to blood and strike the earth with every plague as often as they desire
  - Now we know why the earth wants to harm them and yet for 3.5 years the Lord protects them from harm
- So we know these guys were prophesying to the world for 3.5 years, and in that time they could not be harmed
  - Meanwhile, they brought great harm on the earth and naturally everyone hated them for it
    - What was the point of their ministry? We don't know what they were saying specifically
    - But since the Lord calls them witnesses it's not hard to guess
  - It's likely they were declaring the end had come and that the judgments the world was experiencing were a preview of the end
    - In a sense, these guys were the narrators for the natural disasters that were playing out everywhere
    - They provided an explanation to accompany the seal and trumpet judgments so that no one missed the point
    - In that sense, they testified to the truth of God's purpose in these events
  - But interestingly, these guys are also gifted by God to bring many of the same judgments themselves
    - So while Jesus is producing drought by holding back the four winds of the earth, these guys are doing the same
    - While Jesus is causing the seas to turn to blood, so are these guys at times
    - While Jesus brings plague after plague through the seal and trumpet judgments, so will these guys do the same
  - Why have the duplication? Well, consider how it must look from the standpoint of how the world experiences the first half of Tribulation
    - They can't see what Jesus is doing in Heaven, but they do see what happens on earth and they see what these men are doing
    - And so naturally, the world will see these men as the specific cause of all the tragedies that come upon the earth
  - During the first 3.5 years of Tribulation, they will be blamed for everything bad that happens

- Which will ensure that the world connects the events they see with the explanations that these men offer
  - No one will pin it on “climate change” or aliens or Brexit...everyone will hear these things are a judgment from God
  - But the world will choose to see these two men as the cause and they will look no further
- But the Lord only appoints these men to warn the world for 3.5 years, so when we reach the middle of Tribulation, their time is up

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

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

**Rev. 11:9** Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb.

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

- John says that as these men finish their testimony after 3.5 years, the Lord will allow them to be killed
  - In v.7 he says they will be overcome by a beast that comes up out of the abyss
    - We know what the abyss is since we studied that back in Chapter 9 as part of the trumpet judgments
    - It's the place where the Lord has confined the disobedient angelic realm
  - So clearly the beast is connected to the demonic realm, and the term reminds us of the beasts mentioned in Daniel 7
    - For now we know nothing more about this beast
    - But we'll soon know a lot more about the beast later in the mid-Tribulation chapters
  - After they are killed, their bodies will remain visible in a great city for three days
    - Although unnamed here, we can clearly see what city this is
    - It's the city where their Lord was crucified, which can only be Jerusalem
  - But John says this city is also mystically called Sodom and Egypt
    - Sodom was a city of great depravity while Egypt was the nation that first introduced idolatry to the Jewish people
    - So John is saying that in the day of these events Jerusalem will not be a holy city as God intended
    - On the contrary, by the time of mid-Tribulation Jerusalem will become a city of great depravity and idolatry
    - And as we learn later, the beast will be connected to these things

- After they die, their bodies are left unburied for three days, and during this time the world is celebrating their death like nothing else the world has seen
  - The world turns the occasion of their death into a cause for celebration, even like Christmas
    - They give gifts to one another and rejoice
    - And why? Because they say these two prophets tormented the earth
  - Remember, I said that the world is likely to conflate their plagues with those coming from Heaven
    - So the world blames these men for everything bad that's happened since the start of Tribulation
    - Can you imagine how much the world must have hated these men after seeing so much destruction?
    - Just the first woe judgment of five months of stinging would have been enough to make these two men hated like no other
  - No wonder the world was trying so hard to kill these men, and no wonder the Lord had to give them supernatural powers to defend themselves
    - And when they are killed, the world believes the bad days have finally come to an end, like the end of WWI but far greater
    - And what do we suppose the world will think of the one who defeats them?
    - The "beast" will certainly be celebrated as a world hero
  - How were these men connected to the operation of the temple?
    - According to Zechariah 4, these men will conduct their ministry out of the temple
    - So during the first half of the Tribulation, the Lord uses them as a form a protection for the nation of Israel and the temple
    - They seem to protect the temple from the destruction of the plagues and enemy attacks
    - That's why in the narrative of Revelation 11 the operation of the temple is associated with the ministry of these two men

**Rev. 11:11** But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them.

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

**Rev. 11:13** And in 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.

- After 3.5 days, the Lord will resurrect their dead bodies so that they return to life and stand upright again

- Naturally, seeing two dead bodies return to life after 3+ days of death will strike fear into the hearts of the world
  - But even more than the miracle of resurrection, the world fears the prospect of these men returning to ministry again
  - The world is watching this resurrection and becomes terrified that the plagues will start again
- But then the witnesses heard the Lord calling them up to Heaven
  - And as their enemies watched, these men were taken to Heaven in their resurrected bodies
  - The message to the world is clear: God approved of these men and what they did and what they said
  - So the world was rejoicing prematurely
- In all these things, we now see how Zechariah's promise that these men would have a worldwide ministry could be true
  - Not a person on earth won't have heard of these men and/or won't be impacted by what they say and do
    - And not a person on the earth won't be happy to hear they have died or be afraid when they return to life
    - And the worldwide impact of their ministry goes one step further as their bodies are viewed by the whole world
  - Many speculate that the world's unified response to the events of the two witnesses is made possible by modern technology
    - But I believe all modern technology will be inoperable by this point of Tribulation
    - The disasters will have been too great to allow modern infrastructure to operate
  - So the whole earth knows of what they do because the whole earth will be reduced to a relatively small community centered on the Middle East
    - Furthermore, the impact will be so widespread that everyone is talking about the same thing
    - And the two witnesses are known to everyone as a result
- We know these men are connected to mid-Tribulation, but some wonder if they operate in the first half of Tribulation or the second half
  - They are operating in the first half of Tribulation and as we look back on the events of this chapter, we see that clearly
    - First, the timeline can't fit in the second half of Tribulation
    - We know the second half ends with Jesus' Second coming exactly 3.5 years after the mid point
    - But we're told these men serve for 3.5 years and then their bodies are viewed for an additional 3.5 days after that
    - Those extra few days aren't very long, but still they are more time than exists in the second half of Tribulation

- Secondly, these men will be killed by the rise of the beast from the abyss at the end of their ministry
  - And as we will learn in a couple of chapters from now, the rise of the beast happens at the midpoint of Tribulation
  - Since they are killed at the midpoint of Tribulation, they must serve in the first half of Tribulation
  - Finally, look at the final verse of the chapter

**Rev. 11:14 The second woe is past; behold, the third woe is coming quickly.**

- We know that there will be three woe judgments and then the Tribulation will come to an end
  - The first woe judgment was the demonic scorpions
  - After that woe ended, we were told that one woe was past and two more woes were still coming
- And then the second woe judgment was the army of 200 million demons who killed a third of mankind
  - That woe judgment brought us to the middle of Tribulation
  - The final woe judgment will be the seven bowl judgments which come at the very end of Tribulation
- But as we leave Chapter 11, we're told that the second woe judgment is done yet the third one remains
  - That would indicate that we are still waiting for the seven bowl judgments to start
  - So the second woe has just ended and the third has yet to begin, and meanwhile the two witnesses are now dead and resurrected
  - So clearly, they were living and ministering during the first half of Tribulation and have died now at mid-Tribulation
- Which leads us to a brief moment to end the chapter, which looks forward to the coming end

**Rev. 11:15 Then the seventh angel sounded; 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 will reign forever and ever."**

**Rev. 11:16 And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God,**

**Rev. 11:17 saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign.**

**Rev. 11:18 "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."**

**Rev. 11:19 And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of**

**His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.**

- The seventh angel sounds in v.15, and this refers to the seventh trumpet, which are the seven bowl judgments that end the Tribulation
  - At the sounding of that seventh trumpet, there are voices in Heaven declaring that the world has become the Kingdom
    - In other words, the seventh trumpet leads us to Christ's Second Coming and into the long promised Kingdom on earth
    - And with that proclamation, the elders fall to their faces to worship God for fulfilling His promise
  - Since we are made to live in bodies and on earth, I must imagine that the saints in Heaven are specially eager to see the Kingdom
    - As much as we look forward to it, at least for now we have a body and live in a world we call home
    - But these elders are living in the Heavenly realm, which brings them a step closer to the Kingdom but yet is not a real home
    - So I wonder if they are even more eager for the Kingdom having come so close to it
  - And in vs.18-19 the elders begin to tell the story of the Lord's faithfulness to His promises, retelling the events of Tribulation
    - The nations were enraged against God and then God's wrath came, which is a reference to the bowl judgments
    - Following that is the time to judge the dead and to reward the believers
    - And the temple in Heaven was then opened and the ark in that heavenly temple appears along with great natural powers
  - The overall scene at the end of Chapter 11 serves as a foreshadowing of where the story is going, but it's not there yet
    - In fact, we will see this preview a second time in Chapter 15, the chapter that leads us out of the mid-Tribulation chapters
    - But the bowl judgments are coming without doubt
    - And when they come, they will be followed quickly by the Lord's return and the events that follow leading into the Kingdom
    - And that's where we return next time...





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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

# 12

## Chapter 12:1-17

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- In our last study, we moved into the mid-Tribulation period of our study
  - Revelation Chapters 11-14 cover the events that take place in and around the 3.5 year mark of the Tribulation
    - Each chapter reveals a a piece of a puzzle, a different aspect of the events that mark this important moment
    - And the number of chapters devoted to the mid-point of Tribulation makes clear how important this time will be
  - Last time we studied Chapter 11, which revealed that during the first half of Tribulation, two men were prophesying in Israel
    - They condemn the world for their sin while bringing great disasters that mirror the judgments of the first half of tribulation
    - In that way, they become the narrators for the destruction taking place because of the seal and trumpet judgments
    - And as a result the world comes to despise these men, so that when they finally are killed, the world celebrates
  - A beast was finally able to overpower them, but how did that beast gain the ability to defeat the Lord's anointed?
    - We don't get those details in Chapter 11, but they're coming
    - Meanwhile, the chapter ended with a preview of the end to come
    - And that will be a recurring feature of the mid-tribulation chapters
    - The events of mid-tribulation are the final act of God in this age, which sets in the motion the events that bring the age to an end
- Now we move to the next mid-tribulation chapter and with it a new piece of our puzzle

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

**Rev. 12:2 and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.**

**Rev. 12:3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems.**

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

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

- The twelfth chapter opens with two signs, and these signs work together to tell a single story concerning mid-Tribulation
  - A sign is, by definition, a symbol that stands for something in the real world
    - Signs are convenient tools that teach us something about the thing they represent

- For example, as we drive on a highway and approach the outskirts of a city we may see a city limits sign
  - The sign will be labeled with the name of the city, as in our case the sign would say “San Antonio” and maybe the population
  - By what we learn on the sign, we know the city is nearby and we can anticipate how big it will be
- But that small sign is not the actual city; it’s far smaller, of course, nor does it resemble the city at all
  - We can’t live in the sign, we can’t make the sign our home, etc.
  - So though the sign pointed us to the city and taught us something about the city, it looked nothing like the city
- That may seem obvious, but often Bible students make the mistake of conflating a biblical sign for the true, physical reality it represents
  - They fail to translate the sign into its true form, and when we do that we will misinterpret the meaning
  - Imagine the mistakes we would make if we assumed that a road sign *was* the actual city?
- As we open in Chapter 12, we are given two signs, and we know they are signs because John tells us so
  - Therefore, we must translate these signs into something real, and what we choose must fit all the data we have in this chapter and in the Bible
    - The first sign is a woman with a child, but since that’s the sign we know the interpretation isn’t a literal woman or literal child
    - The woman represents something else as does the child
    - We have to keep reading to understand the meaning of these signs
  - In v.5 we’re told that the child is a son Who will rule all the nations with a rod of iron
    - The reference to ruling with a rod of iron comes from Psalm 2

**Psa. 2:7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:**

**He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.**

**Psa. 2:8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,  
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.**

**Psa. 2:9 ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
You shall shatter them like earthenware.’”**

- So a child represents the Messiah, and of course Jesus came into the world as a child born to a woman
  - But notice this sign concludes with the child in Heaven on His throne
  - So the child doesn’t represent the baby Jesus... Jesus doesn’t sit on a throne and rule the earth as a child

- It refers to Jesus the Messiah destined to rule as King over all the nations and seated on His throne in Heaven awaiting the Kingdom
  - That distinction is important because it keeps us from making the wrong interpretation when we get to the woman
  - Because if we forget to translate the sign into reality, our interpretation would be too simplistic (baby=baby Jesus)
  - And if we do that, then naturally the woman will be interpreted as Mary, Jesus' earthly mother
- But the woman is a sign, and as such she doesn't represent a literal woman, much less Mary
  - So what does the woman represent? The context gives us our answer
    - Notice the woman is clothed with sun, moon under her feet and has a crown of twelve stars on her head
    - Because the Catholic religion has deified Mary, they typically depict Mary according to this description
    - Once again, that's treating the sign as the reality which is a misinterpretation of the text
  - Instead, we follow our rules of interpretation for determining the meaning of a woman with sun, moon and stars
    - First, we consult the immediate context...but find nothing
    - Secondly, we consult the rest of Revelation...but there is nothing else in the book
    - So we go to the rest of the Bible looking for that symbol, and we find our answer in Genesis

**Gen. 37:5** Then Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more.

**Gen. 37:6** He said to them, "Please listen to this dream which I have had;

**Gen. 37:7** for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and lo, my sheaf rose up and also stood erect; and behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf."

**Gen. 37:8** Then his brothers said to him, "Are you actually going to reign over us? Or are you really going to rule over us?" So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words.

**Gen. 37:9** Now he had still another dream, and related it to his brothers, and said, "Lo, I have had still another dream; and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me."

**Gen. 37:10** He related it to his father and to his brothers; and his father rebuked him and said to him, "What is this dream that you have had? Shall I and your mother and your brothers actually come to bow ourselves down before you to the ground?"

- Joseph was one of two men in the Bible that received revelation from God through

dreams

- Joseph's dreams communicated through symbols and the symbols were always explained in the same context as the dream
  - In this case, the dream came in two parts, and I've provided the two parts so we can see the meaning even more clearly
  - In the first part of the dream, Joseph and his brothers are represented as sheaves of wheat
- This first part of the dream establishes the central meaning of the dream
  - Joseph's family would bow down to him in a future day
  - We know this was fulfilled when Joseph goes to Egypt
  - But when his family heard this prophecy, Joseph's brothers react in anger at the suggestion they would serve Joseph
- The second part of the dream repeats this central thought but adds additional detail
  - In the second part of the dream the symbols change from wheat to celestial bodies
  - Joseph sees the sun, moon and stars bowing down to him, and he shares that with his family
  - As he relates his dream to his family, Joseph's father, Jacob, reacts in anger because he too understands its meaning
- Jacob's response gives us the proper interpretation of the symbols
  - Jacob says the sun, moon and eleven stars represent Jacob, his wife Rachel, and the eleven sons of Israel (not counting Joseph)
    - So we now have a Biblical interpretation of what a vision of the sun, moon and stars means
    - It represents the family of Israel (Jacob), or we could say the people of Israel
  - Confirming that conclusion, we also see Scripture representing the nation of Israel as a woman

**Jer. 3:8** **“And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.**

- So our interpretation fits perfectly...
  - A woman with sun, moon and stars represents the nation of Israel, the twelve tribes that came from Jacob
- Furthermore, that interpretation fits the combination of woman giving birth to a child
  - Israel as a nation brought forth the Messiah, just as the sign of a woman giving birth to a child
  - Jesus was Jewish, born out of the family of Jacob
  - So the first sign of a woman giving birth is Israel bringing forth the Messiah into

the world

- Next, we turn to the third sign of a dragon and this sign is also complex
  - By following our rules for interpretation, we find our answer quite easily this time because the interpretation is given in v.9
    - The dragon is the serpent of old – Satan – so the identity of the dragon is clear
    - Going further, the dragon has a “tail” that sweeps a third of the stars from heaven and down to earth
    - Since we know the dragon isn’t literally a dragon then the tail isn’t literal either and neither are the stars
  - So what do stars represents when they are used symbolically? They usually represent angels and the text later confirms it
    - Remember we already learned that stars that fall are symbols of demonic (or fallen) angels, as we saw in earlier chapters
    - And we know that Satan is the leader of the realm of fallen angels who fell from Heaven with him
    - And again in v.9 we find an interpretation given to us that these stars are the fallen angels that followed Satan in his rebellion
  - Therefore, logically the tail represents Satan’s corrupting influence which “swept” angels out of heaven
    - The symbology describes Satan’s fall and the rebellion of a third of the angelic realm that followed him
    - And when that sign is combined with the earlier sign, we find the chapter is telling a story about Satan’s opposition to Jesus
    - The dragon had been waiting for the Messiah intending to devour the “child” when He appeared, but Satan did not succeed
    - Jesus triumphed on the cross and was caught up to His throne
  - But Satan knows that isn’t the end of the story...so he’s continued fighting against the Messiah hoping he can find a way to win in the end
    - But since Jesus has left the earth for a time, Satan has no choice but to direct His attacks elsewhere
    - And the symbols in this chapter explain how Satan has changed his tactics since Jesus’ departure
    - And more specifically, this chapter explains how the enemy’s attacks will change at the mid-point of Tribulation
- Next, we tackle the most difficult part of the second sign: the dragon’s seven heads, seven diadems (or crowns) and ten horns
  - As good Bible students, we should immediately recognize these symbols
    - They should be familiar to us because of our previous study of Daniel 7
    - In that chapter, Daniel saw a dream of four strange beasts, and the final, dreadful beast possessed similar features

**Dan. 7:7 “After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth**

**beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.**

**Dan. 7:8** “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

**Dan. 7:23** “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.

**Dan. 7:24** ‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

**Dan. 7:25** ‘He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

- This passage is review for us, since we studied Daniel 7 earlier in this course
  - The fourth beast in Daniel 7 represents the final Gentile kingdom that rules the world during this age
  - It began with the Roman Empire and evolved into the Imperialistic-Democratic Alliances of our world today
- Eventually at the very end of this age, the Fourth Kingdom will take the form of a ten-king ruling structure that controls the entire planet
  - These ten kings are represented as toes on the statue in Daniel 2
  - And they are represented as ten horns on the beast in Daniel 7
- Then at a later point, Daniel 7 tells us the ten horns will be reduced to seven because an eleventh ruler rises to subdue three of the ten
  - This coup results in the eleventh leader becoming the absolute authority for a period of time, times and half a time (3½ years)
  - That phrase, as you remember, means 3.5 years, and it is the telltale sign that we are in a mid-Tribulation moment
  - And it’s also the key to connecting Revelation 12 to Daniel 7
- According to Daniel 7, the world is ruled by ten kings for the first half of Tribulation but at the 3.5 year point, the eleventh takes over
  - Then that eleventh king proceeds to rule over the whole world for the final three and a half years of the age
  - We will get more detail on these events in Chapter 13 of Revelation
- So for now let’s go back to Revelation 12 and apply what we’ve learned to interpreting the meaning of the dragon’s features
  - The dragon has ten horns, and from Daniel 7 we know those horns represent the

ten kings that will rule the world as the tribulation starts

- But Daniel 7 also tells us that by the time of mid-tribulation, we have only seven kings ruling the world (plus the antichrist)
- So that means we have seven kings ruling what ten kings previously ruled...*seven* kings over *ten* kingdoms
- Looking at the dragon again, we find that symbology evident: seven heads with diadems (or crowns) with ten horns
  - At the mid point of Tribulation, the three rulers are gone leaving behind seven yet the ten kingdoms remain
  - So the seven now divide up responsibility for ruling over the ten kingdoms
- And since all these features are present on the dragon and we know the dragon is Satan, the implication is clear
  - Those seven leaders are pawns under the control of Satan, they are *his* heads
  - And the ten kingdoms these men rule belong to Satan...they are *his* horns
  - Therefore, Satan controls the kings and kingdoms, meaning Satan is the god of this world

**2Cor. 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 2Cor. 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

- Now we can put the symbols together to tell the story John recorded
  - A woman, Israel, was created to bring forth a Messiah Who would defeat the Dragon, Satan, who controls the fallen world
    - The dragon, in his long-standing war with God, knew his adversary would come one day
    - So from the beginning, the dragon has anticipated the arrival of Messiah and sought to stop that plan
  - We know God first announced the plan of His coming Messiah to Satan while in the Garden of Eden

**Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her seed;  
He shall bruise you on the head,  
And you shall bruise him on the heel.**

- Satan isn't omniscient so he couldn't know in advance Who the Messiah would be, so he has attacked in multiple places
- Initially, Satan corrupted Cain and used Cain to kill Abel
  - The purpose was to corrupt the seed through whom God would bring the Messiah



- With Cain a murderer and Abel dead, it seemed God's plan was stopped in its tracks...and then came Seth
- Later Satan sent his demons to mate with women during the time of Noah
- He hoped to corrupt humanity and prevent the Messiah's birth, but the Lord wiped out that corruption with a flood
- The story of the Bible is a story of God working to fulfill His promises of a Messiah while the enemy worked to oppose that plan
  - So along the way, Satan has attacked everything and everyone who seems to him to be important to God's plan
  - And once God called Abraham out of Ur, the enemy had a focus for his anger and attack
- Once it became clear that the Lord intended to bring the Messiah through His people Israel, they became the #1 enemy for Satan
  - The Jews have long been the world's most persecuted people and they remain so today
    - Because the enemy understands how Israel is key to God's plan to bring a Messiah Who would destroy Satan
    - Satan tried to corrupt Israel time and time again, introducing idol worship and all manner of evil to God's people
  - When the Messiah was born, Satan used Herod to kill all the infant boys in Bethlehem hoping to stop the child
    - Later, Satan used Judas to bring Jesus to death, which Satan hoped would lead to God's defeat
    - Instead, it sealed his own fate, yet the war goes on
  - So vs.1-5 are background reminding us of Satan's ages-old effort to stop the coming of Messiah as promised in Genesis 3:15
    - The dragon attacked the woman not in one single moment (like during Herod's murder of the children) but throughout the ages
    - Satan's attacks always failed, because the god of this world is no match for the true God
  - The Messiah came as promised, completed His mission on earth, and then was caught up to His throne with the Father
    - And in the future He rules the nations with a rod of iron
    - Then the story continues...

**Rev. 12:6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.**

- We know the woman is Israel, so Israel is fleeing as a nation into the wilderness to a place prepared for her for 3½ years
  - Here we have our reference to 3.5 years, which is proof that this chapter is

describing something that happens in the middle of the Tribulation

- At the midpoint of Tribulation the nation of Israel will be given shelter and nourishment for the second half of Tribulation
- We don't know the specific circumstances yet, but that comes next

**Rev. 12:7** And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war,

**Rev. 12:8** and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven.

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

**Rev. 12:10** Then 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, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

**Rev. 12:11** "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

**Rev. 12:12** "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

- John describes a great war in Heaven where Michael, the chief angel, wages a war with the dragon and his demons
  - This war will result in Satan being thrown down to the earth, which sounds like a description of Satan's fall at his rebellion
    - We know that event happened long ago, during the time of the Garden and Adam and Woman
    - Yet this war is happening at the 3.5 year point of Tribulation, according to our time reference in v.6
    - So this is a different war...not Satan's original fall but something that has yet to happen and won't happen until mid-Tribulation
  - As the rest of the passage explains, this is the moment Satan and the demonic realm loses access to the throne room of God
    - Since Satan's original fall, he and his demons have maintained access to God and the heavenly realm at least in some sense
    - Notice in v.10 John says that Satan is the accuser of the brethren who accuses us of our sin before God day and night
    - Other Scripture confirms that Satan has access to the Lord

**Job 1:6** Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.

**Job 1:7** The LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.”

- So imagine every time you sin, you give Satan something to declare before God, Who must defend His assignment of grace
- But at mid-Tribulation, all that changes, and for the first time in history, the enemy is forever barred from Heaven
  - At that point, the angel Michael and the other angels wage a war against Satan and his angels
    - The sense is that Michael initiates the war selecting the timing to fit God’s plan
    - And when the war takes place, the good guys win and Satan and his demons are kicked out of Heaven and down to the earth
  - Up to this point in history, Satan’s dominion has been the earth, but since he had access to Heaven, he hasn’t felt defeated
    - He could roam back and forth from earth to Heaven as Job 1 taught us
    - And that allowed Satan to remain self-deceived about his chances for success in his battle against God
    - He may have lost his privileged position as the covering cherub, but still he was free to access the throne room
  - But in v.10 John hears a declaration from heaven that the kingdom of Christ is now ready to appear because the rule of Satan is ending
    - That declaration, together with Satan’s expulsion from Heaven, puts Satan on alert that the end he has always feared has come
    - And the Heavens will celebrate his impending doom and the arrival of the Lord’s kingdom on Earth
  - Heaven will be glad to be rid of him, and remember, we will be in Heaven during this time too, so you will share that joy
    - We will have experienced his presence in the throne room and will watch him at work accusing the brethren
    - We will be cheering as well when we see Michael kick Satan out of Heaven
- We might ask why didn’t God do this a long time ago? Why has God been so patient (and continues to be patient even now) allowing Satan this access?
  - In a word, it’s grace to the world because to have removed Satan’s access earlier would have brought Satan’s response earlier
    - Notice in vs.11-12 Satan’s expulsion from Heaven puts him on notice that his time is running out
    - Satan understands that when God bars him from Heaven, the end of His reign on Earth is approaching
    - And that causes Satan to respond like a cornered animal fighting for his life
  - Satan’s rage and fear drive him to lash out against anyone who his aligned with

## God

- And now that Satan is confined to earth, he is limited to taking out his anger in that realm – so the Heavens declare woe on the Earth
  - The Earth will suffer greatly at having an angry Satan confined there, and specifically Satan’s enemies suffer greatly
- Had the Lord sent Satan out of Heaven earlier, then Heaven would certainly have been better off, but the earth would have been much worse
  - The saints have always endured Satan’s attacks
  - But had Satan lost access to Heaven earlier, those attacks would have been much worse
- So why does God take this step now? Why subject the earth to even 3.5 years of Satan’s wrath?
  - Because the Lord wants Satan to play an important role in the events that end Tribulation
  - And in order to get Satan to play his part as planned, the Lord must confine Satan to the earth
- So God is waiting to bar Satan from Heaven until mid-Tribulation because He knows that taking that step will bring great misery to Earth
  - The effect of Satan’s expulsion will be to provoke Satan to great anger and ruthless attacks against those who are aligned with God
    - Obviously, that rage will come against those who believe in Jesus, resulting in the martyrdom of most tribulations saints
    - But not only will believers be martyred, but also those Jews who remain faithful to the God of Israel
  - And in particular, the enemy takes out his anger against Israel, and that’s why the chapter opened with the sign of the woman and dragon
    - The enemy has always opposed Israel because Israel plays a central role in God’s plan for the Messiah
    - And now at the middle point of Tribulation, the enemy’s vitriol against Israel reaches new heights
  - Which is why the Lord makes a provision for Israel to ensure that the nation isn’t wiped out by the enemy’s rampage
    - As we saw in v.6 the “woman” flees into the desert to escape the rage of the dragon for 1,260 days
    - So what is this provision of safety that Israel enjoys for the second half of Tribulation?

**Rev. 12:13** And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.

**Rev. 12:14** But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.

**Rev. 12:15** And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the

**woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood.**

**Rev. 12:16 But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth.**

- After the Satan's expulsion from Heaven, he goes after Israel – because he goes after anyone who he perceives as his enemy
  - As we noted earlier, this isn't a new phenomenon, since throughout history Satan has targeted the Jews
    - But at mid-Tribulation, the enemy comes against Israel in an especially vicious and concentrated way
    - And that persecution has the potential to bring an end of the believing within Israel
    - If that happened, then the remnant of Israel would be extinguished, which would be contrary to God's promises
  - And as we will learn later, the fate of the Jewish people are uniquely connected to the enemy's fate during Tribulation
    - Destroying the Jews is Satan's only hope for self-preservation
    - And we will consider this important connection later in the study
  - Meanwhile, v.14 uses new symbols to describe how the Lord protects His people during the final half of Tribulation
    - The woman receives wings of an eagle so she can fly into the wilderness to be protected for 3½ years
    - Even as she is protected, she remains in the presence of the serpent, we're told in v.14
  - The flight to protection was a response to the enemy's attacks on Israel, and the flight is made possible by an "eagle"
    - Since the woman is a sign, we understand the eagle to be a sign as well, and obviously, a nation wasn't riding an eagle
    - Furthermore, the text says is it "the great" eagle, so clearly, there is some eagle the reader is suppose to remember
- So we go look elsewhere in the Bible to find a reference to an eagle's wings carrying Israel, and we find one in Exodus

**Ex. 19:3 Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob and tell the sons of Israel:**

**Ex. 19:4 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself.**

- The last time Israel fled into a wilderness to avoid danger was the Exodus account, and in that account the Lord brought them to safety
  - The Lord described the process of escorting His people to Midian as bearing them on eagle's wings

- So the symbology is a picture of the Lord's supernatural ability to protect His people in a wilderness journey
- Here God uses the same sign in a very similar context, so we must understand that God will grant Israel a supernatural escape
  - God will provide Israel a way of moving through the desert and into a place of protection in the wilderness
  - Notice they are protected in the presence of the serpent
  - That means they are still on earth, for that is the only place Satan can be at this point in history
  - They are in the presence of Satan, yet they are also beyond his reach because God is protecting them
- Despite God's protection, the enemy does all he can to destroy them even as they flee, and at one point the dragon used water to drown Israel in a flood
  - But the Lord opens the ground to swallow the water and dry up the land
    - These details continue to draw a connection to the Exodus story, which only serves to reinforce our interpretation of "eagles' wings"
    - We remember that the Lord allowed Israel to walk through the sea but drowned the Pharaoh's army
  - When interpreting the water, we should be cautious about assuming those details are literal
    - Remember, the dragon is a sign, and like his tail, his mouth is an extension of that sign
    - So the water could stand for something else, like an army attacking Israel
- But if we allow that the water as a river is semi-literal (i.e., a rain storm brought by the enemy to drown Israel in the desert), then a picture forms...
  - And to piece it together, we need to bring in other Scripture

**Matt. 24:15** "Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

**Matt. 24:16** then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

**Matt. 24:17** "Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.

**Matt. 24:18** "Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.

**Matt. 24:19** "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

**Matt. 24:20** "But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

**Matt. 24:21** "For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

- In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus describes the events of Tribulation, and in v.15 He reaches the mid-point of Tribulation, the point we are now

- He says when you see the abomination of desolation described by Daniel, which refers to the timeline spoken of in Daniel 9:27
  - In that verse, Daniel told us that the Antichrist would desecrate the temple by placing an abomination in the holy place
  - And Jesus says that's the signal to leave Jerusalem, to flee to the desert
- That flight of Jews from Jerusalem at mid-Tribulation is the same flight being described now in Revelation 12
  - That flight will be Jews who believe in the testimony of Jesus in Mathew 24, which means they are the believing Jews, saints
  - They will flee especially quickly, with no provisions, which is exactly the way Israel fled at the Exodus
  - This flight will be a test of faith, for only those who believe in the word of God will take Jesus' advice and by doing so, save their lives
- Then notice in Matthew 24:21 Jesus says that what follows immediately afterward is a trip of tribulation that the world has never seen
  - As bad as the disasters of the first half of Tribulation were, they are nothing compared to the terror of the second half
  - But now we've learned that the terror of the second half is not caused by the Lord's judgments but by Satan's fury
  - And yet the Lord protects believers from that wrath by giving them a provision in the desert
- In the Old Testament, we have two prophets who describe this provision of protection God will make for Israel during Tribulation
  - First, we read this in Isaiah

**Is. 33:1 Woe to you, O destroyer,  
While you were not destroyed;  
And he who is treacherous, while others did not deal treacherously with him.  
As soon as you finish destroying, you will be destroyed;  
As soon as you cease to deal treacherously, others will deal treacherously with you.**

- The chapter opens with a discussion of a destroyer being destroyed and ceasing to be
  - And it goes forward from there to describe the fear the world experiences during the Tribulation
- And then we reach this comment:

**Is. 33:14 Sinners in Zion are terrified;  
Trembling has seized the godless.  
"Who among us can live with the consuming fire?  
Who among us can live with continual burning?"**  
**Is. 33:15 He who walks righteously and speaks with sincerity,  
He who rejects unjust gain**

**And shakes his hands so that they hold no bribe;  
He who stops his ears from hearing about bloodshed  
And shuts his eyes from looking upon evil;**

**Is. 33:16 He will dwell on the heights,  
His refuge will be the impregnable rock;  
His bread will be given him,  
His water will be sure.**

- There will be those who are ungodly in Zion who will be terrified at what takes place in the second half of Tribulation
  - But for those who are righteous (the saints), they will be protected in refuge
  - And that refuge will be on the heights and among impregnable rock
- So the place god sends the remnant of Israel for protection in the second half of Tribulation is a place high on rocks and impregnable
  - Then Micah 2 gives us the name of the place

**Mic. 2:10 “Arise and go,  
For this is no place of rest  
Because of the uncleanness that brings on destruction,  
A painful destruction.**

**Mic. 2:11 “If a man walking after wind and falsehood  
Had told lies and said,  
‘I will speak out to you concerning wine and liquor,’  
He would be spokesman to this people.**

- Like most of the minor prophets, Micah writes to Israel about the times of Tribulation
  - And in this section of Chapter 2 the prophets tells Israel that during Tribulation they will receive a command to arise and go
    - They must leave because they are not in a place of rest, rather they are in a place of painful destruction and uncleanness
    - But the Lord says He will gather the remnant of Israel as they flee
  - The term “remnant” is the way the Bible describes the believing Jews within the nation of Israel
    - There have always been believing Jews and always will be, as Paul explains in Romans 11
    - The Lord will never allow belief to cease within Israel, but Satan wants to destroy believing Israel during Tribulation
    - So for that reason the Lord must preserve it by protecting it

**Mic. 2:12 I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob,  
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.  
I will put them together like sheep in the fold;  
Like a flock in the midst of its pasture**



### **They will be noisy with men.**

**Mic. 2:13** “The breaker goes up before them;

**They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it.**

**So their king goes on before them,**

**And the LORD at their head.”**

- Micah says this remnant will be together like sheep in a fold
  - The phrase translated “sheep in a fold” is literally the Hebrew word for a sheep pen
    - The Hebrew word for pen or fold is *botzrah*
    - And as it turns out, there is a place in the wilderness not far from Jerusalem called Botzrah, or sheep pen
  - The confirmation of that place fits perfectly the Biblical description of a place of impregnable rock and high cliffs
    - So where is this place? It goes by another name you’ve probably heard...Petra
    - Petra also has places where fast moving rivers of water can form suddenly, threatening anyone walking in that area
  - The area is filled with wadis, which are deep canyons running down the sides of mountains
    - It is prone to flash floods from rainstorms, and when the rain is channeled down the wadis they form dangerous floods
    - Apparently, the enemy brings a flood of rain into one of these wadis, but the Lord supernaturally swallows it to save Israel
    - I’m sure that scene will remind everyone of the Lord’s command over the Red Sea at the approach of the Pharaoh’s army
- So in summary, at mid-Tribulation the enemy is forced out of Heaven in preparation for the events of the end of Tribulation
  - The reason he is forced out isn’t revealed until Chapter 13, but the effect of his fall is explained in Chapter 12
    - Knowing he has a short time, Satan turns his wrath on the Jewish people
    - And God responds by protecting the remnant of Israel by supernaturally escorting them out of Jerusalem and into Petra
  - The Lord allows the remnant to remain in this impregnable place for the duration of Tribulation
    - And he prohibits the enemy from hurting the remnant of Israel
    - No matter how bad things get on earth over the next 3.5 years, the believing Jews wait it out in safety
    - They are said to be in the presence of the dragon, because they remain on earth and earth is Satan’s dominion
  - But not all Jews are in this place...only the remnant lies outside Satan’s reach

**Rev. 12:17** **So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make**

**war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.**

- The dragon soon realizes that he cannot touch the remnant held in protection, so he must turn his attacks elsewhere
  - And John says he goes off to make war against the rest of “her” children
    - Her refers to the woman, which is Israel
    - And Israel’s children would logically be the Jewish people, so in this case that would be unbelieving Jews
  - If a Jew was believing, that is a part of the remnant, Micah says they will be held in protection in Petra
    - So those who are outside Petra are the unbelieving Jews, which means they hold to the Law and the traditions of Judaism
    - But they haven’t received Jesus as their Messiah
    - This is the group who keep the commandments of God, which is a reference to the Law of Moses
  - Because these Jews are still associated with God, they are a target of the enemy and he will go after them in his rage
    - But notice that John also mentions those who hold to the testimony of Jesus
    - Clearly, that is a reference to believers, and yet if a Jew was believing they would be part of the remnant
    - And if they are part of the remnant, they will be in safety in Petra
  - So that means we’re looking at two different groups who are children of Israel
    - The first group were unbelieving Jews, and this second group are believing Gentiles
    - They are not being targeted by Satan for being a Jew
    - They are being targeted for holding to the testimony of Jesus
- So in the second half of Tribulation, Satan goes on an all-out war against any Jew or believing Gentile he can get his hands on
  - They will be persecuted, and most of them will be martyred as we will see later
    - This all-out war on Jews and believers is one of the major consequences of the mid-Tribulation period
    - And it comes as a result of Satan’s expulsion from Heaven



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# Revelation

# 2020 - Lesson

# 13

## Chapter 13

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- Tonight we return to the end of Chapter 12 to revisit something we learned at the end of last week
  - As we've been learning, at the mid-point of Tribulation the Lord makes a series of dramatic moves to prepare the Earth for the next 3.5 years
    - Among those dramatic moves is the establishment of a place of protection for the believing Jews on earth
    - This place of protection, Botzrah or Petra, will become a fortress in the desert for the second half of Tribulation
    - The Lord supernaturally protects the remnant for 3.5 years in this place preventing the enemy from wiping out believing Israel
  - At the end of Chapter 12 we read this:

**Rev. 12:17** So the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

- As I explained that text last week, Satan is now bound to the earth, which alerts him that his time is short
  - That realization sends him into a panic and enrages him against anyone who is aligned with God and against his purposes
- His first target are the believing Jews, because as we will learn later, the Jewish people play a key part in God's defeat of Satan
  - Satan attempts to end the existence of believing Jews on earth, but God won't allow his plan to succeed
  - Believing Jews are protected because God promises the Jewish nation that a believing remnant will always remain

**Is. 37:31** “The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward.

**Is. 37:32** “For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”

- God promises Israel that a remnant (meaning a group of believing Jews) will always exist by God's power
  - Paul tells us in Romans that this has always been the case

**Rom. 11:1** I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

**Rom. 11:2** God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

**Rom. 11:3** “Lord, THEY HAVE KILLED YOUR PROPHETS, THEY HAVE TORN DOWN YOUR ALTARS, AND I ALONE AM LEFT, AND THEY ARE SEEKING MY LIFE.”

**Rom. 11:4 But what is the divine response to him? “I HAVE KEPT for Myself SEVEN THOUSAND MEN WHO HAVE NOT BOWED THE KNEE TO BAAL.”**

**Rom. 11:5 In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice.**

- As Paul said in Romans, the remnant of Israel is always preserved by God’s grace ensuring faith remains alive in the nation
  - In Elijah’s day believing Jews were still present in the nation despite Elijah’s assumptions to the contrary
  - Today, that remnant is part of the body of Christ, the Church, consisting of Jews who come to faith in Jesus Christ
  - And in the Tribulation, it will be the same with Jews who have heard the Gospel and believed in Jesus after the Rapture
- So the Jewish people have always and will always include a minority with saving faith, called the remnant
  - And in the time of Tribulation, God’s protection takes the form of a fortress in Petra to preserve the remnant until Jesus returns
  - And since Satan cannot wipe out the remnant as it sits in God’s protective custody, he must direct his anger elsewhere
- That leads him to attack two other groups who oppose him on the basis of faith
  - The first group Satan attacks are those who keep to the commandments of God, which means those who maintain a faith in the Mosaic Law
    - The commandments of God is a reference to the Law of Moses
    - So this first group are Jews who continue to worship Yahweh, the God of Israel, through the keeping of the Mosaic Law
  - However, these Jews are not yet believing in Jesus as their Messiah
    - If they had believed, they would have been included in the remnant that was delivered into Petra for protection
    - But because they are devoted Jews without protection, they oppose Satan on earth
    - Therefore they are persecuted and murdered by Satan through human agents under Satan’s control
- Then we have the second group which are those who hold to the testimony of Jesus
  - As I said last week, this group are principally Gentiles who have come to faith in Jesus after the Rapture
    - But Gentile believers on earth are not given the same protection as Jewish believers during Tribulation
    - Many Gentile believers will be attacked and martyred as a result of their faith
    - And we’ve already seen evidence of their deaths in the earlier chapters of Revelation – as souls under the altar in Heaven
  - This may seem unfair, but remember there is no promise from God to preserve a Gentile remnant on earth

- Moreover, the plan of God for Christ's return and the defeat of Satan does not depend on Gentile believers as it does Jews
  - So preserving a believing remnant of Gentiles on earth is not necessary to God's plan
  - Nevertheless, as we will see, a group of Gentile believers do manage to survive until the end though most will die
- Moreover, dying is not a bad outcome for those who live during the second half of Tribulation according to Revelation 14
  - We will come back to the implications of martyrdom when we get to Chapter 14
  - And also in Chapter 14 we learn about yet another group that is persecuted and does not receive protection after mid-tribulation
- Meanwhile, let's move to the next stage of action also taking place at the mid-tribulation moment

**Rev. 13:1 And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.**

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

- Chapter 13 opens with some familiar symbols and some new symbols, which tells us that a story is building and new details are being added
  - We have our dragon again, which we know is Satan
  - He is confined to the earth and engaged in persecuting believers and Jews alike
- But as I said a moment ago, he does his work through the agency of human beings he controls and directs
  - Satan has always worked this way, most obviously with Judas betraying Christ, and he will do the same in Tribulation
  - But at the mid-point of Tribulation, his tactics reach a new level, brought about by his casting down from Heaven
  - And Chapter 13 is the story of how Satan's methods change dramatically at mid-Tribulation
- That story centers on a familiar character, called the beast
  - I say this character is familiar because he has already appeared in the book of Revelation in earlier chapters
  - Most specifically, a beast was mentioned in passing in Revelation 11, as the one who killed the two witnesses at mid-Tribulation
  - Now we will learn how it is that someone could obtain the power to defeat those two men when no one else could
- And this beast also appeared in an earlier chapter of Revelation, though at that time he wasn't being called the beast

- He was riding the horses that opened the seal judgments
- In those earlier references, he wasn't called the beast because he had not yet risen to a place of prominence
- Now we learn in Chapter 13 how that man's rise to world domination happens
- It starts with the dragon again standing on the shores of a sea, and the beast rising out of the sea
  - We know the dragon is Satan, so the suggestion is that the beast's rise to power is made possible by Satan's power
    - So what does it mean that the beast rises from the sea
    - Remembering our rules of interpreting symbols, we consult Scripture for the answer
    - And in this case, the answer comes easily because we should remember what we learned in Daniel 7

**Dan. 7:1** In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel saw a dream and visions in his mind as he lay on his bed; then he wrote the dream down and related the following summary of it.

**Dan. 7:2** Daniel said, "I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea.

**Dan. 7:3** "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.

- A beast coming up out of the sea is clearly defined in Daniel 7 as meaning a Gentile nation, or in this case a Gentile ruler coming into power
  - In fact, the use of the term "beast" to describe this world leader is a clear and obvious reference back to Daniel 7
  - So immediately we recognize that this chapter is closely tied to Daniel 7
  - And therefore, as we consider the symbols in this chapter, we will look back at Daniel 7 frequently to understand their meaning
- In v.1 we're told that the beast of Revelation 13 has features that are very similar to one of the four beasts described in Daniel 7, and to the dragon
  - The beast is a Frankenstein monster of other animals parts including a lion, bear, and a leopard
  - This beast also has ten horns and seven heads and there are ten crowns on the horns
  - And on the seven heads were blasphemous names
- Before we go any further in understanding those symbols, let's revisit the description of the four beasts in Daniel 7

**Dan. 7:3** "And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.

**Dan. 7:4** "The first was like a lion and had the wings of an eagle. I kept looking

until its wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a man; a human mind also was given to it.

**Dan. 7:5** “And behold, another beast, a second one, resembling a bear. And it was raised up on one side, and three ribs were in its mouth between its teeth; and thus they said to it, ‘Arise, devour much meat!’

**Dan. 7:6** “After this I kept looking, and behold, another one, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird; the beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

**Dan. 7:7** “After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

**Dan. 7:8** “While I was contemplating the horns, behold, another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it; and behold, this horn possessed eyes like the eyes of a man and a mouth uttering great boasts.

- When we studied Daniel 7, we learned that the four beasts each represent a world dominating empire
  - The lion represented Babylon, the bear was Medo-Persia, the leopard was Greece
    - The fourth beast was altogether different with multiple horns
    - Notice that in the description of the beast of Revelation 13, we see elements of all these creatures represented in that beast
    - He has features of the lion, bear, leopard and the fourth unnamed beast of Daniel 7
  - The implication is clear: the beast of Revelation 13 is the embodiment of the Age of the Gentiles
    - He is the final and most powerful leader of the Age of the Gentiles, which is why he has the features of the fourth beast
    - And he is also the one who fulfills the overall purpose of the age, which is to hold Israel under Gentile rule until Christ’s return
    - At the conclusion of the beast’s rule, Jesus will return
  - This beast is the final world ruler that Daniel 7 told us would end the fourth kingdom and the age of the Gentiles

**Dan. 7:23** “Thus he said: ‘The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth and tread it down and crush it.

**Dan. 7:24** ‘As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

**Dan. 7:25** ‘He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law;



**and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.**

**Dan. 7:26** ‘But the court will sit for judgment, and his dominion will be taken away, annihilated and destroyed forever.

**Dan. 7:27** ‘Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’

- So recognizing the connection with Daniel 7, we can begin to form a story from the symbols opening this chapter
  - At mid-Tribulation Satan will permit a world ruler, called the beast, to rise to power in fulfillment of Daniel 7
    - That world ruler will be the final world ruler of this age and he brings Daniel’s prophecy full circle
    - Just as the age began with one, dominant world ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, so it will end the same with the beast
    - This man is depicted with features of the lion, bear and leopard because he inherits and succeeds all previous kingdoms
    - He embodies all that the age of the Gentiles stands for
  - The beast’s rise to power is made possible by Satan’s power
    - In v.2 we’re told Satan gives the beast his throne and great authority on the earth
    - But notice the dragon also gives his power to the beast, which indicates that something new is happening here as well
    - The beast literally becomes as powerful as Satan himself
    - And the only way for that to happen would be if Satan and the beast become one
- Now at this point we would want to know the meaning of the beasts, horns and heads and crowns?
  - Obviously, they have great similarity to those of the dragon, and we might be tempted to make a direct comparison
    - But then we notice the arrangement of these symbols is slightly different so that means the meaning must be different too
    - Both have ten horns and seven heads but Satan wears crowns on the heads while the beast wears crowns on the horns
  - If we follow our rules of interpretation we find the answer given elsewhere in this book, in Revelation 17
    - Rather than skipping ahead, we will wait for our answer until we get to that chapter
    - However, that will make interpreting the next verse a little tricky since it focuses on one of these details: the heads
    - In the next verse we learn how it is that Satan brings this world leader to rule over the planet

**Rev. 13:3** I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast;

- One of the heads of the beast is slain, but we don't know what the heads represent
  - To make our study of this chapter easier, I will simply tell you now that the slain head represents the Antichrist himself
    - When we get to Chapter 17, we'll unpack the meaning of these symbols carefully
    - And at that time, we will learn that these heads represent seven world leaders, the seventh representing the Antichrist himself
  - Therefore, the death of a head on the beast represents the Antichrist himself dying, being killed by someone or something at mid-Tribulation
    - Now that's a stunning event, because it seems to run against everything we've been learning so far
    - Daniel said the Antichrist would rise to power at the mid-point of Tribulation and rule for 3.5 years
    - And we've already learned one verse earlier that the beast would receive the power and authority of the beast
    - So how does his dying fit into that plan?
- Remember, during the first half of Tribulation the Antichrist begins his rise as a political and military leader
  - He is not one of the ten world leaders of that time, since Daniel 7 tells us he will be an eleventh ruler
    - Instead, he comes into power by negotiating a covenant to permit Israel to return to sacrifice according to Daniel 9
    - And he consolidates his power through threats of war and military conquest according to Revelation 6
  - Now we learn that as he reaches the height of his power, the Antichrist will suffer a head wound that is fatal
    - Notice the language in v.3 carefully: his wound is "fatal" and by definition, a fatal wound means the body dies
    - But then it says that his fatal wound is healed
    - The only way a fatal wound is healed is if the body dies and then returns to life
  - And in v.3 the Greek language confirms this interpretation, because the Greek words for "as if slain" are *hos sphazo*
    - These are the same Greek words used back in Revelation 5 to describe Jesus in the throne room

**Rev. 5:6** And I saw between the throne (with the four living creatures) and the elders a Lamb standing, as if slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent out into all the earth.

- At that time, I told you that the phrase “standing as if slain” was a euphemism for resurrection
  - So here we find the same phrase meaning the same thing: the Antichrist is killed and then is resurrected
  - We don’t know what kills the Antichrist exactly, but we can make an educated guess
- Daniel 7 told us that as the Antichrist rises to prominence, he subdues three of the world leaders and becomes king of the world
  - So perhaps his rapid rise to power leads three of the world leaders to conspire to assassinate the Antichrist
  - They succeed and it appears that the world is safe until the Antichrist is resurrected and then removes the three kings
- How can the Antichrist accomplish a resurrection? Obviously, that would depend on supernatural power
  - God has the power to bring a dead body back to life, but in this case He isn’t the One doing the work
    - Instead, the Lord allows Satan to do something he has long desired to do
    - God permits Satan to indwell the body of the Antichrist bringing the man back to life for the remainder of the Tribulation
    - Moreover, Satan indwells the Antichrist taking up residence in the man’s body
  - This is what v.2 meant when it said that the dragon gives his power to the beast
    - Satan literally puts himself and his power inside this man, which is how he may bring the man back to life
    - Having been resurrected, the beast is now even more powerful than he was before
    - And through this union, Satan becomes the object of the world’s attention and worship
- Notice how the world reacts to this stunning development

**Rev. 13:4 they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, “Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?”**

- The resurrection of the Antichrist leads the world to say who can be like the beast and who could wage war with him?
  - And as a result the world worships the beast as we would expect
  - But notice also that the world begins to worship the dragon, which suggests they begin worshipping a god behind the scene
- Remember, Satan is now confined to the earth, so this is his only domain now
  - And by taking up residence in the body of the Antichrist, Satan assumes a physical form to gain control over the world
  - So the Antichrist and the “god” giving him his power become the objects of the

world's devotion and worship

- Paul taught that this would happen

**2Th. 2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 2Th. 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,**

- The one that Jesus slays at His coming is the same one whose coming into power is done in accord with the activity of Satan
  - Now we see how that activity happens, as Satan takes advantage of the Antichrist's death to bring about his resurrection
  - In fact, since we know that Satan has control of the ten world leaders, we must assume that Satan orchestrated the whole thing
  - He lead three kings to kill the Antichrist so that he could then resurrect the man and set his plan in motion
- This is the moment when the Antichrist becomes the ruler of the world at mid-Tribulation
  - And now we find the reason the man is called the Antichrist
    - He is a man who makes the claim to be Christ on the basis of his resurrection
    - John told us he is called Antichrist because he opposes Jesus and because he is indwelled by the spirit of the antichrist
    - And now we see he is an antichrist because he is a counterfeit Christ
  - This is also confirmed by Paul

**2Th. 2:3 Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,**

**2Th. 2:4 who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.**

- Paul said the Antichrist would claim to be God and take a seat in the newly built Jewish temple, claiming to be the Christ
  - And Daniel told us to expect the same thing

**Dan. 11:36 “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.**

**Dan. 11:37 “He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself**

above them all.

**Dan. 11:38** “But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

**Dan. 11:39** “He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

- Daniel told us that the antichrist would magnify himself above every god and speak blasphemous things
  - He will show no regard for the religions of the world because he will claim to be above the religions of the world
  - He will claim to be the Messiah, the Christ
- But in reality, the Antichrist will honor a god of fortresses, which is a reference to the god of the world, Satan
  - With the help of this foreign god, the Antichrist will take control of the strongest of the world’s fortresses
  - He will also put an end to worship of any other god or religion so that all worship is directed to his god, Satan
- And in Daniel 9 we learned that his rise to power includes the ending of sacrifice in the temple, because he alone will be the god of earth

**Dan. 9:27** “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

- The end of sacrifice in the Temple happens at the middle of the week, and it coincides with an abomination that makes the Temple desolate
  - So the Antichrist stops Jewish sacrifice in the Temple because he claims such sacrifices are no longer necessary
  - He is god on the earth, so he takes his seat in the temple, as Paul says, displaying himself to be god
  - That is the beginning of the abomination in the temple
- It’s the same moment Jesus was thinking about in Matthew 24 when He warned the Jews to flee to the mountains

**Matt. 24:15** “Therefore when you see the **ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

**Matt. 24:16** then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

- In Isaiah 28, the prophet warns Israel that their agreement with this man of the enemy will come back to haunt them

**Is. 28:14 Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers,  
Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,**

**Is. 28:15 Because you have said, “We have made a covenant with death,  
And with Sheol we have made a pact.  
The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by,  
For we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves  
with deception.”**

**Is. 28:18 “Your covenant with death will be canceled,  
And your pact with Sheol will not stand;  
When the overwhelming scourge passes through,  
Then you become its trampling place.**

- In Isaiah 28, the prophet warns Israel that their agreement with this man of the enemy will come back to haunt them
- So at mid-Tribulation the Antichrist is murdered, probably by three of the kings
  - Satan resurrects the Antichrist’s body and through this resurrection, the Antichrist claims to be the real Christ
    - He subdues the three kings that killed him and the other seven kings fall into line under him
    - He gains a worldwide following claiming to be god and directs the world to worship the god who gave him his power, Satan
  - Claiming to be God, the Antichrist enters the Tribulation Temple, runs the Jews out, and seats himself in the mercy seat
    - He desolates the temple and ends sacrifice there and puts an end to other worship
    - And we now see how these turn of events fit with the events we studied in Chapters 11 and 12
  - In Chapter 11, the two witnesses are killed by the beast, and now we know how the beast had the power to do that
    - He was resurrected by Satan and with Satan indwelling him he has the power to kill the witnesses
    - Remember, the beast is celebrated for ending the terror of these men, and that would only add to the world’s desire to worship
  - So the Antichrist will be celebrated at mid-tribulation as the risen Christ and as the savior of the world
    - He ended the terror of the judgments that the world has associated with those two witnesses
    - And He has established a new worldwide kingdom under his rule with one system of worship centered on him and his god

- All of these details are further confirmed in Revelation 13

**Rev. 13:5** There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.

**Rev. 13:6** And he opened his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

**Rev. 13:7** It was also given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him.

**Rev. 13:8** All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

**Rev. 13:9** If anyone has an ear, let him hear.

**Rev. 13:10** If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.

- First, we come to that tell-tale indication that this chapter is describing events of the mid-point of Tribulation
  - In this case it's expressed as forty-two months but that is exactly 3.5 years
    - And as Daniel foretold, once the Antichrist rises to power, he will speak arrogant and blasphemous things for forty two months
    - Paul told us to expect the same things of course
  - And the effect of the Antichrist's resurrection and claims to be God are immediate and profound
    - The world is now set against anyone who would deny the truth of these claims
    - Remember at the end of Chapter 12 we learned that Satan went off to make war with Jews and with Christians
  - Now we see how that war will be prosecuted...Satan will use the Antichrist as his agent to leads those attacks
    - The Antichrist will bring the world to his side then use them to hunt down and kill anyone who will not worship him as god
    - And this war will largely be successful, because we're told he is given authority over the people of the world
  - Obviously, those who have come to know Jesus as Lord will not accept that the Antichrist is god and therefore they will not worship him
    - As a result, he overcomes the saints and make martyrs of believers who refuse to obey him
    - The rest of the world will fall in line and worship the beast as their god
- Notice in v.8 everyone on the earth who were not recorded in the Lamb's book of life from the foundations of the earth will worship the beast
  - Those who are recorded in the Lamb's book refers to the elect of God, those who are saved by His grace

- Consider carefully what this verse is indicating...if someone begins to worship the beast, they will never be saved
    - This moment at mid-Tribulation becomes a dividing point not only in the timeline of Tribulation but of humanity
    - From this point onward, those who worship the beast are unsaveable while those who refuse to worship are martyred
  - There is no third option so there is no hiding or avoiding a fate one way or the other
    - It's worship the beast and live but be condemned
    - Or worship Jesus and die, but have eternal life
  - John sums up this truth in v.9 with the iconic Biblical call to believe: if anyone has an ear (to hear the truth of God), let him hear (or believe)
    - This seems to be a call to the Tribulation citizen reading this book to believe while they still can
    - We will study the issue of the end of evangelism and belief at mid-tribulation in detail next week in Chapter 14
- Then in v.10 comes a sobering reality of the last half of Tribulation, that if a saint is destined to be taken into captivity, then that's where he/she will go
  - And if saint attempts to fight back against the Antichrist, then they are destined to die in the fight
    - There will be no resisting the power of the Antichrist for the time God has appointed for his rule
    - This ruler is one God has permitted to have absolute control over the world for 3½ years
  - And nothing the saints can do will impede his rule, so John says this is the perseverance of the saints
    - It could also be translated the endurance or patience of the saints
    - Which means if you enter mid-Tribulation as a saint, you must understand and accept the fate you are now facing
    - You will likely be a martyr and this is God's appointed outcome
    - But later in Revelation we hear that it's *better* to die at this point than to live through what is coming
- So with a recap, we now we move to introduction of yet another character of mid-tribulation

**Rev. 13:11** Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon.

**Rev. 13:12** He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.

**Rev. 13:13** He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.



**Rev. 13:14** And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

- Another beast emerges this time from the earth and not the sea, which indicates this beast is not connected to Daniel's prophecy in Chapter 7
  - The beast is pictured as a combination of a lamb and a dragon
    - Using what we already know of these symbols, we can put a narrative to the images
  - A lamb is used in Scripture as a picture of Christ in his ministry as the dying prophet sent to be sacrificed (i.e., the Lamb of God)
    - And of course having a mouth of the dragon means he speaks for Satan
    - So this man will appear to be a prophet of the Antichrist's god having been raised up by Satan to be his spokesman
  - We commonly call this second beast the False Prophet of Tribulation for this reason
    - John says in v.12 he will exercise (or carry or bear) the authority of the Antichrist in the Antichrist's presence
    - Which means he will accompany the Antichrist and perform miraculous signs by the power of Satan
- We're learning that Satan raises up a second man at mid-Tribulation, someone we haven't heard about before
  - This second man will work hand-in-hand with the Antichrist to further the deception and further prompt the world's worship of Satan
    - The False Prophet calls upon the world to worship the Antichrist as God, John says
    - And his message is reinforced by a power to call fire down from heaven
    - His miraculous displays are further proof to the world that the Antichrist is god
  - But notice that he is only able to perform these miracles when he is in the presence of the Antichrist
    - This tells us that the power for these miracles is coming directly from Satan who is indwelling the Antichrist
    - Remember, Satan is not God, he is a created being, so he is not omnipresent and can only be in one place at one time
  - Moreover, Satan is currently indwelling the Antichrist's body, so Satan can only be where the Antichrist is
    - Therefore, Satan can't know what the false prophet is doing unless the Antichrist is nearby to watch him
    - And so the false prophet can't perform miracles except in the presence of the Antichrist so that Satan is able to intervene
- Then in v.14 we hear that the false prophet commands that an image of the

resurrected Antichrist be constructed

- This is a classic counterfeit maneuver that Satan has used since the fall of mankind
  - Icons, statues, relics and other physical forms of representing God are classic attempts by Satan to trap mankind in idolatry
  - Many churches today display icons of the resurrected Christ, and all false religions depend heavily on icons and figures
  - That's why early in the ten commandments the Lord forbids setting up such things in our worship practices
- And once again, Satan will have his representative, the false prophet, set up an image in the temple
  - The image will represent the Antichrist and give focus to the world's worship when the Antichrist himself isn't present
  - So the world will stream to the former-Jewish temple to worship the image of the beast
- And this image will compel worship in a way that no image has likely done before

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

**Rev. 13:16** And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead,

**Rev. 13:17** and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.

**Rev. 13:18** Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

- The false prophet, by the power of Satan, gives some kind of life to this image
  - The image has breath and can speak and kill those who will not worship the beast
    - What could be responsible for this supernatural display?
    - One simple answer could be demonic activity, so that demons animate the image and give it the appearance of life
    - Remember, Satan is the father of lies, so everything he does is a charade and an imitation
  - From Daniel 12, we learn that this statue is the abomination of desolation that Jesus refers to in Matthew 24

**Dan. 12:11** “From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

- The abomination of the temple begins with the Antichrist sitting in the mercy seat of the temple
  - But Daniel says there is an on-going abomination of desolation in the temple that is “set up”, indicating something put in place
  - That something is this statue brought alive by demonic activity
- Finally, the false prophet enforces the command to worship the Antichrist through economic means
  - Every human being on earth must take a mark on the right hand or the forehead in order to buy or sell anything
  - The mark is similar to the sealing given to those who were God’s 144,000 bondservants in Chapter 7
  - That mark was the seal of the living God protecting them from harm for a time
- So Satan, the great counterfeit, mimics God once again by developing his own counterfeit the mark for unbelievers
  - And those who take the mark will be protected from Satan’s wrath and will be allowed to buy and sell
  - But those who refuse the mark will be killed (later in Revelation 20 we learn they are killed by beheading)
- This further confirms that at mid-Tribulation there will be no more hiding or equivocating
  - You are either believing in the Christ, in which case you will be persecuted and many will die
  - Or you are believing in the Antichrist, in which case you become the persecutor and are no longer eligible for God’s grace
- While the 144,000 of Chapter 7 were sealed with the seal of the living God, unbelievers will take a mark bearing the name of the Antichrist John says
  - The mark will be represented by a number which John says is the number of the Antichrist’s name
    - Numbering a name is a uniquely Jewish way of turning a word into a mathematical quantity
    - It starts by assigning a numerical value to each letter in the Hebrew alphabet
  - The Hebrew alphabet uses 22 characters but they aren’t numbered 1-22
    - Instead, the numbering scheme begins with 1-10, then moves to 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100, then ends with 200, 300, & 400
    - So by adding up the letters in a person’s Hebrew name, you can arrive at a single value
    - For example, if we add up the Hebrew letters associated with Jesus’ full name and title (Jesus the Messiah), we arrive at 749
  - Keep in mind this system only works with Hebrew names, so the Antichrist’s name (whatever it will be) must be written in Hebrew
    - Once it is translated into Hebrew, then someone who knows Hebrew could calculate the number of his name

- When his name is calculated, John says it will add up to 666
  - The number 6 in Scripture is the number of fallen or sinful man
    - And in Hebrew writing, to double a number means “more” and to triple a number means “most”
    - So 666 is the most sin or the most sinful man, and of course he is the world’s most sinful man because he is indwelt by Satan
  - Only the world alive at mid-tribulation will be able to perform this calculation and confirm the identity of the Antichrist
    - Statistically, many different Jewish names can add up to any particular number
    - So we could imagine an uncountable number of Jewish names that might add up to 666 and learn nothing through the effort
    - Only after we have a name in Hebrew can we then verify if it adds up to the required number
- Finally, we can look back on the activities of Chapter 13 and find an interesting pattern
  - We find Satan engaged in perhaps his biggest counterfeit of all time
    - First, we have a dragon, Satan, acting as the god of the world and the unseen power behind everything
    - He raises up a beast, the Antichrist, to serve as the focus of the world’s worship
    - He causes the death and resurrection of the man to convince the world that the beast is a christ
  - Then he is raises up another man to display supernatural power to create signs and wonders
    - The second beast’s purpose is to lead the world to worship the Antichrist
    - Moreover, the false prophet gives all the Antichrist’s followers a mark indicating their faith in the Antichrist
  - All these patterns are direct counterfeits to the way the real God of Heaven operates with His followers
    - The Father is our invisible God above all
    - Christ is the Son He raised up and all worship is directed toward Him
    - And the Spirit of God leads the world to worship Jesus and marks believers by indwelling them
  - Satan has created a false trinity to mirror the real trinity
    - The Christ is imitated by the Antichrist
    - The Holy Spirit is imitated by the False Prophet
    - And the invisible Father is Satan himself
- So at mid-Tribulation the world is now faced with the prospect of choosing the false trinity or the real one
  - And everyone is now required to make that choice one way or another
    - Next week we see the effect of this forced choice and the end of evangelism on

earth



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

# 14

## Chapter 14

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- We're nearing the end of the mid-Tribulation period, and as we do, let's take a brief moment to stitch together everything we've learned about this period
  - The trigger for all the mid-Tribulation events seems to have been Satan's casting down from Heaven
    - After he loses the war with Michael, he is bound to the earth and knows his time is short
    - So Satan begins to war with the saints and the Jewish people
    - He first attacks believing Jews, and the Lord protects them in a fortress in the desert
  - So then Satan departs and seeks a new strategy, beginning with orchestrating the death and resurrection of the Antichrist
    - The man is killed in Jerusalem by three kings but then is resurrected by Satan
    - His resurrection stuns the world, and they celebrate him as a savior
  - His first act is to kill the three kings and the two witnesses in Jerusalem and then enter the temple
    - In the temple, the Antichrist declares himself to be god and puts an end to the practice of Judaism
    - He eventually leaves the city to complete his conquest of the world and to persecute the saints
  - Before he goes, Satan raises up a second man to be a false prophet who, in the Antichrist's presence, possesses great power
    - The false prophet tells the world to worship the Antichrist
    - He sets up an image of the Antichrist in the temple to focus worship after the Antichrist leaves Jerusalem
    - And he institutes a new religious order for the world that requires taking a mark to buy or sell
    - Those who refuse the mark are executed
- All of these things happen in a relatively brief period of time at the midpoint of Tribulation
  - We have one more chapter of mid-tribulation events and a concluding chapter to close the book of this part of Tribulation
    - Let's set the scene for Chapter 14 with a brief transition out of the events of Chapter 13
    - The false prophet now requires all humanity to worship the Antichrist and take a mark on their bodies
    - If they do not worship the image of the Antichrist in the temple, they are killed
    - And if they do not take the mark of the beast on their body, they could not buy or sell anything
  - The false prophet's requirements placed all mankind between a rock and a hard place
    - On the one hand, refuse the mark and die

- On the other hand, take the mark and forever be excluded from the possibility of receiving salvation

**Rev. 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.**

- Everyone in the world must now make a public declaration for or against the Antichrist
  - There is no room for undecideds or agnostics
- The world will be polarized into a few camps defined according to their response to the Antichrist
  - Among those who choose not to worship the beast, the principle group will be believers, both Jew and Gentile
  - The believing remnant lies in protection in the wilderness and of course will not have the mark or worship the beast
  - They will be the only ones who escape persecution once they reach Botzrah
- Then there will be believing Gentiles who experience severe persecution and many, if not most, will be martyred
  - Finally, there will also be unbelievers who refuse the mark, namely the orthodox Jews who continue to believe in Yahweh
  - Both these groups will face stiff persecution and many will die, though as we will see some will survive
- But there is one more distinct group that will never takes the mark of the beast and so they too are persecuted
  - But unlike the earlier groups, none of those in this fourth group will survive the Tribulation
  - In fact, 100% of this fourth group will be martyred
  - That group is the 144,000 Jewish evangelists that began the work of salvation during this period of history
- That's the group we open with tonight in our study

**Rev. 14:1 Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.**

- John's vision transitions to a new scene, that of the Lamb standing on Mt. Zion
  - We know from earlier chapters of Revelation that the Lamb is Christ
  - But then we're told He is standing on Mt. Zion
- Today, there is a mountain directly south of the temple mount in Jerusalem called Mt. Zion
  - So at first glance, we might assume that John was witnessing Jesus standing on



earth in Jerusalem

- But there are several problems with that view, beginning with what we see in the rest of Revelation
- The previous time we saw the Lamb mentioned as part of the action was in Chapter 8 when He broke the seventh seal
  - At that time, Jesus was in the throne room of Heaven
  - And the next time we see the Lamb taking part in the action will be in Chapter 19 when He returns to Earth
- So logically, we should expect the Lamb to remain in the Heavenly realm until the return of Christ in Chapter 19
  - But at this point, we're only at the mid-point of Tribulation
  - So that raises questions of where this scene is taking place – which we will answer as we move ahead
- Next, we see the 144,000 standing with Jesus, having the name of the Father written on their foreheads
  - Obviously, this group of 144,000 Jewish men is a reference back to the events of Revelation 7 when the Jewish men were commissioned
    - 144,000 were marked with the seal of the Living God, which is the name of the Father
    - Then they went out to bring an uncountable multitude to faith
  - Since then we haven't heard anything of these men and their work
    - But now as we reach the mid-point of Tribulation, we find them standing with Jesus on Mt. Zion
    - Are they on the Mt. Zion of present-day Jerusalem?
    - If so, then it would mean that Jesus was standing with them on earth in the middle of Tribulation
    - But that can't be since we know that Jesus doesn't return until the end of the age according to Daniel
  - So where is this scene taking place? We need to move further in the text

**Rev. 14:2** And I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps.

**Rev. 14:3** And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one could learn the song except the one hundred and forty-four thousand who had been purchased from the earth.

**Rev. 14:4** These are the ones who have not been defiled with women, for they have kept themselves chaste. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These have been purchased from among men as first fruits to God and to the Lamb.

**Rev. 14:5** And no lie was found in their mouth; they are blameless.

- As John sees Jesus and the 144,000, he hears a voice from heaven, but the voice isn't really a voice...it's a loud thundering sound
  - It's also like the sound of harpists playing, so it's the sound of many thundering voices combined with harps playing
    - That's a unique sound and difficult to imagine
    - And it came from the throne, so it seems to be the voice of God
  - Then John says the 144,000 begin singing before the throne of God and before the creatures and the elders
    - The only ones who knew this song were the 144,000, therefore we must conclude that only ones singing were the 144,000
    - If the 144,000 are singing before the throne, then they are obviously in Heaven as is Jesus
  - So why did John say he saw them on Mt. Zion? Mt. Zion is a common term in the Bible for the Kingdom of Israel in glory
    - So John saw the future kingdom of Israel in glory depicted in the Heavenly throne room
    - Jesus in His glory preparing to rule and 144,000 Jewish men prepared to enter and rule with Jesus
    - And they were standing on the heavenly Mt. Zion in the New Jerusalem in Heaven
  - The New Testament mentions the Mt. Zion in Heaven in at least a couple of places

**Heb. 12:22** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

- The writer of Hebrews says that our future lies in Heaven, with a heavenly Mt. Zion ready to descend to earth
- And Paul says that Jesus will come from this place when He returns to earth

**Rom. 11:26** and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB."

- So the chapter opened with a scene of Jesus in Heaven accompanied by the 144,000 evangelists
  - So why is John being shown this scene of the 144,000 in heaven with Jesus at the mid-Tribulation moment?
    - Notice in v.3 that the 144,000 are described as those who were purchased from the earth
    - To be "from the earth" is a clear indication that they have left earth and arrived in Heaven
  - And they were "purchased" which means redeemed by the blood of Christ

- Back in Chapter 5 we heard something similar

**Rev. 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying,  
“Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain,  
and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and  
people and nation.**

- Back in Chapter 5 we had another group around the throne singing a song declaring that Jesus purchased men from the earth
  - In this context, the term purchase clearly refers to the Lord purchasing believers by His sacrifice on the cross
  - So in Revelation 14 we must conclude that these 144,000 were removed from the earth and now reside in Heaven
  - And they entered Heaven because they believed in Jesus
- Then in v.4 we’re given the reason for their death: they were the first fruits for God
  - The concept of first fruits is found throughout Scripture, and the concept is simple
  - During any reaping of produce, the best fruit are typically harvested first (low-hanging fruit)
  - In the law, the Lord dictated that these would be given to God as an offering of thanks
  - The Lord deserves the first and the best in everything, including in the bounty of the land
- So the concept of first fruits is that the best goes first and belongs to the Lord, and in v.4 we’re told these men are the ones who follow Jesus everywhere
  - They are in Heaven, so clearly they have died, and since it’s mid-Tribulation, they died before the second half of the Tribulation
    - So they are the first and best of the martyrs that will soon follow
    - They aren’t necessarily the first people to die during Tribulation, but they are the first group to enter complete into Heaven
  - They were a privileged group because they were the first to receive faith after the rapture removed all believers from earth
    - And they were the first to spread the Gospel again
    - And they were set apart from earthly pleasures like marriage so they could be dedicated to serving Jesus
  - And they were single-minded to their task, obediently following Jesus wherever He asked them to go and whatever He wanted done
    - In v.5 we’re told they never lie, which is a truly powerful testimony for any person
    - They certainly weren’t sinless, but it appears they were on a level of Paul or the other apostles in their sanctified lifestyle
    - Simply put, they were models of obedience and service during their short time on earth

- And then as further grace to them, the Lord allowed them to be the first of the martyrs, removed from earth before the worst of Tribulation starts
  - They were probably being killed throughout the first half of Tribulation
  - And then when the mark is required and worship of the image of the beast is required, these men refuse, of course
  - And so the remaining are quickly killed and become models for obedient martyrdom as well
  - Now that all have been martyred, they stand Jesus on Mt. Zion awaiting the end of the Tribulation
- So if the 144,000 were sealed in Chapter 7, how could they be killed at mid-Tribulation? Wouldn't the sealing protect them?
  - Let's revisit the description of their sealing

**Rev. 7:2 And I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, Rev. 7:3 saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads."**

- These men were sealed and the text indicated that the sealing would prevent the supernatural disaster harm them
  - Much like God protected Israel in Goshen during the time of the Exodus plagues, these men would be protected too
  - Earlier in Revelation 6:6 we're told that these disasters won't hard the oil or wine either, which is a reference to the land of Israel
  - So the disasters spare the land of Israel and they also spare these men no matter where they travel
- So the 144,000 were sealed to protect them from God's judgments, but evidently that sealing is removed at mid-Tribulation
  - The time has come for evangelism to end and for all destinies to be set

**Rev. 13:10 If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.**

- God has purposed to allow believers to experience martyrdom and the first fruits of that martyrdom will be the 144,000
  - By their example, the saints will have encouragement to know that death is not something to fear
- Back in Chapter 12 we were told that mid-Tribulation would include believers dying rather than bending their knee to Satan

**Rev. 12:10** Then 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, he who accuses them before our God day and night.

**Rev. 12:11** “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.

- The martyring of the 144,000 is further evidence that the opportunity to know the truth and be saved by God’s grace has come to an end on earth
  - It’s highly symbolic to see those God selected and commissioned to re-ignite the spread of the Gospel having died and completed that mission
    - The suggestion is that the time for sharing the faith and persuading people to believe is over
    - With the Antichrist demanding that everyone take a stand, everyone must decide at mid-Tribulation
    - So the undecided column quickly drops to zero
  - So who is left to save?
    - The saved already believe and the unsaved have taken the mark and are therefore unsaveable...except for one group
    - We come back to that remaining hold out group later, but for now let’s move ahead
    - Meanwhile, the Lord offers one, very final opportunity to the world to believe, and the offer comes from the very top

**Rev. 14:6** And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

**Rev. 14:7** and he said with a loud voice, “Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come; worship Him who made the heaven and the earth and sea and springs of waters.”

- Now John sees another angel flying in midheaven (the atmosphere), and the last time he saw an angel flying was to announce the coming Woe Judgments
  - And sure enough, this angel is bringing another heavenly declaration to the entire world
    - This angel preaches an eternal gospel to the world, John says
    - He calls it an eternal Gospel because it’s the very same message that has always been preached
  - There has only ever been one way to be saved, one plan for salvation, one message that must be believed
    - The details of that message have expanded over time to include more specifics, but the thrust of that message never changed

- From Adam and Woman in the Garden to Noah to Abraham to Moses to Samuel to David to the Apostles
    - From Abel to Zachariah, the message has always been that a righteous man lives by his faith in the promises of God
  - And here the angel delivers it one last time to the world of this age
    - In this case, the angel declares that the window was closing, the salvation train was leaving the station
    - The hour of judgment had come, and in this context “hour” simply means a short time
    - So don’t fear the Antichrist and don’t fear physical death, but instead fear the Lord, and trust Him Who has made all things
- This angelic declaration is God’s final presentation of the Gospel to the world prior to the return of Christ
  - We can hardly accuse God of not making enough opportunities available
    - Not only has God delivered the Gospel by means of men who faced death for their willingness to declare truth
    - But now God has also elevated that presentation to the heavenly realm
    - In this moment, the Gospel is proclaimed to the entire world, just as Jesus promised

**Matt. 24:12** “Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.

**Matt. 24:13** “But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

**Matt. 24:14** “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

- Jesus tells us that the Gospel will be preached in the whole world before the end of Tribulation and here we see that fulfilled
  - He says it will be done as a testimony to all the nations
  - It’s a testimony both in the sense that some might believe, though we don’t know how many will
  - But also in the sense that it’s a warning to convict the world
- It’s also a reminder to us that evangelism has never and will never depend upon human beings
  - This one passage forever negates and renders irrelevant any question or objection about how God saves people
  - God has all the power He needs to save whoever He desires
  - So if you’ve pointed to the native in a jungle who has never heard of Jesus and wondered if God has been unfair to them, remember this passage
- All those God intends to reach will be reached one way or another
  - And often the method He will use is people like me and you, people who worry about the unreached in the jungle

- So when those people come to your mind, perhaps that's a sign you are supposed to be part of that solution

**Rev. 14:8** And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.”

**Rev. 14:9** Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,

**Rev. 14:10** he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

**Rev. 14:11** “And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.”

- The Lord has more to say to the earth, so a second angel makes an announcement from midheaven
  - The second announcement concerns the enemy and his kingdom on earth
    - The name of the Antichrist's kingdom is Babylon, and this is the first mention of this city name
    - As we've seen already, major topics of Revelation are generally spread out over multiple chapters in the book
    - The topic of Babylon is significant to understanding the events of the second half of Tribulation
    - But since it's revealed in pieces, beginning here and running until the end of Chapter 18, we will wait until later to explore it
  - Next, a third angel declares that if anyone doesn't heed the call to believe the Gospel and takes the mark, they will be tormented forever
    - There will be no second chance for anyone with the mark of the beast because there is no source of the truth after this moment
    - Since God Himself has preached by means of an angel, human messengers are no longer available
    - No more evangelism, no new voices sharing the truth
    - So the fate of every person on earth will be sealed at mid-Tribulation
  - Moreover, the punishment is eternal and terrible, and in v.10 we have one of the most detailed descriptions of eternal punishment in the Bible
    - The specific judgment described is one of burning and suffering in torment
    - Those who die absent faith suffer the wrath of God for sin
  - Specifically, they suffer in intense heat, described as fire and brimstone
    - And they suffer night and day without end and without rest

- They're suffering without end because they are forever existing in a sinful state
  - So their suffering is a result of *who* they are, not merely for *what* they've done
  - Finally, they will suffer in the presence of the angels and the Lamb of God
- In recent time, it's become fashionable to proclaim that there is no hell and that a loving God would not punish people so harshly
  - Some claim God gives second chances after death and others claim that eternal punishment doesn't last forever but after some time it ends
    - While we might be able to empathize with someone's desire to see unbelievers given a reprieve in eternity
    - Or entertain thoughts the eternal punishment must end at some point, we can't let our emotions override the meaning of the text
  - Scripture is abundantly clear about the nature and duration of eternal judgment for unbelievers
    - Unbelievers face a never ending burning torment, the wrath of an angry God Who hates sin
    - And they face eternal judgment because their sinful nature itself never ceases even in eternity
  - Ironically, those false teachers who try to convince others that there is no hell or punishment isn't eternal contribute to the plight of the sinner
    - They remove perhaps the one incentive God was prepared to use in converting the unbeliever, thus ensuring their demise
    - And these false teachers also give purpose to Hell's very existence

**2Pet. 2:1** But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

**2Pet. 2:2** Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

**2Pet. 2:3** and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

- Now the narrative switches...

**Rev. 14:12** Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

**Rev. 14:13** And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them."

- In v.12 John says here is the perseverance of the saints, and notice that this verse is not a quote



- An angel was speaking in v.11 and a voice of Heaven starts talking again in v.13, so this is commentary by John
  - The perseverance of the saints means the way the saints maintain hope in these difficult days...
  - So John says to the saints of Tribulation, here's how you maintain hope during the difficult 3.5 years about to start
- They maintain hope by understanding that dying is a blessing
  - Those who die in the Lord will have been released from living in a horrific, sinful world
  - They will have rested from the burden of trying to escape the enemy, surviving on meager supplies of food and water
  - Of dealing with sinful, sick and weak bodies and the uncertainty of what lies around the corner
- The hope of all believers in that day will be the rest that death brings, knowing their deeds will follow them
  - The mention of deeds following is a reference to the eternal rewards that will be theirs for persevering in difficult times
  - They will be rewarded for maintaining a strong witness in the midst of so much pressure to recant
  - And they can press on knowing that if and when death comes, it is a blessing
- But more than just escaping the turmoil of Tribulation, death brings another blessing for these saints
  - If a person dies in this time, they will be assured of living in the Kingdom in a resurrected state
    - And in that resurrected state they will be sinless and glorified
    - And as a glorified member of the Kingdom, they will be part of the government

**Rev. 20:4** Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

- Those believers who live to the end of the Tribulation and never die will also enter the Kingdom, but they will enter in natural bodies
  - And therefore, they will not be part of the Kingdom government
  - We will come back to that topic later in our study
- So those who die in the Lord from now will be blessed, and that number will be very high
  - In fact, martyrdom will be the norm...

**Rev. 14:14** Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.

**Rev. 14:15** And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

**Rev. 14:16** Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.

- On a white cloud is one like a son of man Who has a sickle in his hand
  - At the command of an angel, he swung his sickle and reaped the earth
    - Obviously, we have numerous questions about what John is seeing, so let’s work back through the details
    - We’ll begin by determining who is the one on the cloud with the sickle
  - John says he was sitting on a cloud like a son of man, and the reference to “son of man” immediately draws us to suspect this is Christ
    - We know it’s a Messianic term in the New Testament
    - And John commonly uses that term for Christ in his gospel
  - But there are a several details that undermine that conclusion
    - First, the “man” has a golden crown on his head but the Greek word for crown is *stephanos*
    - That is not the Greek word used for the crown worn by a king (*diadem*)
    - In fact, the next time we see Jesus described in Chapter 19, we’re told this

**Rev. 19:12** His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

- The form of crown Christ wears is a *diadem*, not a *stephanos*
- Second, the one on the cloud takes an order from an angel sent from heaven
  - It seems unlikely that the Lord in His glorified form would take a command from an angel
  - Third, the angel that gives that command is described by John as “another” angel
  - “Another” could simply mean another angel like those earlier in the chapter, but it suggests that both these characters are angels
- Giving further support to that conclusion, Jesus described in the Olivet Discourse a reaping of the earth during Tribulation by angels

**Matt. 24:31** “And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

- In speaking about the events of the second half of Tribulation, Jesus said that the elect will be gathered (or reaped) from the earth
  - There is a regathering of the elect at Jesus' Second Coming which we will cover later
  - But throughout the Great Tribulation, the angels will be reaping believers through martyrdom
- So the two in view here are both angels, and the directive from Heaven comes announcing that believers are now to be removed
  - This is our confirmation that the second half of Tribulation is a time of great martyrdom
  - Angels are reapers of believers, and according to Jesus in Luke 16 believers are escorted into Heaven by angels
  - But while angels will be reaping the earth of believers, the actual process of death will be carried out by the Antichrist's forces
- Remember what Daniel told us would be true in this time

**Dan. 7:24** 'As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise; and another will arise after them, and he will be different from the previous ones and will subdue three kings.

**Dan. 7:25** 'He will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

- The Lord allows the Antichrist to prosper and have success in killing saints for 3.5 years
  - This is the time of martyrdom
- But as the angels already declared, his success will be temporary

**Rev. 14:17** And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle.

**Rev. 14:18** Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe."

**Rev. 14:19** So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

**Rev. 14:20** And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

- Finally, two more angels emerge from the temple in Heaven, and one angel has a sickle also

- This again confirms our earlier conclusions that these characters are angels and none are Jesus
  - Like before, the second angel gives an order to the first angel to reap
  - But this time the reaping task involves removing a different group from the earth
  - We know this second group is different than the first group because they face a different fate
- This is a description of the deaths of the world's entire population of unbelievers at a point near the end of Tribulation
  - Obviously, this chapter has been describing events that span the second half of Tribulation
  - And believers are dying throughout this time
  - But the death of the unbelievers is largely confined to the final days and weeks of Tribulation
- This group will be placed into the great winepress of the wrath of God to the effect of a great bloodshed, John says
  - This is looking ahead to the end of the seven years even as we exit the mid-Tribulation period
  - Specifically, it's referencing the war of Armageddon, which we begin to study next week
- But for now, the reader gets a taste of what's coming for the unbeliever to balance what we've learned about the fate of believers
  - And unbelievers will become a bloodbath, literally, producing a river of blood rising incredibly high and traveling impossibly far
    - The blood is 4½ feet high and two hundred miles long
    - How is this possible? Because it happens in a narrow ravine that runs in Israel
  - As we will learn later, the battle happens in the valley of Kidron which is probably the channel through which the blood flows
    - Nevertheless, the amount of blood here is literally the blood of billions of people
    - If we assume it flowed to the width of that valley, we're talking about 62 billion cubic feet of blood
    - That would require over 300 billion people's blood, which is clearly too high to be realistic
  - Instead, it likely means that at the moment of the winepress when the armies are killed, there will be a sudden release of blood in the valley
    - And it will produce a 4.5-foot high wave of blood that flows away from the valley for 200 miles
    - We're still talking about a tsunami of blood, and as you let that scene settle in your mind, let it balance your concern for the believer
    - Vengeance is mine, declares the Lord
- So the ending of Revelation 14 describes the eventual fate of the unbelieving world

upon the return of Christ

- But the specific moment when the winepress of the wrath of God takes place will occur at the end of Tribulation
  - In fact, this reference is a foreshadowing of the bowl judgments, which are right around the corner in a chapter or so
  - And when it comes, the world will see immense bloodshed
- But in the meantime, the second half of Tribulation is a relatively peaceful time for the unbeliever
  - Only at the very end of Tribulation will the unbelievers encounter suffering and death
  - The bowl judgments bring a new level of suffering unlike anything the world has ever witnessed before
  - But the people who suffer through most of the second half of Tribulation will be believers and Jews who oppose the Antichrist
- So Chapters 10-14 have taken us out of the Trumpet judgments and into the amazing events of mid-Tribulation
  - Those events have drawn to a close, and now we wonder how the second 3½ years will proceed
    - Though there is still much to happen at the end of Tribulation, in a way the answer will be a bit of a disappointment
    - Because the next two chapters pick up at a point near the end of Tribulation
  - Most of the second half of Tribulation will have concluded, and in reality, we've already studied most of the last half of Tribulation
    - In Chapters 12-14 we learned that during the last 3½ years the enemy is confined to earth
    - Together with the Antichrist and false prophet, he persecutes and kills anyone who threatens his existence, particularly Christians and Jews
  - The Antichrist and false prophet pursue an economic and police state that brings a temporary sense of peace to the unbeliever
    - But it brings great persecution to believers and Jews
    - That's how the final 3.5 years of Tribulation will go...until the bowl judgments begin
- To end today, let's revisit all three judgment series in Tribulation
  - The first series of judgments, the seals, contains all three judgments
    - So that seventh seal ARE the seven trumpet judgments
    - And then the seventh trumpet will become the seven bowl judgments
  - When the judgments were suspended at the end of Chapter 9, we knew we were waiting for the seventh trumpet to sound
    - We do not know the exact timing for any of the judgments, whether seals, trumpets or bowls
    - We only know relative positioning within the seven years of Tribulation

- For example, we know that the seal judgments cannot begin until Tribulation itself has started by the signing of a covenant
  - We also know that the seal judgments must happen before the trumpet and the trumpet before the bowls
  - And we know that the seal and trumpet judgments happen before the middle of Tribulation
  - This is based on the sequence of chapters in Revelation
- Now as we transition into the second half of Tribulation, we know that the bowl judgments are after the middle of Tribulation
  - But we're faced with the same question of where exactly in the second half of Tribulation do these judgments take place
  - The short answer is we can't be sure exactly, but there are some strong suggestions that they come at the very end of Tribulation
  - We'll come back to this question next time as we return to the final judgments of Tribulation



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 15-16

## Chapter 15:1-8, 16:1-16

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- We've sorted out the mid point of Tribulation, so now it's time to transition out of this period and move into the final months and weeks of the seven years
  - As we do, let's review quickly where the world stands at this point
    - Satan has resurrected the Antichrist, and is indwelling his body
    - With Satan's power, the Antichrist is ruling the world, being celebrated as the Messiah and Savior
  - Satan has raised up a false prophet to lead the world in a new religion that worships the Antichrist
    - And a supernatural image is installed in the Jewish temple to remind people of the new god of the world
    - The world is called to worship this new god, and all take a mark indicating their willingness to worship him
    - If a person refuses, they cannot buy or sell and once found they are beheaded
  - For the most part, the only ones who resist are those who believe in Jesus and the Jewish people who remain devoted to Yahweh
    - Among these groups, some are in safety in Petra
    - Others are under persecution around the world and especially in Jerusalem
    - And many are martyred and enter Heaven to rest from these trials and await the resurrection
  - Meanwhile, the world enjoys an uneasy peace for the better part of the second half of Tribulation
    - The seal judgments and the trumpet judgments have come and gone during the first 3.5 years
    - The bowl judgments still await, but they do not come right away
- And since the bowl judgements are the next act in this drama, the narrative of the book jumps from the midpoint to a point near the end of the seven years
  - And Chapter 15 transitions us along that path beginning with another sign in Heaven

**Rev. 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.**

- Once again John's attention is directed into the Heavenly realm to witness another great and wondrous sign in Heaven
  - John calls what he sees a sign, a symbol, and in fact all of Chapter 15 is that sign
  - The entire chapter uses a series of symbols to make a point
- The sign begins with the seven angels holding seven bowls
  - John says these bowls are the last, meaning the last of the judgments of Tribulation
  - Moreover, they are the last of God's judgments as required under the Old



## Covenant

- Remember, the period of Tribulation is itself a consequence of the terms of the Old Covenant between the Lord and Israel
  - All that’s happening in this seven year period was appointed for Israel in keeping with that covenant
  - As Daniel was told by Gabriel

**Dan. 9:24** “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

- Seventy sevens, including the final seven of Tribulation, have been appointed for Israel the angel said
  - And that appointment was for the purpose of addressing the sins of Israel under the Old Covenant
- So God’s obligations to pour out wrath on Israel under the terms of that covenant will be completed by these seven judgments
  - Because these judgments are not directed at the believers, the Lord provides protection for the believing Jews in Botzrah
    - But for the rest of Israel, the pouring out of God’s wrath refines and purifies them

**Zech. 13:7** “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,  
And against the man, My Associate,”  
Declares the LORD of hosts.  
“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;  
And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

**Zech. 13:8** “It will come about in all the land,”  
Declares the LORD,  
“That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;  
But the third will be left in it.

**Zech. 13:9** “And I will bring the third part through the fire,  
Refine them as silver is refined,  
And test them as gold is tested.  
They will call on My name,  
And I will answer them;  
I will say, ‘They are My people,’  
And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

- God uses the judgments to cut off some in Israel while refining the rest
  - So while many unbelieving Jews will perish others will come to faith through the process

- In short, that’s what we are watching take place in the remainder of Tribulation
- God narrows His focus on the unbelieving Jews while at the same time bringing judgment against the enemy and the unbelieving world
  - He is finally delivering the judgment He has long delayed

**Is. 48:8** “You have not heard, you have not known.  
Even from long ago your ear has not been open,  
Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously;  
And you have been called a rebel from birth.

**Is. 48:9** “For the sake of My name I delay My wrath,  
And for My praise I restrain it for you,  
In order not to cut you off.

**Is. 48:10** “Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;  
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

**Is. 48:11** “For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act;  
For how can My name be profaned?  
And My glory I will not give to another.

**Is. 48:12** “Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called;  
I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.

- Back to Chapter 15, let’s look at John’s sign:

**Rev. 15:2** And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

**Rev. 15:3** And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,  
“Great and marvelous are Your works,  
O Lord God, the Almighty;  
Righteous and true are Your ways,  
King of the nations!

**Rev. 15:4** “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?  
For You alone are holy;  
For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU,  
FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.”

- The sign has multiple parts, beginning with a glass sea mixed with fire
  - Obviously sea, glass and fire don’t ordinarily mix well
    - We have to appreciate that John is trying to describe a scene without a point of reference
    - So he references elements he knows from earth and combines them in impossible combinations
    - Clearly, he’s seeing something other-worldly

- Standing on this “sea” are those who had been victorious over the beast, which is a reference to those who were martyred in the Tribulation
  - Their death is called a “victory” over the beast and his image and the number of his name
  - Death is a victory because it removes the person from the influence of the beast and brings them to a place of rest
  - Once a saint dies in Tribulation, they pass from the dominion of the enemy to the dominion of the Lord
  - And since they have left the world behind, they are no longer within reach of the enemy who has been cast down
- They overcame the beast and the mark, John says, in the sense that they never gave in to his demands to worship him or take his sign
  - Doing these things would have resulted in them never having opportunity to be with the Lord
  - Because they have died without giving in to the enemy’s demands, they have passed the test and entered Heaven
- And they overcame the mark because they never loved their physical life more than the Lord
  - This is exactly the kind of eternal perspective that all believers are expected to maintain
  - The one who seeks to gain his life will lose it, and the one who loses his life will gain life eternal
- Next, we see these Tribulation saints singing with harps, singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb
  - These are two different songs in this chapter
    - The song of the Lamb is recorded here in vs.3-4, while the song of Moses references an earlier song from the Old Testament
    - The words of the song of the Lamb are a praise to Jesus specifically
    - It never mentions Jesus by name, but we know it is talking about Jesus because it is called the song of the “Lamb”
  - The singers declares that Jesus is the righteous King of the nations
    - That soon the Lamb will be worshipped by the nations
    - These statements indicate that the Tribulation is coming to an end soon and Jesus’ return is approaching
  - These singers are also singing the song of Moses, of which there are two possible songs in Scripture
    - The first possibility is a song sung by Moses in Deuteronomy 32

**Deut. 32:5 “They have acted corruptly toward Him,  
They are not His children, because of their defect;  
But are a perverse and crooked generation.**

**Deut. 32:6 “Do you thus repay the LORD,**

**O foolish and unwise people?  
Is not He your Father who has bought you?  
He has made you and established you.**

**Deut. 32:7** “Remember the days of old,  
Consider the years of all generations.  
Ask your father, and he will inform you,  
Your elders, and they will tell you.

**Deut. 32:17** “They sacrificed to demons who were not God,  
To gods whom they have not known,  
New gods who came lately,  
Whom your fathers did not dread.

**Deut. 32:18** “You neglected the Rock who begot you,  
And forgot the God who gave you birth.

**Deut. 32:35** ‘Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,  
In due time their foot will slip;  
For the day of their calamity is near,  
And the impending things are hastening upon them.’

**Deut. 32:36** “For the LORD will vindicate His people,  
And will have compassion on His servants,  
When He sees that their strength is gone,  
And there is none remaining, bond or free.

**Deut. 32:37** “And He will say, ‘Where are their gods,  
The rock in which they sought refuge?’

**Deut. 32:41** If I sharpen My flashing sword,  
And My hand takes hold on justice,  
I will render vengeance on My adversaries,  
And I will repay those who hate Me.

- As Moses is about to die and the nation enters the Promised Land without him, he warns of days of vengeance when the Lord will deal with their sin
  - In the future, Israel will become faithless, worshipping other gods and overlooking the God, the Rock, Who saved them
    - And as a result, the Lord will bring calamities upon His people and when He sees their strength gone they will be broken
    - He brings them low to break them of their rebellious hearts
    - That song is clearly prophetic and its ultimate fulfillment is found in the events of Tribulation
  - Remember, their relationship was established by covenants
    - One covenant established a relationship without condition, that is the Abrahamic Covenant

- But another covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, came along side the first covenant, and it had conditions
  - Israel's disobedience to that covenant required God pour out His judgment against the nation for their sins according to its terms
    - The period of history when the Lord brings these judgments is called the Age of the Gentiles according to what we learned in Daniel
    - And the Age of the Gentiles culminates with a time of Tribulation
- But there is a second song of Moses in the OT, and it also has relevance for this moment
  - In Exodus 15:1-18 Moses leads the people of Israel in a song of praise after the nation is saved from Pharaoh's army
  - The Lord had just closed the Red Sea over the advancing chariots and drowned the army

**Ex. 15:9** “The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be gratified against them; I will draw out my sword, my hand will destroy them.’

**Ex. 15:10** “You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

**Ex. 15:11** “Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?

**Ex. 15:12** “You stretched out Your right hand, The earth swallowed them.

**Ex. 15:13** “In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; In Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation.

**Ex. 15:16** “Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.

**Ex. 15:17** “You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.

- This song is also a picture of what will happen in the last days
  - In fact, the entire Exodus experience is a picture of Tribulation
  - Exodus is a story of Israel escaping slavery by fleeing in the desert from a determined enemy
  - Ultimately through miraculous judgments, the Lord brings Israel to Himself to dwell in safety in the Promised Land

- So the heavenly choir sings the song of Moses, which may be elements of both these OT songs, because both are relevant
  - On the one hand, the Lord is fulfilling His promise to bring vengeance and judgment against Israel for their sin
    - And on the other hand, He will rescue His people from the Antichrist in the end
    - The next few chapters of Revelation explain how the Lord does that
- So let's make sense of this scene by understanding how these songs are a "sign"
  - We have a heavenly scene communicate something about what is going to happen at the end of Tribulation through songs
    - The first song is song is about Jesus indicating it's a song by believers sung to believers
    - And that song communicates that Christ's return is imminent and His time of rule is near
    - He alone is righteous and holy in contrast to the blasphemous claims of the enemy on earth
  - This sign from Heaven will give the believer in Tribulation something to cling to as they face terrible persecution while hoping for the end
    - This time will probably feel something like the days of Christians being fed to lions in Rome
    - The enemy's forces will tear families apart, execute children in front of their parents or wives in front of their husbands
    - And they will carry out even greater atrocities than the world has ever known
    - But the believer's confidence lies in knowing that they overcome the enemy through death and Christ will return to reign shortly
- But the song(s) of Moses are a sign to a completely different group in the second half of Tribulation
  - Moses' songs are sung to the Jews of Tribulation, particularly to the orthodox Jew who is yet to believe in Jesus
    - The first part of the song from Deuteronomy reminds God's people that this judgment is a result of the Old Covenant's demands
    - The Lord will take Israel through a time of judgment causing Her to experience great weakness
  - Through the judgments, the nation is atoning for their sin and the Lord is remaining faithful to His promises to bring that judgment
    - So ironically, Moses' song gives Israel hope because it says that these events are not outside God's control
    - God remains in control and is keeping His promises and will bring a good result in the end
  - And for the same reason, the second song of Moses from Exodus reminds these Jews of God's faithfulness in the midst of attack
    - When things looked darkest to Israel, the Lord saved them in the end
    - So Israel can have confidence that the Lord will overthrow those who rise up

against His people

- Later at the end of Tribulation we'll see exactly how the Lord fulfills these promises to Israel in a day of desperation
- So the sign of Chapter 15 is to the two persecuted groups in the second half of Tribulation
  - Believers are told to look forward to the Lord's coming and reigning at the end of the bowl judgments
  - And the orthodox Jews can look forward to the Lord's rescue of His people
  - These messages are an encouragement to those on earth in these days

**Rev. 15:5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened,**

- The next part of the sign transitions to the temple in Heaven and the tabernacle opening
  - In the heavenly realm stands a tabernacle, similar to the one that Moses was instructed to build for Israel in the Law
    - The writer of Hebrews tells us that the earthly tabernacle the Lord gave to Israel was patterned on the heavenly version

**Heb. 9:23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.**

**Heb. 9:24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;**

- In the tabernacle on earth resided an ark with a mercy seat, which is the name given to the top or lid of the ark
  - So we assume that in the tabernacle in Heaven there is also a mercy seat
  - And in fact, Ezekiel 28 tells us that Satan was originally the cherub who guarded the mercy seat in heaven
- The Shechinah glory of God dwelled in the earthly tabernacle resting on the top of the mercy seat
  - But at a point in Israel's history, the glory of the Lord left the temple shortly before the Age of the Gentiles began
  - And since that Age began, the glory of the Lord has never returned to Israel
  - It won't return, according to Ezekiel, until the Kingdom begins and a new temple is built
- So now as the Lord prepares to pour out His final wrath upon Israel and the world, He opens the tabernacle in Heaven as a sign
  - The glory of the Lord on the mercy seat becomes visible for a time alluding to the

Lord's impending return to the tabernacle

- Here's what Ezekiel saw of that day to come:

**Ezek. 43:5** And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.

**Ezek. 43:6** Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me.

**Ezek. 43:7** He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die,

**Ezek. 43:8** by setting their threshold by My threshold and their door post beside My door post, with only the wall between Me and them. And they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed. So I have consumed them in My anger.

**Ezek. 43:9** "Now let them put away their harlotry and the corpses of their kings far from Me; and I will dwell among them forever.

- So the next part of the sign communicates that the time for the Lord to finish with wrath and return to dwelling with Israel has come
  - And with that angels emerge with the bowls of the final judgment

**Rev. 15:6** and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.

**Rev. 15:7** Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

- The seventh Trumpet judgment is the seven bowl judgments, and now we see those bowls being prepared in Heaven so the final trumpet is about to blow
  - God's wrath is commonly depicted in Scripture as something poured out
    - You can find examples of wrath depicted as something poured out of a cup or drank from a cup
    - And God's wrath or judgment is also said to be stored up or filling up of a cup or other vessel
  - And now we see wrath measured not in cups but in bowls, indicating the greater form of this judgment
    - Israel has stored up wrath for herself and now it will be poured out in full measure
    - As Paul wrote in Romans

**Rom. 2:5** But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are



**storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,**

**Rom. 2:6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:**

- Then an interesting moment happens in Heaven

**Rev. 15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.**

- The temple filled with smoke representing the glory and power of the Lord, and then everyone was barred from entry into the temple
  - Who normally enters into the temple of God? In the case of Israel and the Law, entry was limited to the priests
    - And in the case of the Holies Place which held the mercy seat, only the High Priest could enter
    - So if we assume the Heavenly tabernacle works in similar ways, then we must conclude that no priest is entering the temple
  - What priest lives in Heaven? There is only one: Jesus, our High Priest
    - So the indication is that the Father has barred Jesus from entering the temple until the end of the bowl judgments
    - If Jesus cannot enter the temple, then He cannot go before the Father to make intercession
    - And if He cannot make intercession, then there can be no grace offered
  - This is further indication that there is no new faith possible on earth until the end of the bowl judgments
    - Remember, Chapter 15 is a transition chapter leading us out of the mid-Tribulation point
    - And as such, it tells us how the second half of Tribulation will go
    - The bowl judgments will take place near the end of this time, and until they finish, there is no opportunity for faith on earth
- Now with the end of Chapter 15 we officially leave the middle of the seven years of Tribulation and with Chapter 16 we move to the final weeks
  - As with the middle of Tribulation, the end of the seven years involves a complex set of events that overlap
    - So as we study these chapters, we continue to build our understanding with graphs and diagrams
    - We will lay out the events in sequence and understand the cause and effect of them all
  - Let's start with the first five bowl judgments that kick off this final period of Tribulation

**Rev. 16:1** Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”

**Rev. 16:2** So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

**Rev. 16:3** The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

**Rev. 16:4** Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

**Rev. 16:5** And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things;

**Rev. 16:6** for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.”

**Rev. 16:7** And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

**Rev. 16:8** The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.

**Rev. 16:9** Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

**Rev. 16:10** Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain,

**Rev. 16:11** and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

- The final wrath of God poured out brings a new level of suffering and misery to the earth
  - First, God takes away man’s physical comfort with loathsome sores
    - Loathsome is from a Greek word meaning wretched and malignant (literally the word for evil or wicked)
    - If these sores are vile or wicked, they must disrupt the flesh in unimaginable ways
    - Imagine something like the way Jesus’ body was ripped to shreds by his scourging
  - Secondly, God puts an end to all sea life by making all seas turn to blood
    - Besides an uncountable number of dead and rotting fish, the blood itself would begin to congeal and become putrid
    - This would also shut down the water cycle of the planet stopping all rain
    - And it will also cause an unimaginable environmental disaster and make navigation on the sea impossible
  - This is followed by a third bowl making the fresh water sources also turn to blood
    - The angel explains the blood of these judgments is a repayment for the world

pouring out the blood of the saints

- And therefore, the angel declares that the world deserves to be without water
  - This judgment is one of numerous indications that the bowl judgments occur at the very end of the seven years
    - How long can someone survive without water to drink? Only a few days
    - Perhaps the world will survive on stockpiles of water which could extend survival for a time, but certainly not for years
- Fourthly, the sun suddenly increases in intensity to the point that it burns men
  - Imagine living with evil wretched sores in a world with no rain (because the seas are blood) and no natural sources of fresh water
    - Now add to that a scorching sun that literally expels tongues of fire that scorches the earth and people
    - The heat would also increase the rate of decomposition of the dead animals everywhere making the air wretched
  - Finally, the fifth bowl casts the earth into darkness and the darkness is so intense that it causes unbearable pain
    - How does darkness lead to pain?
    - It's not merely the lack of physical light...it's spiritual darkness
  - Similar to the way the Father withdrew His presence from Jesus while He hung on the cross, the Lord has left the world exposed
    - As God's creation is separated from its Creator, it is left to the mercy of the spiritual forces of darkness
    - So for a time, the world feels the effect of the Lord's wrath by experiencing an absence of His protection
- You may have noticed a familiar pattern in many of these judgments
  - Scorching heat, darkness, no water, no refreshment, at the mercy of the enemy, no relief from physical torment
    - The world is experiencing a preview of Hell, because they are enduring the wrath of God
    - Hell is itself a place that experiences the outpouring of the wrath of God continually
    - So it makes sense that His wrath poured out would be felt in similar ways
  - The world's response to these calamities in v.9 is to continue blaspheming God without repentance
    - An unbeliever's sin nature is eternal and so their rebellion will be eternal unless God changes their nature
    - Therefore, for the same reason an unbeliever's punishment must be eternal too
  - These judgments reinforce the sign of Chapter 15 when they heard the song of Moses
    - In the Exodus, the nation of Egypt held Israel captive so the Lord used

- judgments to free His people
    - Here again, the nation of Israel is captive to an enemy, and the Lord pours out judgment to free His people
    - Specifically, bowls 1, 2, 3, and 5 all have parallels in the Exodus
  - The connection is intentional, because it reminds us that these judgments are ultimately moving His nation to a good outcome
    - In the end, the judgments of Exodus brought Israel freedom and ultimately entrance into the Promised Land
    - Likewise, these judgments are part of the plan to free Israel from slavery to sin and unbelief and into the Kingdom
- So now that we've studied the first five bowls, let's pause to look at how the bowl judgments fit into the overall plan for the end of Tribulation
  - The first five judgments are a systematic delivery of Hell to earth in preparation for the Lord's return
    - We can call these judgments collectively the plagues, in recognition of the way they mirror the Exodus
    - They serve to bring God's wrath to the world, but they are also a preparation and backdrop for the events of Chapters 17 & 18
    - Then we have the final two climatic judgments before the return of Christ
  - The final two judgments may seem insignificant compared to what we've already seen in the first five
    - But they are part of a larger set of events
    - We call this climax the War of Armageddon, and it has multiple stages
    - This war ends the Tribulation and leads to Christ's Second Coming
    - And the first two stages of the war are set in motion by the final two bowl judgments
  - Even just the word "Armageddon" can produce a wide variety of misconceptions and assumptions
    - Many Christians have heard of this war but most have no idea of its timing or purpose, much less its details
    - And like most wars, the actual events of the war are complex and defy a simple explanation
  - Beginning with the fact that the war of Armageddon isn't a single military engagement but rather a series of events over weeks
    - It takes place in a series of locations and involves many different groups and characters
    - As usual, Revelation will give us the broad outline of the events of the war and how they relate to the bowl judgments
    - But crucial aspects of the story lie outside Revelation in other books of the Bible, particularly in the OT prophets
- Even more confusing, descriptions of the war are sprinkled throughout Chapters 16-19

- These chapters bring resolution to a number of loose ends in Revelation and conclusion to major themes of Scripture going back to Genesis
  - In particular, God judges and eliminates the enemy and his most importance influence on humanity: Babylon
  - Babylon is itself a mysterious and complex topic that requires careful explanation
- We'll dissect all this over the coming weeks, but first we need to establish a relationship between the bowls and the events of this war
  - Let's begin where we left off in Revelation 16, at the pouring out of the sixth bowl judgment

**Rev. 16:12** The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

**Rev. 16:13** And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs;

**Rev. 16:14** for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

**Rev. 16:15** (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”)

**Rev. 16:16** And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-magedon.

- As the sixth angel pours out his bowl, we're told that the great river, the Euphrates, is dried up
  - The Euphrates is the major river of Mesopotamia in present-day Iraq that runs near the ancient city of Babylon
    - We know from the earlier bowl judgments that all the rivers of the Earth have been turned to blood
    - So this river had already changed to blood too
  - But blood itself is mostly water, so it's still accurate to say this judgment has “dried up” as a result of this bowl judgment
    - Naturally, we ask how is the drying up of a river (given that it has already turned to blood) considered a judgment?
    - In v.12 we're told the reason: it makes a way possible for the kings of the east
    - The kings is a reference to the Antichrist and the seven kings who serve him in this day
  - We know from Daniel that Tribulation begins with only ten kings in power, which become seven when the Antichrist rises to power
    - So those kings are the same kings described here and the river dries up to

- prepare a way for these seven kings of the earth
  - When v.12 says “prepare a way,” it speaks of making travel or movement possible for the kings
  - Obviously, the Lord is the one carrying out these judgments and is therefore the One preparing their travel
  - But why does the Lord want them to travel and how is that a judgement?
- In vs.13-16 we begin to see how this movement plays a part in God’s judgments
  - The dragon, beast and false prophet see opportunity when the river dries up to enact a plan to oppose God
    - They send unclean spirits as messengers to the kings of the earth
    - An unclean spirit is a demon, and they are described as like frogs, which is an OT symbol for an unclean spirit
  - The demons call the seven kings of the earth to gather their military forces in preparation for a great war against God
    - The gathering place for these forces is a place called by the Hebrew name, Har-Megiddo
    - The word har in Hebrew is hill or mountain and Megiddo is the name of a city in northern Israel in the Jezreel Valley
  - Therefore, the hill of Megiddo is Har-Megiddo in Hebrew
    - And in the transliteration of the Hebrew into English, we arrive at Armageddon
    - This is the location where these kings will gather their armies in preparation for a great war against God
  - That war we’re about to study gets its name from this city and the battle that begins in this area
    - Why does Satan call the kings of the Earth to gather in Har-Megiddo?
    - And why does the Lord use the sixth bowl judgment to make this possible?
- First, remember the incredible destruction brought to earth by the first five bowl judgments
  - Life on earth is now virtually unlivable, and those who have taken the mark of the beast see that their time is short
    - Like Satan when he was cast down, the world as a whole realizes that without water death is right around the corner
    - And they know that God is behind these judgments
  - So Satan, who also knows his time is short, determines he must prepare to destroy Christ at His return
    - So with the influence of the Antichrist and the false prophet, Satan calls the world to fight as one against Christ
    - He probably points to the world’s desperate state and declares this the only hope for survival
  - So with Satan and the world in the same boat, both searching for a way to defeat

God and avoid death, they set about to go to war

- So the call goes out for the Antichrist's forces to gather in northern Israel for a massive attack against the Lord's city
  - So that when the Lord returns to the Mt. of Olives and to the temple, the Antichrist's forces will be waiting to destroy Him
  - Moreover, the enemy will target the remaining hold out of Jews hunkered down in the city
  - And if he can destroy these Jews, he hopes to make Christ's return impossible
- This war unfolds in five stages over the next several chapters, and the first of those stages is the sixth bowl judgment
  - Stage I of the war of Armageddon is the movement of the Antichrist's forces out of his capital city and toward Israel
    - We haven't heard the name of the Antichrist's capital yet, but the drying up of the Euphrates river gives us a clue
    - The city of Babylon lies on the east side of that river, while Israel lies to the west
    - So moving forces toward Israel would require that the river dry up
    - We'll see confirmation that Babylon is his headquarters later in Revelation
  - The river was an obstacle to his movement westward into Jerusalem especially in its bloody state
    - So the Lord dries up the river to make movement possible
    - And the demons respond to the move of God by calling the kings to Har-Megiddo
  - This is a judgment because it sets in motion a war that ultimately brings death to all unbelievers and defeat to Satan and the Antichrist
    - So the world's armies move from Babylon westward until they mass near Har-Megiddo
    - The armies use this area as a staging location in preparation for battle
    - The actual battle will take place in two other locations
    - And apart from those battles, the Lord initiates destruction in still a third location
- Finally, in v.15 the Lord inserts a parenthetical statement to the believer who lives during these difficult final days
  - Earlier in Revelation 3 in His letter to Laodicea, the Lord warned the church to be ready for the Rapture
    - He would come unexpectedly and only the believing would be received into Heaven
    - So Jesus told the unbelieving in the church to be ready since they wouldn't know the hour of His coming
    - You won't have a chance to get right with God at the last minute because you won't see that minute coming

- Likewise, the world will not recognize that Jesus' Second Coming is imminent
  - And so they must know and believe before that day comes
  - It's the same problem but for a different moment
  - And yet the call is the same...believe while today is still called "today"





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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 17

Chapter 16:17-21; 17:1-  
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- We've reached the climactic period of the seven year Tribulation, the time of Jacob's Troubles
  - God is pouring out His wrath in a series of final bowl judgments prior to Christ's Second coming
    - Six of the seven judgments have already come upon the earth
    - The first five produced devastating destruction such that life on earth is virtually impossible so the end must come quickly
    - The final two judgments kick off a complex series of events that collectively are known as the war of Armageddon
  - In Chapter 16 we get an overview of the seven judgments and the first stages of this war
    - Last week we studied the first phase where the Lord dries up the body of water of the Euphrates river east of Jerusalem near Babylon
    - In doing so, the Lord opens the way for the Antichrist's forces to attack Jerusalem and the Jews still living there
  - The Lord motivates Satan to launch this attack by eliminating all sources of fresh water on earth making sustained life impossible
    - So with time running out and Satan aware that Christ's return is imminent, he causes the Antichrist to bring his forces to Israel
    - The Antichrist moves westward toward the Jezreel Valley, near a place called Har-Megiddo, from which we get Armageddon
    - The stage is now set for an epic battle between good and bad, and with it comes the end of Tribulation and this age
- So the Lord is directing the enemy's actions like pieces on a chess board bringing everything to its appointed end
  - Which brings us to the final bowl judgment at the end of Chapter 16
    - This judgment is focused on the fall of a great city, and that fall is the most important event in Tribulation
    - In fact, it's so important that this one judgment is explained in greater detail in Chapters 17 & 18
  - That judgment is the next stage of the war of Armageddon

**Rev. 16:17** Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

**Rev. 16:18** And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

**Rev. 16:19** The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

**Rev. 16:20** And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

**Rev. 16:21** And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of

### **the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.**

- The final bowl judgment is poured out into the air, as if the wrath of God coats the entire planet like a blanket
  - The atmosphere of our earth is an ocean surrounding the planet
    - And just as the previous bowl judgments were poured into bodies of water, so is this judgment poured into an ocean of air
    - It's like a dye poured into a pool that mixes throughly bringing wrath to every part of the pool
    - So God's wrath is going everywhere on earth
  - And this judgment results in an earthquake that produces a unique destruction unlike any other earthquake ever
    - The damage must be on a par with the flood of Noah except without water
    - Mountains are gone, islands are gone, and even the continents are ripped apart
  - Mountains and islands are the same thing, geographically speaking
    - An island is simply the top of a mountain rising out of the sea
    - So the logical conclusion is that mountain ranges – both on land and in the sea – sink downward into the crust of the earth
    - And anything built on a mountain would be gone...only the cities built on the plains remain and even these are leveled
- Then as this final judgment comes, a voice from the temple says “It is done”
  - The Greek word for done can also mean accomplished
    - Meaning the wrath of God and His purposes in the Tribulation would come to an end with this final bowl

**Rev. 15:1** Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

- As promised, these judgments bring an end to God's wrath
- Remember also, when Jesus had completed the work of redemption, He declared it is finished as well

**John 19:30** Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

- On the cross, Jesus took the wrath of God upon Himself for our sake
  - And once He had received God's wrath for sin, He declared the wrath of God against the elect is finished
- So the wrath of God will be poured out against all sin

- It will be poured out either upon those who will bear God's wrath themselves
- Or it was poured out upon Jesus Who took it in our place

**John 3:36** “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

- Finally, a hailstorm to end all hailstorms pummels the earth
  - Then the hailstorm brings 100lb hail falling on the entire earth
    - When we think of hail, we think of ice, which would be bad enough
    - But when the Bible speaks of hailstones, it literally means stones falling from the sky
  - God destroys the world with 100lb falling rocks, leaving nothing intact...resulting in the complete destruction of anything man-made
    - Since the judgment is clearly Heaven-sent, people on earth recognize this is another act of God
    - Who couldn't recognize this as God's work?
    - Nevertheless, they blaspheme His Name in response
  - So what is God's purpose in these terrible disasters? In v.19, we're told all the cities of the nations fall
    - The Greek word for nations, *ethnos*, can also be translated Gentiles
    - All nations apart from Israel are, by definition, Gentile
    - Therefore, “all the cities of the nations” means all the cities of the Gentiles
  - Therefore, the purpose of the seventh bowl judgment was to eliminate all Gentile cities anywhere on Earth
    - Only Jerusalem has been excluded from these judgments
    - And since Jerusalem stands on a mountain, we can presume that the mountain is still there as well
    - So the Lord has made abundantly clear which city He favors
    - Jerusalem alone remains intact and rises above all other cities, literally the highest point on all the earth
- But there is one Gentile city still remaining on earth, at least to a degree
  - In v.19 we're told a “great city” was split into three parts
    - At first glance, we assume that the term “great city” is a reference to Jerusalem
    - But when we follow our rules for interpreting symbols we find a different answer
  - The term “great city” appears in only eight verses in all the Bible, all of them in Revelation
    - And in every instance, the term references the same place: Babylon
    - For example, if we jump forward to Chapter 18 we find one of those eight

occurrences:

**Rev. 18:21** Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, “So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.

- One of the eight references to “the great city” in Revelation occurred back in Chapter 11

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

- We know that verse was describing Jerusalem
  - But the term “great city” was being used in that verse also as a reference to Babylon
- Notice Jerusalem is described in a total of four ways in that verse
  - It’s called the great city, Sodom, Egypt, and the place Jesus was crucified
  - The last of those four descriptions clearly tells us the city in view is Jerusalem
- And therefore, the first three references are all euphemistic:
  - Jerusalem is *like* the great city, Babylon, and *like* Sodom and *like* Egypt
  - Each of these three places are known for great sin and rebellion against God, and so will be the state of Jerusalem in that day
- So the term “great city” is always a reference to Babylon, and this city will now become the focus of our story for two chapters
  - In v.19 we’re told that Babylon is now receiving the cup of wine of God’s wrath
    - Bowls and cups are commonly used in Scripture as symbols
    - They store up God’s wrath for a later time when it will be poured out upon the deserving objects of God’s anger
  - This is now the fate of Babylon, but the concept of Babylon is complex, which is why it requires two chapters to deal with her destruction
    - The destruction of Babylon is one of two major themes of the Bible (the other major theme being redemption through Christ)
    - These two themes play against one another throughout all of Scripture
    - Babylon serves as the antagonist to Christ’s protagonist in that story
  - But just as Jesus’ identity was revealed slowly in stages over the course of Scripture, so is Babylon slowly unveiled
    - The word Babylon in scripture carries multiple meanings
    - In fact, Babylon stands for five related concepts in the Bible
- First, Babylon is the home of sin, because it is the location for the Garden of Eden in present-day Iraq

**Gen. 2:10** Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.

**Gen. 2:11** The name of the first is Pishon; it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold.

**Gen. 2:12** The gold of that land is good; the bdellium and the onyx stone are there.

**Gen. 2:13** The name of the second river is Gihon; it flows around the whole land of Cush.

**Gen. 2:14** The name of the third river is Tigris; it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

- The Garden of Eden was the location of Satan's original attack against God
  - After Satan's fall in Heaven, he was removed from his position in the Heavenly tabernacle
  - Later, Satan's jealousy over the creation of Man and Woman led Satan to attack Adam and bring mankind into sin
  - At that point Satan gained dominion over the earth, having taken it from Adam when Adam obeyed him instead of God
  - So Babylon is Ground Zero for the start of sin on earth and the beginning of his battle with God over control of the earth
- Forevermore, Babylon has been Satan's home territory, his stronghold
  - Today, this region continues to be heavily guarded by Satan and his dark forces
  - Demonic activity seems to be especially strong in these areas today as well
  - So when you hear the word Babylon, you should think of the home of Satan and sin
- Secondly, Babylon was the source of idolatry on earth
  - Genesis 11 records how men gathered in Babel under the leadership of a man called Nimrod
    - Nimrod was the antichrist of his day, and his story even serves as a picture of the Antichrist
    - Nimrod was an all-powerful world leader of everyone in that day
    - He calls for a new kind of worship, one that leads mankind into a project building a tower that will reach to heaven
  - While that goal may seem like folly, it was actually deadly serious, because the Babel tower was the start of idolatry among mankind
    - The tower was the first false religion
    - And like all religion, it attempted to replace obedience to God with a man-made way to reach Heaven
    - In that first case, their attempt to reach heaven was a literal one using a tower of mud bricks
  - But behind their foolish act were hearts that believed for the first time that it was possible to make your own way to God

- The building of the tower in Babel was no coincidence...who do you think was behind this idea? Satan
    - Satan used Nimrod to establish the thinking that men could define their own way to reach Heaven
  - The Lord responded by scattering people, confusing language to ensure such a worldwide rebellion would be more difficult in the future
    - Since that time, languages have kept men separated and fighting one another rather than organizing against God
    - Until recent times, as Western culture and the internet have increasingly reunited the world under a common language
    - So as the world overcomes the barrier of language, a new worldwide rebellion against God becomes possible yet again
    - So when you hear the word Babylon, we need to think “the source of idolatry”
- Thirdly, Babylon is the first Gentile kingdom to conquer the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem
  - Prior to Nebuchadnezzar, no Gentile nation had ever succeeded in overpowering God’s people
    - God permitted Babylon to conquer Israel as part of His plan to discipline His people for their sins
    - And in that way, Babylon becomes the first of the nations to control Israel during the Age of the Gentiles
    - And as we studied in Daniel, the man at the head of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, is also a picture of the antichrist
  - God permitted Babylon to conquer Israel, but He also promised to eventually punish Babylon for their cruelty against Israel

**Jer. 51:24 “But I will repay Babylon and all the inhabitants of Chaldea for all their evil that they have done in Zion before your eyes,” declares the LORD.**

- And the times of the Gentiles will end in a similar manner
  - A single Gentile ruler controlling the entire world and persecuting Israel, controlling both Jerusalem and Babylon
- This will be the Antichrist’s kingdom and like the first Babylon, this final Babylon will be used by God to discipline His people
  - Yet as God promised, the discipline will not be to Israel’s destruction
  - So when we hear the word Babylon, we need to think “God’s instrument to discipline Israel”
- Fourthly, Babylon becomes the seat of power for the Antichrist during the time of Tribulation
  - Some interpreters argue over whether the Babylon referenced in Revelation refers to the historical city or the symbol of Satan
    - But Scripture makes clear the Babylon in Revelation is both the literal place

and a Biblical symbol

- We've already seen in Revelation 16 that the Antichrist resides in the geographical Babylon near the Euphrates river
    - When the Euphrates river dries up, it becomes the opportunity for the Antichrist to bring the world's armies to Israel
  - Also, the seventh bowl judgment declared that the great city, which is always Babylon, would be destroyed like the other Gentile cities
    - Again, a destruction of the city Babylon is singled out precisely because the city has become a center of power again
    - The Antichrist moves the world's seat of power to Babylon during Tribulation at the point when he is indwelt by Satan
  - And that makes sense, since we know Satan's home has always been in Mesopotamia
    - So naturally, he headquarters a world government in that city
    - So when we hear the word Babylon, we need to think "the seat of power in the last days"
- Finally, because Babylon is the home of the Father of Lies and the seat of power for the Antichrist during Tribulation, the city stands for false religion in general
  - Babylon does not represent one specific false religion but all false religious systems Satan has ever invented
    - Because in reality, there are only two religious systems on earth
    - One is the way of God made available by His promises found in His word and through our faith in the work of Christ
    - Everything else is Babylon
  - The enemy's counterfeit religion which began in the Garden, took shape at Babel, and eventually gave birth to uncountable numbers of children
    - Today's smorgasbord of religious choices is a testimony of the enemy's proliferation of lies
  - Creating many false religions plays to Satan's advantage in two ways
    - First, it camouflages the truth, leading to confusion and making it harder for someone to find the truth
    - And secondly, it perpetuates the myth that there are many roads to heaven, so that all religions seem equally valid
    - So when we hear the word Babylon, we need to think "all false religion"
- Putting all this together, we find that Babylon is both a literal, physical place of importance in the end times and a seat of spiritual power in Scripture
  - It is a physical location where sin began, and the spiritual home for Satan and rebellion
    - It was the starting point for idolatry, and the source of all hatred and oppression against God's people in the Age of Gentiles
    - Babylon represents all of Satan's false religions and the untold damage they have done over the millennia



- So Babylon becomes representative of everything Satan is and all that he does to undermine the truth and oppose God
    - Just as other places like Sodom or Las Vegas convey certain meaning, so is the term Babylon loaded with meaning
  - And as Babylon is the poster child for Satan and evil, so Jerusalem symbolizes the opposite: it's the city of God and a place of redemption
    - Jerusalem is God's dwelling place, the capital of His people and the place of Christ's sacrifice
    - It will be the seat of Christ's government and the center of the world in the Kingdom
    - So as Babylon is for Satan, so Jerusalem is for Jesus
- Therefore, Babylon and Jerusalem are always set opposed to one another in all Scripture, though that relationship is often hard to see
  - Generally, it's expressed simply in terms of cardinal directions rather than by specific titles
    - So Babylon is east of Jerusalem, and therefore the direction east represents evil
    - Similarly, Jerusalem is in the west, and so moving west is a picture of moving away from evil and toward the Lord
  - For example, after Adam was created, the Lord put him in a Garden in the east, representing Adam moving toward sin
    - Later, Cain is sent to the east after he murders Abel
    - Then Abraham was sent from Ur in the east to the Promised Land in the west, intimating his move from paganism to faith
    - Even Jesus moved from west of the Jordan to the east to meet Satan in His temptations in the wilderness
  - And this pattern happens time and time again, with characters moving east or west suggesting a spiritual change as well
    - And now in this climactic end to the Age of the Gentiles, the figurative has become the literal
    - Where before Babylon and Jerusalem pictured the dichotomy of evil vs. good, now they have become the literal battle ground
  - The only two cities left standing at the end of the age are Babylon and Jerusalem
    - The Lord has narrowed the focus of the world on to these two locations
    - And with the bowl judgments he brings Satan from the east to the west to attack Jerusalem for a final battle
- We know that the bowl judgments of Tribulation are the final wrath of God upon the earth
  - Therefore, these Tribulation judgments must bring an end to Babylon in all her forms
    - When all is said and done, Satan's influence must be ended
    - The Antichrist and his base of power, the city of Babylon, must be destroyed

- But more than that, all false religion must come to an end as well as all rebellion and idolatry
  - So in the seventh bowl judgment, Babylon, the great city, will fall
    - The physical city coming to an end including its political, economic and military power
    - Once and for all, the city that stands opposed to God and His people will be gone
  - But Spiritual Babylon will also be destroyed
    - All false religions will end, all idolatry including the idol of wealth, anything that could compete with worship of the Christ
    - All things Babylon will be conquered in preparation for Christ's return
  - We see Babylon destroyed in two parts: first in Chapter 17 we see God judging Spiritual Babylon
    - The Lord brings an end to all false religion and its control over the unbelieving world
    - Interestingly, the Lord uses the father of false religion, Satan Himself, to complete that destruction
  - Secondly, with Spiritual Babylon defeated, Chapter 18 describes the judgment of the physical city of Babylon
    - The Antichrist makes the city a seat of military and financial power in the last days of Tribulation
    - So the Lord brings the city to ruin, robbing it of its wealth, power and prestige
- We now see the judgment against Spiritual Babylon
  - In Chapter 17 we get a puzzle to solve, but the answers to the puzzle all appear in the chapter more or less

**Rev. 17:1** Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters,

**Rev. 17:2** with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality."

**Rev. 17:3** And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness; and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast, full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

**Rev. 17:4** The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,

**Rev. 17:5** and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."

**Rev. 17:6** And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. When I saw her, I wondered greatly.

**Rev. 17:7** And the angel said to me, “Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

**Rev. 17:8** “The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose name has not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will wonder when they see the beast, that he was and is not and will come.

- The angel tells John he will give him greater insight into the seventh bowl
  - And he introduces the scene in vs.1-2 by describing a certain woman whom he calls a harlot who sits on many waters
    - In v.5 we learn that the harlot is a symbol for the great city, Babylon, and its rule over the kings of the earth
    - Women are commonly used to symbolize religious systems in Scripture
    - Israel is called the wife of Jehovah, and the Church is called the Bride of Christ
  - And harlot is used here to picture Spiritual Babylon because a harlot is a perfect representation of false religion
    - A harlot or prostitute is an illegitimate, counterfeit wife, who gives the illusion of a marriage without the substance or reality
    - So in that sense a harlot is a fitting picture of idolatry, a false religious relationship rather than covenant with the true God
    - But more than merely picturing idolatry, John is told that this woman, the great city Babylon, is the Mother of all harlots
- Babylon is not merely one of many harlots or false religions, she is the source, the beginning of counterfeits
  - Here’s confirmation of what we observe in the rest of the Bible
    - The source of false religion is Satan, personalized by His home city of Babylon
    - Notice the harlot sits on many waters, and the meaning of the waters is explained later in v.15
  - These “waters” represent the multitude of nations and peoples of the world...all of humanity in other words
    - So if the woman sits on waters, then it suggests she is over them or dominating them
    - The world is under the deception of false religion, which finds its source in Babylon, the home of Satan
  - The angels says that world leaders “fornicate” with her and the peoples became drunk in immorality
    - The enemy entices people to engage in false religion for a variety of fleshly reasons
    - Throughout time, world leaders have used religion to build a base of power, to enrich themselves to control their subjects

- They fornicate with the harlot in the sense that they use her for their own pleasure and become partners with her
- They become drunk by her immorality in the sense that they lose their senses as they come under Satan's influence
- False religion is both a sedative and a stimulant
  - It stimulates the lust of the flesh for greater power, various lustful desires or other greed
  - And false religion sedates the mind, lulling a person into a spiritual stupor and inoculating them from the truth

**2Cor. 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 2Cor. 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.**

- Then in v.3 John is taken to see this harlot in a new and more mysterious form
  - In the desert wilderness, John sees a woman riding a red beast, full of blasphemous names and having seven heads and ten horns
    - This beast is the same as the first beast John saw back in Revelation 13

**Rev. 13:1 And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.**

- We said then the beast is the Antichrist, and in v.8 we see confirmation that this is the Antichrist
  - He is the one who was, is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and to destruction referring to his death and resurrection
  - And he is also the one the world will see and marvel over
- And the beast is being ridden by the harlot, clothed in scarlet and purple and adorned richly
  - We know the woman is Spiritual Babylon, the mother of all false religion and idolatry
  - She has existed long before the Antichrist, and in fact we just saw her sitting on many waters, which are the kings of the earth
- So Satan has been using false religion to control and manipulate world leaders throughout the ages
  - But now Babylon the harlot rides only the beast, the Antichrist who rules the world
  - As Satan indwells this man, Spiritual Babylon, the mother of idolatry, and the beast have become united as one
- Which means that at the end of the Tribulation, all world religion is vested in a single

man, the Antichrist

- No longer will there be many false religions, because now there will be only the worst, the beast
- In that sense, the harlot is now riding the beast, since he is her owner
- And the woman is clothed like royalty and adorned with riches because Satan requires the world to worship him by making sacrifices to his false religion
  - Remember what Daniel told us about this same person during this time

**Dan. 11:36** “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

**Dan. 11:37** “He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all.

**Dan. 11:38** “But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

- The Antichrist honors Satan by calling the world to sacrifice greatly for the cause of the new world religion
  - The world lavishes the one false religion with great wealth, which honors Satan
- And yet her judgment is assured because the effect of Spiritual Babylon has been to promote immorality and abominations and to kill the saints
  - In v.4 we’re told she holds a cup of abominations and immorality and it’s as if she indulges in these things like drink
  - She takes pleasure in them as if she is addicted to them
- And in v.6 John hears that she is drunk on the blood of the saints, which pictures the martyrdom of the Tribulation but also of earlier times
  - In effect this scene tells the story of religion in all times
  - False religion is Satan’s tool to enslave the world, bringing it into all manner of sin, and using it to persecute the saints
  - And of course the worst examples are so-called Christian false religions that Satan uses to discredit Jesus and the true Church
- So this is Spiritual Babylon, the system of lies and corruption Satan promulgates throughout the history of the world to counter the true God
  - In the final days of the age, all his schemes are vested in a single man, the Antichrist
    - Now John is given an answer to the meaning of the horns and heads of the beast
    - And the answer will explain how this beast relates to the fourth beast of Daniel 7

- First, remember that we learned already in Chapters 12 and 13 that the dragon was Satan and the beast was the Antichrist
  - The dragon had ten horns and ten heads with crowns
  - This indicated Satan was in control of the entire world, all its kingdoms and all its rulers
- But the beast had ten horns with ten crowns, but only seven heads with blasphemous names
  - And one of those seven heads was killed and then resurrected
  - Now we get the rest of the story

**Rev. 17:9** “Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits,

**Rev. 17:10** and they are seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while.

**Rev. 17:11** “The beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction.

**Rev. 17:12** “The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour.

**Rev. 17:13** “These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

**Rev. 17:14** “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.”

- To have wisdom is the Bible’s way of saying you must know history and the rest of the Bible, specifically the Old Testament
  - First, the heads are mountains, which is itself a symbol of world rulers
    - And in v.10 we get confirmation that these mountains are kings because the text goes on to say they are seven kings
    - So why did the text go from heads to mountains to kings?
  - The angel is distinguishing these seven kings from the seven leaders who rule under the Antichrist
    - When the Bible uses mountains to stand for kings, it means kings of the highest authority...no one is higher
    - That means these seven kings cannot be the seven kings under the Antichrist, because they are not the highest authority
  - Furthermore, the harlot will sit on these seven kings
    - Remember, we learned earlier that the woman sits on the king of the earth
    - But once the Antichrist rises to power, she sits only on the beast
    - So if the harlot sits on these kings, they must have ruled before the Antichrist ever came to power

- Then in v.10, we're told five of these seven have fallen by John's day, one is in power in that day, and one has not yet come
  - Clearly we're talking of these kings appearing in a sequence over time
  - They don't all rule at the same time, which is another indication that these seven kings are not the ones who rule at the end
  - The ten kings of Daniel 7 who rule in the Tribulation are all in power at the same time
- Later in v.16, we're told that the ten horns, not the seven heads, represent the kings of Tribulation
  - These horns give their power to the beast, but in John's day they had not yet come to power
  - It would be 2,000 years or more before they come to power, but when they do they will rule for a short time (an hour)
- So these seven heads on the beast are different kings than those who rule under the Antichrist in Tribulation
  - Next notice in v.10 the beast himself is also one of the seven heads, which means he is a successor to these other kings
    - And when he comes to power he remains only a little while, referring to his 3.5 year reign in the second half of Tribulation
    - So that tells us these are kings that rule one after another, not all at the same time
  - Next, in v.11 we're told that the beast is not only a seventh but also an eighth
    - In v.11 John says he was and is not, which we know is a reference to the Antichrist's death and resurrection
    - So the Antichrist is also an eighth in the sense that he dies and then comes back to life
    - He was the seventh until he dies, and then when he resurrects, he is in charge again, as if he becomes an "eighth" king
  - To understand the meaning of the heads of this beast, we need to go back to Chapter 13 to take note of one important detail

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

- The beast of Revelation 13, which is the same beast we see here in Chapter 17, incorporated aspects of all four of Daniel's beasts
  - It had parts of the lion, bear, leopard and the fourth beast with his ten horns
- So this beast represents the entire age of the gentiles, culminating with the Antichrist's rule of the world
  - The heads of the beast, therefore, must be supreme world leaders who ruled in this age

- So we must look across all four of the kingdoms in Daniel's Age of the Gentiles to find the identity of the kings
- We know that during the 2,600+ years of the Age of the Gentiles, there have been many more rulers than seven
  - So how do we know which ones are represented by these seven heads?
- Well, we get answers from the additional clues in the text
- John is told five of the seven kings have fallen, one is, and one will come for a short while
  - So as John received this revelation in 95 AD, five of the kings associated with the Age had come and gone already
    - Before we start guessing, we need to remember the criteria for any nation or ruler to be considered part of the Daniel's beasts
    - They must conquer both Babylon and Jerusalem
  - Now we begin to see a connection between this chapter and Daniel...it's always been about Babylon vs. Jerusalem!
    - Even in the way the Lord put together this age of discipline for Israel, He emphasizes the point of good vs. evil
    - The nations that rule over Israel will also possess Babylon
    - So that ultimately we can say Israel has remained under Babylon's authority until Christ's return
  - So what supreme kings ruled over Jerusalem and Babylon and had died by the time John wrote Revelation?
    - History records only five, beginning with Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty in Babylon
    - Followed by Cyrus' dynasty in Persia and Alexander's short rule
  - Upon Alexander's death, Greece dissolved into four parts, just as the four wings of the leopard represented
    - Initially, the Seleucid Empire retained control of Babylon while the Ptolemaic Kingdom controlled Jerusalem
    - Then in 246 BC Ptolemy III attacked the Seleucid Empire and temporarily achieved control over both Babylon and Jerusalem
    - Later in 170 BC Antiochus Epiphanies IV of the Seleucid Empire attacked the Ptolemaic Kingdom and gained control of both
- So by John's day five kings and kingdoms had ruled Babylon and Jerusalem during the Age of the Gentiles
  - In that way, each of these kings pictured the antichrist in the simple sense that they did what the antichrist would one day do
    - In John's day one was still in authority in the same way
    - General Titus conquered Jerusalem in AD 70 and ruled over Babylon when he ascended to emperor of Rome
    - Following Titus, the Roman Empire and its remnants continued to exert control over both cities off and on until 1923



- The next head to conquer both will be the Antichrist during Tribulation
  - The Antichrist will be the last world leader to gain control over both places
  - He comes for a little while, meaning 3½ years, doing what his predecessors did, but doing it even more violently
- So the seven heads are those kings who lead Satan's kingdom, Spiritual Babylon, serving God's purpose of Gentile domination over Israel
  - And as the harlot rides these kings throughout the history of the Age of the Gentiles, she eventually settles on the Antichrist
    - These kings were her benefactor and the harlot was an enabler for them to gain control
    - Together, Satan ruled the world by deception and lies and greed and lust
    - Then in Tribulation, that relationship becomes even closer as she rides one world leader
- Finally, the ten horns, the ten kings who lead the world at the start of Tribulation, exist only for that purpose and they give their authority to the beast
  - The only purpose these kings serve is to support God's program to bring the Antichrist to power
    - Ultimately, they and their kingdoms are brought to an end with Christ's coming
    - Finally, now that we understand Spiritual Babylon, let's see how the judgment comes to her

**Rev. 17:15** And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.

**Rev. 17:16** "And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.

**Rev. 17:17** "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

**Rev. 17:18** "The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth."

- During the Age of Gentiles, God put Satan's counterfeit religious system to work for God's own purposes in discipling Israel
  - But now God sends the seventh bowl judgment to bring an end to this corrupt, counterfeit system
    - In v.16-17 we're told that the Antichrist and the world rulers under him come to hate the harlot
    - At mid-Tribulation when Satan indwells the Antichrist, he directs that all worship be given to him
    - He puts an end to any form of worship and religious practice

- So all religious institutions, temples, churches, mosques, and other places of worship are destroyed
  - These physical structures and the relics within are burned with fire we're told in v.16
  - These things constitute the "flesh" of the harlot
  - And all religious institutions are stripped of their wealth, so she is made desolate and naked
- The angel says in v.17 that these kings are working to fulfill God's purposes though they think it's their own idea
  - So after the seventh bowl is poured out, the only false religious worship remaining on earth will be worship of Satan
  - Which has always been the goal of Spiritual Babylon anyway
- So now that Spiritual Babylon is no more, all that remains of idolatry and false religion is Satan and the Antichrist and the False Prophet
  - And in v.14 we're told that Jesus will take care of them Himself upon His return
  - So the Lord used the seventh judgment to greatly simplify the problem of cleansing the world of false religion
  - He allowed Satan to do it for Him, so that at His second coming He need only destroy one man to end all idolatry



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 18

## Chapter 18

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- Let's return to the final bowl judgment of Tribulation
  - The seventh bowl judgment isn't a single moment of destruction
    - Instead, think of it like a row of dominos set up on a table
    - As the final bowl is poured out, it's as if the Lord's finger pushes over the first domino in that row
    - Triggering a cascade of falling dominos that play out over a period of days and weeks
  - Some of those dominos were set up by God in the earlier bowl judgments and now that everything is set, it's time to knock them down
    - As the final bowl judgment began, it started with an unimaginably destructive hailstorm and earthquake
    - They eliminated all mountains and islands, except the one on which Jerusalem stands
    - All the Gentile nations of the earth are destroyed
  - In particular, one Gentile city – the Great City, Babylon – will be utterly destroyed
    - While Babylon is an ancient ruin in our world today, in Tribulation the city will have been resurrected to its former glory
    - The Antichrist will make that city (or some new version of it) his world capital
    - So that as in ancient times, Babylon will once again be the seat of world power and the chief adversary of God's people
  - Think back to the statue of Daniel 2, which the Lord gave to Nebuchadnezzar in a dream so that Daniel could interpret it
    - That statue represents a long age of history called the Age of the Gentiles, when Israel would fall under Gentile authority
    - The beginning of that period corresponded to the head of the statue, representing Babylon's king, Nebuchadnezzar
    - He was the first to conquer Israel and rule the world
- And the end of the statue represents the final Gentile authority to rule over Israel, and I told you that the end of the age will be much like the beginning
  - Just as it started with one man ruling the world in absolute authority, so it will end with one man in control of the world
    - And just as it starts with the seat of world power centered in Babylon, so it will end the same way
    - And this is more than coincidence...this is God sending us a message about the real adversary of God's people
  - Satan has always been our true enemy, and like any enemy he has a base of power and a place for his throne on earth
    - And that place is Babylon...Mesopotamia
    - Throughout the Bible, this region has been associated with God's enemy and his efforts to undermine God's people
    - Of course, as the population of the earth has spread out, the enemy's demonic

forces have followed

- But Satan's headquarters has remained in the Middle East, in the plain of Shinar, in the historical area of Babylon
- So in the final stages of Tribulation, the Lord is tearing down the enemy's stronghold in preparation for the Lord's Second Coming
  - His bowl judgments are the final series of blows to bring about the end
  - And there are two phases to His plan of destruction, the first of which we studied last time in Chapter 17
- Chapter 17 described the destruction of spiritual Babylon
  - Spiritual Babylon is my term for the Kingdom that Satan has been trying to establish on earth in opposition to God
  - It takes the form primarily of false religious systems that Satan has created and promoted among the nations of the earth
- While there are countless false religions on earth, they are truly just shades of the same color...they are inventions of Satan
  - And they all serve the same purpose...to distract humanity and lead them away from the truth of the Gospel
    - Collectively, they form an alternate Kingdom to the one God establishes for Christ
    - That false kingdom began, not coincidentally, in Babel with the tower and it continues to today
    - But those who come to the light and believe in Jesus are transferred by their faith from Satan's kingdom to the true Kingdom

**Col. 1:12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light.**

**Col. 1:13 For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,**

**Col. 1:14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**

- But at the end of the Age in preparation for Christ's return, the Lord will systematically destroy the enemy's Kingdom on earth
  - Chapter 17 opens with symbols that show us how the end of the Age of the Gentiles is connected to this destruction
    - A woman riding a beast in Revelation 17 pictured how the rulers of the Age of the Gentiles support Satan's Kingdom
    - The woman was the mother of all harlots, a picture of Satan's Kingdom of counterfeit worship
    - And this harlot rides a seven-headed beast, representing the rulers of the Age of the Gentiles
  - So during the Age of Gentiles, Satan's spiritual Kingdom will be supported by earthly kingdoms under his control starting (again) with Babylon

- These empires prompted false religion and trap generations of humanity in their false claims
    - The empires also oppress Israel and persecuted the saints
  - The beast had seven heads, representing various world rulers who come and go during the age
    - These heads serve as mile markers to mark the passage of time and tell us how close we are to the end of the Spiritual Babylon
    - By John's day, only one world leader had not yet appeared, the Antichrist, and after he appears Satan's Kingdom will come to an end
- So Spiritual Babylon, the spiritual nature of Satan's kingdom, will be set up for destruction first, beginning with the consolidation of all world religion
  - At the midpoint of Tribulation, all objects and houses of false worship are destroyed as the world is directed to worship the Antichrist only
    - All world leaders give their allegiance to the Antichrist, and with the help of the false prophet, everyone worships him alone
    - It's still a false system of worship, of course, but because it's been condensed to one monolithic religion, it's easier to destroy
  - In Chapter 17 we read:

**Rev. 17:13** “These have one purpose, and they give their power and authority to the beast.

**Rev. 17:16** “And the ten horns which you saw, and the beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.

**Rev. 17:17** “For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.

- So as we move now to Chapter 18, the Lord has set up the spiritual kingdom of Satan for destruction at the Lord's return
  - So all that remains is for Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet to be destroyed and the Lord will deal with them personally upon His return
    - Now our attention turns to the physical remnant of Babylon and its impact on the earth
    - This second judgment takes place as part of the campaign of the war of Armageddon
  - The destruction of geographical Babylon is the subject of numerous prophecy in the Old Testament
    - To appreciate those prophecies, we need to examine passages from Isaiah and Jeremiah
    - We will move back and forth between Revelation, Isaiah and Jeremiah studying parts of them together

- Also note that the events of Revelation 16-17 are the backdrop for the events of Revelation 18, so we will glance back at times

**Rev. 18:1** After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory.

**Rev. 18:2** And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird.

**Rev. 18:3** “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”

- The chapter opens with our familiar phrase “After these things...” which in Greek is *meta houtos houtos*
  - This phrase implies a cause-and-effect relationship so the events in Chapter 18 are the result of events described earlier
    - Those earlier events are the judgments poured out in Chapter 16, specifically the seventh bowl judgment
    - Remember, Chapter 17 was an interruption in the narrative of those judgments
  - In the beginning of Chapter 17 John was carried away to see a vision of the Harlot being judged
    - In fact, glance back at the start of that chapter, and in vs.1-3 we see the movement is away from the earth and into heaven
    - So that chapter was backstory to explain how spiritual Babylon existed for millennia but in the end it will be destroyed
  - Now in Chapter 18 John returns to a literal description of the Great City being judged by the seventh bowl
    - Notice in v.1 the direction of movement is away from heaven and toward the earth as an angel comes down...
    - John describes the angel leaving heaven as having great authority, perhaps an archangel
    - His authority does indicate the importance of the mission and the announcement
  - The angel declares (twice for emphasis) that Babylon is fallen
    - What follows is God’s fulfillment of previous prophecy concerning Babylon
    - These prophecies are scattered among numerous Old Testament prophets
    - In particular, Isaiah and Jeremiah (and Ezekiel) spoke extensively on Babylon’s end
- The angel declares that the city will be so utterly devastated that it will be left uninhabited forever
  - The only thing that will remain in that place are the demons that will be confined

there during the Kingdom

- In v.2 we're told it will become a dwelling place only for demons and unclean spirits and unclean birds, meaning scavengers
- The reference to scavenger birds is a way of saying that only dead things will dwell in this place
- And the mention of animals associated with death is an allusion to the resting place of the dead, including demons held in confinement

**Is. 13:19 And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride,**

**Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.**

**Is. 13:20 It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation;**

**Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there,**

**Nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there.**

**Is. 13:21 But desert creatures will lie down there,**

**And their houses will be full of owls;**

**Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there.**

**Is. 13:22 Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers**

**And jackals in their luxurious palaces.**

**Her fateful time also will soon come**

**And her days will not be prolonged.**

- Jeremiah says something similar

**Jer. 51:35 "May the violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon,"**

**The inhabitant of Zion will say;**

**And, "May my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea,"**

**Jerusalem will say.**

**Jer. 51:36 Therefore thus says the LORD,**

**"Behold, I am going to plead your case**

**And exact full vengeance for you;**

**And I will dry up her sea**

**And make her fountain dry.**

**Jer. 51:37 "Babylon will become a heap of ruins, a haunt of jackals,**

**An object of horror and hissing, without inhabitants.**

- The destruction of Babylon the Great will result in the place forever remaining uninhabited except by unclean animals
  - These descriptions preclude the possibility that the prophets were talking about the overthrow of Babylon by Medo-Persia
    - During that event, the nation of Babylon was not destroyed and it continued to be inhabited even to this day
    - Secondly, the conquest of Babylon in that day happened very differently than the way described here



- In fact, the conquest of Babylon by the Medo-Persians was largely a bloodless affair
  - The city of Babylon was protected by high walls no one could successfully assault
  - The river Euphrates ran under the wall, but iron gates block anyone from swimming under the opening
- Cyrus the Great invaded Babylon by diverting the Euphrates river upstream
  - Then when the river level dropped, his troops marched in the river bed undetected
  - They then destroyed the gates over the riverbed and entered the city under the wall
  - At the time, Babylon was sleeping off a night of feasting, so there was virtually no fighting during the capture of the city
- So this must reference a future time of destruction, something that has yet to happen
  - Isaiah lists animals that will inhabit Babylon instead of people, but it's an odd list of animals
    - Back to Revelation 18, the chapter says nothing about animals, yet it does talk about unclean spirits or demons
    - So we understand that Isaiah's description of animals is a picture of demons, which is a typical pattern in scripture
  - Animals like goats and birds of prey are associated with sorcery, satanism or other cultic practices
    - Meaning that only the demonic realm will exist in this place after the destruction of the bowl judgment
    - We'll see a similar description later when we read about the destruction of Edom in Isaiah 37 and Ezekiel 34
  - In v.3 we have the three reasons for her destruction
    - First, the nations have become drunk by her immorality
    - This statement sounds like the judgment of the previous chapter, that of the Harlot and Spiritual Babylon
    - But Chapter 18 is focused on physical Babylon, the city of the Antichrist that reigns over the world
    - So this first indictment refers to the city's corrupting influence on the world of that day...specifically the world's worship of beast
  - Secondly, the kings of the earth will commit acts of immorality with Babylon the Great
    - Babylon controls all political and military authority and causes all kings to do the Antichrist's bidding
    - In Chapter 17:13 we heard how the kings of the earth give their authority to the Beast
    - So this is the second charge against the city...it is the seat of power of all corrupt government in that day

- Finally, the merchants of the world have profited from the Antichrist's rule in Babylon
  - Since the Antichrist regulates all commerce by the mark of the beast, his city becomes unbelievably rich
  - And his material wealth and financial control becomes another way of oppressing and controlling people
  - So the world's corrupt economy also depends on Babylon
- So now comes time to end all of that...

**Rev. 18:4** I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues; **Rev. 18:5** for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

**Rev. 18:6** "Pay her back even as she has paid, and give back to her double according to her deeds; in the cup which she has mixed, mix twice as much for her.

**Rev. 18:7** "To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I SIT as A QUEEN AND I AM NOT A WIDOW, and will never see mourning.'

**Rev. 18:8** "For this reason in one day her plagues will come, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for the Lord God who judges her is strong.

- In v.4, a voice from heaven calls to those who belong to God to leave the city so they might escape the city's corrupting influence and her coming judgment
  - Remember we said that the plagues have come upon the entire world except for the Jews and believers and except for Jerusalem
    - And so God will call from heaven for His people to leave Babylon before the city's judgment
    - Because if the people remain in the city, they will surely experience the judgment with the city
  - This is a consistent pattern in the Bible, that the Lord is always discriminating between those who are His and those who aren't

**2Pet. 2:9** then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, **2Pet. 2:10** and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority.

- There is a principle in the Bible that when God pours out judgment, He protects those who are His
  - We remember how the Lord removed Lot and his family before the coming judgment in Sodom

- And He removes the Church from the earth before the coming judgment of Tribulation
- And now He calls for believers in Tribulation to leave the city prior to the judgment on Babylon
  - God spoke of this warning to leave Babylon before judgment in Jeremiah

**Jer. 51:5 For neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken**

**By his God, the LORD of hosts,  
Although their land is full of guilt  
Before the Holy One of Israel.**

**Jer. 51:6 Flee from the midst of Babylon,  
And each of you save his life!  
Do not be destroyed in her punishment,  
For this is the LORD'S time of vengeance;  
He is going to render recompense to her.**

**Jer. 51:7 Babylon has been a golden cup in the hand of the LORD,  
Intoxicating all the earth.**

**The nations have drunk of her wine;  
Therefore the nations are going mad.**

**Jer. 51:8 Suddenly Babylon has fallen and been broken;  
Wail over her!**

**Bring balm for her pain;  
Perhaps she may be healed.**

**Jer. 51:9 We applied healing to Babylon, but she was not healed;  
Forsake her and let us each go to his own country,  
For her judgment has reached to heaven  
And towers up to the very skies.**

- The Jews still living in Babylon (and any who haven't taken the mark of the beast) will flee the city in response to God's warning
  - God's warning to leave Babylon is similar to the one Christ gave believers concerning Jerusalem in the Olivet Discourse
  - He told those in Jerusalem to flee to the mountains when they see the armies surrounding the city
  - Only those who heard and believed God's word would respond to the call to flee
- Similarly, those Jews who hear and believe the call from Heaven will flee, only those who do not have the mark of the Beast
  - By their departure, they will save their lives and give opportunity for eventual salvation
  - But where will the Jews who flee Babylon go?
  - They go to the only other city remaining on earth: Jerusalem

**Jer. 51:10 The LORD has brought about our vindication;**

**Come and let us recount in Zion  
The work of the LORD our God!**

**Jer. 51:49** Indeed Babylon is to fall for the slain of Israel,  
As also for Babylon the slain of all the earth have fallen.

**Jer. 51:50** You who have escaped the sword,  
Depart! Do not stay!  
Remember the LORD from afar,  
And let Jerusalem come to your mind.

- When they arrive in Jerusalem, these refugees from Babylon share the news with the other Jews that the city was destroyed
  - That the news comes only by messenger reminds us the world is so utterly devastated that all other communication is gone
    - And back in v.6-8 the angel declares that this judgment is recompense for Israel
    - In particular, Babylon is held responsible for her mistreatment of Israel during the invasion of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar

**Psa. 137:1** By the rivers of Babylon,  
There we sat down and wept,  
When we remembered Zion.

**Psa. 137:2** Upon the willows in the midst of it  
We hung our harps.

**Psa. 137:3** For there our captors demanded of us songs,  
And our tormentors mirth, saying,  
“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.”

**Psa. 137:4** How can we sing the LORD’S song  
In a foreign land?

**Psa. 137:5** If I forget you, O Jerusalem,  
May my right hand forget her skill.

**Psa. 137:6** May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
If I do not remember you,  
If I do not exalt Jerusalem  
Above my chief joy.

**Psa. 137:7** Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom  
The day of Jerusalem,  
Who said, “Raze it, raze it  
To its very foundation.”

**Psa. 137:8** O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one,  
How blessed will be the one who repays you  
With the recompense with which you have repaid us.

**Psa. 137:9** How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones  
Against the rock.

- In v.7 the psalmist asks the Lord to remember the day Babylon ordered that Jerusalem be razed to its very foundation and judge her
  - And in Revelation 8:7, the angel quotes from Isaiah 47, a lament against Babylon
  - Then he goes on to say how blessed is the one who repays Babylon
- Historically, we could credit the Medo-Persian empire for accomplishing that revenge against Babylon but only in a limited sense
  - In effect, the Persians just became Babylon as they conquered and assimilated Babylon
  - The true and ultimate destruction of Babylon awaits Tribulation when the Lord once and forever destroys it
  - And that's the destruction that Jeremiah is describing here
- So the city will be destroyed as punishment for the history of the city and its people in opposing Israel and corrupting the world
  - The destruction of physical Babylon is actually a two-part process, with both parts orchestrated by God
    - The first part is accomplished at the hands of men and directed against the citizens of the city
    - The second part is accomplished supernaturally by God alone and directed against the structures of the city
  - Revelation 18 only summarizes the outcome of both, so we need to go outside the chapter to find details on each part individually
    - Let's study the destruction of Babylon at the hands of men, starting in Isaiah 13

**Is. 13:1 The oracle concerning Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.**

**Is. 13:2 Lift up a standard on the bare hill,**

**Raise your voice to them,**

**Wave the hand that they may enter the doors of the nobles.**

**Is. 13:3 I have commanded My consecrated ones,**

**I have even called My mighty warriors,**

**My proudly exulting ones,**

**To execute My anger.**

**Is. 13:4 A sound of tumult on the mountains,**

**Like that of many people!**

**A sound of the uproar of kingdoms,**

**Of nations gathered together!**

**The LORD of hosts is mustering the army for battle.**

**Is. 13:5 They are coming from a far country,**

**From the farthest horizons,**

**The LORD and His instruments of indignation,**

**To destroy the whole land.**

- Isaiah delivers an oracle or word against Babylon and in vs.2-3, God describes how He

will destroy the city

- First, the Lord will command His mighty warriors to execute His anger against Babylon
  - These warriors are God’s “consecrated” ones commanded to attack Babylon
  - The word for consecrated is *qadash* in Hebrew
  - The word can mean holy, but it can also mean simply “set apart” or “appointed for God's purpose”
- God’s call is followed by the sound of an army, many people, numerous nations gathered together to muster for battle
  - They come from a far away country as God’s instruments of indignation to destroy the whole land of Babylon
  - So God sends some armies to destroy Babylon but what army is there to oppose the Antichrist?
- Jeremiah describes it

**Jer. 50:46** At the shout, “Babylon has been seized!” the earth is shaken, and an outcry is heard among the nations.

**Jer. 51:1** Thus says the LORD:

**“Behold, I am going to arouse against Babylon  
And against the inhabitants of Leb-kamai  
The spirit of a destroyer.**

**Jer. 51:2** “I will dispatch foreigners to Babylon that they may winnow her  
And may devastate her land;  
For on every side they will be opposed to her  
In the day of her calamity.

**Jer. 51:3** “Let not him who bends his bow bend it,  
Nor let him rise up in his scale-armor;  
So do not spare her young men;  
Devote all her army to destruction.

**Jer. 51:4** “They will fall down slain in the land of the Chaldeans,  
And pierced through in their streets.”

- This is a prophecy about the ultimate destruction of Babylon, and again it can’t be a description of the Medo-Persian conquest because that was bloodless
  - This is a description of the Tribulation destruction of Babylon, when God promises to raise up the spirit of the destroyer against Babylon
    - The translation of the phrase “spirit of the destroyer” is a poor choice
    - A more literal translation would be a “destroying wind” because this is not a reference to a spirit
    - The invading army is compared to a violent windstorm that blows in from the north and destroys the city
  - The invading army attacks the people in the city using hand-to-hand combat and simple weaponry

- With the result that all the citizens of the city are killed...all of them
- Remember, no one inhabits the city again
- And the Lord says this attack will also be against *leb-kamai*
  - *Leb-kamai* means “heart of my adversaries” which is an ancient term for Chaldea or Mesopotamia
  - It conveys a sense similar to the phrase “mother of harlots”
  - It means that Mesopotamia is the heart or source of all God’s adversaries and that corrupting source will be destroyed
- Who will conduct this attack upon the Antichrist’s headquarters?
  - Like Isaiah, Jeremiah give us an answer...to a degree

**Jer. 50:1** The word which the LORD spoke concerning Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans, through Jeremiah the prophet:

**Jer. 50:2** “Declare and proclaim among the nations.

Proclaim it and lift up a standard.

Do not conceal it but say,

‘Babylon has been captured,

Bel has been put to shame, Marduk has been shattered;

Her images have been put to shame, her idols have been shattered.’

**Jer. 50:3** “For a nation has come up against her out of the north; it will make her land an object of horror, and there will be no inhabitant in it. Both man and beast have wandered off, they have gone away!

**Jer. 50:9** “For behold, I am going to arouse and bring up against Babylon

A horde of great nations from the land of the north,

And they will draw up their battle lines against her;

From there she will be taken captive.

Their arrows will be like an expert warrior

Who does not return empty-handed.

**Jer. 50:41** “Behold, a people is coming from the north,

And a great nation and many kings

Will be aroused from the remote parts of the earth.

**Jer. 50:42** “They seize their bow and javelin;

They are cruel and have no mercy.

Their voice roars like the sea;

And they ride on horses,

Marshalled like a man for the battle

Against you, O daughter of Babylon.

- Jeremiah tells us the attack will come from the north and consist of a great nation and many kings
  - And it will involve peoples from all parts of the earth

- Later Jeremiah identifies the northern nations involved

**Jer. 51:27 Lift up a signal in the land,  
Blow a trumpet among the nations!  
Consecrate the nations against her,  
Summon against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni and Ashkenaz;  
Appoint a marshal against her,  
Bring up the horses like bristly locusts.**

**Jer. 51:28 Consecrate the nations against her,  
The kings of the Medes,  
Their governors and all their prefects,  
And every land of their dominion.**

- Jeremiah names God's consecrated as the kingdoms of Ararat (Turkey), Minni (Armenia), Ashkenaz (southern Russia/Black Sea), and the Medes
  - We know that in the time of Tribulation, the political map will look very different than it does today
    - There will only be ten kingdoms and ten rulers and then later just one ruler for all ten kingdoms
    - North of Babylon today, you find the nations of Iran (Persia), Turkey, Armenia and Russia
    - Perhaps these will all become part of a common kingdom and together they attack as Jeremiah describes
- So God's judgment on Babylon starts in very ordinary ways...an army invading the city to destroy it
  - But why would an army dare to attack the Antichrist's headquarters in Tribulation?
    - Let's revisit the story from the earlier stages of the War of Armageddon
    - First, at the release of the sixth bowl judgment, the Euphrates was dried up
    - This made it possible for the Antichrist's armies to leave Babylon to engage in the great war against God
    - His armies gather in Northern Israel in preparation to invade the city
  - Secondly, we heard in Chapter 17 that God caused the kings of the earth to give their allegiance to the beast

**Rev. 17:17 "For God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose by having a common purpose, and by giving their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God will be fulfilled.**

- Notice v.17 says they will give their kingdoms to the beast only until the words of God are fulfilled
  - The phrase at the end of the verse suggests that the kings will change their mind at some point during Tribulation



- They follow the Beast only until it's time for the word of God concerning Babylon to be fulfilled
- That's a reference to Isaiah 13 and Jeremiah 50-51
- So once God is ready to judge Babylon, he causes His consecrated ones (i.e., the kings of the earth) to turn against the Antichrist
  - Because the Antichrist has left his city unprotected, Babylon becomes an easy target, emboldening the nations of the north to attack
    - Those kings attempt a coup by destroying the Antichrist's city while the Antichrist is away
    - We can suppose that the motivation for the kings to attack is to take it for themselves and to topple the Antichrist's rule
    - But in reality God is using them to do His will in destroying the the city and its people
- So to review, Phase II of the Battle of Armageddon is the destruction of Babylon
  - That destruction is accomplished in two steps, beginning with an invading army sent by God to destroy the city left unprotected
    - These armies defeat the city but they do not hold the ground for very long
    - Following this manmade attack, the Lord will utterly destroy the the physical city supernaturally
  - That supernatural destruction was described in Chapter 16 as part of the bowl judgments
    - And all of this physical destruction is part of putting spiritual Babylon to an end, as described in Chapter 17
    - And the effect of that supernatural destruction is described in the rest of Revelation 18

**Rev. 18:9** “And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning,

**Rev. 18:10** standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

**Rev. 18:11** “And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more —

**Rev. 18:12** cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble,

**Rev. 18:13** and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives.

**Rev. 18:14** “The fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer

**find them.**

**Rev. 18:15** “The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning,

**Rev. 18:16** saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls;

**Rev. 18:17** for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!’ And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance,

**Rev. 18:18** and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’

**Rev. 18:19** “And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’

**Rev. 18:20** “Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.”

- God’s destruction reduces the city to ruins
  - The city is burning and everything in her has been laid waste
    - Her ruin is complete, and all three classes of society mentioned in v.3 are shown mourning for her
    - In v.9 the kings of the earth mourn for the loss of their important city and the political power that came from controlling her
    - In v.11 the merchants mourn the loss of trade and wealth associated with her
    - In vs. 15 & 17 the working class that profited from the city mourned
  - Notice that the destruction comes very quickly, reflecting the supernatural desertion
    - Three times we’re told that the destruction of the city comes in an hour
    - This is not a description of the invading armies described earlier
    - In fact, the kings who led that invasion are most likely the same kings shown mourning here
  - Notice that the kings and merchants and laborers are described as standing at a distance from the city
    - They are at a distance because they fear her torment, as they experienced the judgment of the bowl judgment
    - We saw that judgment mentioned briefly earlier in this chapter in v.8
    - And back in Chapter 16:9 we were told that this judgment resulted in the city being split

**Rev. 16:19** The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of

**the wine of His fierce wrath.**

- Jeremiah provides a nice two-verse summary of both parts of God's judgment against the city

**Jer. 51:28 Consecrate the nations against her,**

**The kings of the Medes,  
Their governors and all their prefects,  
And every land of their dominion.**

**Jer. 51:29 So the land quakes and writhes,**

**For the purposes of the LORD against Babylon stand,  
To make the land of Babylon  
A desolation without inhabitants.**

- Jeremiah says nations rise up against her while the land quakes and writhes
  - The nations rose up against Babylon and then the Lord destroyed the city supernaturally through the bowl judgments
- Finally, the city receives a brief eulogy

**Rev. 18:21 Then a strong angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So will Babylon, the great city, be thrown down with violence, and will not be found any longer.**

**Rev. 18:22 "And the sound of harpists and musicians and flute-players and trumpeters will not be heard in you any longer; and no craftsman of any craft will be found in you any longer; and the sound of a mill will not be heard in you any longer;**

**Rev. 18:23 and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were deceived by your sorcery.**

**Rev. 18:24 "And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints and of all who have been slain on the earth."**

- An angel takes a great millstone and throws it into the sea, and obviously, a large stone will sink and never be found again
  - This is the image the Lord wants His people to have in their minds when they think of Babylon's future
    - The enemy and all his power and work on earth is going to be completely vanquished and forgotten
    - And that day is coming soon
  - As a final footnote, what do you suppose the Antichrist thinks of all this as it's happening while he's sitting in the Jezreel Valley?
    - Jeremiah tells us that as well....

**Jer. 51:31** One courier runs to meet another,  
And one messenger to meet another,  
To tell the king of Babylon  
That his city has been captured from end to end;

**Jer. 50:43** “The king of Babylon has heard the report about them,  
And his hands hang limp;  
Distress has gripped him,  
Agony like a woman in childbirth.

- Messenger after messenger transfers the news of his city’s fall (notice again the rudimentary form of communication)
  - When the Antichrist hears the news that his city is gone, he is distressed and in agony
  - Now he and his armies have no choice but to attack Jerusalem, for Jerusalem is the last city standing on the earth
  - And destroying the Jews is the enemy’s last hope for rescuing himself
- The Lord baited him into leaving his city unprotected, and now the Lord has given him no reason to return
  - The Lord is moving the Antichrist steadily toward his own destruction in Jerusalem at the Lord’s return
  - The Lord is whittling away at the world leaving the Antichrist cornered and right where He wants him
  - So the second stage of the War of Armageddon is complete and stage three sets the stage for the Lord’s return in Chapter 19



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 19A

## Chapter 19:1-10

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- Today we begin a study of what most students of Revelation would consider to be the climax of this book: the Second Coming of Christ
  - Certainly, the Lord’s return to reign is climactic, especially for those who live through Tribulation and await His rescue
    - But like other events we’ve studied in the book of Revelation, the process of Christ’s return is not a simple affair
    - Nor is it even a single moment, but rather it is a series of events spread out over several days
  - Chapter 19 informs us of Christ’s return, but the details surrounding His return are found outside Revelation in the Old Testament prophets
    - And in particular, the OT’s coverage of Christ’s Second Coming is focused on ending the War of Armageddon
    - That war is called the Great War of God in Revelation, and as we reach the end of Tribulation it becomes focused on the Jews
  - Indwelt by Satan, the Antichrist has lost everything
    - His headquarters is destroyed as is the rest of Babylon, the great city he rebuilt
    - His allies have turned against him and have overrun the city
    - So now he’s sitting in northern Israel with what’s left of his army and only one way to go
  - All that remains is Jerusalem and the last group of Jews on earth still resisting the Antichrist’s reign
    - So now the plan becomes killing that final resistance and in the process, preventing Christ’s return
    - Obviously, this is not the way the story ends...the Antichrist does not succeed in his plans though he tries
    - So we must learn why the enemy wants to kill all remaining Jews and what stops the Antichrist from succeeding in his plans
- So let’s start in Chapter 19 with the preparation in Heaven for the Lord’s arrival
  - In typical fashion, Revelation moves from a discussion of heavenly events followed by their impact on earth

**Rev. 19:1** After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God;

**Rev. 19:2** BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER.”

**Rev. 19:3** And a second time they said, “Hallelujah! HER SMOKE RISES UP FOREVER AND EVER.”

**Rev. 19:4** And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”

**Rev. 19:5** And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all

**you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.”**

- John’s nineteenth chapter opens with *meta houtē houtos* again, that Greek phrase implying a cause-and-effect sequence
  - So the events of Chapters 17 & 18 and these events in heaven are related, and that relationship is somewhat obvious
    - The seventh bowl judgment described in Chapters 16-18 led to several events that precipitated the Lord’s Second Coming
    - First, it made it possible for the Antichrist to move his forces out of Babylon and into northern Israel – Stage I
    - That resulted in the destruction of Babylon, the great harlot, by an attack of rebellious forces – Stage II
  - And now with Babylon’s demise, the way has been paved for Christ’s return because opposition to His rule is quickly disappearing
    - The preparation for Christ’s return begins in the opening of Chapter 19 with the marriage supper of the Lamb
    - The multitude of the heavenly host recognize the significance of this moment and sing out Hallelujah!
    - All human history has been pointing to this moment, and as it arrives, the drama is undeniable even in Heaven
  - They declare that salvation and glory and power belong to God and these characteristics of our God are now ready to appear on earth
    - The Lord has brought His righteous judgment to the ungodly and vile on earth
    - He has avenged those who were persecuted and martyred, just as He promised to the souls under the altar
    - And He has put an end to the chief adversary of the truth, spiritual Babylon in all its forms
- That leads to a moment of worship and praise in Heaven for Who God is and what He has done to bring about the dawn of the Kingdom
  - The elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshipped
    - And all the bond-servants do the same, the great and the small
    - Note that the term bond-servant is a specific reference to the Church saints, so the Church is clearly in Heaven with Jesus
    - This statement refutes any claim that the Church remains on the earth until the Second Coming of Christ
    - In v.5 we see irrefutable evidence that we are already in Heaven at this point
  - Also, note that the leaders in the Heavenly realm are also the worship leaders in that realm
    - Worship is the natural expression of any child of God who recognizes the power, wisdom, grace and goodness of God
    - Never will that be more evident than in Heaven, of course, but we shouldn’t wait until that moment to demonstrate our worship

- Worship isn't merely an inward feeling or thought...it only fulfills its purpose in glorifying God through an outward expression
  - That outward expression takes the form of words, song, posture and other forms of expression
  - So it's a proper and necessary Christian discipline to express our devotion and praise outwardly, both individually and corporately
  - And scenes like this remind us of how important worship is
- So now the stage is set for Christ's return and next we see preparations for that return beginning in Heaven

**Rev. 19:6** Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

**Rev. 19:7** "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

**Rev. 19:8** It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

**Rev. 19:9** Then he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'" And he said to me, "These are true words of God."

**Rev. 19:10** Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, "Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

- In the heavenly realm, a declaration is made by a great multitude (an uncountable number) that Christ reigns!
  - The composition of this multitude then becomes the focus for the next few verses of the chapter
    - The first group called out from within the multitude the Bride, who has made herself ready for the Lamb
    - The "Bride of Christ" is a New Testament reference to the Church saints, those who are baptized in the Spirit by faith in Jesus
- We are given this association by Paul in Ephesians 5

**Eph. 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,

**Eph. 5:26** so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

**Eph. 5:27** that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.

**Eph. 5:32** This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.



- Paul compares the Church’s relationship to Christ to one of a bride to a husband
  - Elsewhere Paul defines the term “Church” to mean all who have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit
  - And the only ones with that distinction are the saints who lived between Pentecost and the Resurrection (rapture) of the Church
  - Certainly, there are saints who lived before the Church and there are saints who lived after in the Tribulation
  - But only those who fall within this special period are called the Bride of Christ in the Bible
- The Lord has chosen to call His Church a Bride and Himself our Groom to picture our relationship to Him and the events that lie ahead
  - The Lord uses the metaphor of a wedding to reflect the process He follows to bring us to Him and ready the world for our return
  - We studied this connection between marriage and our future as the Church in an earlier lesson
- I compared the Church’s removal from the earth at our resurrection to a Jewish betrothal
  - In this process, the betrothal happens before the bride and groom meet, just as we entered into a covenant with Jesus without meeting Him
    - Next there is a period of waiting for the groom to claim the bride, which is the period the Church is in presently on earth
    - Later the Groom will come for His Bride at the resurrection and we will return to the Groom’s home for a time in Heaven
  - After time with the Groom, the wedding is held and a celebration at the Groom’s house
    - This is followed by the Groom and Bride traveling back to the Bride’s home for another celebration
    - That step will happen after the Second Coming of Christ
  - But now we see the marriage supper at the Groom’s home preparing to happen
    - This is the moment that Jesus told the disciples would take place while He was still with them

**Matt. 26:26** While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.”

**Matt. 26:27** And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you;

**Matt. 26:28** for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

**Matt. 26:29** “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

- The Lord suspended the Passover meal with a cup of wine still waiting, and He says that final cup awaits the Kingdom

- That celebration will begin with the wedding supper
- Then back in v.8 John hears how the the Bride (i.e., the saints) is prepared for the wedding
  - We receive bright clean linen to wear which are the righteous acts of the saints
    - We discussed the way linen represented our works earlier when we studied the letters to the churches
    - The Church is preparing to go to earth and receive our inheritance and the rewards for our service in the Kingdom
  - So as we prepare to make that journey with Jesus, we receive a token representing their good work done by faith and in service
    - But notice that the linen represents only works that are righteous
    - We will do many works “for” Jesus over the course of our life walking with Him, but not all are righteous
  - Some of those works are done with selfish or insincere motives or are not a result of the leading for the Spirit
    - These are bad works in the sense that they are not directed by and for Jesus... they are simply done for our own sake
    - And those don’t count for reward

**2Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

- So the first group mentioned in the throne room are those who are the Bride (the Church) and we are preparing by donning proper garments
  - Meanwhile, every wedding needs a wedding party to share in the moment and celebrate with the Bride and Groom
    - And there will be guests invited to the wedding in Heaven also
    - In v.9 John is told that those who are able to view this wedding moment in Heaven are blessed by that opportunity
  - So who will be present in Heaven and able to attend this wedding moment and yet will not be the Bride?
    - The Bride isn’t invited to her own wedding, so these are saints other than the Church
    - So the guests must be the Old Testament and Tribulation saints
  - Every believer from Abel to John the Baptist and all those who die in Tribulation will be in Heaven at this moment
    - They remain there in spirit form only, without bodies, awaiting their opportunity for resurrection
    - We will study their resurrection moment later in the study
    - Meanwhile, they look on as we participate in the marriage supper of the Lamb

- At the thought of all this, John is moved to spontaneously drop down and worship his escort angel, but the angel tells him to stop
  - He says he is just a servant of God and of believers
  - Instead, worship only God because Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy
- The angel means Jesus by His Spirit is the source of all revelation and the angel was just the messenger of that revelation
  - The author of the message deserves glory, not the conduit of that message
  - So when we are dying of thirst, we praise the water coming through our tap, we don't praise the pipes
  - Similarly, we praise Jesus the Author of this plan, not the messenger who told us about it
- Now at this point in Revelation 19 at v.11, John moves to describing the return of the Lord, but we're not ready to take that step with John
  - We have events on earth that we left hanging, and we need to know how those events conclude before we come back to Chapter 19
    - So on earth at this point, the world had been rocked by unbelievable devastation and turmoil
    - The Kingdom of Satan was wiped out, but the Antichrist is still ruling and persecuting the remaining Jews in Jerusalem
  - His army is now on the move southward, to take the only city still remaining on earth, Jerusalem
    - Since his headquarters is gone, he has no choice but to make Jerusalem his new capital
    - So the great war of God is now about to take place, the war we call Armageddon
  - We've already studied Stages I and II of the battle so let's review them again briefly
    - Stage I was the movement of the Antichrist's forces from east to west, from Babylon to the Jezreel Valley
    - That move was triggered by the Lord drying up the blood river Euphrates and setting the Antichrist's mind to attack Jerusalem
  - Stage II was the invasion of the armies of the northern kings who wipe out Babylon and seize control of the Antichrist's headquarters
    - But then shortly thereafter, the Lord destroyed the city completely with the final bowl judgment
    - So the armies and the city itself cease to exist, but that attack has motivated the Antichrist to move toward Jerusalem
- So now Stage III of the war begins and will be the next part of our study
  - Stage III involves three different locations in the Middle East:
    - Jerusalem, the Mt. of Olives and Botzrah
    - Let's start with an overview from the book of Daniel

**Dan. 11:36** “Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods; and he will prosper until the indignation is finished, for that which is decreed will be done.

**Dan. 11:37** “He will show no regard for the gods of his fathers or for the desire of women, nor will he show regard for any other god; for he will magnify himself above them all.

**Dan. 11:38** “But instead he will honor a god of fortresses, a god whom his fathers did not know; he will honor him with gold, silver, costly stones and treasures.

**Dan. 11:39** “He will take action against the strongest of fortresses with the help of a foreign god; he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.

- In this passage we studied earlier, we learned that the Antichrist would dominate the world and take control with the power of Satan
  - But then we read this...

**Dan. 11:40** “At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through.

**Dan. 11:41** “He will also enter the Beautiful Land, and many countries will fall; but these will be rescued out of his hand: Edom, Moab and the foremost of the sons of Ammon.

- First, notice in v.40 that Daniel says “at the end” meaning at the end of the seven years
  - So we know these events are related to the end of the Tribulation, right before and during Christ’s Second Coming
  - At that time, two of the seven kings will take action against the Antichrist
  - The kings of the South and North collide with the Antichrist, and the Hebrew word for collide is push, as in press in
- These are the two kings that come against Babylon as we studied in Chapter 18
  - They storm against the city of the Antichrist with chariots and horsemen and with ships traveling up river
  - Meanwhile, as that attack is happening, v.40 says the Antichrist is entering other countries, namely Israel, passing through the land
- Then in v.41 Daniel confirms that the Antichrist has entered Israel by calling it the Beautiful Land, which to a Jew means only one place
  - He successfully invades Israel, which we also studied earlier in Chapter 17
    - But notice that three areas of the world will be rescued out of his hands: Edom, Moab and Ammon
    - These are ancient names for roughly the same region, which is present-day

Jordon, a strip of land east of the Jordan River

- This is also the region that includes Botzrah
- So if this area is rescued out of his hand at the end, then it means the Antichrist must attack this area at the very end
  - And the prophet Jeremiah confirms that the Antichrist will attack Botzrah at the very end

**Jer. 49:13** “For I have sworn by Myself,” declares the LORD, “that Bozrah will become an object of horror, a reproach, a ruin and a curse; and all its cities will become perpetual ruins.”

**Jer. 49:14** I have heard a message from the LORD,  
And an envoy is sent among the nations, saying,  
“Gather yourselves together and come against her,  
And rise up for battle!”

**Jer. 49:15** “For behold, I have made you small among the nations,  
Despised among men.

**Jer. 49:16** “As for the terror of you,  
The arrogance of your heart has deceived you,  
O you who live in the clefts of the rock,  
Who occupy the height of the hill.  
Though you make your nest as high as an eagle’s,  
I will bring you down from there,” declares the LORD.

- What remains of the Antichrist’s armed forces are located largely in two places
  - First, the bulk of his army is concentrated in the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel ready to attack Jerusalem
    - But there are still others scattered around the ruins of Babylon
    - They escaped the invaders and watched the city’s destruction from afar as described in Chapter 19
  - So Jeremiah says in v.14 that the Antichrist sends an envoy probably on horseback to the nations back in Babylon and instructs them to attack
    - Their target are the Jews at Botzrah
    - Remember that at the mid-point of Tribulation the Lord escorted believing Jews out of Jerusalem into the desert to be protected
  - He prepared a place for them in present-day Southern Jordan, in a rocky canyon area that can’t be easily breeched
    - In the Bible, the place is called Botzrah (Petra), which is Hebrew for a sheep’s fold or pen as Jews will be protected there like sheep
    - And though the enemy will desire to attack and destroy them, he won’t have the ability because the Lord defends His people there
  - But at the very end of Tribulation, the Antichrist will try again to destroy the Jews hiding in Petra
    - And when he does, Jeremiah says that Botzrah in Edom will become a ruin

- He means that the Antichrist's forces there will come to ruin
- Notice in v.15 the Lord says He has made the Antichrist's army small among the nations
- This army has been reduced greatly by the judgments and yet it will still try to defeat the Jews in protection

**Jer. 49:21** The earth has quaked at the noise of their downfall. There is an outcry! The noise of it has been heard at the Red Sea.

**Jer. 49:22** Behold, He will mount up and swoop like an eagle and spread out His wings against Bozrah; and the hearts of the mighty men of Edom in that day will be like the heart of a woman in labor.

- And in vs.21-22 Jeremiah says the Lord will swoop down like an eagle to defend His people
  - The Lord's Second Coming involves an appearance at Botzrah, to defend those waiting in protection there
    - We will come back to this moment a little later, but for now let's move to the second major theater of this war: Jerusalem
    - And that takes us back to our overview in Daniel 11

**Dan. 11:42** "Then he will stretch out his hand against other countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape.

**Dan. 11:43** "But he will gain control over the hidden treasures of gold and silver and over all the precious things of Egypt; and Libyans and Ethiopians will follow at his heels.

**Dan. 11:44** "But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many.

**Dan. 11:45** "He will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.

- As the Antichrist rampages throughout the remaining inhabitable lands of the Middle East, he receives a report, a rumor, from the East and from the North
  - In v.44 Daniel says these reports from the East and North will disturb him
    - This reminds us of what we learned last week when we studied the destruction of Babylon
    - The Antichrist, while in the land of Israel, hears of the defeat of Babylon at the hands of the king of the North
  - Those are the rumors that disturb him here, and notice they bring him to great wrath and lead him to annihilate many
    - Then in v.45 Daniel says this news also causes him to move his forces from the Jezreel Valley to the west side of Jerusalem
    - It says he pitches his tents of his royal pavilion, which is proof that this is a

military encampment on the move

- He locates his encampment between two familiar places in Israel
  - On the east stands the beautiful Holy Mountain, a reference to Mt. Zion where the temple is located
  - On the west he has the seas, and the only sea touching Israel is the Mediterranean Sea
  - So he will be located in the Shephelah, the foothills on the western side of the country
- Once again notice that this battle will also not go his way
  - In v.45 Daniel says that he will come to his end and no one will help him
  - He will have no allies or other forces come to his aid and of course nothing will be able to stand against Christ anyway
- So the Antichrist's deployment of his forces to Botzrah and Jerusalem is Stage III of the War of Armageddon
  - These movements are triggered by the news that his headquarters is gone
    - It enrages the Antichrist and leads him to go forth in anger to annihilate many, specifically the Jews in Botzrah and Jerusalem
    - The third area of action at Christ's Second Coming will be on the Mt. of Olives, but we will wait to address that scene later
    - For now, let's stay with the action near Jerusalem and consult a few other texts to understand how that battle develops
  - The armies of the Antichrist siege the city and prepare to breach what defenses remain
    - Remember, the Tribulation has reduced men to attacking on horses using ancient weaponry
    - And stone walls are once again an effective defense
  - So the Antichrist's attack will proceed in a manner similar to ancient warfare
    - A siege followed by an assault and a defense using basic weapons, and ultimately hand-to-hand combat
    - The OT prophets give plenty of detail about the attack of Jerusalem, but we're only going to look at a few select places
    - Beginning with Joel, who tells us this attack is centered on Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat

**Joel 3:9 Proclaim this among the nations:**

**Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men!**

**Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!**

**Joel 3:10 Beat your plowshares into swords**

**And your pruning hooks into spears;**

**Let the weak say, "I am a mighty man."**

**Joel 3:11 Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations,**

**And gather yourselves there.**

**Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones.**

**Joel 3:12 Let the nations be aroused**

**And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat,**

**For there I will sit to judge**

**All the surrounding nations.**

- Joel says that warriors will come against the city having beaten farming implements into makeshift weapons
  - They come because the Lord has brought them here, in the sense that He has orchestrated the events leading to this battle
  - They come to the valley of Jehoshaphat, which is another name for the Kidron valley along the east side of the city
  - So the armies approach from the west and eventually surround the city on all sides
- Isaiah gives us more detail on this attack

**Is. 29:1 Woe, O Ariel, Ariel the city where David once camped!**

**Add year to year, observe your feasts on schedule.**

**Is. 29:2 I will bring distress to Ariel,**

**And she will be a city of lamenting and mourning;**

**And she will be like an Ariel to me.**

**Is. 29:3 I will camp against you encircling you,**

**And I will set siegeworks against you,**

**And I will raise up battle towers against you.**

**Is. 29:4 Then you will be brought low;**

**From the earth you will speak,**

**And from the dust where you are prostrate**

**Your words will come.**

**Your voice will also be like that of a spirit from the ground,**

**And your speech will whisper from the dust.**

**Is. 29:5 But the multitude of your enemies will become like fine dust,**

**And the multitude of the ruthless ones like the chaff which blows away;**

**And it will happen instantly, suddenly.**

**Is. 29:6 From the LORD of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise,**

**With whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a consuming fire.**

**Is. 29:7 And the multitude of all the nations who wage war against Ariel,**

**Even all who wage war against her and her stronghold, and who distress her,**

**Will be like a dream, a vision of the night.**

- In this passage, Isaiah describes the place under attack as Ariel, which is another Hebrew name for the city of Jerusalem
  - We see that confirmed because Isaiah says it's the city where David once camped
    - And this city will be under siege with battle towers erected and it will be like



an “*ariel*” to the Lord

- The word Ariel literally means altar, or a place of sacrifice
- The Lord will be making a sacrifice with the people who die in the battle, an atoning sacrifice for the sins of the nation
- During the Antichrist’s siege, the city’s inhabitants will be faint of heart, expecting to die at any minute
  - Notice in v.4 it will result in the nation bowing low, speaking from the earth, meaning with their face on the ground
  - That’s a posture of humility and worship, so the nation will be moved to seek for God
  - And from the dust where they are prostrate, their voice will rise up like a spirit from the ground
  - We will study this moment more later
- Meanwhile, notice that the enemies of Israel will be struck down in an instant, suddenly as a result of Israel’s prayers for help
  - In a whirlwind of consuming fire, all the nations that stood against her will be gone as if it was just a dream
  - Clearly, this is a supernatural defeat
- Micah confirms this account

**Mic. 4:9 “Now, why do you cry out loudly?**

**Is there no king among you,  
Or has your counselor perished,  
That agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?**

**Mic. 4:11 “And now many nations have been assembled against you**

**Who say, ‘Let her be polluted,  
And let our eyes gloat over Zion.’**

**Mic. 4:12 “But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD,**

**And they do not understand His purpose;  
For He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.**

- Micah asks why the people of Israel cry out and why is there no king among them?
  - These are rhetorical and somewhat mocking questions, because God is pointing out they turned their back on their king in times past
    - And now that’s why Israel is suffering in this time
    - Many nations have assembled before Israel and are gloating over their opportunity to possess the city
  - But they don’t know that the Lord has set them up in this trap, and the trap is about to be sprung on them
    - They don’t understand the Lord’s purpose which is to destroy all of the Antichrist’s forces

- He has gathered the Antichrist’s army at Jerusalem like sheaves in a threshing floor to be crushed and separated like wheat from chaff
- Finally, Zechariah tells us this plan of allowing the attack on Jerusalem serves God’s purpose in putting pressure on Israel

**Zech. 13:7** “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,  
And against the man, My Associate,”  
Declares the LORD of hosts.

“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;  
And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

**Zech. 13:8** “It will come about in all the land,”

Declares the LORD,  
“That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;  
But the third will be left in it.

**Zech. 13:9** “And I will bring the third part through the fire,  
Refine them as silver is refined,  
And test them as gold is tested.  
They will call on My name,  
And I will answer them;  
I will say, ‘They are My people,’  
And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

- In v.7 Zechariah refers to the Lord as the Shepherd and the Antichrist as My Associate
  - The Shepherd would be struck down in His day and Israel would be scattered
    - That’s clearly a reference to the Lord’s first coming
    - After Jesus died, the Lord scattered the Jews in AD 70 as penalty for rejecting their Messiah
  - And now the time has come for the Lord to bring judgment against the man, My Associate, speaking of the Antichrist and Satan behind the scenes
    - In v.8 Zechariah says that two parts to the land will be cut off and perish
    - These two parts cut off are the sections of Israel in the north and south
    - Those Jews living there will die when the Antichrist enters the land
  - Only the Jews left in the middle of the nation in the city of Jerusalem will be alive
    - And this group will be put through a furnace of trial to refine them
    - This will ultimately lead these Jews to respond to their fate by calling out for their Lord
    - And He will answer them, Zechariah says
- Finally, Zechariah gives a very detailed description of the attack and of the Lord’s defense of the city

**Zech. 12:1** The burden of the word of the LORD concerning Israel. Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth,

and forms the spirit of man within him,

**Zech. 12:2** “Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.

**Zech. 12:3** “It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.

**Zech. 12:4** “In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.

**Zech. 12:5** “Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the LORD of hosts, their God.’

**Zech. 12:6** “In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem.

**Zech. 12:7** “The LORD also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.

**Zech. 12:8** “In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.

**Zech. 12:9** “And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

- After the siege comes against Jerusalem, the Lord will make the city like a heavy stone too heavy to lift
  - And when the nations try to “lift” it, they will be injured in the attempt
    - He is describing the way the Lord supernaturally defends the city during the Antichrist’s siege so that he can’t take the city
    - The horses will be struck with bewilderment and blindness and the riders with madness
    - So the attackers and their animals will become confused and disorganized
  - At the sight of this, in v.5 we’re told the people in the city will acknowledge that the Lord is the One coming to their defense
    - In v.7 the Lord will defend not only those living in the city but also Jews who are camped outside the protection of the walls
    - Those dwelling in tents is a description of Jews who are outside the city and especially vulnerable to the attack
    - Judah is a reference to the larger region in which Jerusalem sits, so the Lord will defend not only the city but all of Judah
    - Remember, this is the “middle” third of the people that God said He would refine by ultimately saving
  - And in v.8 we see that the Lord will strengthen the hearts of the people for the

battle, so even the weakest will be like David before Goliath

- The end result will be that the Lord will destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem in that coming day
  - Later in our study we'll come back to this scene to see how Jesus accomplishes this victory upon His return
  - But here we see that even before Jesus returns, the Lord works supernaturally to defend Jerusalem
- This moment is pictured in the history of Israel in a vivid way in the story of Hezekiah
  - In Chapter 37 of Isaiah and in 2 Kings 19 we learn the story of Assyria's siege of Jerusalem
    - Assyria was sent by God to destroy the Northern Kingdom of Israel as punishment for their sins
    - But Assyria became proud and thought it had the right to conquer Judah as well
  - God did not give Judah into Assyria's hands...Assyria was told they could destroy only the Northern Kingdom
    - But the king of Assyria was greedy and decided to attack the south anyway
    - The Assyrians invaded Judah encamped around Jerusalem sieging the city and attempting to defeat it
    - They had a massive army and it appeared as if the city would be defeated
  - At one point the commander of the Assyrian army sends a letter to King Hezekiah demanding surrender or suffer annihilation
    - The people were faint with fear and expected to be crushed
    - But King Hezekiah famously took the letter from the commander of the Assyrians and spread it out before the Lord and prayed
- He ends the prayer saying:

**2Kings 19:19** “Now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O LORD, are God.”

**2Kings 19:20** Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you.’”

- The Lord tells Hezekiah that because he prayed, the Lord would rescue the city from the Assyrians
  - And then the Lord says to the commander of the Assyrian army

**2Kings 19:28** ‘Because of your raging against Me,  
 And because your arrogance has come up to My ears,  
 Therefore I will put My hook in your nose,  
 And My bridle in your lips,  
 And I will turn you back by the way which you came.’

**2Kings 19:29** ‘Then this shall be the sign for you: you will eat this year what grows of itself, in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year sow, reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit.

**2Kings 19:30** ‘The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will again take root downward and bear fruit upward.

**2Kings 19:31** ‘For out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD will perform this.

**2Kings 19:32** ‘Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, “He will not come to this city or shoot an arrow there; and he will not come before it with a shield or throw up a siege ramp against it.

**2Kings 19:33** “By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he shall not come to this city,” declares the LORD.

**2Kings 19:34** ‘For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.’”

**2Kings 19:35** Then it happened that night that the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead.

- This story is a picture of what takes place in the time of Tribulation with Jerusalem and the Antichrist
  - And it also pictures the way the nation will be saved by the Lord in the end as well
    - Israel will feel the pressure of the fight, and fearing for their lives, they will finally turn to their Lord
    - And when they bow to Him and ask for rescue, then the Lord will rescue them
  - He will come and finish the fight for them, just as He destroyed the Assyrian army Himself
    - The Lord went into the Assyrian camp as the Angel of the Lord and destroyed the army Himself
    - This is what we will study next week as we see the Lord’s return and His destruction of the Antichrist’s armies
    - Beginning with the army in Botzrah and ending with the army attacking Jerusalem
  - And in that study we will also look closely at the moment that Israel calls out for Jesus as we saw tonight
    - And as we do, we will learn why it is so important to Satan that he destroy the Jews in Tribulation
    - And also why it’s so important to God that the Jewish people survive



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 19B

## Chapter 19:11-16

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- Let's rejoin the final battle of our age, the War of Armageddon, or as the Bible calls it, the war of the great day of God
  - Like most wars, the war of Armageddon isn't one battle that takes place in a single moment
    - Rather, it's a series of events that take place over days and weeks
    - The war concludes the seven-year Tribulation, and in the midst of the war, Jesus returns to bring an end to the Antichrist's rule
  - But even the Lord's return isn't a single moment as it first appears to be in Revelation 19
    - Revelation 19 summarizes His return, but it leaves out many details, because those details are already given in earlier books
    - So as we did last week, we will spend significant time outside the book of Revelation to fill in those details
  - Last week we read through Revelation 19:10 which described the events in Heaven prior to the Lord's coming
    - During that time the early stages of the war are playing out as a result of the seventh bowl judgment
    - As I said two lessons ago, the final bowl judgments set off a chain of events like falling dominos
    - That chain of events starts the war and moves it along its five stages until the end comes
- So far, we've studied Stages I, II and III of the war, so let's summarize what we learned
  - The sixth bowl judgment dried up the river Euphrates so that God could lure the Antichrist and his forces to leave Babylon
    - They travel west toward Israel and camp in the Jezreel valley preparing to move southward to invade Jerusalem
    - This movement is also the first stage of the war of Armageddon
    - The Antichrist hopes to crush the remaining Jews in Jerusalem and Petra who continue to resist his reign
  - While they are gathered in the Jezreel Valley, Stage II of the war commences in Babylon
    - Two of the seven kings under the Antichrist's rule rebel against him and invade his capital city Babylon
    - And after they invade, the Lord brings the final bowl judgment against the city, reducing it to ashes and destroying the invaders
    - With the Antichrist's beloved city in ruins, he now has no choice except to move forward in attacking Jerusalem as God intends
- This leads to Stage III of the war as the Antichrist moves his forces southward through the central valleys and into the Shephelah foothills
  - Eventually they reach a point between the Great Sea and the Holy Mountain, as Zechariah told us

- Then from that point, they advance east up to Jerusalem eventually surrounding the city and sieging it
  - Because the Tribulation has reduced society to a rudimentary level of technology, warfare returns to a medieval style
  - Zechariah and other Old Testament prophets told us the Antichrist uses siege ramps, horses, swords, and the like
  - And for the same reason the Jews in Jerusalem are protected for the most part by the walls of the city
- And during the siege, the Lord supernaturally defends the city, including defending those who are encamped outside the walls
  - The city inhabitants recognize that the Lord is working in that time to defend them from the Antichrist and they rejoice
  - Ultimately it will cause them to turn to the Lord in repentance which we will study soon
- Meanwhile, the Antichrist opens a second front in this war by sending what's left of his forces at Babylon to Petra to siege the Jews there
  - Petra or Botzrah is the place the Lord has prepared to keep the remnant of Israel safe during the final 3.5 years of Tribulation
  - Satan initially tried to destroy the remnant during their flight to Petra, but the Lord protected them as He did in the Exodus
  - And now Satan tries again by directing the Antichrist to use his army to attack
- Tonight we move forward along both fronts, beginning with the Lord moving from Heaven to Earth to become personally involved in these events
  - And to start that examination, we first need to remember the purpose of the Tribulation itself
    - Daniel gave us six reasons why the nation of Israel must endure the Age of the Gentiles, including the seven-year Tribulation

**Dan. 9:24** “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

- The angel told Daniel that this period of history would accomplish six things for Israel
- Among other things, it brings an end to sin in Israel and ushers in everlasting righteousness
- Simply put, it brings saving faith to all Israel and causes them to return to the Lord
  - And the Lord accomplishes this by placing the nation in an incredibly difficult situation after seven years of intense trial
  - And at their low point the Lord begins to show Himself to them and they begin to rejoice in Him as Zechariah told us
- Speaking of the Antichrist's siege against Jerusalem, the prophet wrote



**Zech. 13:8** “It will come about in all the land,”

**Declares the LORD,  
“That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;  
But the third will be left in it.**

**Zech. 13:9** “And I will bring the third part through the fire,

**Refine them as silver is refined,  
And test them as gold is tested.  
They will call on My name,  
And I will answer them;  
I will say, ‘They are My people,’  
And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”**

- Earlier in this study we learned the Tribulation period was made necessary for Israel because of the agreement God made with them in the Mosaic Covenant
  - In the Old Covenant, the Lord told Israel that unless the entire nation kept His law perfect for all generations, they would suffer consequences
    - The consequences for failing to keep the law perfectly would be severe and the Lord warned them in advance
    - Moses said this to the generation of Israel that agreed with this covenant

**Deut. 29:14** “Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath,  
**Deut. 29:15** but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today  
**Deut. 29:16** (for you know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed;  
**Deut. 29:17** moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them);  
**Deut. 29:18** so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood.

- When Israel entered into the covenant shortly before entering the Promised Land, Moses put Israel on notice
  - Moses said this covenant was a national arrangement that bound not only the Jews in the desert but also their descendants
  - So the requirements of the covenant and the consequences of failure apply to everyone equally
- This Mosaic covenant set a standard for God’s relationship with His people that stand to this day
  - As the individual goes, so goes the nation and as the nation goes, so goes the individual
  - Until the covenant is fulfilled, the nation will continue to be held to its terms

- An individual Jew is released from the Law when they place their faith in Jesus Christ, because He fulfilled it in its entirety on their behalf

**Rom. 7:4** Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God.

**Rom. 7:5** For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death.

**Rom. 7:6** But now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

- But apart from the remnant who come to faith in Jesus, the rest of the nation of Israel remains bound to the Law's commands and penalties
  - In Deuteronomy 29 the Lord goes on to say that when Israel fails to keep the covenant, which was inevitable, then the curses would come
    - And those curses would lead future generations of Israel to recognize the problem

**Deut. 29:22** “Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it, will say, **Deut. 29:23** ‘All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.’

**Deut. 29:24** “All the nations will say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?’

**Deut. 29:25** “Then men will say, ‘Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.’

- Notice the judgments that are described here have never been experienced in Israel, not even till today
- They are a description of the devastation that comes during the day of the Lord, the seven year Tribulation
- While the curses for failing to keep the Old Covenant will be severe, they are evidence of God's grace because of the way they lead to good
  - First, as we learned earlier in this study, Israel's period of judgment under the Old Covenant gives opportunity for Gentiles
  - The period of the Church Age is made possible because the Lord sets His people aside for a time to make salvation available to us
  - As Paul said

**Rom. 11:7** What then? What Israel is seeking, it has not obtained, but those who were chosen obtained it, and the rest were hardened;

**Rom. 11:11** I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression salvation has come to the Gentiles, to make them jealous.

- Secondly, the Lord will use the period of Israel’s judgment to bring the nation back to Himself as Daniel and Zechariah indicated
  - In their trial and testing, the nation will call out for the Lord and He will hear them
  - Jesus said this must happen before He would be willing to return to His people and give them the Kingdom

**Luke 13:34** “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

**Luke 13:35** “Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!’”

- Jesus set the terms for His Second Coming for His people...they must call out for Him as their Messiah
  - When they call out for Him, then He will return to them as promised
  - The trial of Tribulation will create the circumstances under which the nation of Israel will experience that change of heart
- And even before the Lord came to Israel the first time, the Old Covenant itself foretold that Israel would experience judgment followed by repentance

**Lev. 26:40** ‘If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me —

**Lev. 26:41** I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies — or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity,

**Lev. 26:42** then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.

- Leviticus says that after Israel has experienced the curses required by the Old Covenant during the Tribulation, it would experience a change of heart
  - And in their Law, God made provision for His grace...a loophole I called it
    - The loophole in Leviticus 26:40-42 gives Israel a way to escape the penalties of the Old Covenant on the basis of faith alone

- First, each Jew must confess his own sin and their need for a Savior, just as anyone coming to faith in Jesus
  - That is sufficient repentance for that individual to be saved, but there's still the issue of the nation's rescue
- And the Old Covenant requires that the entire nation make this confession together, no exceptions
  - Israel must make a national confession of repentance which Leviticus calls a confession of the sin of their forefathers
  - Specifically, this future generation of Israel must confess that their forefathers were wrong when they crucified Jesus
  - So a personal confession is enough for personal salvation but a national confession is necessary for the nation's salvation
- And when the nation makes that national confession of faith in Jesus, the Lord said He'll remember His promises in the Abrahamic Covenant
  - When the Lord says He remembers something, it's a way of saying this is the moment when His promise will be fulfilled
  - So the promises He gave Abraham will be brought to fulfillment in the moment that Israel makes that national confession
- The Bible says that all Israel will make this confession at the end of Tribulation when the city of Israel is under siege and the people in fear
  - Paul says this in Romans

**Rom. 11:25** For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in;

**Rom. 11:26** and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,

**“THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,  
HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.”**

**Rom. 11:27** **“THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,  
WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.”**

- Notice Paul says that all Israel – the entire nation of Jews alive on earth in that moment – will be saved in a future day
  - That moment will happen when the deliverer, Jesus, comes from Zion
  - That Zion mentioned in v.26 is Heavenly Zion, a reference to Christ's Second Coming
  - So the Second Coming of Jesus will be associated with God removing all ungodliness from His people Israel
- Just as Daniel told us in Chapter 9...the age of the Gentiles would result in the removal of Israel's sin and the ushering in of righteousness
  - And at the moment, every living Jew on earth will be saved, because every living Jew will be part of this national confession
  - Remember under the Old Covenant, as the individual goes, so goes the nation and

vice versa

- That's why Jesus made this promise to Israel:

**Matt. 24:13** “But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.

**Matt. 24:14** “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come.

- At the end of Tribulation, the nation of Israel will be under such intense pressure in Jerusalem, that they will turn back to the Lord
  - And at a certain point in that battle, the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem are all moved to confess Jesus
  - That's what we're waiting for in our study of the war of Armageddon
- Jesus is in Heaven with His Bride made ready to return to Her home
  - Babylon is gone, the rest of the world is in ruins, food and water is running out and the Antichrist is positioned around the city
    - The believing Jews in Petra are alive and well, protected by the Lord and waiting His return
    - And the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem are desperately pleading with God for rescue as the Antichrist attacks
  - Meanwhile, all that's remaining is for all the unbelieving Jews in the city to obey the Lord's demands to declare Him Messiah
    - At the point they say blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord, Jesus will hear them and return to save them all
    - All Israel will be saved and the Tribulation will end, because it will have met its ultimate purpose in bringing Israel to faith
  - But how does Israel move to that last step...how does Israel ever reach a point where every Jew simultaneously comes to faith?

**Luke 18:27** But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.”

- This may seem impossible, but if so it's only because we view salvation as a human decision
- And if salvation was only a matter of a personal decision, it truly would be impossible, but all things are possible with God
- So now it's time we return to the events of the war beginning with the war on the Jerusalem front
  - The Antichrist has seized the city and Zechariah tells us how the siege leads to the moment required by Leviticus 26
    - When all the city confesses their faith in Jesus

**Zech. 14:1** Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you

**will be divided among you.**

**Zech. 14:2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.**

- Zechariah says a day is coming for Israel when the tables will be turned
  - Instead of Israel being the oppressed and conquered, they will be the conquerors
    - In other words, the Age of the Gentiles will end and the Age of the Messianic Kingdom will come
    - And that turn begins with all nations of the earth gathered against Jerusalem to battle the city
    - This has never happened before...so this is an unfulfilled prophecy
  - But when the leader of the entire world attacks Jerusalem, then truly we can say the entire world has come against the city
    - So Zechariah is describing the Antichrist's attack in Stage III of the war of the Armageddon
    - And he goes on to report that the battle will initially result in the city walls breached and part of the city will be captured
    - Half the city will be exiled and women in the city will be sexually assaulted as often happens in warfare
  - But God intervenes to prevent the entire city from being overrun by the Antichrist's attack
    - The Lord has allowed the Antichrist's forces to gain this partial victory to put the remaining city under added pressure
    - Earlier in Zechariah 12, the prophet explains the Lord's purpose

**Zech. 12:2 “Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.**

**Zech. 12:3 “It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.**

- The Lord has set a trap for the Antichrist by bringing him to siege the city and by allowing him a degree of success in the early goings on
  - We studied this passage last week, and we learned that the end effect of the siege would be the Antichrist's defeat
    - But we also learned that the city would be terrified of defeat, and now we know why
    - The Antichrist will manage to capture half of the city resulting in many dying and worse
  - But as Zechariah 12 told us last week, the Antichrist's partial victory is merely set

up for his total defeat

**Zech. 12:8** “In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.

**Zech. 12:9** “And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

- In that day, the Lord will set about to destroy the nations that have come against the city
- And that turn begins with a movement of the Spirit

**Zech. 12:10** “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

- As with every work of salvation, the Lord is the first to move when at the 11th hour the nation seems on the verge of annihilation, the Lord sends His Spirit
  - He pours His Spirit out on two related groups: the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem
    - The house of David refers to the ruling class of the nation of Israel
    - The inhabitants of the city refer to exactly that...the Jewish population still alive in the city
    - Remember, many have been taken away but a part of the city remains, and it's this remaining group that is still alive in the city
  - And this group, as a result of the pouring out of the Spirit, begin to make a national confession of faith
    - They look upon Jesus, the One that Israel pierced in previous millennia, and they mourn for Him
    - They mourn for Jesus like someone mourning for an only son who has died, which is a subtle reference to the Son of God
  - So those remaining Jews who are barricaded in the city receive the gift of faith as the Spirit comes upon them all
    - And the effect of the Spirit's arrival is an instant recognition that Jesus is the Messiah
    - Except that this doesn't feel like good news to these Jews, because the Spirit also reveals that Israel killed its Messiah
    - Zechariah says they mourn terribly for Jesus, and this mourning is a sign they have come to believe in Him
  - But their belief will not result in joy because they assume they have lost their chance to receive Him

- Their Messiah came for them once before, but they killed Him they realize
- So now in their greatest moment of need, they assume it's too late to expect Him to save them
- But remember what Leviticus 26 told the nation...

**Lev. 26:42** then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land.

- The Lord's response to Israel is based on His covenant with Abraham, not based on the Old Covenant made with Moses
  - And why is it not based on the Old Covenant? Because in the moment the nation confesses Christ, they are no longer under it
  - They have come out from under the Law, and the Law of Moses is no longer in effect
- So the Lord moves on the basis of grace alone to fulfill the unconditional promises He made to Abraham's descendants
  - The Lord brings all His people to faith in the midst of this crisis, every single person, and Zechariah makes that clear

**Zech. 12:11** “In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

**Zech. 12:12** “The land will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves;

**Zech. 12:13** the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves;

**Zech. 12:14** all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.

- Zechariah makes it clear that the Spirit's impact on Israel is universal
  - All the families that remain in the city come to faith, and moreover this mass revival happens as people are in isolation
  - Four groups of the Jews are mentioned to represent the entire spectrum of Jewish people
  - David (ruling class), Nathan (prophets), Levi (priests), and Shimeites (the common Jews)
- In other words, the great and small, the learned and uneducated, the privileged and the ordinary are all coming to the same faith in Jesus
  - And this happens while they are alone with their families, meaning this isn't a group experience
  - Nor is it the result of conventional evangelism where one person tells another



- Every Jew is individually and simultaneously convinced by the Spirit
- There is a beautiful Psalm that captures the thinking of the Jewish people in Jerusalem in this moment when they come to faith

**Psa. 79:1 O God, the nations have invaded Your inheritance;**

**They have defiled Your holy temple;**

**They have laid Jerusalem in ruins.**

**Psa. 79:2 They have given the dead bodies of Your servants for food to the birds of the heavens,**

**The flesh of Your godly ones to the beasts of the earth.**

**Psa. 79:3 They have poured out their blood like water round about Jerusalem;**

**And there was no one to bury them.**

**Psa. 79:4 We have become a reproach to our neighbors,**

**A scoffing and derision to those around us.**

**Psa. 79:5 How long, O LORD? Will You be angry forever?**

**Will Your jealousy burn like fire?**

**Psa. 79:6 Pour out Your wrath upon the nations which do not know You,**

**And upon the kingdoms which do not call upon Your name.**

**Psa. 79:7 For they have devoured Jacob**

**And laid waste his habitation.**

**Psa. 79:8 Do not remember the iniquities of our forefathers against us;**

**Let Your compassion come quickly to meet us,**

**For we are brought very low.**

**Psa. 79:9 Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Your name;**

**And deliver us and forgive our sins for Your name's sake.**

**Psa. 79:10 Why should the nations say, "Where is their God?"**

**Let there be known among the nations in our sight,**

**Vengeance for the blood of Your servants which has been shed.**

**Psa. 79:11 Let the groaning of the prisoner come before You;**

**According to the greatness of Your power preserve those who are doomed to die.**

**Psa. 79:12 And return to our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom**

**The reproach with which they have reproached You, O Lord.**

**Psa. 79:13 So we Your people and the sheep of Your pasture**

**Will give thanks to You forever;**

**To all generations we will tell of Your praise.**

- Psalm 79 captures the repentant voice of the nation in that moment as the Antichrist presses his attack against the city
  - And the very next Psalm, Ps. 80, continues that confession moment
    - The climax of that confession comes at the end

**Psa. 80:14 O God of hosts, turn again now, we beseech You;**

**Look down from heaven and see, and take care of this vine,**

**Psa. 80:15** Even the shoot which Your right hand has planted,  
And on the son whom You have strengthened for Yourself.

**Psa. 80:16** It is burned with fire, it is cut down;  
They perish at the rebuke of Your countenance.

**Psa. 80:17** Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,  
Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.

**Psa. 80:18** Then we shall not turn back from You;  
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.

**Psa. 80:19** O LORD God of hosts, restore us;  
Cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved.

- The nation is calling for the Son Who God has strengthened for Himself
  - But that shoot (the shoot of Jesse) is burned with fire and cut down, they say
  - They're recognizing they have rejected their only hope, the Son of God
- But nevertheless, they ask that the Lord's hand would be upon the Son of God, meaning that He would be sent back to them again
  - And this time they promise not to turn back from Him
  - Instead, if the Lord should revive Israel they will call upon His name as Jesus required they do
  - And when that happens they know they will be saved
- So the climactic moment of Jesus' Second coming isn't His return but rather it's Israel's repentance and call for Jesus to rescue them from certain death
  - And Hosea tells us the precise moment when this turn happens

**Hos. 6:1** "Come, let us return to the LORD.  
For He has torn us, but He will heal us;  
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.

**Hos. 6:2** "He will revive us after two days;  
He will raise us up on the third day,  
That we may live before Him.

**Hos. 6:3** "So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.  
His going forth is as certain as the dawn;  
And He will come to us like the rain,  
Like the spring rain watering the earth."

- Hosea says the Lord's reviving of Israel happens after two days, and He raises them up on the third day
  - In this context, to be raised up doesn't mean to be resurrected but to be raised spiritually
  - They are saved on the third day of the Antichrist's siege of the city
- In those first two days, the city is captured, half of the Jews are killed and the women are sexually assaulted as Zechariah says

- But that final half of the city is able to survive until the third day
- And as Jesus said in Matthew, the one who endures to the end shall be saved
- And the Lord will come to them as rain watering the earth, which is a consistent picture of God’s grace in the Bible
- So the Jews have called out for Jesus, and in Heaven the Lord hears their call and as promised He comes to earth a second time to save His people

**Rev. 19:11** And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.

**Rev. 19:12** His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.

**Rev. 19:13** He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

**Rev. 19:14** And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.

**Rev. 19:15** From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

**Rev. 19:16** And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

- As we said earlier, the description of Christ’s return in this chapter is a summary of the events, including of the actual moment itself
  - John describes the scene as it unfolds from his perspective in Heaven
    - But the experience from the perspective of the earth is completely different
    - So we need to move between John’s account in Revelation and other passages that give us the earthly viewpoint
  - First, John says that Heaven itself is opened up so that all Heaven is opened and visible from Earth
    - And Jesus appears at the head of a great procession
    - Jesus is depicted in the glorified form that John first described in Chapter 1 of Revelation
    - He has flaming eyes, diadems reflecting His natural right to rule all nations
  - And He has a name unknown to anyone else, a name above all names
    - This suggests to us that the name we know today, the name Yeshua, is not the name the Lord will bear in the Kingdom
    - So for all the controversy that circulates in the church on what to call Jesus, in the end we will all feel a bit foolish about it
    - Because Jesus will have a new name that no one has yet heard, though Jesus will still be known as the Word of God
- Next John says Jesus is riding a white horse as He appears, which is interesting

because it matches an earlier description from this book

- The Antichrist, the false ruler, also appeared riding a white horse, which reminds us that the Bible uses a white horse as a symbol of ruling
  - But now the true King has appeared to replace the false ruler
  - Which is why Jesus is wearing a robe dipped in blood
- In v.15 John says Jesus comes to strike down the nations and rule with a rod of iron
  - He is bringing a sword and will tread the winepress of God’s wrath
  - So our King comes to earth prepared for a fight, which is very different than when He first appeared to mankind
- Jesus’ first coming was to preach salvation and to show mercy and forgiveness, but His Second Coming will be for judgment and to rule
  - For the same reason He bears the title King of Kings and Lord of Lords
  - No one on earth or in Heaven will ever challenge Jesus’ rule again, as all authority will bow down to Him
- Also, Jesus is followed by “armies” and they are clothed in fine clean white linen
  - Earlier we saw the Church saints clothed in this way, so we are the army that follows Jesus in that moment
    - So our vantage point for the Second Coming of Christ will be the vantage point John is describing here
    - We are accompanying our Savior and King in His triumphant return to rule, and though we are called an army, we will do none of the fighting
  - Still, it should excite every Christian to consider that day to come
    - We are reading about a future event in which we are assured to participate
    - We can’t say with certainty what we will do tomorrow, but we can be assured by our faith that we will be there on a future day
  - Finally, Jesus tells us in Matthew 16 that when He returns, He will also be accompanied by an army of angels

**Matt. 16:27 “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS.**

- So now let’s move from heaven to earth to understand the Lord’s return from an earthly perspective, and as we expect, the event looks a little different
  - Jesus says it starts with great disturbances in the Heavens, even greater than those that took place in the Tribulation judgments

**Matt. 24:29 “But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.**

**Matt. 24:30 “And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then**

**all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.**

- Immediately after the Tribulation ends, every source of light in the heavens will cease to give its light
- Zechariah confirms this in his description of the return of Jesus

**Zech. 14:6 In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.**

**Zech. 14:7 For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.**

- Literally, a complete blackout of the Universe takes place, leaving the earth in complete and utter darkness
  - Then out of the midst of that complete blackout, the window into Heaven opens up and the Lord comes on the clouds
  - And in that moment, the Lord Himself is the only source of light in the entire Universe
- Earlier in Matthew Jesus warned the church not to follow after anyone who came to them claiming to be the Messiah
  - And now we know why Jesus gave that warning...because when He does return, we won't be able to miss it
  - In fact, we will be with Jesus and the rest of the world won't be able to take their eyes off Him
  - There will be nothing else to see except Him, and Jesus says that the effect of His return will be to bring the nations to mourning
  - They will mourn because they are watching their Judge return to bring them to an end
- So we leave tonight with Jesus in mid-air returning to save Israel
  - Next week we complete the war of Armageddon by studying Stages IV and V, both of which are battles carried out by Jesus Himself
    - The result of these battles is the complete end of the Antichrist and his forces and the conclusion of the seven year Tribulation
    - So after next week our study of Tribulation comes to an end, and we transition to the events that follow the Lord's return
    - And that includes some of the most fascinating prophecy in the entire Bible



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 19C

## Chapter 19:17-21

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- Tonight we finish our study of Daniel's seventieth seven, the Tribulation, and the War of Armageddon that ends this period of devastation
  - More importantly, we're rejoining the events of the Second Coming of Jesus, which takes place in a series of events
    - So let's revisit the scene from the end of our study last week
    - The last of the unbelieving Jews on earth are huddled in Jerusalem under the withering attack of the Antichrist
    - The Antichrist, who is indwelt by Satan, is determined to destroy every last Jew to prevent the return of Christ
  - But the enemy has already lost that battle since a few days earlier the Lord poured out His Spirit on Israel
    - As a result, the nation has come to faith in Jesus, and all Israel has called out to Jesus as He required as a condition for His return
    - And now Paul's words are being fulfilled:

**Rom. 11:26** and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written,  
**"THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION,  
 HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.**

**Rom. 11:27** **"THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM,  
 WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."**

- Paul was quoting Isaiah 59, which describes the Second Coming of Jesus in response to Israel coming to faith
  - Here's the full quote:

**Is. 59:19** **So they will fear the name of the LORD from the west  
 And His glory from the rising of the sun,  
 For He will come like a rushing stream  
 Which the wind of the LORD drives.**

**Is. 59:20** **"A Redeemer will come to Zion,  
 And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob," declares the LORD.**

**Is. 59:21** **"As for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the LORD, "from now and forever."**

**Is. 60:1** **"Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
 And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.**

**Is. 60:2** **"For behold, darkness will cover the earth  
 And deep darkness the peoples;  
 But the LORD will rise upon you  
 And His glory will appear upon you.**

- That's the moment we've reached...the moment of Jesus setting His feet on the earth

again to set up a Kingdom for Israel

- We left Jesus and the Church saints and an army of angels descending to the earth in response to the cries of Israel
  - Half of the city of Jerusalem has been taken and the rest are experiencing dread in knowing they killed their Messiah
  - They have yet to understand that the grace of God is still coming to rescue them
  - They are desperate and without hope even as they cry out to God for mercy
  - Which is why Zechariah told us last week that Israel's first reaction after coming to faith in Jesus is to mourn

**Zech. 12:10** “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

**Zech. 12:11** “In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

- The Old Testament story of Joseph and His brothers gives us a beautiful picture of Israel's turn around in the midst of trial and sorrow
  - Joseph was the preferred son of Jacob, which made his older brothers jealous
  - When Jacob placed Joseph in command over his brothers, they rebelled against his authority and conspired against him
  - And one day when Joseph came to his brothers near Dothan, they decided to sell him to Gentile traders
- That part of Joseph's story pictures Jesus' first coming when He offered the Kingdom to Israel if they allowed Him to rule over them
  - But like Joseph's brothers, Jesus' brothers rejected His rule and instead sold Jesus into the hands of the Gentile Romans
  - Later, Joseph rises to rule over a Gentile power, Egypt, just as Jesus became the Lord over the Gentile Church
  - Joseph was the second in charge of Egypt, just as the Son of God is under the Father God
- Later, the Lord is ready to bring Jacob's family under Joseph's rule, so He brings famine to the land to cause Jacob to seek for help in Egypt
  - And one day Joseph's brothers appear before Joseph desperate for help
    - But Joseph decides how and when to reveal himself to his brothers
    - And when the right moment arrives, Joseph opens his brothers' eyes

**Gen. 45:3** Then Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?” But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his



presence.

**Gen. 45:4** Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Please come closer to me.” And they came closer. And he said, “I am your brother Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

**Gen. 45:5** “Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life.

**Gen. 45:6** “For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are still five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvesting.

**Gen. 45:7** “God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.

**Gen. 45:8** “Now, therefore, it was not you who sent me here, but God; and He has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his household and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

- This moment is a picture of Christ’s Second Coming, and for both Joseph and Jesus the first response of the Jews is fear
  - Notice Joseph has to tell his brothers not to fear him, because they assume he will deal harshly with them for their sin
  - But Joseph tells them that this plan of God was intended to produce a great deliverance for them and the world
- And indeed, Israel’s rejection of Jesus at His first coming was a part of God’s plan to ensure that the entire world would be blessed in the end
  - And that’s what we’re seeing now as Jesus returns to earth
  - He is about to deliver Israel the promised Kingdom
  - But because of Israel’s earlier rejection of Jesus, that Kingdom will now include a great Gentile army of saints
  - Just as Joseph ruled not only over his family but also over the entire nation of Egypt
- So now let’s rejoin the action in the final two stages of war of Armageddon, and these two stages happen across two fronts
  - First, we have the Antichrist attacking Jerusalem, having already destroyed half the city
    - And we have the believing Jewish remnant in Botzrah under attack as well from the Antichrist’s forces sent from Babylon
    - They have not managed to find a way into the stronghold yet they persist
  - But both battles are about to come to an end, at Jesus’ return
    - You’ve probably heard others tell you that Jesus’ Second Coming will happen at Jerusalem
    - And certainly Jesus does come to Jerusalem – eventually, but His Second Coming does not begin there
    - The first place of His return isn’t to Jerusalem...it’s to those believing Jews in the fortress of Botzrah

- Let's start with Isaiah's description of Stage IV of the war...

**Is. 34:1 Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples!**

**Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it.**

**Is. 34:2 For the LORD'S indignation is against all the nations,  
And His wrath against all their armies;  
He has utterly destroyed them,  
He has given them over to slaughter.**

**Is. 34:3 So their slain will be thrown out,  
And their corpses will give off their stench,  
And the mountains will be drenched with their blood.**

**Is. 34:4 And all the host of heaven will wear away,  
And the sky will be rolled up like a scroll;  
All their hosts will also wither away  
As a leaf withers from the vine,  
Or as one withers from the fig tree.**

**Is. 34:5 For My sword is satiated in heaven,  
Behold it shall descend for judgment upon Edom  
And upon the people whom I have devoted to destruction.**

**Is. 34:6 The sword of the LORD is filled with blood,  
It is sated with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats,  
With the fat of the kidneys of rams.  
For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah  
And a great slaughter in the land of Edom.**

- Notice at the opening of this chapter, Isaiah describes a time in history when all the nations' armies are ready to be destroyed by the Lord
  - And that the Lord Himself will be the One to bring this slaughter against the nations
    - The Antichrist is the leader of the whole world, of all nations, so his army is the army of all the nations
    - And in v.4 we see this battle occurs in conjunction with a time when the heavens will wear away, speaking of Tribulation
    - The sky is rolled back like a scroll and the vegetation is gone
    - Clearly, this description closely matches what we've seen in the time of Tribulation
  - So this battle of the nations' armies against the Lord is set in the time of Tribulation, according to Isaiah
    - Then in vs.5-6, the Lord Himself begins to speak about the battle
    - The Lord's sword is satiated in Heaven, and the term satiated means satisfied, saturated
    - So the Lord's sword has had its fill from Heaven, implying it is now ready to fight in a new way

- And so in v.5 the Lord says His sword will descend for judgment
  - The reference to descending is important, because it communicates that there is a transition taking place in that verse
  - That sword is moving from Heaven to the earth, at Christ’s Second Coming
- And Isaiah says that the destruction of all nations will come at the hands of God starting at Edom, specifically at Botzrah
  - Isaiah says the Lord has a sacrifice prepared in Edom, in Botzrah
  - And notice in v.3 the bodies of the slain will be found on a mountain that becomes stained with their blood
  - That’s a clear reference to the mountainous ring that surrounds the open area of Botzrah or modern-day Petra
- These descriptions confirm that the Lord will defend the encampment of His people in Petra and destroy all who attack it
  - This destruction happens during Tribulation and in conjunction with the Lord’s descending from Heaven, which is at the end of Tribulation
    - Jesus’ attack at Botzrah is Stage IV of the War of Armageddon, when the Lord destroys the armies of the Antichrist there
    - The Lord alone does the fighting, and the text makes no mention of any other person or entity fighting – just the Lord
  - So the Lord descends as described in Revelation 19 with armies behind Him, and as He arrives in Petra He destroys the forces of the Antichrist
    - Now Micah tells us what Jesus does next

**Mic. 2:12** “I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob,  
I will surely gather the remnant of Israel.  
I will put them together like sheep in the fold;  
Like a flock in the midst of its pasture  
They will be noisy with men.

**Mic. 2:13** “The breaker goes up before them;  
They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it.  
So their king goes on before them,  
And the LORD at their head.”

- We read Micah 2:12 earlier when we studied Israel’s flight into the desert in Revelation 12
  - Micah is the prophet who names the place of Israel’s protection: Botzrah
    - In Hebrew the phrase “in the fold” is the word Botzrah, which refers to the nature of this place as a protective enclosure
    - It is the literal Hebrew word for a sheep’s pen and it is also the proper name of the present-day town of Petra
  - This is the place that the believing remnant of Israel will be kept safe for the second half of Tribulation

- And now that the Tribulation is ending and Jesus has returned, it's time to let the "sheep" out of that "pen"
    - And in the very next verse Micah describes that release on the day Jesus comes
  - Micah says "the breaker" goes before those who have been held in this place
    - That breaker is a reference to the One Who sets them free, breaking them out of that place
    - The Hebrew word for breaker means one who breeches or destroys or breaks down the enclosure
  - This is the Lord Himself, and notice that they follow Him out passing through the gate and go out by it
    - Passing through a gate is another reference to a sheep pen and the way a shepherd lets sheep out to enter the pasture
    - This is a calm, peaceful exodus like sheep calmly following after their shepherd when he leads them out
    - And notice Micah adds that their king goes before them and the Lord is at their head
- So this is a description of the remnant being released from their place of protection and provision at the end of the Tribulation
  - Jesus defeats those attacking the remnant and then He opens the gate and leads them out
    - We don't know what kind of gate this will be, but imagine it like Noah's ark
    - The ark had a door that God closed before the flood and opened after the ship landed safely, and so will it be here
  - So as Jesus set these believing Jews free from Petra, we can imagine a scene like that of the Exodus
    - As Moses led the people of Israel through the Sinai, Jesus now leads His people into the open desert
    - Only now Jesus, assumes the role of Charlton Heston
    - But as the Lord leads them out, where are they going?
- Isaiah gives us the answer

**Is. 63:1 Who is this who comes from Edom,  
With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah,  
This One who is majestic in His apparel,  
Marching in the greatness of His strength?  
"It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."**

**Is. 63:2 Why is Your apparel red,  
And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?**

- To understand this text properly, we must appreciate its context
  - Isaiah is writing from a first-person point of view while standing on the walls of

Jerusalem during the Antichrist's attack on the city

- That's the context of this chapter, and so imagine the prophet on top of a crumbling wall, the city under attack, smoke pouring out
- Chaos everywhere, fighting in the streets and armies gathered around the walls
- And in the midst of that moment, the prophet is on the wall facing east toward the Mount of Olives
  - And as he gazes into the distance, he begins to ask questions
  - He asks, who is this coming from Edom? He is majestic in apparel
- Remember the way John described Jesus' appearance at His Second Coming?

**Rev. 19:12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.**

**Rev. 19:13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.**

**Rev. 19:14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.**

**Rev. 19:15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.**

- Jesus returns in His glory and Isaiah's description of Jesus in glory with glowing colors and fierce wrath matches John's description
- He has a robe dipped in blood, and I mentioned last week the blood reflected the battle He was going to wage
- And now Isaiah tells us that the blood comes from the battle in Botzrah
  - Isaiah says His garments are red from treading the wine press, a reference to the fierce wrath
  - So Isaiah sees the Lord coming to Jerusalem from Botzrah with His robe bloodied from a battle
- But Isaiah doesn't understand why the Lord has appeared in this way, so he asks for an explanation

**Is. 63:3 "I have trodden the wine trough alone,  
And from the peoples there was no man with Me.  
I also trod them in My anger  
And trampled them in My wrath;  
And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments,  
And I stained all My raiment.**

**Is. 63:4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart,  
And My year of redemption has come.**

**Is. 63:5 "I looked, and there was no one to help,  
And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold;**

**So My own arm brought salvation to Me,  
And My wrath upheld Me.**

**Is. 63:6 “I trod down the peoples in My anger  
And made them drunk in My wrath,  
And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.”**

- The Lord’s explains He has engaged in a battle by Himself
  - He says He strode the peoples, describes the battle He encountered in Botzrah
    - He says He trod the wine press alone, a reference to the Lord’s outpouring of wrath against the armies at Botzrah
    - He trampled them in God’s wrath and their blood stained His clothing because the day of redemption and vengeance had come
  - Notice that the Lord says He fought this battle by Himself, and no one helped
    - He was astonished, which means appalled, at what He saw at Botzrah
    - And He took it upon His own authority and power to destroy the pitiful army waiting
    - The strong language here reflects the fierce anger of God against the ungodliness of the world that He finds at His return
  - Remember the Lord’s words when He came the first time:

**Luke 18:7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?**

**Luke 18:8 “I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”**

- The Lord foretold that at His return He would not find a world of faith waiting
- Rather His return will be met by a world of intense and unrepentant unbelief and hatred for God and His people
- So Isaiah witnesses the Lord coming to Jerusalem leading a procession of the remnant who accompany Christ
  - It’s interesting to consider how this group might cross this distance in a short time, since it’s about 75 miles as the crow flies
    - Do they move in a natural way or supernaturally?
    - Obviously Jesus Himself has the capacity to move there without limitation and His armies are capable of going wherever He goes
    - So presumably, Jesus moves the remnant in a supernatural way to transport them quickly to Jerusalem
  - So now Christ approaches the city of Jerusalem, and as He does, He’s met by the second front of the war of Armageddon
    - And much like the first front we have the rag-tag army of the Antichrist scratching and clawing their way into the city
    - The Lord has been defending the city, supernaturally strengthening the

citizens of the city against the invaders

- Though they have done some damage, there is still a resistance holding out
- But they can't hold out much longer...and then appears Jesus and His armies
- In Zechariah 14 we see how the battle unfolds as Jesus arrives at Jerusalem in a step by step process
  - We will study this final battle of our age in several steps as Zechariah explains them
  - Beginning with Jesus approaching the city

**Zech. 14:1 Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.**

**Zech. 14:2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.**

**Zech. 14:3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.**

**Zech. 14:4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.**

**Zech. 14:5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!**

- Previously, we read vs.1-2 of this chapter when we studied Stage III of the War of Armageddon, the initial assault on Jerusalem
  - You remember that the Antichrist moved from the north of Israel southward and then climbed up from the west to siege Jerusalem
    - As the battle begins, the Antichrist begins to scale the walls and enter the city
    - Zechariah says the city is invaded, half of the city will be carried off and presumably killed
    - Women are raped and likely killed as well
  - And Hosea told us that the battle would go on for 2 days, and then on the third day the nation of Israel would be brought to faith by the Spirit
    - And as they respond by calling out on Jesus, He comes to them
    - Specifically He comes to them from Botzrah, leading a band of believing Jews who were waiting for Him there
  - Zechariah picks up the narrative at that point in v.3, explaining that the Lord comes to fight for Jerusalem
    - The Lord fights against those nations that come against the city
    - And in v.4 we're told the Lord's feet stand on the Mt. of Olives

- That phrase is sometimes misunderstood to mean that Jesus lands on the Mt. of Olives, but Zechariah doesn't say that
    - He simply says Jesus stands there, and Isaiah tells us that He arrives there by coming from Botzrah
  - So Jesus comes to the mountain range east of Jerusalem and stops, standing directly on the Mt. of Olives
    - From that point, He can look down into the city and witness the Antichrist's attack
    - And it's from here that Jesus begins to defend the city
    - This is Stage V of the War of Armageddon, the final battle of the war and the end of the Age
- But the Lord doesn't charge down the hill and into the city to start beating up soldiers kung fu-style
  - Instead, the Lord begins the fight remotely, by changing the landscape of the battle
    - Notice that Jesus is approaching the city from the east, which makes sense if He is coming to the city from Botzrah
    - And we also remember the Antichrist's forces are attacking from the west, according to Daniel 12
  - So as Jesus arrives, He is on the east, the Antichrist is on the west, and what's left of Jerusalem lies between them
    - And Zechariah says that as Jesus stands on the Mount of Olives, He commands the mountain to split in two, east to west
    - Then the two parts of the mountain will move apart, one half to the north and another half to the south
    - This will create a channel or valley that runs eastward away from the city to the east
  - Remember the world has no mountains at this point, except the mount that Jerusalem sits upon and the surrounding connecting range
    - So when the mount itself is split, it creates a channel that provides complete protection for those in it
    - Zechariah then says the Jews in Jerusalem will then flee the battle out this channel
    - Because the attack is coming from the west, the exit route will be to the east through this valley
- In v.5 Zechariah says the Jews will flee by way of the valley the Lord creates in the ground
  - Does this remind you of another time when the Lord rescued fleeing Israelites from an attacking army by creating a valley of protection?
    - We remember Israel fleeing from Pharaoh through the valley of water created in the Red Sea, another flight from West to East
- Finally, Zechariah says the Lord will enter the city with all His holy ones behind Him to finish the battle



- Only after the innocent ones are out of the way does the Lord then move ahead in His attack
- Habakkuk gives us another view of this movement from Petra to Jerusalem

**Hab. 3:3** God comes from Teman,  
And the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah.  
His splendor covers the heavens,  
And the earth is full of His praise.

**Hab. 3:4** His radiance is like the sunlight;  
He has rays flashing from His hand,  
And there is the hiding of His power.

**Hab. 3:5** Before Him goes pestilence,  
And plague comes after Him.

**Hab. 3:6** He stood and surveyed the earth;  
He looked and startled the nations.  
Yes, the perpetual mountains were shattered,  
The ancient hills collapsed.  
His ways are everlasting.

**Hab. 3:7** I saw the tents of Cushan under distress,  
The tent curtains of the land of Midian were trembling.

**Hab. 3:8** Did the LORD rage against the rivers,  
Or was Your anger against the rivers,  
Or was Your wrath against the sea,  
That You rode on Your horses,  
On Your chariots of salvation?

**Hab. 3:9** Your bow was made bare,  
The rods of chastisement were sworn. Selah.  
You cleaved the earth with rivers.

**Hab. 3:10** The mountains saw You and quaked;  
The downpour of waters swept by.  
The deep uttered forth its voice,  
It lifted high its hands.

**Hab. 3:11** Sun and moon stood in their places;  
They went away at the light of Your arrows,  
At the radiance of Your gleaming spear.

**Hab. 3:12** In indignation You marched through the earth;  
In anger You trampled the nations.

**Hab. 3:13** You went forth for the salvation of Your people,  
For the salvation of Your anointed.  
You struck the head of the house of the evil  
To lay him open from thigh to neck. Selah.

- The passage is a description of the Second Coming of the Lord to Jerusalem, and notice it begins with geographical references
  - The prophet says the Lord comes to Jerusalem from Teman or Mt. Paran

- These are ancient names for Edom, where we find Botzrah
  - And the Lord arrives with a radiance like sunlight, confirming the other accounts we've read of the Second Coming
- In v.6, Habakkuk describes the earthly destruction that preceded His return
  - Plague, pestilence, mountains shattered, etc.
  - These are references to the Tribulation events that precede Jesus' return
- His wrath was against seas, rivers, and the sun and moon stood in their place and then went away at the light of His appearing
  - All of those descriptions are literal depictions of things we've studied elsewhere already
  - So we know this prophet is talking about the same event...the Lord's Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation
- But in Habakkuk he asks rhetorically in v.8 whether God's wrath was directed at the rivers and mountains and seas themselves?
  - In other words, was the Lord mad at the Creation itself?
  - In vs.12-13 the prophet answers no... the Lord wasn't raging against the creation itself
- Instead, He was raging against the armies and nations of the world, Habakkuk says
  - So after the Jews escape, Jesus enters the city from the east, and meets the Antichrist as he and his armies advance from the west
  - He battles for the salvation of His people, Israel, and at the end of v.13, he says the Lord will strike the head of the house of evil
- The head of the house of evil is a clear reference to the Antichrist who is the head of the world and all that is evil
  - The Lord's blow lays him open from thigh to neck, which is a graphic description of the death of the Antichrist
  - He is literally flayed open, sliced open by Christ's sword
- So at the moment Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, His attack results in the death of the Antichrist along with all his armies
  - We see confirmation of this outcome in 2 Thessalonians

**2Th. 2:8 Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; 2Th. 2:9 that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,**

- The Lord's appearing will result in the Antichrist's end and his end comes by the breath of Christ's mouth
- Remember, the word (or breath) of Christ is called a sword in Scripture

**Heb. 4:12** For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

- So Jesus literally fights only with His word, because the word of the Lord is a force of its own, the only true force in the Universe
  - Hebrews also says that the word of God is literally the glue holding the Universe together

**Heb. 1:3** And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

- So Jesus' word is more than enough to destroy anything, because it's the only thing holding everything together
- So at the word of Christ, the Antichrist's body is split open, his armies die in a similar fashion, and the battle is over quickly
  - Remember Revelation 14 gave us a preview of that destruction

**Rev. 14:18** Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe."

**Rev. 14:19** So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

**Rev. 14:20** And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.

- This is the moment of that bloodletting as Jesus ends the lives of thousands and perhaps millions of human beings in an instant
- So quick and violent is their death that all their blood is suddenly released filling the Kidron Valley and flowing 200 miles
- Now all that remains is to clean up the mess, and it's quite a mess, but the Lord has a plan

**Rev. 19:17** Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God,

**Rev. 19:18** so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and

great.”

**Rev. 19:19** And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.

**Rev. 19:20** And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.

**Rev. 19:21** And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse, and all the birds were filled with their flesh.

- We’ve now returned to John’s heavenly perspective on the events
  - Remember, we are studying Christ’s return from an earthly perspective and a heavenly perspective
    - The Old Testament prophets gives us the view from earth, whether at Botzrah or Jerusalem
    - While John sees the events from his vantage point in Heaven, which is also where *we* will witness these things thankfully
  - We started from John’s perspective at the start of this chapter, and then we studied the earthly perspective
    - Now Jesus and His entourage have reached the earth, so at this point the two perspectives merge
    - Habakkuk described a violent end in Jerusalem with many dead, and now John sees the same thing
    - It’s as if John never saw the battle but later comes upon the aftermath and he’s viewing the carnage
  - After the battle ends, Jesus’ angelic realm starts work on calling the clean up crew
    - An angel in Heaven calls to birds in midheaven to come and assemble for a great meal
    - The term mid-Heaven is usually a Biblical term for outer space
  - But these are birds that eat flesh, like vultures, so in this context the term mid-Heaven is understood a different way
    - In Greek it can also be translated zenith, as in the highest point in the sky, which is the sense intended here
    - Ezekiel give us confirmation that God uses birds and beasts to devour the carcasses of the dead at times in Chapter 29
- And thus Stage V of the War of Armageddon, the Age of the Gentiles, and the Tribulation come to an end...the earth is at rest from war
  - All opposing armies are destroyed and all Jews on earth have been saved
    - There are always believing Gentiles on earth at Jesus’ coming
    - And there are unbelieving Gentiles who aren’t in the army and so they aren’t killed in the final battle

- We will look at what happens to all these groups after Jesus returns in next week's study
- But before that, we need to see what happens to the instigators of the world's rebellion: the three players in the False Trinity
  - In v.20 we read of the final disposition of the beast or Antichrist and the false prophet
    - They receive a special and dubious distinction of being thrown alive into the Lake of Fire
    - But just as we've seen elsewhere, there's more going here than John records in this quick summary in Revelation
  - First, both the Antichrist and the false prophet are human beings, of course
    - But during the second half of Tribulation, they are both instruments of Satan
    - The Antichrist is indwelled by Satan, we know, and the false prophet is likely indwelled by a powerful demon
  - And when the body dies, any spirits in the body are released from the body, just as the person's own spirit is released from the body at death
    - Since we know the Antichrist was killed when Jesus returned, because Habakkuk and Paul told us that
    - And presumably, the false prophet also dies in the battle as well
    - Then we can assume that Satan and his demons were released, and the men's own spirits were also released from their bodies
- So what happens to each of these characters? First, the Antichrist's soul descends for a short time into hell
  - Isaiah gives a lengthy description of what happens to the Antichrist's soul as it arrives in Hell

**Is. 14:1** When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

**Is. 14:2** The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors.

**Is. 14:3** And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved,

**Is. 14:4** that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say, "How the oppressor has ceased, And how fury has ceased!

**Is. 14:5** "The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of rulers

**Is. 14:6** Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes, Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.

**Is. 14:7** "The whole earth is at rest and is quiet;

They break forth into shouts of joy.

**Is. 14:8** “Even the cypress trees rejoice over you, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying,

‘Since you were laid low, no tree cutter comes up against us.’

**Is. 14:9** “Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the spirits of the dead, all the leaders of the earth;

It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.

**Is. 14:10** “They will all respond and say to you,

‘Even you have been made weak as we,

You have become like us.

**Is. 14:11** ‘Your pomp and the music of your harps

Have been brought down to Sheol;

Maggots are spread out as your bed beneath you

And worms are your covering.’

**Is. 14:12** “How you have fallen from heaven,

O star of the morning, son of the dawn!

You have been cut down to the earth,

You who have weakened the nations!

**Is. 14:13** “But you said in your heart,

‘I will ascend to heaven;

I will raise my throne above the stars of God,

And I will sit on the mount of assembly

In the recesses of the north.

**Is. 14:14** ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;

I will make myself like the Most High.’

**Is. 14:15** “Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,

To the recesses of the pit.

**Is. 14:16** “Those who see you will gaze at you,

They will ponder over you, saying,

‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble,

Who shook kingdoms,

**Is. 14:17** Who made the world like a wilderness

And overthrew its cities,

Who did not allow his prisoners to go home?’

**Is. 14:18** “All the kings of the nations lie in glory,

Each in his own tomb.

**Is. 14:19** “But you have been cast out of your tomb

Like a rejected branch,

Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword,

Who go down to the stones of the pit

Like a trampled corpse.

**Is. 14:20** “You will not be united with them in burial,

Because you have ruined your country,

You have slain your people.

May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.

**Is. 14:21** “Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter

**Because of the iniquity of their fathers.  
They must not arise and take possession of the earth  
And fill the face of the world with cities.”**

- This scene in Isaiah will occur at a time when the nation of Israel has been restored, the prophet says
  - The Lord will take His people, having shown compassion on them, and settle them in their land
    - They will bring other people (Gentiles) along with them into the Kingdom
    - And the Lord will give Israel rest from their pain and turmoil
    - Clearly that's a reference to Israel coming into the Kingdom
  - So that's our context, and in that moment, we hear Israel taunting the King of Babylon
    - Remember, Babylon is the Bible's term for Satan's Kingdom and all that it represents
    - And this king of Babylon once ruled the people with unceasing strokes and subdued the nations
    - So in this context, it's a reference to the Antichrist
  - But now the world is at rest and this king finds himself in Sheol or Hell (v.11, v.15), resting on a bed of maggots
    - Notice in v.19, he had been clothed with the slain, a reference to his resurrection at mid Tribulation
    - Then in v.20 we're told that he will not be united with his people in burial
  - His people are the nations that followed him and went to their death into Hell at the Second Coming of Jesus
    - But the Antichrist will not join them, because He will be brought out of Sheol almost immediately
    - And as John tells us, he will be sent directly into the Lake of Fire along with the False Prophet
- So the Antichrist and the false prophet die in the final battle, and as they die they enter into Hell like all souls but only for a short time
  - Just long enough for them to be welcomed by the kings of the earth that preceded them into that terrible place
    - Notice in Isaiah 14 they mock the Antichrist for having been brought so low
    - This is the reception that all the great and mighty unbelievers receive when their lives end and they enter Hell
    - They are surrounded by their own kind who, like them, suffer
    - And yet they have memories of each other and the life they left behind
  - So the Antichrist is almost immediately resurrected into a new, eternal body and then cast into the permanent home for the unbelieving
    - He and the false prophet enter the Lake of Fire alive, which is how all

- unbelievers will enter that place
- All human beings are resurrected into new bodies, both believers and unbelievers
- The difference is where the two groups spend eternity living
- The Antichrist's distinction of being first to be resurrected and cast into the Lake of Fire is an ironic twist on our story
  - When Satan, the Antichrist and false prophet came together, they tried to form a counterfeit, false trinity
  - They were copying the true Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- And unintentionally, they reflect that counterfeit even in their death
  - Christ is the first fruits of the resurrection to eternal life
  - Meaning He was the first human being to be resurrected into an eternal body that never dies
  - Similarly, the Antichrist will be the first fruits of the resurrection among those who go into eternal death
- Next week we move into Chapter 20 which describes the Kingdom period, but we don't move very far into that Chapter right away
  - Because first we enter a little-known period of God's timeline called the 75-day interval
    - We'll introduce the concept next week and explain its purposes
    - Once we cover that period, we will move into an introduction to the Millennial Kingdom period and an extended study of that period





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# Revelation 2020 - Lesson 20A

Chapter 20:1-5, Dan. 9  
& 12, Is. 26

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- We've spent fourteen lessons and nearly 20 weeks studying the seven years of Tribulation
  - In fact, our study of tribulation required about 5.5% of the time that Tribulation will actually last!
    - And we started our study of Tribulation in Daniel 2 & 7
    - Because in those chapters Daniel gave us the roadmap for this seven year period
    - That roadmap told us that Christ's return to Earth would be the event that brings the Tribulation to an end
    - And last week we studied through that roadmap ending with Jesus on the earth, the world is quiet and the enemy vanquished
  - The world has anticipated the moment of the Lord's arrival on Earth since it was first promised in Genesis 3:15
    - The ancient world, the patriarchs, Israel's prophets and kings, the apostles and the Church eagerly anticipated this coming day
    - And we too look forward to that moment, when the Lord will keep His promises to establish His kingdom on earth
    - We'll join Jesus on an earth free of war, injustice and pandemics, so we can enjoy our inheritance
- So tonight you might expect we would begin our study of the period of the kingdom but you would be wrong
  - We'll study the kingdom soon enough, but first we must spend time on things that precede the start of the kingdom
    - Specifically, we need to learn about a brief interval of time sandwiched between Tribulation and the Kingdom
    - This period of time is neither part of Tribulation nor is it part of the Kingdom time
    - Instead, it bridges one to the other, and accommodates certain events that must take place in preparation for the Kingdom
  - By way of introduction tonight, let's revisit Daniel's broad outline for the seven-year Tribulation timeline taken from a single verse in Daniel 9

**Dan. 9:27** “And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”

- Daniel is told that a week (shabbat) or seven-year period would end our current age
  - And the event that kicks off that seven-year period will be the signing of a covenant between the Antichrist and Israel
  - This covenant will allow the Jews to restart sacrifice in a newly constructed temple on the temple mount

- Then the angel told Daniel that the midpoint of the week (3.5 years) would be a pivotal moment during the seven years
  - At that moment the sacrifice in the temple would end, and the Antichrist would assume a new and dangerous place in the world
  - This would continue until a complete destruction would be poured out on the Antichrist at the end of the seven years
- So Daniel tells us the time anchors of the Tribulation are the beginning, the middle and the end of the seven years
  - Earlier in Revelation, we learned that half of the Tribulation is equal to 1,260 days, which is 3½ years using the Jewish calendar year of 360 days
    - So the Tribulation consists of two periods of 1,260 days
    - And now that we've finished examining those two parts, it's time to return to Daniel for our next timeline
  - In Daniel we're given a new way to count the time surrounding the end of Tribulation

**Dan. 12:11** “From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.

**Dan. 12:12** “How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!

- In v.11 Daniel refers back to one of our three familiar Tribulation anchors again
  - He mentions the moment the regular sacrifice is abolished, which we know is the midpoint anchor of Tribulation
  - And we also know that from that midpoint anchor until the end of Tribulation there will be 1,260 days or 3½ years
- But notice in this case Daniel gives us a different number of days to count from the midpoint anchor
  - Beginning at the midpoint of Tribulation, Daniel tells us to count 1,290 days until the abomination of desolation is ended
  - The abomination is that image of the Antichrist that the false prophet set up in the temple and made the world worship
  - After Jesus returns, it remains standing for a while until it's taken down
  - And the time required to remove it is 30 days after Jesus' second coming (1,290 days after mid-Tribulation)
- Then in v.12, Daniel's timeline extends a step further, and it gets even more intriguing
  - Daniel says that those who are “blessed of the Lord” will be those who wait and attain to 1,335 days
    - That's another 45 days after the abomination of desolation is removed from the temple
    - Who are these who are waiting and what are they attaining?
  - These additional 45 days will be a period for identifying those who may enter the Kingdom and giving them eternal bodies

- Those who are blessed are those who have been waiting for the resurrection and now that time has come
    - At the end of the 45 days, they will finally attain what they have waited for
  - Who are these still waiting for resurrection? The Church saints have already attained resurrection, so this passage is about other saints
    - Principally two groups of saints will still be awaiting resurrection at the end of Tribulation
    - Old Testament saints (the invited guests) have yet to be resurrected
    - And the souls of Tribulation saints martyred and under the altar are without bodies
  - So altogether, there will be 75 days sandwiched between the end of Tribulation and the start of the Kingdom
    - The first 30 days are to clean the temple from the abomination and presumably to cleanse the entire world of the destruction
    - While the remaining 45 days will be a period to resurrect and reward those blessed to enter the Kingdom
- Let's look at the first period of 30 days for repairing and cleaning the temple and by logical extension the earth
  - Simply put, the earth has become the greatest fixer-upper project ever known
    - The judgments of Tribulation have resulted in a global natural disaster of biblical proportions (literally)
    - Yet this same earth is the earth of the Kingdom
    - So if we are to enjoy the world with Christ during the Kingdom, this disaster must be cleaned up

**Is. 65:17** “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;  
And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

**Is. 65:18** “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;  
For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing  
And her people for gladness.

**Is. 65:19** “I will also rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in My people;  
And there will no longer be heard in her  
The voice of weeping and the sound of crying.

- This passage is speaking about the 1,000-year Kingdom period, and Isaiah says it will be created new
  - Isaiah mentions clearly a recreation of the earth for this time
  - Our English translation is unhelpful because it sounds as if the Lord is making a new earth, but that's not the sense
  - The better sense would be to say “creating Heavens anew and earth anew”
- But for students of Revelation, it's easy to confuse Isaiah's description with a similar phrase John uses in Revelation 21

- When we reach Revelation 21, we'll see John is describing an entirely different world unlike the one we know now
- Even the shape and dimensions of the future world are radically different from the one we have now
- But the world that Isaiah is talking about here is very much the same one we know now, just renewed and made better in some ways
  - More importantly, the world Isaiah describes is a world that still has sin and death, as later verses in this chapter will show
  - That detail tells us definitively Isaiah is talking about a recreation of the present earth rather than the earth of Revelation 21
- So the earth and heavens (Universe) will be renewed to make earth livable again for the Kingdom time
  - In fact, Ezekiel tells us that the earth will be renewed in ways that make it different in some key ways, especially around Jerusalem
    - And a new and majestic temple will be built for the opening of the Kingdom as Daniel said in Chapter 12
    - And Ezekiel also describes new mountains and rivers around Jerusalem and other details we'll cover later
  - And Ezekiel also tells us that the new temple will become the centerpiece of life in the Kingdom

### **Is. 2:2 Now it will come about that**

#### **In the last days**

#### **The mountain of the house of the LORD**

**Will be established as the chief of the mountains,**

**And will be raised above the hills;**

**And all the nations will stream to it.**

**Is. 2:3 And many peoples will come and say,**

**“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,**

**To the house of the God of Jacob;**

**That He may teach us concerning His ways**

**And that we may walk in His paths.”**

**For the law will go forth from Zion**

**And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

- We'll study more about the temple in the Kingdom in a future week
  - For now simply note that the house of the Lord (i.e., the temple) will be the dwelling place of Jesus during this time
- All this repair and reconstruction will be done in the first 30 days as the world prepares for the Kingdom
  - But obviously, the world can't be fixed in just 30 days without God's supernatural intervention and that's to be expected
  - After all, it was destroyed as a result of His supernatural judgments so it's up to the Lord to fix it

- But the fact that the Lord takes 30 days to accomplish this work (when He could do it instantly) tells us He has a purpose in the time spent
  - And the numbers 3 and 10 ( $30 = 3 \times 10$ ) guide our understanding of his purpose in the delay
    - The number 3 is the number of the Godhead, which reminds us that God is at the center of this work and the world to come
    - And the number 10 is the number of testimony, so this moment and all the Kingdom itself is a testimony to Jesus
    - So the Lord takes 30 days for us to observe and learn from what we see, understanding God's character, power and purpose
  - Besides repairing the world and cleansing the temple, what else will be going on during those thirty days?
    - Well, we've already heard of a few things that must happen already
    - First, there was the dispatching of the Antichrist and false prophet
  - They will first go into Hell as they die at Jesus' second coming, and they will remain there for at least these 30 days
    - And then Revelation 19 told us they will eventually be deposited into the Lake of Fire
    - That judgment along with Satan's binding takes place in the 45 period that follows this 30 day period
    - We'll wait to learn more about that place until then
  - Secondly, we learned that the armies were killed at Jesus' return
    - Their bodies must be removed with the help of the birds and that takes some time
    - So that also happens during the 30 days after the Tribulation
- Next, we turn to the 45 days, the balance of the 75-day interval
  - The first 30 days were for rectifying the disaster of the earth and preparing it for the kingdom
    - And the next 45 days are for identifying and preparing those who may enter the Kingdom
    - Daniel 12 told us that the second part of this interval would be for judgment and blessing
  - And the numbers 9 and 5 ( $9 \times 5 = 45$ ) reinforce that meaning
    - The number 9 is the number of judgment, and this period is a time of judging hearts to determine who enters the Kingdom
    - And the number 5 is the number of grace, because in the midst of the judgment there will be grace for some
  - And Revelation 20 tells us that this period of judgment begins with a partial judgment of the #1 Enemy: Satan

**Rev. 20:1 Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the**

**abyss and a great chain in his hand.**

**Rev. 20:2 And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;**

**Rev. 20:3 and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.**

- After Jesus and the armies of angels and saints arrive on Earth, John says there are yet still angels serving in the throne room of heaven
  - They are attending to the Father on His throne and this reminds us that the Father remains in the heavenly realm now
    - Throughout the entire 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth He remains outside the reach of the Creation as He does now
    - Only by His Son may someone approach the Father, because there will still be sin on the earth
    - And sin may not enter into the presence of the Father
    - But eventually He joins the Son and we will study the reunion of the Godhead later in Chapter 21
  - So this angel comes to earth with a single mission: to bind Satan
    - He binds the dragon, Satan, and places him in the pit for 1,000 years, which defines the time of peace in the Kingdom
    - Later in v.7 Satan is released at the end of the kingdom to remove peace from the earth for a short time
    - Descriptions like this guide us into a literal interpretation of the 1,000 year kingdom of Christ ruling on earth
  - The holding place for the enemy during the thousand years will be the abyss
    - The abyss is the place we saw mentioned at various times during the judgments of Tribulation
    - This abyss is not Hell (or Sheol) though it is similar
    - It is a place located in the depths of the earth where God is holding demons' spirits until the day of their judgment
    - At a future point, the abyss will be emptied and all demons will receive their final judgment in the Lake of Fire
  - Similarly, Hell is a holding place for sinful humans in the depths of the earth
    - And like the Abyss, Hell is not the final state for anyone
    - It will be followed by a final judgment and a permanent home in the Lake of Fire as well
    - We cover this process at the end of Chapter 20
- Next, we need to consider the citizens of the kingdom
  - More specifically, we need to understand who will enter the kingdom and the physical nature of these citizens

- For example, we remember the Church saints, including you and me, return with Jesus in resurrected bodies
- We also heard that the Old Testament and martyred Tribulation saints were invited guests at the marriage supper of the Lamb
- They returned too but they are still in soul form only, so they need new bodies before they can enter the Kingdom
- The Kingdom is a physical place on a real earth, so those who live there must possess physical bodies
- So both the OT saints and Tribulation saints that died must be given new physical bodies during the 45 days so they can enter the kingdom
  - The Old Testament saints have been with Christ in spirit form since He removed them from Sheol at His resurrection
  - And the Tribulation saints have been in soul form since they died (we saw them under the altar in Chapter 6)
- So let's see where each group is resurrected beginning with the Old Testament saints as Daniel gives us a description of them in chapter 12:

**Dan. 12:1** “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.

**Dan. 12:2** “Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.

- Daniel 12:1 sets the context of this passage coming out of Chapter 11
  - At the end of Chapter 11 Daniel tells how the Antichrist would come to his end at the conclusion of Tribulation
  - And then in Chapter 12, the text says “at that time” meaning at the last moment of Tribulation
  - “At that time” Daniel’s people, the Jewish nation, will be saved and rescued by Jesus’ return
- Then the angel says at that same time many of those who “sleep” in the ground will awake to everlasting life
  - The terms sleep and wake in this context are euphemisms for death and resurrection
  - So the resurrection of Daniel’s people (i.e., the OT saints) will happen at the moment of Israel’s saving
  - This will take place in the 45-day period of the 75-day interval
- Also notice that the unbelieving Jews are promised disgrace, though their resurrection doesn’t take place here
  - The resurrection moment for all unbelievers doesn’t take place until after the Kingdom
  - Isaiah confirms this:



**Is. 26:13 O LORD our God, other masters besides You have ruled us;  
But through You alone we confess Your name.**

**Is. 26:14 The dead will not live, the departed spirits will not rise;  
Therefore You have punished and destroyed them,  
And You have wiped out all remembrance of them.**

**Is. 26:15 You have increased the nation, O LORD,  
You have increased the nation, You are glorified;  
You have extended all the borders of the land.**

**Is. 26:16 O LORD, they sought You in distress;  
They could only whisper a prayer,  
Your chastening was upon them.**

**Is. 26:17 As the pregnant woman approaches the time to give birth,  
She writhes and cries out in her labor pains,  
Thus were we before You, O LORD.**

**Is. 26:18 We were pregnant, we writhed in labor,  
We gave birth, as it seems, only to wind.  
We could not accomplish deliverance for the earth,  
Nor were inhabitants of the world born.**

**Is. 26:19 Your dead will live;  
Their corpses will rise.  
You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy,  
For your dew is as the dew of the dawn,  
And the earth will give birth to the departed spirits.**

- The first part of this passage describes the end of Tribulation and then it goes forward from that point
  - In v.13, Isaiah says that Israel will confess the Lord's name by God's power, which is a reference to Israel's saving at the end of Tribulation
    - Then in v.14 Isaiah says the unbelievers of Israel will not live
    - Nor will they even rise at this point he says, confirming that they are not resurrected yet
  - Then in v.19 Isaiah says that the dead of Israel will live and corpses will rise and shout for joy as the earth gives birth to departed spirits
    - This is a description of the resurrection of all the OT saints
    - That's the moment Daniel is describing in Chapter 12
  - So the Old Testament saints are given new bodies during the 75-day interval, probably in the 45-day period
    - And now for the first time we will see Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and even John the Baptist in the flesh
    - It will be an amazing time for us, to walk with and interact with men and women who lived the stories we've studied in the Bible
  - And though we will all know God fully at that time, I'm sure we will still be able to learn more things

- I can't wait to learn about what life was like for people in those early days
  - And I have a few questions I want to ask Adam in particular
- The other group that must be resurrected in preparation for their lives in the Kingdom are the Tribulation saints
  - And that takes us back to Revelation 20

**Rev. 20:4** Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

- After Satan's binding, John next sees thrones set up for ruling
  - This tells us that these events are part of the 45-day period of judging and blessing
  - Then John mentions seeing the souls that he saw earlier under the altar in Revelation 6
  - These are the Tribulation saints martyred for their faith, and until now they have lived in Heaven in soul form only
- Now John says these souls "came to life", and obviously these saints were never "dead" since souls don't cease to exist
  - But they were dead in the sense that they lacked physical bodies
  - So the phrase "came to life" is a description of resurrection
  - This is their "rapture" in the sense that this is when they enter into the new body
- Next, we consider the Jews who were alive on earth at the point of Jesus' return
  - They haven't died so they are still in their natural bodies
    - Natural bodies are just like the body we have now: sinful, incomplete in their knowledge of God
    - Moreover, they could marry and reproduce just like we do now, and those offspring would be sinful like our children are
  - So what form will they take as they join Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the rest of the OT saints in the land of Israel?
    - Will they remain in their natural state and bring their sin nature into the Kingdom?
    - Or will they be resurrected as we will be and occupy a new eternal sinless body?
    - Let's consult a few passages of the Old Testament to get our answer

**Jer. 31:31** "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,  
**Jer. 31:32** not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took

them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD.

**Jer. 31:33** “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

**Jer. 31:34** “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

- This passage is well known to most Christians because it provides the name of the covenant created in Christ’s blood, the New Covenant
  - But notice this covenant was made with Israel, not with Gentiles
    - We are grafted into this covenant, Paul says but it was intended for Israel
    - And the covenant promise is that all Israel will be perfect in their obedience and knowledge of the Lord
  - Notice in v.34 that when this covenant is in effect for Israel, no one in Israel will need to teach another to know the Lord
    - Evangelism in Israel will be unknown because all Israel will already know and follow the Lord with perfectly obedient hearts
    - In an earlier chapter Jeremiah says concerning the Israel of the Kingdom

**Jer. 24:7** ‘I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.

- Again, all Israel will have a heart to know the Lord, but now we hear that they will return to the Lord with their whole heart
  - Israel won’t be partially obedient as they had been in the past
  - Instead, 100% of the nation will be 100% obedient and that suggests something about the nature of Israel in the Kingdom
- Next, Jeremiah describes Israel in the Kingdom again in Chapter 50

**Jer. 50:19** ‘And I will bring Israel back to his pasture and he will graze on Carmel and Bashan, and his desire will be satisfied in the hill country of Ephraim and Gilead.

**Jer. 50:20** ‘In those days and at that time,’ declares the LORD, ‘search will be made for the iniquity of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will pardon those whom I leave as a remnant.’

- Jeremiah says that even if one searches for sin in Israel, none will be found

- And Ezekiel says something similar

**Ezek. 11:19** “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

**Ezek. 11:20** that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

- Ezekiel says that in the Kingdom God gives Israel a heart capable of keeping all His statutes and ordinances perfectly
- As one final reference, let’s go to Zephaniah:

**Zeph. 3:9** “For then I will give to the peoples purified lips,  
That all of them may call on the name of the LORD,  
To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

**Zeph. 3:10** “From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia  
My worshipers, My dispersed ones,  
Will bring My offerings.

**Zeph. 3:11** “In that day you will feel no shame  
Because of all your deeds  
By which you have rebelled against Me;  
For then I will remove from your midst  
Your proud, exulting ones,  
And you will never again be haughty  
On My holy mountain.

**Zeph. 3:12** “But I will leave among you  
A humble and lowly people,  
And they will take refuge in the name of the LORD.

**Zeph. 3:13** “The remnant of Israel will do no wrong  
And tell no lies,  
Nor will a deceitful tongue  
Be found in their mouths;  
For they will feed and lie down  
With no one to make them tremble.”

- This prophet also describes all Israel in the Kingdom with no sin, telling no lies, etc.
  - The only way these statements concerning Israel can be true would be if the nation is sinless, glorified
  - So all these passages and others like them indicate that all Israel must be 100% resurrected as they enter the Kingdom
- But there is a problem with this view, because after a person is resurrected, then they will not marry or produce children, Jesus says

**Mark 12:24** Jesus said to them, “Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that

**you do not understand the Scriptures or the power of God?**

**Mark 12:25** “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.

- Those who are resurrected become like angels in the sense that we exist in a form that has no need nor possibility of reproducing
  - Therefore, we are not married and have no need for marriage
  - And certainly, once we are resurrected we are like Jesus in that we never die again, the Bible says
- So what’s the problem? Well, there are passages in the Bible that seem to describe the Israel of the Kingdom sinning, marrying and even dying
  - For example, those Jews who will serve as priests in the new Kingdom Temple must follow certain rules
    - We find these rules described in Ezekiel, and among the rules for the priests of Israel, we find these instructions

**Ezek. 44:21** “Nor shall any of the priests drink wine when they enter the inner court.

**Ezek. 44:22** “And they shall not marry a widow or a divorced woman but shall take virgins from the offspring of the house of Israel, or a widow who is the widow of a priest.

**Ezek. 44:23** “Moreover, they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

**Ezek. 44:24** “In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge; they shall judge it according to My ordinances. They shall also keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed feasts and sanctify My sabbaths.

- Notice these priests are told who they can and cannot marry, which means marriage is possible
  - And they are also teaching fellow Jews the difference between right and wrong, clean and unclean
  - And they are judging in disputes between the Jewish people
  - These observations are inconsistent the earlier statements that Israel is sinless and without the need to be taught
- But it gets even more confusing, because Ezekiel also tells us there is death in Israel

**Ezek. 44:25** “They shall not go to a dead person to defile themselves; however, for father, for mother, for son, for daughter, for brother, or for a sister who has not had a husband, they may defile themselves.

**Ezek. 44:26** “After he is cleansed, seven days shall elapse for him.

- First, notice the priest of Israel will be the offspring of a father and mother and have

siblings

- Moreover, these priests are also told they can't visit a dead body unless it's a member of their own family
- The fact that someone in their family is dead means that death happens in Israel, so these Jews can't be glorified
- So which is it? Is Israel resurrected, sinless and glorified or natural, sinful and more? I think the best answer is yes to both
  - Some Jews will be glorified in the Kingdom; those Old Testament saints that are resurrected at the end of the Tribulation
  - But other Jews will enter the Kingdom in natural form and these will marry, have offspring and possess sin
  - That doesn't fully reconcile the passages though, but that's the best answer I have at this time
- Now our attention shifts to the Gentiles, but first let's return to Revelation 20 to conclude our discussion of the resurrection of the saints

**Rev. 20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.**

- In v.4 John described the resurrection of the Tribulation saints, and now in v.5 John says the rest of the dead don't come to life until after the thousand years
  - By process of elimination, the "rest of the dead" can only refer to unbelievers
    - So the resurrection of all believers is called the first resurrection to distinguish it from a second resurrection of unbelievers
    - The terms first and second do not reference the moment of resurrection but the moment of judgment
  - There is a judgment for believers and a judgment for unbelievers
    - These two judgments happen at different times, hence first and second
    - There is a resurrection that leads to the first judgment and a resurrection that leads to the second judgment
  - So the first resurrection is the resurrection leading to the first judgment which is the judgment for believers
    - The judgment for believers comes first, the Bible says

**1Pet. 4:17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?**

**1Pet. 4:18 AND IF IT IS WITH DIFFICULTY THAT THE RIGHTEOUS IS SAVED, WHAT WILL BECOME OF THE GODLESS MAN AND THE SINNER?**

- So the first resurrection is the Bible's term for the resurrection of all believers who are then judged

- The judgment for believers is a judgment of our work for the purpose of assigning eternal reward

**2Cor. 5:9 Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.**

**2Cor. 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

- This judgment moment is the first judgment for reward and it's only for believers
  - But for a believer to receive their reward in the Kingdom, they must get their heavenly report card before the Kingdom starts
  - So the first judgment must be preceded by the resurrection of all saints
- And John says we are blessed if we have a part in this first resurrection, because it means we are blessed to be included in God's family
  - To have a part reflects the fact that the first resurrection takes place in parts over time
  - The first part of the first resurrection was Christ's own resurrection
- Paul told us that Christ was the first fruits of the resurrection, the first to receive a new body

**1Cor. 15:20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.**

- Following Christ, the Church saints are the next to receive new bodies at the Rapture
  - After us, the Two Witnesses are resurrected at the middle of Tribulation
  - Finally, the Tribulation saints are resurrected after the Tribulation
  - Collectively, these resurrections are all part of the first resurrection
- Which leads to the implication that the second resurrection is not a blessed event, which is what John describes in v.5
  - All unbelievers will be resurrected in a second event at the end of the 1,000 years
    - And that resurrection precedes their judgment moment
    - We'll study this event more later at the end of Chapter 20
  - That leaves us with one group unaccounted for in the 75-day interval: the living Gentiles
    - At the end of the Tribulation, there were Gentiles living on the earth like the Jews
    - We know that all living Jews were saved and enter into the Kingdom
    - The Lord promised that if a Jew lived to the end of the Tribulation, they all would be saved
    - But there was no such promise for the Gentiles

- When Jesus returns, the Bible says that some Gentiles on earth will be believers while most will be unbelievers
  - The Gentiles who were participating in the armies fighting Christ and were killed upon Christ's return will be unbelieving of course
  - But there will also be unbelieving Gentiles on earth who were not in the army fighting
- And there will also be believing Gentiles hiding from the Antichrist and waiting eagerly for the Lord's return
  - We don't know where they are hiding, but it doesn't matter, because in the end the Lord will gather them all together

**Matt. 25:31** “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

**Matt. 25:32** “All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats;

**Matt. 25:33** and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

- After Jesus' return, Jesus uses His angels to gather all nations before Him
  - The word in Greek is *ethnos* which is the word commonly used for Gentiles, so the Lord is gathering Gentiles
  - And that makes sense because we know where the Jews are...with Jesus
- And then the judgment will happen for these living Gentiles, and Jesus will sit on His throne
  - We don't know if the throne will be visible or if it's on the earth or perhaps it's entirely metaphoric
  - Perhaps the throne will be in the new temple built during the first 30 days
- And if so that explains why judgment waits until Day 45
  - Jesus waits 30 days for the Temple to be cleansed and rebuilt before He enters and conducts the judgment
  - If so, that's why Daniel says that those who wait and attain to the 75th day are blessed
  - So if you reach the end of that time, it will be because you have been found worthy to enter the kingdom
- Obviously, the judgment for whether you are worthy to enter the Kingdom will be on the basis of faith, not on the basis of works
  - As Habakkuk 4 says, the righteous will live by faith
    - So as Jesus begins to judge, He separates the sheep from the goats He says
    - The sheep are placed on His righthand side while the goats are on the left
  - In the eastern culture, the right was the place of honor while left was dishonor or lesser honor
    - So the sheep are believers while the goats are the unbelievers



- To the sheep, the believers, Jesus says enter my Kingdom

**Matt. 25:34** “Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

- Like all believers, these believers will be known by their fruit, but what kind of fruit can a believer exhibit during a difficult time like Tribulation?
  - You can’t hold church services or else the Antichrist would come and behead you
  - You can’t send out missionaries or stream worship albums on the internet
  - So much of what counts as normal spiritual fruit will be impossible in that difficult time
- But fruit will still be visible, and Jesus explains what that fruit will look like:

**Matt. 25:35** ‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; **Matt. 25:36** naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’

**Matt. 25:37** “Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink?

**Matt. 25:38** ‘And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?

**Matt. 25:39** ‘When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’

**Matt. 25:40** “The King will answer and say to them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’

- People have taken Jesus’ statement in this passage and gone in many different directions, but unfortunately the main point is often missed altogether
  - Jesus seems to be suggesting that good works were responsible for the sheep entering into the Kingdom, but he’s speaking about the fruit
    - First, Jesus describes a series of works of mercy done during the Tribulation
    - Remember, we’re talking about believers that came to faith during the Tribulation
    - If they had come to faith before the Tribulation, they would have been raptured and already glorified
  - So these statements are only relevant to Tribulation saints, because they describe the unique spiritual fruit of believers during that time
    - And who were these works of mercy done for? Jesus says for “these brothers of Mine” in v.40
    - Who are Jesus’ brothers in Tribulation that Gentile believers supported with acts of mercy?

- By process of elimination, the only other group possible are the unbelieving Jews of Tribulation
  - Jesus can't be describing the Gentiles since they are the ones doing the works for others
  - And it can't be the believing Jews, because they are in protection and under the Lord's care
  - The only group remaining are the unbelieving Jews being persecuted in Tribulation, and they certainly needed mercy
- Therefore, the sheep were Gentiles who cared for the needs of unbelieving Jews during the time of Tribulation
  - They cared for the sick, gave up valuable water when supply was short, clothing when none existed and visited the persecuted Jews in prison
    - Such acts of mercy would have been incredibly dangerous and potentially suicidal during the Antichrist's reign of terror
    - Yet these Gentiles took it upon themselves to support the Jews when no one else would
    - And as such they became the instrument of God to support His people from a distance to preserve them until the end
  - Why would a Gentile take such risks to protect Jews during a time when Satan is actively trying to destroy this people group?
    - Because their faith in Jesus led them to support God's people in that desperate time
    - A Gentile with faith in Christ would be motivated to help the Jews under these circumstances, based on the word of God
- But interestingly, these sheep will be so absent discipleship during the Tribulation that they are actually surprised to learn they are to be rewarded
  - Is it possible for a believer to come to faith and yet not understand what they believe?
    - Yes, and the book of Acts is full of stories of such people
    - The Spirit brings life, and faith doesn't depend on spiritual maturity thankfully
    - When mature believers are rare and persecution is common, it's typical for new believers to fail to get proper instruction
    - And even in normal circumstances it takes time to mature in understanding how to follow and please Christ
  - But these believers have neither instruction nor time, so they simply live in the Spirit and do what they feel led to do and it bears fruit
    - But they don't realize they are serving Jesus in these things until this moment when Jesus tells them they were serving Him
    - Every act of mercy was an act of service to Jesus
- So these sheep came to faith by the Spirit but lacked someone to explain their faith clearly

- Nevertheless, they were motivated to protect Israel and help God's people, which is the fruit of the Spirit
  - Lastly, Jesus attends to the unbelieving Gentiles

**Matt. 25:41** “Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

**Matt. 25:42** for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink;

**Matt. 25:43** I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’

**Matt. 25:44** “Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’

**Matt. 25:45** “Then He will answer them, ‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’

**Matt. 25:46** “These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

- In contrast to the first group, these Gentiles lack the fruit of the Spirit, since they didn't have faith
  - They are called goats, the non-sheep, and they go away into eternal punishment
  - These Gentiles are instantly killed and enter the first eternal destination, Hell
  - Later they will enter the Lake of Fire
- So the believing Gentiles are going to live and be welcomed into the Kingdom
  - While the unbelieving Gentiles are to die immediately and enter Hell to await the Second Resurrection
  - This gives rise to an interesting fact concerning the Kingdom
- In the Kingdom there will be natural born men and women entering the Kingdom
  - We said earlier that there may be natural bodied Jews, and now we see for certain that there will be natural bodied Gentiles
  - As natural human beings, they still carry sin in their bodies, and they will be capable of marriage and producing children
  - And when they reproduce, they will produce children like those we produce: sinful unbelievers
- On the other hand, all resurrected saints occupy eternal bodies and cannot sin nor marry nor have children
  - And we are called to rule over the natural world of sinners and the sin offering they produce
  - That dichotomy leads to some fascinating consequences for the nature of life in the Kingdom
  - Next week, we move into the Kingdom period proper, beginning with a discussion

of the Kingdom's purposes



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 20B

## Chapter 20:6-8

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- It's time to begin our study of Christ's Kingdom on earth, which follows 75 days after His return to the Earth
  - All preparations have been made for the Kingdom to start
    - The earth has been restored to beauty
    - The temple has been cleansed and rebuilt in a new and better way
    - The evil of the world has been set aside at least for a time
  - And the citizens of the kingdom are present and ready to receive their inheritance in that time
    - All resurrected saints from the Old Testament, Church and Tribulation are entering the Kingdom
    - As well as those believers who didn't die in Tribulation
    - And all living unbelievers, which are only Gentiles at this point, are sent to Hades
    - So now we get to learn about the Kingdom
  - And if we turn to the book of Revelation to study that time, we will be greatly disappointed by what we find
    - Returning to the place we left off, here's all we find

**Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.**

**Rev. 20:7 When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,**

- In v.6 we learn what happens before the kingdom begins, and in v.7 we learn what happens after the kingdom ends
  - So the book of Revelation tells us nothing about what happens during the 1,000 years of the kingdom
  - The entire kingdom period takes place between vs.6-7 in the book of Revelation
  - The only thing the book of Revelation tells us about the Kingdom is the length of that time: 1,000 years
- The reason Revelation virtually ignores the details of the Kingdom is because the rest of the Bible is literally filled with those details
  - The kingdom is described in the Torah and it's a major theme of the OT prophets and psalms
  - Jesus offers tantalizing details in many of His parables and other teaching
  - And even the Epistle writers gives us a few details
  - So, we must venture outside the book of Revelation for the next two weeks to examine the life and times of the Kingdom
- Let's begin by remembering what the term "kingdom" means in the Bible
  - Many Christians operate with a very limited and superficial understanding of their

own eternal future

- The concept of the Kingdom (or Heaven) is largely limited to Hallmark theology
- As a result, our understanding is largely void of substance or meaning
- Ironically, the Bible speaks extensively about the coming kingdom using a variety of terms, and descriptions and pictures or shadows
  - In fact, the coming Kingdom is one of the most important themes of the Old Testament, second only to the Messiah
  - We can find these references literally from Genesis to Malachi
- And in the New Testament, discussions of the kingdom were tremendously important to Jesus' ministry
  - There are 160 mentions of the kingdom in the NT and 125 are found in the Gospels
  - Jesus talked of entering the kingdom, living in the kingdom, ruling in the kingdom, and having an inheritance in the kingdom
  - Paul also taught that we would receive our inheritance in the kingdom when Christ returns
  - And now Revelation has told us that the Kingdom is 1,000 years long
- If we look at the Bible's teaching about the Kingdom across all these references, we find the concept of the Kingdom progressing
  - The Kingdom concept transitions through four stages of meaning from the Old Testament to the New Testament
  - And it's important to recognize these transition points to arrive at a proper interpretation
- The Kingdom theme begins in Genesis as a promise, something God would do to correct for the sin of Adam
  - That promise is clearly articulated in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants
  - The nation of Israel would enjoy an inheritance of land, a posterity of descendants, a perfect king and unending peace
  - And many generations of believers in Israel looked forward to the future fulfillment of that promise

**Heb. 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.**

- Then the time came to fulfill that promise, and the Lord came to Israel offering the Kingdom in that day
  - Jesus made Israel a proposal: accept me as your King and I will give you the promised Kingdom
    - But Israel rejected their king, as we're studying in Matthew
    - And as a result, Jesus withdrew His proposal and the Kingdom was taken from

- that generation of Israel
      - In their place, the Kingdom proposal was given to Gentiles, who became the Bride of Christ instead of Israel
    - So the proposal of the Kingdom was temporarily withdrawn, and in its place emerged a program of recruiting Gentiles to join the Kingdom
      - This program advances the call to believe in Jesus, and as a person obeys the call, they become part of a spiritual Kingdom
      - They become citizens of a heavenly Kingdom that is not of this world
      - And this program will continue until the Lord puts an end to it by calling His Bride to Heaven at the resurrection
    - Then as we have studied, the Lord will return to the earth a second time, and at that point the Kingdom will appear as promised
      - At that point the Kingdom will become a literal place just as God promised to Abraham and His descendants
      - It will exist on earth in the future, and it will also include men and women from all the nations
      - This is also a fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, when God said all nations would be blessed through him
    - So the concept of a Kingdom progresses from a promise, to a proposal, to a program and finally to a place
      - At the point we have reached in Revelation, we have seen the program come to an end at the Rapture
      - And we now see the Kingdom begin at Christ's second coming
      - And in this time to come, all the good things the Lord has promised to His people will finally be fulfilled
      - We wait for the Kingdom to see His promises fulfilled because those promises were always set in that time, not in this one
  - So it's time to learn about that place, a very real world that we will inhabit for 1,000 years
    - We will enjoy that time in a home we call ours, with land and possessions that can never be taken away
      - We will be absent disease and sorrow, for there will be nothing about us or the world to disturb our peace or joy
      - We will have meaningful work that is not hard and we will have relationships and natural beauty to enjoy
      - And we will know, worship and serve the Lord in ways we can't even imagine today
    - We can't say exactly what the earth and seas look like after the restoration, but one thing is sure
      - The world of the Kingdom won't be less of a place to enjoy than the world we know now
      - The beauty and suitability of the Kingdom earth won't be less than the beauty



- and enjoyment in the world today
  - On the contrary, it will be far greater
- And while there is much we can't know about that place, there is still much we can know
  - And our goal in this study is to learn what we can in a short time so that our understanding of that time would grow
  - And as we come to understand more about what life in that place will be like, we can look forward to it even more
  - And as you think more about the Kingdom life, you will begin to live more for that life rather than for this life
- And because there is a lot we could say about the Kingdom, we need to approach this section of our study in sections
  - First, we study changes in the order of Creation and in nature, including the geography, borders and government of the land
  - Secondly, we will study the people in the Kingdom and the quality of daily life in that time
  - Thirdly, we study Jesus' place in the Kingdom including the nature of worship at the new Kingdom temple
  - Finally, we study the culminating event of the Kingdom: the war of Gog of Magog
- Let's start with the way Creation changes during the Kingdom period, and that study begins with a look at the past
  - When Adam and Woman sinned, the Lord responded to their sin with a series of pronouncements

**Gen. 3:17** Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life.

**Gen. 3:18** “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field;

**Gen. 3:19** By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

- The Lord responded to Adam's willful sin by cursing the ground, or the earth itself
  - God placed the earth under a curse, and a curse from God is a pronouncement of judgment resulting in destruction

- So the earth will one day be destroyed and replaced, as we will soon see
- In the meantime the nature of Creation also changed, starting with the need for mankind to toil to produce food from the ground
  - The Lord declares that the earth would produce thorns and thistles naturally
  - So apart from the toil of man, the earth would produce weeds and unhelpful plants
  - Only by the sweat of his brow would man be able to produce the food he required
- Before the curse, man enjoyed life in a garden that produced all the food he required without any work at all
  - No weed came up, no unhelpful plants crowd out the good ones
  - Adam needed only to walk outside his door and he found all the food he wanted
- Furthermore, the days of man will be numbered, meaning life would have an end called death
  - The spirit of Adam died in the moment he ate of the fruit, and now his physical body would also die
    - Everything that came from the ground was cursed like the ground itself, which meant the physical body of man was to die
    - Likewise, the animal kingdom, which also was made from the earth, would also die
    - The Lord instituted a process of decay that results in physical bodies succumbing to disease and frailty over time
    - Death may also come from instantaneous acts of violence, which are themselves the result of sin
  - All this was a change from the beginning, because the physical body was created to live forever
    - Without sin, Paul explains in Romans, there would be no death, either for us or for any other creature
    - So after the fall, the order of Creation changed in fundamental ways to include difficulty working the land and the death of the body
- Then later following the flood, the Lord made more changes to Creation, specifically to the animal Kingdom

**Gen. 9:1 And God blessed Noah and his sons and said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.**

**Gen. 9:2 “The fear of you and the terror of you will be on every beast of the earth and on every bird of the sky; with everything that creeps on the ground, and all the fish of the sea, into your hand they are given.**

**Gen. 9:3 “Every moving thing that is alive shall be food for you; I give all to you, as I gave the green plant.**

- The Lord gave mankind permission to eat animal flesh after the flood
  - Prior to that moment, human beings ate only plants as God directed in the Garden

- Though the text doesn't mention the animals' diet changing, we assume that animals began to eat each other too after this time
- This change would have been necessary at that time since in the days and weeks after the flood vegetation would have been sparse
  - So without meat to eat, animals would have starved
  - Likewise, a change in the earth's climate following the flood made it more difficult to grow crops
- Then to protect the animals from a quick extinction, the Lord leveled the playing field by placing the fear of man into animals
  - The animals were previously unafraid of men and of each other, but now a predator-prey relationship was established
  - Animals were adversaries with each other and man with animals
  - Animals might attack men and men might eat animals
- So the world we know where people and animals eat one another, attack one another, and ultimately die represents a change to Creation's original intent
  - Likewise, the difficulty with which we work with nature is also a change to the original plan of God
    - These things were brought about as a result of man's sin
    - And in the future the Lord has a plan to correct for all these consequences of Adam's sin and He does it in stages
  - During the Kingdom He begins the correction process and He completes it in the New Heavens and Earth that follow the Kingdom

**Is. 11:6 And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,  
And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,  
And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together;  
And a little boy will lead them.**

**Is. 11:7 Also the cow and the bear will graze,  
Their young will lie down together,  
And the lion will eat straw like the ox.**

**Is. 11:8 The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,  
And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den.**

**Is. 11:9 They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain,  
For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
As the waters cover the sea.**

- One of the first comforting things we learn about the created order of the Kingdom is that animals exist in this time as well
  - We often get the question will my pet be in Heaven with me?
  - Well, your pet might be there, but my poodle won't...poodles go to another place
- Whenever we answer a question about Heaven, we always need to be specific about the place and time we mean

- Heaven isn't a single place or time...Heaven is where Jesus is
  - And Jesus moves around, and therefore so do we
  - Heaven for us begins in the throne room of God after death or rapture
- That will be our home for a short time, but it's not our permanent home, because it is not a physical place to dwell
  - We are made to live on a physical earth, and so are animals
  - But since animals don't have a soul, they won't be found in the temporary home we have in the Heavenly throne room
  - But when Jesus brings us back to earth for the Kingdom, Isaiah says we will find animals on the earth during the Kingdom
- But according to Isaiah 11, the nature of the animal kingdom is changed
  - Predators like wolves, leopards and lions will live peacefully next to prey like lambs, goats and calves
  - Even more interesting, large dangerous animals will pose no threat to people and animals will show no fear of men
  - Even a cobra poses no risk to a small child, and a young boy can command the obedience of any animal
  - And being without reason to fear men, these animals will cease attacking men with lethal defense mechanisms
- In short, all animals can be domesticated now, and will obey the will of man, and we will once again have dominion over the animal kingdom
  - Today, many wild animals simply can't be domesticated because they are unpredictable and may revert to their wild instincts
  - But in this day, the Lord removes the predator-prey relationship so there will no longer be the hunted and the hunters
  - This is a direct reversal of the pronouncement God gave Noah, and it's a step back to the nature of the world at the start
- Next, the Lord reverses the curse of toiling to produce food in the Kingdom life
  - In speaking about what Israel will experience in the Kingdom, the Lord says life gets easy

**Ezek. 34:25** “I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods.

**Ezek. 34:26** “I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing.

**Ezek. 34:27** “Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the LORD, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them.

- The Lord establishes a covenant of peace with Israel, and that covenant establishes the nation in their land once more
  - And in that place the Lord makes the hills of Israel a blessing again
  - He says they can sleep in the woods securely without fear, which is a way of indicating they have no enemies, neither man or beast
- But then notice that the tree of the field will yield fruit and the earth will yield increase
  - These are terms referring to the natural production of the earth without the need to farm or cultivate the land
  - This is a direct reversal of the curse on the earth that made life hard and difficult
  - Now that curse has been lifted, so that working in the field isn't work anymore
  - This is true for both Israel and all nations on the earth
- So when you hear that we are given an inheritance in the land and our life will be one of farming, you need to understand what that means
  - It's not a hard life...it's the opposite
    - Farming is a joy when the land is giving you its produce without the need to prepare the land or even sow the seed

**Ezek. 36:27** “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.

**Ezek. 36:28** “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

**Ezek. 36:29** “Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you.

**Ezek. 36:30** “I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

**Ezek. 36:34** “The desolate land will be cultivated instead of being a desolation in the sight of everyone who passes by.

**Ezek. 36:35** “They will say, ‘This desolate land has become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, desolate and ruined cities are fortified and inhabited.’

**Ezek. 36:36** “Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it.”

- The Lord says the land will be like Eden again and there will never again be a famine in the land
  - The Lord will call for fruit and grain to come forth for the people
  - How hard will it be to farm a land producing food at the call of God's voice?
  - It's also a great picture of grace...the Lord does the work and we receive the blessing
- How does God ensure so much success farming in a desert?

**Is. 30:23** Then He will give you rain for the seed which you will sow in the ground, and bread from the yield of the ground, and it will be rich and plenteous; on that day your livestock will graze in a roomy pasture.

**Is. 30:24** Also the oxen and the donkeys which work the ground will eat salted fodder, which has been winnowed with shovel and fork.

**Is. 30:25** On every lofty mountain and on every high hill there will be streams running with water on the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.

**Is. 30:26** The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days, on the day the LORD binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted.

- After the Lord rescues Israel, He gives it the good things He promised in the Kingdom
  - Where before they suffered deprivation during the time of Tribulation, now they have all they need
  - They get rain and rich, roomy pastures for cattle with plenty of feed
- And then we hear that the geography of Israel is very different than today
  - Streams running everywhere on tops of mountains, rain falling wherever they plant
  - Even more curious, the moon and sun see their brightness increased dramatically
- It's not clear whether Isaiah means this literally or whether it is simply a literary device indicating the optimistic joyful perspective of Israel
  - That is, in this day, the sun will seem brighter, but if it is literal, it brings more questions than answers
  - How can we survive on a planet with so much light?
  - We can trust that God has a way to accommodate these changes and still produce a wonderful world
  - And I'm sure everyone has a fabulous tan
- So the Creation in the Kingdom will be closer to the time of Eden, with animals obeying man, no predators killing one another, and the land producing easily
  - But one thing will not change though: the curse on Satan and the serpent will continue throughout the Kingdom period
    - Back in Genesis 3, the Lord also placed a curse on Satan for his part in the Fall

**Gen. 3:14** The LORD God said to the serpent,  
 “Because you have done this,  
 Cursed are you more than all cattle,  
 And more than every beast of the field;  
 On your belly you will go,  
 And dust you will eat  
 All the days of your life;

- The serpent was a literal snake indwelt by Satan, who took the snake as a disguise to deceive the woman
- As a result of that moment, the Lord cursed the snake in v.14
  - The snake was made to give up its legs and crawl on the ground
  - That tells us that prior to the fall the snake stood upright or at least its belly didn't touch the ground
  - But from this point forward, the snake would be against the ground to remind men of their eventual destination: the earth
- Obviously, the snake was an unwitting participant in that moment and not to be blamed for the outcome
  - So the Lord's curse against the snake wasn't intended as a punishment against the animal
  - Instead, it was a memorial to remind mankind of that moment and of their true adversary
- So for as long as Satan remains and for as long as sin is still a part of life on earth, the snake would assume this form
  - So does this curse get reversed for the Kingdom period? No

**Is. 65:25** **“The wolf and the lamb will graze together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox; and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will do no evil or harm in all My holy mountain,” says the LORD.**

- In the Kingdom, Isaiah says the snake continues to eat dust, which is a direct reference back to Genesis 3
  - In other words, the snake's cursed form continues unchanged during the Kingdom
  - His form isn't changing because the conditions that led to his new form haven't been reversed either
  - Satan is still around, though he's bound until the end of the Kingdom
- Next, let's consider other changes to the borders and geography that take place during the renewing of the heavens and earth
  - First, Israel will exist in the Kingdom, but Israel's borders will be different than they are today or at any time in the past
    - God establishes new borders for Israel, while eliminating the historical enemies of Israel that surrounded her
    - Today, Israel occupies a relatively small slice of land against the Mediterranean Sea
    - Lebanon is on the north, Egypt on the south and Jordan and Syria on the East
  - And this territory is only a fraction of what the nation once possessed at the height of the kingdom under Solomon
    - At that time, Israel was the dominant kingdom on earth, the superpower of its day
    - At its zenith, Israel reached well north into Syria, including all of Lebanon and

the land east of the Jordan

- And it stretched southward into Egypt and southern Jordan
- Israel has never since controlled so much territory
  - We might expect that God would give Israel a grant of land similar to the land they held under David and Solomon
  - But that’s not the half of it, literally
- Let’s look back at the land God promised to Abraham and his descendants in His covenant

**Gen. 15:18** On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates:

- God gives Israel borders from the river of Egypt to the river Euphrates
  - The river of Egypt is at the historic border of Israel in Egypt on the Sinai peninsula
  - And the Euphrates river is in Iraq, which is far east of any historical borders of Israel
  - Later when Israel moved into the Promised Land under Joshua, the Lord reiterated the borders of the land He was giving to Israel

**Josh. 1:2** “Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel.

**Josh. 1:3** “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.

**Josh. 1:4** “From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory.

- The Lord elaborates on His grant of land saying He gave Israel the land from the wilderness to Lebanon
  - And from the great river Euphrates to the Great Sea
  - These descriptions extend far beyond the traditional borders of Israel
  - These are the borders God has promised will be Israel in the day He fulfills His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and to Israel
- Ezekiel gives us a few more markers in Ezekiel 47:15-20, and if we plot these geographical markers, we arrive at a much different Israel
  - Israel will occupy a far larger area of land than anything seen before
  - More importantly, God’s promises for Israel to rule over their captors is fulfilled by these borders
  - Israel will consume all the nations that historically persecuted her in this region:



- Moad, Ammon, Edom, Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and others as God promised

**Is. 14:1** When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

**Is. 14:2** The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors.

**Is. 54:3** “For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left.  
And your descendants will possess nations  
And will resettle the desolate cities.

- So Israel will be much larger than it ever has been and will consume its neighbors
  - We don’t have borders given for Gentile nations, except that the Bible does note that many familiar nations will be represented
    - Time doesn’t permit me to explore this area in detail, and if you want more background, please listen to the Ezekiel study
    - But in summary, many nations will be repopulated around the earth with Gentile believers though there are a few exceptions
  - Edom will exist in the Kingdom but will remain empty as a memorial to their sin against Israel
    - It will be the location of the entry to the pit where Satan is held
    - Smoke will pour out of the pit and no human being will set foot in this land
  - Secondly, Egypt will exist but the Egyptians of the Kingdom will not be allowed to enter their land for the first 40 years of the Kingdom
    - This will be a memorial to the way Egypt stumbled Israel with idols, leading to Israel’s time of wandering in the desert
    - But eventually, Egypt will be allowed to be inhabited after the 40 years are up
- Those are the major geographical and boundary changes of the Kingdom, but there are also natural changes to the land in the Kingdom
  - In addition to land being more fruitful and with more rivers, there will be other major geographical changes
    - Starting with the mountain on which Jerusalem sits

**Mic. 4:1** And it will come about in the last days  
That the mountain of the house of the LORD  
Will be established as the chief of the mountains.  
It will be raised above the hills,  
And the peoples will stream to it.

- This mountain will be raised up high and will draw people toward it from around the world
  - The mountain at the center of Israel will become the tallest mountain in the world
  - On top of this mountain will sit the temple, the house of the Lord where Christ dwells
  - We'll study more about the temple in a future lesson
- Next, Zechariah says there will be new rivers flowing from the top of this mountain

**Zech. 14:8** And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.

**Zech. 14:9** And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.

**Zech. 14:10** All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.

**Zech. 14:11** People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.

- The city of Jerusalem will become the source for two rivers, one that flows East and the other West
  - The river that flows west will end up in the Mediterranean Sea while the one that flows east will end up in the Dead Sea
- According to Ezekiel, this new river flowing east will have a dramatic impact on the Dead Sea

**Ezek. 47:8** Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh.

**Ezek. 47:9** "It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and the others become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes.

**Ezek. 47:10** "And it will come about that fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be a place for the spreading of nets. Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many.

**Ezek. 47:11** "But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.

- The river flowing from Mt. Zion will transform the Dead Sea into a fresh water body of water
  - Ezekiel doesn't say if this happens miraculously (instantaneously) or naturally over time as fresh water dilutes the sea

- With the sense of the text saying this is a miraculous change, especially considering that the lake becomes filled with every kind of fish
- So the Dead Sea comes to life as a beautiful Millennial picture of God’s grace bringing life to the dead
  - Ezekiel adds that fishermen will fish there, from Engedi which is in the south near Masada to Eneglaim, which is unknown but probably somewhere in the north
  - They will fish according to their kinds, meaning there will be so much variety of fish that fishermen will specialize in their catch
  - And the fish will be bountiful
  - But salt marshes remain, probably as a testimony of how the Lord changed the water from salt to fresh
- Zechariah 14 gives us a few additional interesting details about the land
  - Seasons will continue as they do today, so life will continue to have a rhythm like we know today
  - And Zechariah says the land around Jerusalem will be transformed into a large flat plain extending for miles
  - We learn more about how this plain is used in a later lesson
- Finally, on the the top of the mountain will sit the temple and seat of government for the entire Kingdom period

**Mic. 4:2 Many nations will come and say,  
 “Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD  
 And to the house of the God of Jacob,  
 That He may teach us about His ways  
 And that we may walk in His paths.”  
 For from Zion will go forth the law,  
 Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.**

- The nations of the world, wherever they are settled, will make their way to Jerusalem to learn from the God of Israel
  - And the laws of the world will come from Zion, from the word of the Lord
  - So the capital of the Earth will be Jerusalem, where the Lord dwells in ruling the nations
  - We will study more about the Lord’s dwelling place in a future lesson
- And in v.3 Micah says the Lord renders decisions between the nations including mighty distant nations
  - To rule over people implies that they need ruling in order to do the right things
  - That’s a sign that sin is present, and therefore the world needs Christ’s perfect judgment to ensure proper behavior
  - But Christ rules with such perfection that He can control sin even on the opposite side of the earth
- Christ exerts His perfect rule through a government that does His bidding perfectly

- Isaiah says that His government officials will know His will instantly to do it always

**Is. 65:24** “It will also come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.

- His government will ensure that no sin gets room to grow or take peace from the earth
- In fact, Michael says that implements of war will be done away with and the art of war will be forgotten altogether

**Mic. 4:3** And He will judge between many peoples  
And render decisions for mighty, distant nations.  
Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation will not lift up sword against nation,  
And never again will they train for war.

- So while sin will exist, it will have no material impact on life since it will be under perfect rule at all times
  - The psalmist describes the Lord’s rule this way

**Psa. 2:6** “But as for Me, I have installed My King  
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”

**Psa. 2:7** “I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:  
He said to Me, ‘You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.

**Psa. 2:8** ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,  
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

**Psa. 2:9** ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
You shall shatter them like earthenware.’”

**Psa. 2:10** Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;  
Take warning, O judges of the earth.

**Psa. 2:11** Worship the LORD with reverence  
And rejoice with trembling.

- The Lord will break (or rule) them with a rod of iron
  - He shatters the resistance of the sinful nations like pottery
- But also notice, there are kings and judges of the earth in that day, who Micah says should show discernment in ruling
  - So this means there is a government under Jesus, a government that rules with Jesus under His authority
  - The government carries out His orders perfectly to ensure sin is ruled perfectly

**Is. 9:6** For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us;

**And the government will rest on His shoulders;  
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.**

**Is. 9:7** There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,  
**On the throne of David and over his kingdom,  
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness  
From then on and forevermore.  
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.**

- The government sits on His shoulders, meaning Jesus presides over a bureaucracy
  - The world is a big place and there will be many to rule over, so Christ enlists others in His government including us
  - And the government is divided into a Jewish government and a Gentile government
- Israel, the nation that saw so many rule over it in the past, will now rule over the world
  - And their most famous king will return to rule over them as their prince serving under the authority of the King, Jesus

**Jer. 30:8** ‘It shall come about on that day,’ declares the LORD of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from off their neck and will tear off their bonds; and strangers will no longer make them their slaves.

**Jer. 30:9** ‘But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

**Ezek. 34:23** “Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd.

**Ezek. 34:24** “And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the LORD have spoken.

- David is resurrected and returns to rule over the land of Israel in Christ’s government
- He is called prince because Jesus is King
- Under David we find the twelve tribes of Israel ruled by the apostles as Jesus promised

**Matt. 19:28** And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

- The twelve apostles will rule over the tribes of Israel as Jesus promised
  - The tribes of Israel will exist in their land and have additional rulers over them
  - We can assume that these additional rulers will be other great OT saints rewarded with positions of honor for their service

- Moving to the Gentiles, we find a little less detail, though we can learn a few things
  - First, the Gentile nations are spread around the world and will have need of government representation too
    - And you and I will fill that need: the church saints will rule them
    - We saw this already in Revelation 20, when we heard that the church saints will rule with Christ

**Rev. 20:4** Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

- Also Jesus taught parables emphasizing He will reward those who are faithful here and now with the opportunity to be faithful with more
  - In the parable of the minas in Luke 19, Jesus rewarded spiritual maturity with opportunity to rule over cities
  - That parable pictures the way Christ will assign us roles in the Kingdom government
- You may say we don't care whether you have a high position in the Kingdom government, but Jesus holds it out as a desirable reward
  - So we should aspire to please Him now and in the Kingdom as well, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5
- Finally, we need to understand that all nations are not created equal in this age
  - Israel will be the highest nation on the earth and all other nations will serve Israel

**Deut. 28:1** “Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

**Is. 14:1** When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

**Is. 14:2** The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors.

- The Gentiles will serve Israel and the Lord will set Israel above all other nations in honor and position
  - This is a complete reversal of Israel's historical position ever since the Lord began to discipline the nation for their sin

- Now they receive their blessings under God's promises
- It's worth a moment to remember how Israel arrived at this point of glory
  - They were created as a nation by God through Abraham, received promises
  - They entered into a national covenant to obtain God's blessings
- They violated the Old Covenant and so they spent many long years as a people under God's judgment
  - They were dispersed and then suffered great losses
  - Ultimately they endured the Tribulation where God brought them to their end
- In the end, they came to faith and received their Messiah
  - He will save them and bring them the promised blessings of the covenant and make them to obey God's law perfectly
  - And He will make them the chief nation on the Earth
- Now all this need for government and ruling suggests that there will be disobedience in that time
  - And disobedience implies sin, and so the questions comes how and why will sin exist in the Kingdom?
    - And we answer that question next week



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# Revelation 2020 - Lesson 20C

## Various Isaiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah

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- Tonight is Part 2 of our study of the Kingdom
  - We're taking our study of this fascinating time in sections
    - Last week we looked at the changes to Creation, the land, the animals and the government
    - Let's summarize what we learned in those areas
  - First, the natural world will begin to return to the state that it knew before the fall of Adam
    - The animal kingdoms will no longer experience a predator-prey relationship
    - Likewise, human beings will no longer be threatened by animals
  - And these changes represent a partial reversal of the curses God pronounced on the earth after the fall
    - One change hasn't been reversed, however: the snake still crawls on the ground
    - This memorial to Satan's deception remains on the earth because the enemy himself remains for a time
  - Next we learned that Israel will be back in her land, and her borders will be greatly increased over the borders of today
    - They will be closer to the borders of Solomon's day
    - And Israel will be the chief nation on earth because Jesus Himself will live in Jerusalem
- Among other natural changes are new features on the land in Israel, beginning with a land that will produce an abundance of crops without effort
  - That too is a reversal of the curse on the land
    - And the mountains will have streams on top, so that water is everywhere and the land is easy to work
    - The mountain holding the temple will be the chief mountain in that day
  - And from the temple, a new river will flow that will split and go into the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea
    - And when it hits the Dead Sea, it will cause the waters to turn fresh and produce new fish
    - And that temple will be the home of Christ and the government of the earth
  - Jesus will rule the nations from this place and His government will eliminate all disobedience and sinful behavior even among those who have sin
    - The Jewish nation will be ruled by David and the twelve apostles, along with the glorified nation of Israel
    - While the Gentile nations will be ruled by the glorified church saints in an unknown structure
    - And Isaiah said last week that when we need Jesus' direction, we can call upon Him and He answers us instantly from anywhere
- Now as we move on to the next section, we need to consider daily life, starting with why a government exists in the Kingdom time at all

- Governing is fundamentally a process of dealing with lawbreakers
  - If there were no lawbreakers, there would be no need for government
  - As Paul explains in Romans 13

**Rom. 13:3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;**

**Rom. 13:4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.**

- The purpose of government is to be an instrument of God to ensure that lawbreakers are punished and good behavior is encouraged
  - So the need for government comes from the effect of sin
  - Take away sin and we remove the need for government of any kind, for everyone would be doing the right thing
- Therefore, the fact that government exists in the Kingdom is (another) proof that sin exists in that time
  - And we discussed earlier in this study how some will enter the Kingdom bringing sin with them
  - They are saved by their faith, yet they come with a sinful body since they had never died
- Let's take a moment to revisit the various groups of humanity who enter into the Kingdom
  - We learned earlier that there are five different groups of believers that enter the Kingdom on Day 1 while all unbelievers die beforehand
    - Three groups enter in new, glorified, sinless bodies, and these eternal, sinless people rule with Jesus in the government
    - They are sinless so they need no rule themselves, and because they do the will of Jesus perfectly, they can assist in ruling
    - Under Christ's direction, they ensure that the world is ruled with a rod of iron in perfect justice
  - But two other groups enter in natural, earthly bodies that still possess sin and they will not participate in the government
    - The condition for entry into the Kingdom was not sinlessness but rather righteousness by faith
    - So 100% of those who enter the Kingdom will be believers made righteous by faith, but not all 100% will be sinless
  - These sinful believers who come out of Tribulation, both Jew and Gentile, will continue to live in the same bodies they entered with
    - They have not died yet, so they have not been resurrected into new glorified bodies yet

- And these natural bodies may unite in marriage and reproduce to create a new generation of humanity in the Kingdom time
  - And the new generations they produce will also possess natural bodies, which means they too will have a sinful nature
- But unlike their parents, these new generations of Kingdom citizens (the *true* Millennials) will not all be believing like that first generation that entered
  - Remember, we aren't "born" believing...we all enter the world lost and in need of salvation
    - Which is why we must be born again by faith at some point in our earthly life
    - So the children of the Kingdom will enter into the world both sinful and without faith
  - All those who enter with sin will require ruling, and that will be especially true for the future generations of unbelievers
    - They will make mistakes, and the government will step in to stop that mistake from going anywhere
    - No sin will have a chance to grow or produce harm in the world because it will be contained quickly and perfectly
  - So for 1,000 years the world will be ruled by a class of humanity that does not die, cannot sin and will not marry or procreate
    - And those we rule will live in natural bodies that can die, possess sin and may reproduce more sinful natural people
    - And over time these natural people will repopulate the earth
- But that scenario opens some intriguing questions...questions that are hard to answer in some cases
  - First, what is life like for those believers who enter into the Kingdom?
    - How many people are born in this time? Do they die in this world?
    - And if they don't die, how can we have a government that never grows, rule a population that increases and never dies?
  - If we assume only 10,000 people, both Jew and Gentile, survive the Tribulation and enter the world in natural bodies
    - And then assume those 10,000 are roughly equal numbers of men and women and those 10,000 marry
    - Then assume that 2% have a child each year and no one is dying
    - Then after 1,000 years, the earth population would be 4 trillion!
    - That seems impossible to manage, so what does the Bible tells us about that time?
  - Isaiah gives us this description of the Kingdom

**Is. 65:20** “No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,  
 Or an old man who does not live out his days;  
 For the youth will die at the age of one hundred  
 And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred

## Will be thought accursed.

- Isaiah’s poetry employs couplets in this verse to describe the rules of death in the Kingdom
- The first and third lines go together while the first and fourth lines go together
- Let’s reorganize them to understand them more easily
  - (1) No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days,
  - (3) For the youth will die at the age of one hundred
  - (2) Or an old man who does not live out his days;
  - (4) And the one who does not reach the age of one hundred will be thought accursed.
- Isaiah reports that no longer will there be an infant who lives only a few days
  - Obviously, there will be children born in the Kingdom, but this isn’t a surprise since we know that natural people enter the Kingdom
    - But no longer will a child die in infancy, which forces us to acknowledge a fundamental truth: God controls life and death
    - God has declared that in the Kingdom children will not die young which can only be true if God controls the timing of death
  - Isaiah says the earliest a child will die is at the age of 100, and the person will be considered a youth because life can go much longer
    - The Lord has assured every person born in the Kingdom at least 100 years of life
    - Obviously, this is a dramatic departure from what we see today
    - But to die at that point will be considered an early death, Isaiah says, which means that normal lifespans return to that of Genesis
    - Even natural men and women can live much much longer than 100 years in that day
  - Next Isaiah also says that an old man will never fail to live out his days in the Kingdom, meaning he will not die of old age either
    - So people will live hundreds of years, just as was the case in the ancient world
    - We don’t know about the aging process in this day, but apparently God is capable of sustaining natural bodies as before
    - This too is a partial reversal of the curses of the Garden
    - Before Adam sinned, there was no death, but even after bodies still died very slowly, since Adam lived 969 years
  - The one who does not pass the 100th year will be understood to be accursed
    - To be accursed means to fall under divine judgment, which in this context indicates eternal judgment in Hell
    - We know that only unbelievers are under condemnation from God, so those accursed must refer to unbelievers in the Kingdom
    - These are the offspring of the Gentile believers born into the Kingdom in

- natural bodies
  - They will die at age 100 and enter Hell at that point
- So the 100th birthday seems to be the watershed moment for all those born in the Kingdom
  - Only those who believe in Jesus as Lord will be allowed to live longer than 100 years
    - Once a person believes, they become immune to death because Isaiah says they will live until the end of the Kingdom
    - So it's an all-or-nothing proposition: the unbeliever will only live 100 years while believers enjoy the duration of the Kingdom
  - Clearly, this is a very different economy of life and death than the one we know today
    - And in this way God sends a very clear message that the Kingdom is meant to be enjoyed by believers
    - And the precision and severity of this judgment is in keeping with Jesus' overall style of rule: He rules with an iron rod
  - If believers do not die in the Kingdom, then when do they receive a new, eternal body?
    - And this is one of the great silences of the Bible...because to my knowledge there is no Scripture that addresses this question
    - Clearly, they must be resurrected into a new, eternal sinless body at some point because we know all sin is gone after the Kingdom
    - But the Bible never tells us when this happens, so we're left to guess
    - It could happen when they turn 100, or it could happen any point after that or at the end of the Kingdom
- Meanwhile, let's move to the next question: how does anyone live 100 years on the earth with Jesus ruling in Jerusalem and not believe in Him?
  - Students of the Bible naturally wonder how it could be that a world ruled by Christ could include unbelievers
    - Most assume that Jesus will be visible in the world
    - And we assume that supernatural displays will be common
    - And even the fact that we live among the world in our glorified bodies should be proof enough to bring faith
  - But if you think a moment longer, you come to realize these things can't be true in the Kingdom
    - First, remember this has happened before, when Jesus walked the earth and showed His power and authority
    - People didn't believe in Him then, so clearly it's possible to see God in your midst and not be convinced to believe
  - Secondly, the unbelievers in the Kingdom were born during the time of the Kingdom, so they have no experience other than the Kingdom
    - They know nothing of the age that preceded theirs and there will be no

evidence of that prior age

- Just as this world refuses to believe in the stories of Adam and Noah, etc. because physical evidence is lacking
- So it will be then that people lack evidence of the life that existed before the Tribulation and the renewing of the earth
- Thirdly, they will never see Jesus during the entire 1,000 years of the Kingdom
  - We will study the details of the Kingdom temple in next week's lesson, but one detail we need tonight is Jesus' dwelling place
  - Ezekiel 43 tells us that the Lord dwells in the Holy of Holies in the Temple for the entire 1,000 years

**Ezek. 43:4** And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east.

**Ezek. 43:5** And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.

**Ezek. 43:6** Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me.

**Ezek. 43:7** He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever...

- The Lord returns to His usual appearance of glory as we saw John describe in Chapter 1, and He dwells in the temple without interruption
  - And Ezekiel goes on to tell us that the glory of the Lord is only visible to visitors on Sabbaths, Feast days and new moons
  - And unbelievers are never allowed to enter the temple or see the glory of the Lord...we will study this more next week
- So in other words, the one born in this age can see that a temple exists on a high mountain in Jerusalem
  - And that person also sees a government of people ruling the world, but the unbeliever never sees the king on His throne in the temple
    - Therefore, the only way an unbeliever will recognize Jesus as King is by faith in the testimony of the word of God
    - The requirement for faith in the Kingdom is just as it is today (and has always been)
  - Salvation can never be a matter of sight...it must always come from faith in god's word

**Heb. 11:1** Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

**Rom. 8:24** For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?

- The Bible teaches that faith is an expression of hope because it accepts something as true before it can be “seen”
- Once something can be seen, accepting the truth of it no longer requires faith...it’s become self-evident
- Nor should such a concession gain us anything, because God Himself gains no glory when we acknowledge the obvious
- So God’s plan of salvation depends on faith, trusting in the promises of God found in His word concerning things yet to come
  - We place our faith in things that cannot be seen, Christ’s atoning death, our future resurrection and judgment
  - God’s word has made promises to us concerning these matters, and faith is required to accept them
- Now imagine if Jesus were visible in His glorified form to the unbelieving world?
  - They would certainly acknowledge Jesus, but that acknowledgement wouldn’t be based on faith in God’s word
    - It would merely be a self-evident truth, and acknowledging Jesus under those circumstances wouldn’t result in salvation
    - No more than at the final judgment when Paul says:

**Phil. 2:9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,**

**Phil. 2:10 so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**

**Phil. 2:11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

- At the final judgment, all humanity from all history will come to understand the truth that Jesus is Lord
  - In that moment, Paul says every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that truth
  - Notice the various places where humanity will exist when they make this confession
  - Some are above the earth, others on the earth, but importantly some are still below the earth
- And Paul says that even those below the earth will acknowledge Jesus, referring to souls enduring eternal judgment
  - Paul says they too will confess Christ as Lord, yet they will remain in judgment despite their confession
  - Why? Because at that point their confession is simply an acknowledgement of self-evident truth...no faith required
  - And so it does not bring salvation
- Therefore, since unbelief remains part of life during the Kingdom, then faith must still be the means to salvation

- And if faith is required, then the truth of Christ will not be self-evident, at least not in the sense that it nullifies the need for faith
  - That's one reason Jesus is not roaming the earth in His glorified form but rather He remains in the Holy of Holies
  - The testimony of that day will be that our Lord is resident in the temple, reigning and ruling
  - But accepting that testimony will require faith, since unbelievers will not see Jesus nor will they be permitted to enter the temple
- And then there's the issue of our appearance, and for the same reason, we should assume that our glorified appearance won't vary dramatically
  - We should expect that our physical construction will mirror the one we have now albeit without sin or disease or weaknesses
  - Perhaps our appearance will remain essentially the same (just fewer wrinkles and maybe a little thinner)
  - And if so, that may be the way we'll recognize each other
- And perhaps most amazing, our sinless nature won't make us radically different from the sinner
  - Remember, Jesus lived a sinless life, and yet none of his earthly brothers were moved by what they saw to believe in His claims
  - So if sinless Jesus could live side by side with unbelievers without them noticing, we should expect to do the same
- We will live side-by-side with the natural man or woman and yet our sinlessness won't challenge their lack of faith in Jesus as God
  - They won't look at us so as to be amazed and persuaded to believe in Jesus
  - They may see us as kind or good, or on the other hand, they may think we're impossibly good and feel convicted by it
  - That's the situation I find myself in all the time
  - But one thing we can know for sure, our sinless nature won't serve to nullify faith for those who remain unbelieving
- So the unbelievers on that day will live with those who rule over them without appreciating a difference exists
  - Meanwhile, we who are glorified will enjoy endless days of joy serving Jesus and presumably we will have many relationships
    - We will re-establish relationships with those we knew here
    - We will establish new relationships with believers from all ages of time, including people famous and unknown to history
  - Elsewhere in the Gospels Jesus tells us we will be surprised by those who make it into the Kingdom and those who don't
    - There will be those in the Kingdom who lived terrible lives but came to faith in the end
    - And there will be those missing who lived pious lives and even had well-known ministries but never knew the Lord personally



- We will have 1,000 years to make it around the world and meet as many saints as we can and learn their stories
  - I suspect that tourism in that day will be less about seeing places and more about meeting people
  - You can read the story of Jonah on one day and decide to seek him out for a conversation on the next day
- Ever wondered what it felt like to be in a boat with animals for over a year? Have coffee with Noah
  - Curious what the Red Sea parting looked like? Talk to Moses or Miriam
  - Want to ask Aaron what he was thinking with that calf? What Abraham was thinking with Hagar? Get in line...
- The more we consider these issues, the more reasons we have to look forward to the Kingdom life
  - It's going to be everything we like about life today and nothing we don't
    - It's going to be a life with fulfillment in place of disappointment
    - It will be a life with meaning instead of one that sometimes seems senseless
    - It's a life with a rhythm and stability that eliminates fear or worry
  - A life where the prospect of growing old and dying are gone, where the consequences of sin are no more
    - Our days will be filled with work we enjoy, pastimes that don't hurt us or others and possessions that never fade away
    - And for the unbeliever, the same will be true so long as they do not sin and if they come to faith during their first 100 years
  - And in the midst of that near-perfect world, the unbeliever will be told they must believe in Jesus if they want to continue in that bliss
    - Though we may assume that such a great world would make faith easier to come by, the reality will be the exact opposite
    - When the world is experiencing such bliss, faith will be harder
    - Just as today when people are comfortable in their circumstances, they find little reason to consider a change
    - Especially not a change as significant as repenting of their present way of life to embrace a new one in Jesus
- What else can we know about life in that day? Let's take a closer look at the Jewish life in the Kingdom

**Is. 4:2 In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.**

**Is. 4:3 It will come about that he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy — everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem.**

**Is. 4:4 When the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and purged the bloodshed of Jerusalem from her midst, by the spirit of judgment**

**and the spirit of burning,**

**Is. 4:5** then the LORD will create over the whole area of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, even smoke, and the brightness of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory will be a canopy.

**Is. 4:6** There will be a shelter to give shade from the heat by day, and refuge and protection from the storm and the rain.

- The passage opens with a familiar statement, that Israel, the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and the earth will produce bountifully for Israel in that day
  - And all who are left (after Tribulation) will be holy, everyone who is recorded for life in Jerusalem
    - As we studied earlier, there will be no unbelievers in Israel
    - So there will be natural un-glorified Jews in the Kingdom (just like the Gentiles)
  - But unlike the Gentiles, the children of Jews will always come to faith in the Kingdom or so it seems
    - But we also studied earlier in Ezekiel that there would be death among the families of the priests in the temple
    - So we still have a bit of mystery on the question of Jewish life
  - Isaiah also says that Jerusalem will be covered by the Shechinah glory of God like the assembly of Israel in the desert exodus
    - The temple itself is part of a great mountain that also includes Jerusalem and covers that plain we described earlier
    - The flat plain on the top of this mountain is 50 miles square
    - The city of Jerusalem will be up there too, 10 miles square
    - And then the temple itself which is nearly 1 square mile
  - Over this whole area will be a cloud at day time to provide persistent shade keeping the area cool
    - And at night there will be flaming fire in the sky to provide constant illumination over the temple
    - And the effect of both will be to prevent a storm or rain from falling on this area like a canopy
    - The glory of the Lord will be honored in these things
- What about Gentile life in the Kingdom? We know only a few things specifically

**Is. 56:6** “Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,  
To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD,  
To be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath  
And holds fast My covenant;

**Is. 56:7** Even those I will bring to My holy mountain  
And make them joyful in My house of prayer.  
Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;

### **For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”**

- In the Kingdom strangers, referring to Gentiles, will join themselves to the Lord to minister to Him in love of Him
  - They will live as servants and observe the Millennial law, which we will talk about next week
  - These Gentiles will be brought to the holy mountain and become a joyful part of the house of prayer
  - We know that “house of prayer” is an Old Testament term referring to the temple itself
- So these Gentiles will become workers and likely priests in the Temple and will offer sacrifices before the altar as priests
  - In that way the temple will be called a house of prayer for all peoples
  - In the time of the earlier temple, only Jews were able to sacrifice and certainly only Jews could serve as priests
  - But in the Kingdom, the temple will be known as a house of prayer for all the peoples, because Gentiles will serve there too
- And there are other places of service for Gentiles in Israel during this time

**Is. 66:18** “For I know their works and their thoughts; the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and see My glory.

**Is. 66:19** “I will set a sign among them and will send survivors from them to the nations: Tarshish, Put, Lud, Meshech, Tubal and Javan, to the distant coastlands that have neither heard My fame nor seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations.

**Is. 66:20** “Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to the LORD, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules and on camels, to My holy mountain Jerusalem,” says the LORD, “just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

**Is. 66:21** “I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites,” says the LORD.

- In the Kingdom the Lord will populate nations around the globe with the believing Gentiles who enter the Kingdom on the first day
  - The Lord says they will know His works and see His glory, because as we said earlier Gentile believers will have access to the temple
    - On certain days of the year, they can enter and witness the glory of the Lord in the temple
    - And in the lands where they live, the Lord says He will also set a sign among the nations
  - That sign will be the survivors God sends to live there, the Church saints who go to rule there
    - We are a sign to the nation by our witness of righteousness and faith that we

possess

- And Isaiah says in v.19 we will declare the glory of the Lord to those distant nations
- In v.20 the prophet says that these will bring Israel's brethren back to Jerusalem on horses, chariots and the like
  - This seems to describe the initial days of the Kingdom when Israel is reestablished in her land
  - The Gentile believers will carry Jews to their land as a statement of honor and reversal of previous scatterings
  - Where before Gentile nations pushed Israel out of her land, now we carry them back like making a grain offering to the Lord
- Finally, Isaiah confirms that some of these Gentile believers will be honored to become priests serving in the temple
  - So the Gentile believers will have a place in government in distant lands where the Lord gives us an inheritance
  - But some of us may be called up to the majors to serve Jesus in the temple
  - And some Gentiles will be assigned to serve in Israel directly

**Is. 14:1** When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

**Is. 14:2** The peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive and will rule over their oppressors.

- Isaiah says that when the nations bring the Jews into the land at the start of the Kingdom, some of those Gentiles will stay in the land
  - They will become a possession of Israel as part of Israel's inheritance
  - And those Gentiles will become servants of Israel though in a position of honor
- Moving on, I said earlier that sin will not have a chance to gain momentum in the Kingdom, and so life will remain peaceful in this time
  - But there is an interesting exception to that rule: worship in the temple
    - The requirement for Gentile nations to visit the temple periodically may be disobeyed
    - And when a nation refuses to obey the requirement to come to the temple, the Lord will bring a devastating response

**Zech. 14:16** Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

**Zech. 14:17** And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go

**up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them.**

**Zech. 14:18** If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the LORD smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

- Nations will be required to come to the temple for an annual feast called the feast of Booths, which is the final feast on the Jewish calendar
  - We study this feast and the other worship events of the Kingdom next week
  - But for now notice what happens when a nation decides to skip church that week, so to speak
- A drought will be the one and only response the Lord sends to nations that refuse to conduct worship at the temple
  - Remember, that the earth produces without effort because water is plentiful
  - So no irrigation systems will be necessary or built we presume
  - So a drought will have an immediate and devastating effect on agriculture and life making it an effective deterrent
- Finally, for both Jew and Gentile living in that time, life will be satisfying

**Is. 65:21** “They will build houses and inhabit them; They will also plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

**Is. 65:22** “They will not build and another inhabit, They will not plant and another eat;

**For as the lifetime of a tree, so will be the days of My people, And My chosen ones will wear out the work of their hands.**

**Is. 65:23** “They will not labor in vain,

**Or bear children for calamity;**

**For they are the offspring of those blessed by the LORD, And their descendants with them.**

- First, we will build houses for ourselves in the Kingdom Isaiah says
  - If you’ve ever wanted to design and build that perfect house for yourself, you will get that chance
    - And you will live in the house you decide to build, and I suspect it will be a house that far surpasses the one you have now
    - In fact, it’s a general rule of Scripture that this life is a pale comparison of the one we get next
    - Which is why the Bible warns us against investing too much of ourselves in this world rather than waiting for our reward
  - And as we already know we will plant crops and eat the fruit of it
    - This is more than a simple statement of farming...the point is the certainty of a return on our effort

- The plants will not die, the crop will not fail to materialize
    - No one will raid the land, no one will take our house from us
  - Notice in v.22 Isaiah says we won't build what we desire only to see someone else gain it later for some reason
    - It will be ours to keep without any fear of losing it, because the Lord has given it to us as our inheritance
    - Likewise, no one else will take our produce from the fields
  - And the days of our lives in this time will be like that of a tree, Isaiah says
    - There are trees that have lives 2,000+ years, and so we will know that kind of lifespan
    - In fact, our lifespan will never end, so every day will be a continuation of our joy
    - And we will wear out the work of our hands
  - And for those who can marry and reproduce, they will not labor in vain, because there will no infant mortality as we discussed earlier
    - The offspring of those blessed of the Lord will live
    - And every parent will gain the joy of raising children without fear for their young lives
- Having covered what we can from Scripture, there is still a lot left unaddressed of course
  - We don't know the level of technology present in the Kingdom
    - Will we enjoy the conveniences we have today or perhaps we will be rescued from the hectic nature of our connected life
    - Will there be entertainment, sports? Can we move to new places? Is there money and an economy?
  - I think the Lord has intentionally left many things unanswered so that the Kingdom life is a never-ending series of surprises
    - And I remind myself of how much life here can astonish and please us despite the terrible condition of the world and people
    - So imagine how much better it will be when sin is under control and we have none of our own
    - And curses are gone and the world is peaceful...I'm sure we won't be missing this age at all
  - Next week we look at the temple operations, including why sacrifices return
    - And we look at worship in the Kingdom and take a brief tour of the temple building itself
    - And then the following and final week of the Kingdom, we look at the events that bring the 1,000 years to an end



**VERSE BY VERSE MINISTRY**  
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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 20D

## From Ezekiel

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- Welcome to the third night of our examination of the Kingdom
  - In our study of Revelation, we're taking time to explore life in the coming Kingdom in depth
    - The Kingdom is the 1,000-year period that follows our current age, beginning at Christ's Second Coming
    - That period is only described in a handful of verses in Revelation 20
    - And once you pass the brief mention of the Kingdom in Revelation 20, John says this world ends altogether
    - And then we move into an entirely new world described in Revelation 21 & 22
  - But before we get there, we have more to understand about the Kingdom
    - And because the book of Revelation itself doesn't say much about that time, we're spending a few weeks outside the book
    - We're studying various Old Testament passages where the life and times of the Kingdom are described often and in great detail
  - I've divided this section of our study into four parts:
    - Order of Creation, nature, geography, borders and government
    - Daily life and death
    - The Temple, worship and Kingdom Law
    - Final War against Satan
  - Today we examine the temple operation of the Kingdom, including the sacrifice system and Kingdom Law
    - For those of you who are regular students of VBVM, you will recognize most of tonight's teaching
    - Most of what I cover tonight and next week will come from our recent Ezekiel study
    - That's because virtually everything we know about the Kingdom temple and the final war is given in Ezekiel and nowhere else
- So tonight, we will start with a tour of the temple itself, followed by a discussion of worship and sacrifice under the new Kingdom Law
  - The only temple mentioned in the book of Revelation is the temple constructed during Tribulation
    - John measures it in Chapter 11 and the Antichrist desecrates it at the midpoint of Tribulation
    - But Daniel 12 told us that the Tribulation temple will be cleansed of the image of the beast 30 days after the Lord's return
    - That detail suggests that the temple itself will continue on in a new and better form
  - And Ezekiel confirms the existence of a temple in the Kingdom, and more than that, he describes it in great detail
    - Over nine chapters, Ezekiel gives his readers a tour of the entire building and its operation



- Since that study already exists, we will just summarize what we learned there in this study
- And for the sake of time, we will include Scripture references to the relevant passages in Ezekiel but we won't read them all
- Ezekiel's description of the temple starts this way:

**Ezek. 40:2** In the visions of God He brought me into the land of Israel and set me on a very high mountain, and on it to the south there was a structure like a city.

**Ezek. 40:3** So He brought me there; and behold, there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of bronze, with a line of flax and a measuring rod in his hand; and he was standing in the gateway.

**Ezek. 40:4** The man said to me, "Son of man, see with your eyes, hear with your ears, and give attention to all that I am going to show you; for you have been brought here in order to show it to you. Declare to the house of Israel all that you see."

- Ezekiel was given the privilege of seeing and describing the Millennial temple for Israel
  - He said it was positioned on a high mountain and the structure was so massive it was like a city all its own
  - That's very different than the current topography of Jerusalem where the temple is at a height similar to the surrounding area
- Ezekiel was also told to measure the dimensions of the building precisely
  - He takes these measurements so that we can appreciate the massive scale of the building
  - And from that we also know that this building was very different from any that came before it
- So let's walk through the building together based on the dimensions and descriptions that Ezekiel provides to us
  - And the easiest way to get oriented is to compare the structure we're studying to others we know from history
    - Consider the size of the Millennial Temple in comparison to these structures
    - The Tabernacle, Solomon's temple, an American football field, and Herod's temple
  - The size of this temple reflects the need for some many millions of people to stream to this place from all over the world
    - This temple will save all humanity, not just the Jewish people
    - This reinforces the truth that Israel is the center of the world and all worship and government will center on this nation
  - And the reality of an operating temple of this scale, priests, guards and the like remind us of how prevalent sin will be in that world
    - We will be above it all, ruling, but we will still see it all around

- Because of Christ's perfect rule, the effects of sin will be greatly mitigated and controlled
  - But it will still be in the world, which will make Christ's perfect rule all the more amazing to see operating
- The structure is a perfect square, and it includes an outer wall with three gates and an inner wall with three more gates (no west gate)
  - There are two courtyards formed by these walls and there is the temple building proper with several supporting buildings around it
    - Let's enter from the east gate, which is the main entrance at the start of the Kingdom [*Tour will be via slides*]
    - The gate is 100 ft long, 50ft wide and has a 100ft door and a 120ft porch
    - Notice that in the measurements the recurring numbers are 5 and 6 (the 5 found in the .5 cubit walls separating spaces)
    - The number 5 is the number of grace, while the number 6 is the number for sinful man
  - So symbolically, this gate reminds people that this is a place where sin meets grace
    - The spaces of sin (6 cu) where people congregate are divided or broken up by the walls of grace (.5 cu)
    - The symbolic sense is that sin will be broken here
  - After exiting the inner east gate, we walk into a large open courtyard, and as we move forward we reach the inner east gate
    - This gate leads into the temple courtyard proper
    - There are palm trees marking this entrance and exit
    - And there are tables for sacrifice at the entrance of this inner gate
  - Entering into the courtyard we find a high altar with steps leading up
    - And behind it the steps leading into the temple itself
    - There is no door on the temple nor is there a veil separating the inner rooms
    - That is different to the earlier tabernacle and temples that had veils on the entrance and leading to the Holy of Holies
  - Also, the Millennial temple will have only one piece of furniture inside
    - Only an altar of incense will exist in the temple
    - Previously, there were other items required, but they are gone now because they pictured Jesus
    - Since Jesus is present, we have no need for those symbols
    - But incense pictures intercession before the Father, so that item remains since Jesus' role as intercessor for sin still remains as well
- Around the temple we also find three additional buildings in that day, two for the priests and one that is not defined in Ezekiel except for its measurements
  - The priestly chambers flank the temple on the north and south sides, and in here priests begin their work day

- They change clothes in these chambers before and after work
  - There are galleries here for viewing the offering of burnt sacrifices in the temple courtyard
- Looking more closely at the temple, we find a small river emerging from the building leading us back outside the temple
  - The river emerges from under the foundation of the temple
  - It runs through a channel in the courtyard and under the inner east gate and the outer east gate
- At that point it splits and runs both east and west as we learned last week
  - When it hits the Dead Sea in the east, it turns the salt sea into a fresh water lake
  - The symbolism of living water emerging from the temple is a testimony to the world of Christ's presence in the temple
  - We will talk more about this symbolism in a future week of this study when we look at the New Heavens and New Earth
- This temple will be the center of worship in the Kingdom, and that worship involves Jesus, sacrifice, priests and feast days as it did under the Jewish Law
  - First, let's discuss Jesus' place in the temple, beginning with Jesus' place in the earlier temples
    - In the first tabernacle built by Moses, the Lord occupied the Holy of Holies as the Shechinah Glory of God
    - Later, after Solomon built the temple, the glory of the Lord entered the temple to rest above the mercy seat again
    - The Lord eventually departed the temple in Ezekiel's day in response to the sin of Israel and the coming judgment
  - When He departed, the glory of the Lord left in a very certain way starting at the doorway of the temple

**Ezek. 10:4 Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub to the threshold of the temple, and the temple was filled with the cloud and the court was filled with the brightness of the glory of the Lord.**

- First the glory of the Lord moved from the Holy of Holies to the temple doorway
- It moves through the length of the Holy Place in the temple, Ezekiel says, and as it does the temple was filled with the cloud
- Then He moves from the temple to the east gate of the temple structure escorted by cherubim

**Ezek. 10:18 Then the glory of the Lord departed from the threshold of the temple and stood over the cherubim.**

**Ezek. 10:19 When the cherubim departed, they lifted their wings and rose up from the earth in my sight with the wheels beside them; and they stood still**

**at the entrance of the east gate of the Lord's house, and the glory of the God of Israel hovered over them.**

- Finally the glory of the Lord moves outside the temple across the Kidron Valley and to the top of the Mt. Of Olives

**Ezek. 11:23** The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city.

**Ezek. 11:24** And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me in a vision by the Spirit of God to the exiles in Chaldea. So the vision that I had seen left me.

- From there the glory of the Lord disappeared and it has not returned to the temple since that day
- So when it comes time for the Lord to once again reside in His temple, He arrives in the same way He departed
  - According to Ezekiel 43, the glory of the Lord enters the temple on the first day of the Kingdom in this manner

**Ezek. 43:1** Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing toward the east;

**Ezek. 43:2** and behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.

**Ezek. 43:3** And it was like the appearance of the vision which I saw, like the vision which I saw when He came to destroy the city. And the visions were like the vision which I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell on my face.

**Ezek. 43:4** And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east.

**Ezek. 43:5** And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.

**Ezek. 43:6** Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me.

**Ezek. 43:7** He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die,

**Ezek. 43:8** by setting their threshold by My threshold and their door post beside My door post, with only the wall between Me and them. And they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed. So I have consumed them in My anger.

**Ezek. 43:9** "Now let them put away their harlotry and the corpses of their kings far from Me; and I will dwell among them forever.

- So the Lord lives in the Kingdom in that day in the form of His Shechinah glory once

more, resident in the house of the Lord, the temple

- He lives there continually, never leaving the temple again
  - He resides in the temple and out of view of the world
  - In fact, after He enters the east outer gate is shut forever, never to open again in the days of the Kingdom

**Ezek. 44:1 Then He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east; and it was shut.**

**Ezek. 44:2 The LORD said to me, “This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut.**

- The Lord is the only One Who enters by way of the east gate of the temple
  - No one will take the same journey that the Lord took, which clearly symbolizes the Lord’s work of atonement
  - His entry into the temple is a symbolic representation of Christ entering by His blood to be our High Priest interceding for sin
- Christ entered once for all, which is symbolized by His entry into the temple through the east gate never to leave and re-enter
  - And the gate is shut because neither can anyone else enter the way Jesus did
  - This is why we said earlier that no one will be sitting down for coffee with Jesus in the Kingdom
  - Jesus never leaves the temple because to leave and return would suggest He must continue to qualify Himself
  - And since the east gate is permanently closed, David, the Lord’s prince, uses the closed off space as his temple office
- So the only time believers and glorified saints see Jesus in the temple is when we come to the temple to worship Him
  - Ezekiel tells us that can happen on two feast days, Sabbaths, and new moon celebrations
    - There are only two feasts in the Kingdom, the feast of Passover and the Feast of Booths
    - Under the Law of Moses, there were seven feasts each calendar year
    - And all seven pictured some aspect of Jesus’ ministry of redemption
  - The first three feasts represent aspects of Jesus’ first coming
    - The last three picture aspects of His return and in the middle is Pentecost
    - Pentecost represents the Church period between the two appearances of Jesus
  - But in the Kingdom, there are only the first and last feasts, because they are the only two that still have spiritual meaning in the Kingdom time
    - The first, Passover, represents Jesus’ redemption of His people through His

sacrifice as our Lamb

- And the feast of Tabernacles or booths represents God dwelling among His people, which is still present in that day as well
- In addition to these feast days, we may go to the temple on Sabbaths and new moon days:

**Ezek. 46:3** “The people of the land shall also worship at the doorway of that gate before the LORD on the sabbaths and on the new moons.

**Ezek. 46:9** “But when the people of the land come before the LORD at the appointed feasts, he who enters by way of the north gate to worship shall go out by way of the south gate. And he who enters by way of the south gate shall go out by way of the north gate. No one shall return by way of the gate by which he entered but shall go straight out.

- When we go up, we enter by either the north gate or south gate, and we must exit out the opposite gate, Ezekiel tells us
  - That forces us to cross the courtyard, and in the process we can see directly into the Holy of Holies where the glory dwells
  - This will be the only opportunity for us to see the Lord’s glory in this day
  - Remember, we will still communicate with Him constantly and we will have seen Him before in the throne room earlier
- But Ezekiel also states that nothing unholy can have access to the temple, meaning unbelievers

**Ezek. 44:8** “And you have not kept charge of My holy things yourselves, but you have set foreigners to keep charge of My sanctuary.”

**Ezek. 44:9** ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “No foreigner uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the sons of Israel, shall enter My sanctuary.

- Those who are uncircumcised in the heart, which is Bible terminology for unbelievers, may not enter the temple
- So that means an unbeliever will never see the glory of God in that day
- Unbelievers will be required to make sacrifices in the outer court yard with the help of the temple priests
  - The role of a priest is to be an intercessor for the people, a mediator who brings God to the people and the people to God
    - In the days before Jesus, God only accepted certain men as intercessors between Himself and the people of Israel
    - Those Levitical priests served by ministering in the temple according to the Mosaic Law

- But even then, Christ was the true high priest interceding for God’s children
- Then after Jesus came and the Church was started, Peter says we were all made to be priests, calling us a royal priesthood

**1Pet. 2:9** But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

- We are all priests because we are all in a position to intercede for the world
  - We bring God to the world by shining the light of Christ before men through our good works
  - And we bring the people to God by our testimony of Jesus and our preaching of the Gospel
  - Nevertheless, Jesus remains the high priest who reconciles all believers to God
- But then in the Kingdom, we return to a time when there are only some who are designated as priests, but they will not be the Levites

**Ezek. 44:10** “But the Levites who went far from Me when Israel went astray, who went astray from Me after their idols, shall bear the punishment for their iniquity.

**Ezek. 44:13** “And they shall not come near to Me to serve as a priest to Me, nor come near to any of My holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they will bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed.

**Ezek. 44:14** “Yet I will appoint them to keep charge of the house, of all its service and of all that shall be done in it.

- Because of the unfaithfulness of God’s ministers in that day, He says the Levitical priests will officiate in a more limited way in the Kingdom
  - Notice in v.13 the Lord says they shall not come near Him in this time
  - This is different than under the Mosaic law, where the offerer kills his own sacrifice, not the priest
  - The priest offered the sacrifice on the altar and took blood into the Holy Place
- Only one family of priests will be allowed to serve Christ as before

**Ezek. 44:15** “But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood,” declares the Lord GOD.

**Ezek. 44:16** “They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge.

- Zadok was the high priest who remained loyal to David when the house of Saul was contending with David for the throne
- Zadok took the ark of the covenant and followed David as David fled the city of Jerusalem
- He knew David was the the Lord’s anointed, and because of Zadok’s faithfulness, the Lord makes Zadok’s sons priests
- But we remember from Isaiah last week that the Lord will also take some Gentiles and allow them to serve as priests as well
  - So there will be a joint Jew-Gentile priesthood to serve in the temple
  - They officiate over the sacrifices, and the Levites assist in the process by killing the animals and keeping the building organized
- In the Kingdom, these priests will have a more limited role
  - They will have oversight of the house and gates, slaughtering animals and ministering to the people who worship there
  - They now do the “dirty” work for the worshippers, ministering to them in the temple
  - When worshippers bring sacrifices, they will assist in the sacrifice, cutting and burning of these sacrifices in pits
- Finally, all of this discussion of priests and sacrifice begs a few questions about why such a system returns in the first place
  - For example, if Christ has always been our High Priest, why was any other priest even needed?
    - And if Christ was always our once for all sacrifice, why were other sacrifices ever required?
    - Over the centuries, many theologians have been troubled at the prospect of a return of a sacrificial system in the Kingdom
  - We remember the teaching of Hebrews

**Heb. 10:10** By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

**Heb. 10:11** Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;

**Heb. 10:12** but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,

**Heb. 10:13** waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.

**Heb. 10:14** For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

- Basic New Testament theology holds that the substitutionary atonement of Jesus on the cross satisfies the wrath of God
  - And not just for one person or for one time, but for all who place their trust in Jesus and for all time



- Therefore, why should God re-institute a temple and sacrificial system in the Kingdom?
- To answer why there is a temple in the Kingdom, we must first understand why there has ever been a temple with sacrifices
  - And the story begins with what sin did to the human condition

**Gen. 3:7** Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.

- Adam and Woman were alone on earth, enjoying the Garden, without sin and without need for clothing
- Then they disobeyed the Word and sin entered their hearts
- At that point, though they were married and were completely at peace with one another even without clothes, suddenly that changed
  - As soon as they sinned, they sought to cover themselves physically
  - Who were they hiding from? Who else could see them? Only each other and that never bothered them before
- The point is that the arrival of sin resulted in an immediate impediment in the fellowship between these two people
  - Sin fundamentally changed the couple's relationship with one another
  - Where before they were in perfect fellowship with one another, now they felt uncomfortable and self-protective
- When sin corrupted their nature, the couple instantly became adversaries in the sense that they now had reasons to hide from one another
  - No longer could they be fully known, nor could they fully know another person as they once did
    - Sin had darkened their innocent transparent nature, so now they harbored secret thoughts, had sinful desires and secret sins
    - Shameful things entered their minds, and they were weighed down by guilt and the worry over their sin and that of their spouse
    - So they instinctively sought a way to feel comfortable in each others' company again, but the best they could do was a fig leaf
  - But as serious as the physical effects of sin, the spiritual effects were even more serious

**Gen. 3:8** They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

- Spiritually, the couple suddenly realized they were accountable before God so they instinctively hid from His presence

- Mankind no longer felt comfortable approaching God, because sin demanded God's wrath
- Their spirits within them sensed their vulnerability so they also lost the opportunity for fellowship with God
- Where once they knew God intimately, now they could not even be in His presence
- For the same reason, God could no longer dwell among men without shielding men from His glory
- So sin had two fundamental effects on the human condition reflected in the behaviors of Adam and Woman in the Garden
  - Sin ruined our relationship with other human beings by corrupting our nature and making us enemies of one another
  - And sin ruined our relationship with God by incurring His judgment and making us deserving of His wrath
  - Physically, sin separates us from other human beings
  - Spiritually, sin separates us from God
- And in response, God offered us a provision to correct for both of these problems, beginning with Adam and Woman in the Garden
  - First, the Lord corrected for our spiritual separation from Him with a spiritual covering which we receive by faith
    - He gave Adam and Woman the first Gospel preaching

**Gen. 3:15 And I will put enmity  
Between you and the woman,  
And between your seed and her seed;  
He shall bruise you on the head,  
And you shall bruise him on the heel.”**

- The Lord promised to send Adam and Woman a “Seed” Who would defeat the enemy and reconcile mankind
- That “seed” would be Christ in the day He came
- This provision was spiritual in nature because it depended upon our faith in that promise
  - Jesus' sacrifice wasn't made in Adam's day, but it was promised to happen one day
  - Adam received the promise, and by his faith in that promise, Adam was credited with Christ's righteousness
  - So that through faith Adam was restored in His relationship with God
  - All saints, whether OT or NT, gain the same spiritual covering in the same way: through faith in the promised Messiah
- Next, the Lord made a provision to correct for the physical separation that robbed Adam and Woman of their personal trust and intimacy

**Gen. 3:21 The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them.**

- In v.21 the Lord killed an animal (probably a lamb) and used the skin to clothe the man and woman
  - That sacrifice was physical, not spiritual, and it came in addition to the spiritual provision
  - Without this physical sacrifice, Adam and Woman would have continued to feel shame in their nakedness
  - Their physical discomfort reflecting an inward mistrust toward one another
  - But once covered, they experienced a degree of restoration and comfort again
- Moreover, the practice of making a physical sacrifice offered an object lesson to humanity about the greater spiritual sacrifice of Christ
  - That earlier spiritual covering was not witnessed...it came by faith alone, so it was difficult to appreciate in abstraction
  - But seeing a physical sacrifice in which an animal loses its life makes clear the price of sin and the need for blood atonement
  - So physical sacrifice also becomes a picture of the sacrifice of Christ for our sake
  - So the physical covering is both a means of restoring human fellowship and a way to teach us about Christ's sacrifice
- Importantly, notice God officiated over their physical sacrifice
  - The Lord was present as the animal was sacrificed in the Garden, and He presided over the ritual
  - Had Adam or Woman killed and skinned an animal without God's involvement, it wouldn't have qualified as a physical sacrifice
  - Our sacrifice must be to the Lord by His measure in order to satisfy Him
  - And it must be acceptable to Him if it is to be useful to us in cleansing our conscience
- Finally, it's critical to note the order of these events: first came the spiritual covering of faith to restore fellowship with God (v.20)
  - Then came the physical covering of an animal sacrifice in the presence of God to restore and maintain human fellowship (v.21)
  - We first reconcile with God by faith in the provision of His Son
  - Then He may accept our physical sacrifices made in His presence to grant us reconciliation with each other
- This pattern is evident throughout the Bible...for example Noah believed in God and his faith found favor with God according to Genesis 6
  - Yet Noah also practiced animal sacrifice at altars before the Lord to maintain fellowship among God's people
    - Likewise, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were righteous by faith yet they also sacrificed animals on altars from time to time

- Yet when sin required, they also participated in God-ordained physical sacrifices as the Angel of Lord attended in the moment
- And of course, the Lord codified this practice in the Law of Moses
- Throughout, faith was always the spiritual covering required for salvation, but God also commanded regular physical sacrifices
- Jumping to the Church, what do we find? The same two sacrifices!
  - We too are reconciled to God spiritually by faith in Christ, Who is our spiritual covering, but we also need a physical covering
  - We too have sin and therefore like Adam and Woman, we too suffer from the physical separation that sin produces
  - So therefore, we also need a physical system of sacrifice to reconcile with one another
- And our system of physical sacrifice follows the same pattern as before
  - It serves to reconciles us to others by cleansing our conscience and healing the wounds caused by sin
  - It also teaches us about Christ and His eternal sacrifice made on our behalf
  - And our physical sacrifice is also performed in the presence of God
- That last detail is key to our understanding of when and how we offer physical sacrifices today and why a temple exists in the Kingdom
  - In Genesis 3, God dwelled directly with Man and Woman in the Garden, so the physical sacrifice happened in the Garden
    - During the period of the patriarchs, the Lord visited His people as the Angel of the Lord (pre-incarnate Christ)
    - So sacrifices happened at altars set up wherever the Angel of the Lord appeared or directed
    - And in Moses' time the Lord dwelled in a physical building, so Israel gathered there to make physical sacrifices
    - A physical sacrifice is only edifying to the worshipper's conscience if it's approved by God in His presence
  - Today, the presence of the Lord is not located in a certain building because the Bible says that the Spirit of God is inside every believer

**1Cor. 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?**

- If our body is the temple and the Spirit resides within us, then our physical sacrifices are made in our body
- Paul describes how we perform the physical sacrifices of this age in Romans

**Rom. 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.**

**Rom. 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.**

- We are to present our bodies as living sacrifices to God, in His presence, as our service of worship
  - Just as the Israelites worshipped by making sacrifices in the temple, we worship by making sacrifices in our body
  - The Law of Moses demanded animals dying in a building, but the Law of Christ demands we die to self
- And when time came for God to set Israel aside for a time and make Himself known to Gentiles, He had to change the place of His dwelling
  - He couldn't build a new temple in a Gentile country, because He only gave His Law and the temple service to Israel
  - Moreover, if He had placed His temple in one Gentile nation, it would have signaled that He preferred one Gentile nation over others
  - Therefore, He chose to indwell the Church directly so that He could be equally present in every Gentile nation during this age
- For that reason, we make our physical sacrifice by making sacrifices in our body, denying our flesh its desires, serving Christ's desires instead
  - This is our physical covering, and it follows all the same patterns as before
    - Our personal sacrifices are an act of worship before God that restores fellowship with others
    - It is a form of worship, it is done in God's presence, it cleanses our guilty conscience and it is modeled after Christ's sacrifices
    - So as we sacrifice our pride and self-interest to show love for others, we restore fellowship within the body
  - This is why we are all called priests in the New Testament
    - We all have the Spirit God dwelling inside us, therefore we are all qualified to make sacrifices before the altar of our heart
    - Those physical sacrifices are how we worship God, and they are not contradictory to our spiritual dependence upon Christ
    - On the contrary, they are modeled on Christ's own ministry, and in that way our sacrifices are also picturing Christ
    - As Paul explains

**Phil. 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, Phil. 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,**

**Phil. 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.**

**Phil. 2:8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming**

## **obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**

- Though He had no sin of His own, Christ made Himself a physical sacrifice to serve the interests of the body of Christ
  - Likewise, we have no sin debt before God because of faith, yet we still make physical sacrifices to serve the needs of fellowship
  - Our dependence on Christ's sacrifice does not invalidate the need for making physical sacrifices
  - Though the form of our physical sacrifices are quite different than the form they had under the Law of Moses
  - And the change in the form of our physical sacrifices was made necessary because God changed the place of His dwelling
- So now, consider how the dwelling place of God changes again in the Kingdom...He returns to dwelling in a building rather than in human bodies
  - In the Kingdom age, Israel is restored as the chief nation on earth under God's protection, so the temple is placed again in Israel
    - And as we read, Jesus returns to dwell there as before
    - And since the Lord's presence dwells in a building again, then all physical sacrifices must happen at that one place again
  - Once again, people will stream to the temple regularly to sacrifice animals as the Lord directs
    - These sacrifices accomplish exactly the same things the earlier physical sacrifices covered
    - They serve to restore fellowship among God's people and teach about the meaning of Christ's sacrifice
    - If the people do not participate in these sacrifices, they are cut off from fellowship with God's people
    - As we read last week about God bringing drought to nations that fail to worship at the feasts in Jerusalem
- Summary...
- One final note...sacrifices are covering for sin, so this system is only used by those who have sin
  - Those of us who are glorified will have no sin, and therefore we will not make sacrifices
    - Our role will be limited to governing it seems, though perhaps some of us may be priests
    - But we will not participate in the sacrificial system ourselves
  - So at that time, we will have no need of it except to oversee it in some way
    - But those who have sin, whether believing or unbelieving, will be required to make physical sacrifices
    - And those who are believing will also have the benefit of a spiritual covering provided by Christ

- Without that faith, it is impossible to please God, and the worshipper who seeks to please God will also perform physical sacrifices
- Next time we conclude our study of the Kingdom looking at the culminating events of the 1,000-year period, including the Final War

## Revelation (2020) – 20E

### 20E-1

- Tonight we finish our study of the Kingdom period by examining the events that will end that 1,000-year period of history
  - In all, we've studied four broad areas of life in the Kingdom
    - We studied the order of Creation, nature, geography, borders and government
    - Daily life and death
    - The Temple, worship and Kingdom Law
    - And this week we end with the Final War of history, the war of Gog and Magog, which takes us back into Revelation 20

### 20E-2

- First, let's remember where we are in the timeline of events in the book of Revelation
  - Revelation 20:6 tells us that the time of Jesus ruling with the saints will be a thousand years
  - That's the period we have been studying over the past three weeks
  - But before we studied a brief period of time that bridged the seven-year Tribulation with the 1,000-year kingdom
  - That period lasted only 75 days, according to Daniel 12, so we called it the 75-day interval
- I remind you of this detail because it sets an important precedent that will come into play in our study today
  - And that precedent is that not all the events of Chapter 20 take place within the 1,000 years of the Kingdom
  - Revelation 20 doesn't start counting the 1,000 years until after the 75 days is over
  - So in a sense, the Kingdom period is 1,000 years plus 75 days
- But it doesn't stop there...Chapter 20 also tells us that there will be events that happen after the 1,000 years is complete



- And yet these events are still part of the Kingdom period because they take place prior to the next age starting
- For example, look at the next verses we cover in Revelation 20

20E-3

**Rev. 20:7** When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison,

**Rev. 20:8** and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.

**Rev. 20:9** And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.

- Notice how v.7 begins with “when the thousand years are completed...”

20E-4

- So by the time we get to the events of v.7 and later, the clock has already run out on the 1,000 year Kingdom
  - As we will see from our study of these events, these final events last at least seven years and likely a little longer

20E-5

- So now we can calculate the entire Kingdom period between the Tribulation and the New Heavens and Earth
- That period must be at least 75 days + 1,000 years + 7 years
- For simplicity sake, we say the total is 1,007 years
- This detail is important for two reasons...
  - First, it helps us understand the purpose of the 1,000 year period
  - The Kingdom serves a specific purpose which is understood by separating it from the time of the war of Gog and Magog
  - Secondly, it helps us know that the war being described in this chapter is the same war Ezekiel describes in Ezekiel 38 & 39
- Let's start by understanding how the war gets started, which Revelation explains in the second half of v.7
  - The culminating events of the Kingdom age begin with Satan released from his imprisonment in the abyss

- We remember Satan was bound and committed to this prison during the 75 days that preceded the Kingdom

20E-6

**Rev. 20:1** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand.

**Rev. 20:2** And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;

- Notice John said in v.2 that Satan will be bound for a total of 1,000 years
- He is in prison before the Kingdom starts and he is not released until the 1,000 years have taken place
- So Satan spends the duration of the Kingdom away from mankind and unable to tempt anyone
- But once Satan is released, he immediately begins to deceive humanity leading to a war on earth for the first time since the end of Tribulation
  - That war will involve countless numbers of people from all the Gentile nations of the earth
  - Their target is Israel, and more specifically, the temple in Jerusalem
- Notice Revelation 20 says they come up to the broad plain and surround the beloved city
  - The broad plain is the flat area that surrounds the high mountain on which the temple sits
  - We studied that broad plain earlier in Zechariah's description of the Kingdom topography

**Zech. 14:9** And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.

**Zech. 14:10** All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.

- So the detail of a broad plain clearly identifies the battle as taking place in Israel after the Millennial Kingdom

- Finally, back in Revelation 20:9 John says that the battle is over quickly with a supernatural destruction of the invaders
    - God sends fire from heaven to devour them and that's the last thing we read in Revelation 20 about the final war
      - This brief mention of the final events of the Kingdom raise more questions than they answer
      - And once more Revelation has only skimmed the surface of these events because the details are elsewhere in the Bible
- 20E-7**
- So let's list the questions we will address in our study tonight as we revisit Ezekiel 38 & 39 and elsewhere in the Bible
    - First, why was Satan bound only to be released again?
    - Secondly, why doesn't the Lord destroy Satan in the first place prior to the start of the Kingdom?
    - Finally, who are Gog and Magog and what can we learn about this final war?
  - We start with the question of why was Satan bound in the first place, which begins by understanding his role on earth today
    - The Bible says that Satan provokes sin in two ways
    - First, the Bible says Satan is the great deceiver – the author of lies
  - By contrast, Jesus is the Truth, so all true and righteous knowledge comes from God, and God cannot lie, the Bible says
    - And yet the world is filled with lies, and the Bible says all those lies have their origin in Satan and his demons
    - Jesus said Satan is the father of lies and has been from the beginning, referring to his deception in the Garden of Eden
    - Had Satan never existed, the world would have known only truth
  - Satan is the author of all false knowledge on earth, and he uses his lies to trick the world concerning God and sin
    - As we read earlier in this study

20E-8

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

- So the enemy provokes sin by deceiving the world, and secondly he provokes sin by tempting our flesh nature to act according to its desire
  - He knows that our flesh nature is already predisposed to act against the word of God, as Paul explains in Romans 7

**Rom. 7:18** For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.

- Our physical body has its own desires, and Satan and his demons are experts at enticing our flesh to fulfill its desires
- Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that we all know the experience of being tempted by the enemy, who is our “tempter” (1 Thessalonians 3:5)
- But in that same verse Paul also says that the Lord provides us a way of escape from the temptation if we would only take it
- So the old saying that “the devil made me do it” is simply an excuse
  - The enemy may deceive us at times, but we have the word of God to correct our thinking
  - And he certainly tempts us to give in to sin, but the Lord has given us His Spirit to lead us into righteousness
  - So at the end of the day, the devil (and his demons) don’t make us sin...it’s our choice to sin either out of ignorance or lust
- But as we studied in prior weeks, Jesus will rule the Kingdom with a rod of iron enforcing righteousness perfectly, without variation or delay
  - If Satan were loose deceiving and tempting the world to sin, it would undermine Jesus’ perfect rule
  - So for 1,000 years, to ensure there is no opportunity for sin to gain a foothold, our enemy is bound and out of the way
  - There is still sin in the world because the world is filled with people who possess a sin nature

- But those people live under the watchful eye of a perfect and just King Who limits sin's impact and judges it instantly and perfectly
  - And with the enemy bound, there is no catalyst to disturb that perfect peace
  - And though Scripture doesn't say, I assume that his demons are also in the abyss and bound during this time
  - It makes no sense to think that the king of the demons is bound while the demons roam free to wreck havoc
- So we understand why Satan is bound, but why is he later released?
  - Paul gives us the answer to that question in 1 Corinthians 15, and the answer is related to why he was bound in the first place

20E-9

**1Cor. 15:24** then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

**1Cor. 15:25** For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

**1Cor. 15:26** The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

**1Cor. 15:27** For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him.

**1Cor. 15:28** When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.

- Paul quotes from Psalm 8 in which the Father promises He will eventually place all Creation under Jesus' authority
  - Every enemy of God will be subjected to Christ's authority before this world ends, and the last enemy to fall will be death
  - Death is a reference to the one who personifies death, Satan, because he brought sin and death into existence
- Once Satan is defeated and all things are under Christ's rule, then Paul says all powers and authority will be abolished forever
  - In other words, no longer will Christ rule separately from the Father much less will the saints rule in a government
  - Because there will be nothing to rule...if the last source of sin and rebellion is crushed then there is nothing that needs ruling

- We're learning the very purpose for the 1,000-year Kingdom and for the whole creation itself: to give opportunity for Jesus to rule over sin
  - According to the chronology of the Bible, the world has existed in its present form for about 6,000 years
    - During that time, the fallen world has been the dominion of Satan and sinful humanity has tried to rule itself
    - The testimony of those 6,000 years is death, war, misery and destruction...it's been a disaster
  - Those 6,000 years of history proves that we cannot rule our own hearts, just as the Lord declared

20E-10

[Jer. 17:5](#) Thus says the LORD,

“Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind  
And makes flesh his strength,  
And whose heart turns away from the LORD.

[Jer. 17:6](#) “For he will be like a bush in the desert  
And will not see when prosperity comes,  
But will live in stony wastes in the wilderness,  
A land of salt without inhabitant.

[Jer. 17:7](#) “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD  
And whose trust is the LORD.

[Jer. 17:9](#) “The heart is more deceitful than all else  
And is desperately sick;  
Who can understand it?

- If we trust in the heart or strength of mankind, we are sunk
- But if we trust the Lord to rule our hearts, we are blessed

20E-11

- For 6,000 years the world has trusted in mankind, and not coincidentally the number 6 in the Bible is the number for sinful, fallen man
  - But for an additional thousand years, the world will experience what it's like when we trust in the Lord's rule over Creation

20E-12

- And when you add that additional thousand years to the age of the world, you get 7,000

- And 7 is the number of perfection and completeness
- So the purpose of the Kingdom is to be a capstone on the earth's existence highlighting Jesus' perfect rule
  - Those final 1,000 years contrast with the prior 6,000 years to make the point that only through the Messiah come righteousness and justice
    - Satan will be bound during that time to prevent him from interfering with Jesus' rule over the Creation
    - And then once the 1,000 years is complete and God is ready to end this phase of history, He releases Satan for a little while
  - Why? Paul says so that he may be defeated as planned and once death is defeated, then this age may come to a complete end
    - When Jesus crushes Satan's final rebellion, He will have abolished His final enemy
    - And at that point this Creation will have met its intended purpose as Paul explained
  - Now we know why Satan was bound – to make possible 1,000 years of perfection
  - And why he must be set free to deceive the nations – so that Creation itself can come to completion and Christ can defeat the last enemy
    - But had Satan been destroyed at the beginning of the 1,000 years, then there would have been no Kingdom at all
    - Because once the final enemy is abolished, Christ returns all authority back to the Father, Paul says
  - That leads us into the last events of this book, the final judgment and the New Heavens and New Earth in Chapters 21 & 22
    - But before we go there, we still have one final question to answer tonight

20E-13

20E-14

- Who are Gog and Magog, and what are the details of Satan's deception and this final battle?
- Revelation doesn't tell us much other than mention the names and explain how the battle ends

- And that's because the details are elsewhere in the Bible, and in fact the mention of Gog and Magog are intended as markers to leads us
  - There are only two mentions of a "Gog and Magog" in connection with a war against God's people
  - We have this mention in Revelation 20 and as mentioned earlier in Ezekiel 38 & 39
  - Chapter 38 describes the preparations for the war and the war itself, while Chapter 39 describes the aftermath of the war
- And as I mentioned last week, our ministry features a comprehensive teaching on Ezekiel online already
  - So we won't cover all of Chapters 38 & 39 here...we will just cover the main points as they relate to Revelation 20
  - Starting with a simple framework for understanding the purpose of these chapters in Ezekiel's prophecy
- Ezekiel is a long book of prophecy with 48 chapters, and the last 16 chapters (33-48) are all devoted to prophecies related to the Kingdom
  - Last week when we studied the temple in the Kingdom, most of what we studied came from Chapters 40-48 of Ezekiel
    - And Ezekiel also tells the story of the final war that ends the Kingdom period, the war of Gog and Magog
    - Those details are found in Chapters 38-39, before the discussion of the temple
    - So perhaps for that reason, some scholars have decided that the events of Ezekiel 38 & 39 precede the time of the Kingdom
  - But a closer examination of the structure of Ezekiel's final chapters tells a different story
    - Those chapters are not organized chronologically, they are organized according to God's promises to Abraham
    - Because the entire Kingdom is a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant given to Israel
  - So Ezekiel 33-48 are an explanation of how God is going to fulfill His covenant to Abraham and Abraham's descendants



- We can summarize this relationship with a simple chart
- There are four parts to the Abrahamic promises

**20E-15**

- God promised Abraham an inheritance of land with prosperity, descendants living securely and His presence dwelling among them
  - Later the Lord added a fourth promise to David to provide a king to rule the land perfectly
  - So a king to rule a land of prosperity filled with a people at peace with the Lord among them in glory
- Ezekiel 33-48 is the story of how the Lord will fulfill all four promises in the kingdom

**20E-16**

- And Chapters 38 & 39 show how God fulfills His promise to ensure the security of Israel in the land while demonstrating His glory to the nations
  - God allows Satan loose to deceive the nations, teaching them how to wage war and tempting them to do so
  - And then as Satan attempts to take peace away from Israel, the Lord intervenes to stop the battle before it starts
  - And in that way, the Lord uses Satan to show Israel that He is indeed keeping His promise to protect them
- So let's start our summary of Ezekiel 38 & 39 by looking at the primary human actors in this war

**20E-17**

**Ezek. 38:1** And the word of the LORD came to me saying,

**Ezek. 38:2** "Son of man, set your face toward Gog of the land of Magog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him

**Ezek. 38:3** and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal.

**Ezek. 38:4** "I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords;

**20E-18**

**Ezek. 38:5** Persia, Ethiopia and Put with them, all of them with shield and helmet;

**Ezek. 38:6** Gomer with all its troops; Beth-togarmah from the remote parts of the north with all its troops – many peoples with you.

[Ezek. 38:7](#) “Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them.

[Ezek. 38:8](#) “After many days you will be summoned; in the latter years you will come into the land that is restored from the sword, whose inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they are living securely, all of them.

- Our first actor in this drama is Gog, from the land of Magog
  - The word Gog is a title, not a specific name, similar to Pharaoh or Caesar
    - So Gog is a person while Magog is the nation or land that he comes from
    - And from the table of nations in Genesis 10, Magog roughly refers to Eastern Europe including present day Turkey
    - Among Noah’s grandsons to settle in that region north of Israel included men named Magog, Mechech, and Tubal
  - A man with the title Gog comes from this land, and this man will be joined by allies from east and south to start a war
    - They come to invade Israel from every possible direction but notice the impetus to gather and fight comes from God
    - In v.4 we’re told God draws them into battle, and we know from Revelation 20 that God uses Satan to accomplish that outcome
  - Next, notice the army is equipped in a very rudimentary way, with horses and rudimentary weapons
    - In Chapter 39 we learn that they battle using wooden clubs and spears, wooden shields and helmets, wooden bows and arrows
    - In fact, everything used in the battle will be made of wood, not metal
    - Remember, Isaiah told us that since the art of war will be lost in the Kingdom, all metal will be refashioned into farm equipment
  - And finally, notice that the attack will come against a land that has been restored from the sword

- The word for restored is the Hebrew word *shuv*, which has many shades of interpretation
- In this context, the best interpretation would be turned away from or to have put away
- In other words, in that day Israel will be a defenseless land, a land without military weaponry because obviously none is needed
- Notice a few other key details...this happens in the latter days after they have been summoned by God back into their land to live peacefully
  - Secondly, Israel will have been gathered from among the nations to live in their mountain which was previously a continual waste
    - That's a reference to Israel regathered after the end of the Age of Gentiles, which ends with the conclusion of Tribulation
  - Finally, notice the small phrase at the very end of v.8..."all of them"
    - All of Israel is dwelling in this place, not just some Jews but all Jews
    - Putting all this together (with many other details in these chapters), this must be Israel in the Kingdom
  - But if you've studied Ezekiel's war before or if you're a student of prophecy, then you may have heard others placing these events earlier
    - It's common to hear teachers placing these events prior to Tribulation, in our world today
    - But for the reasons I've shown already and more to come, that timeline just doesn't fit the details nor the purpose of the war
  - As we continue our study, we will see more evidence stacking up for this war to take place at the end of the Millennial Kingdom
    - It's worth noting that the only two places in the Bible where the leader Gog of Magog is mentioned is in Ezekiel and Revelation
    - That connection all by itself demands an explanation
  - Given the similarities of the situation, the obvious and logical connection would be that these reference the same individual
    - John mentions the name Gog in Revelation 20 with no explanation because it's a reference to the earlier prophecy

- He expects his readers to know who Gog is from having read Ezekiel
- Now let's move to the invasion itself

20E-19

**Ezek. 38:9** “You will go up, you will come like a storm; you will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your troops, and many peoples with you.”

**Ezek. 38:10** ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan,

**Ezek. 38:11** and you will say, ‘I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates,

**Ezek. 38:12** to capture spoil and to seize plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places which are now inhabited, and against the people who are gathered from the nations, who have acquired cattle and goods, who live at the center of the world.’

20E-20

**Ezek. 38:13** “Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish with all its villages will say to you, ‘Have you come to capture spoil? Have you assembled your company to seize plunder, to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to capture great spoil?’”

**Ezek. 38:14** “Therefore prophesy, son of man, and say to Gog, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “On that day when My people Israel are living securely, will you not know it?

**Ezek. 38:15** “You will come from your place out of the remote parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great assembly and a mighty army;

**Ezek. 38:16** and you will come up against My people Israel like a cloud to cover the land. It shall come about in the last days that I will bring you against My land, so that the nations may know Me when I am sanctified through you before their eyes, O Gog.”

- In v.9 we read about the movement of a vast army of people so great that it covers the ground like a cloud, which agrees with what Revelation 20 told us
  - Then beginning in v.10 we see how this invasion unfolded
    - An evil thought entered into the mind of an evil man, Gog
    - He devises a plan to invade Israel and his idea originates in opportunity and greed
  - Gog notices the land is at rest, which means quiet, unsuspecting and the land is unwalled, no bars, no gates

- Walls are the most basic of protective measures intended to defend against an enemy attack
- So an unwallled village indicates a total lack of concern, like living in a house without a front door
- Secondly, Gog's greed gives him reason to seize upon that opportunity
  - In v.12 Gog notices the abundance of the land, the cattle and goods amassed in the land
  - The Bible says the abundance of Israel in the Kingdom will be second to none
  - Israel will be blessed above all other nations in that time period, so it makes sense for Gog to see something there he wants
- Ezekiel says these thoughts entered into Gog's mind, but we know from Revelation 20 who the real instigator of these muses was: Satan
  - Though he's not mentioned here, Revelation tells us that Satan has returned to work deceiving the world by this point
  - He deceives Gog to thinking that he can win this battle and that God has been wrong to bless Israel so much
  - Then Satan has tempted Gog's lust into taking what Israel has for himself
- So in v.15 Gog recruits others to enter into battle with him, and with the help of Satan he recruits other nations to invade from the north
  - In v.13 we're told that Israel's neighbors are puzzled by invaders gathering on Israel's border
    - They seemed surprised and in disbelief at the unfolding events indicating how out of the ordinary this action will be in that day
    - No one has seen war before, so people in this day are literally stupefied to see an amassing of an army
  - Then in v.14, we hear the Lord's challenge to Gog, asking rhetorically will Gog disrupt the peace that God has given to His people Israel?
    - Curiously, we know the Kingdom will be a time without war for 1,000 years

- In fact, Isaiah told us that the knowledge of how to wage war will be completely lost

20E-21

[Is. 2:4](#)

And He will judge between the nations,  
 And will render decisions for many peoples;  
 And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.  
 Nation will not lift up sword against nation,  
 And never again will they learn war.

- Generations will be born and raised without experiencing war so no one will even know how it's done
- And the technology of war will be gone as well
- But God promised He would ensure Israel safety in their land during the Kingdom, so how will Israel *know* God is keeping that promise?
  - Without a threat to Israel's peace, there is no way for God to demonstrate His faithfulness to keep the peace covenant
  - It's as if God promised to cure you from cancer, but until you contract cancer, you can't know God kept His promise
  - But since God said He will protect Israel from her enemies, He shows Himself faithful by defending Israel against Gog
- So Gog's invasion is how the Lord brings about Satan's end, but it also serves an important purpose in the Kingdom
  - It gives opportunity for the Lord to show Himself faithful to the peace covenant He makes with Israel in that age
  - By how the Lord defends Israel against Gog's invasion, everyone will come to see just how securely the people are dwelling in the land
- Next, look at the nature of warfare in this coming day
  - In v.15 the Lord describes the invasion as many peoples all riding horses
    - The Hebrew word translated as horse means...*horse*
    - There is nothing in the text to indicate this is a symbolic reference to some non-horse tool of war

- Which means this is a type of warfare where horses are again a chief means of transportation
- If we suppose this battle happens in the present day, then we have a very difficult time explaining this reference
  - The Israeli Defense Forces are among the most modern and sophisticated in the world
  - Moreover, the armies of Russia, Turkey, Iran, Libya, and even Ethiopia possess tanks, armored vehicles, aircraft, etc.
  - So either we place these events in the pre-industrial times or forward to the Kingdom age where war technology is unknown
- The people come into Israel covering the land like a cloud, similar to the description we saw in Revelation 20 of as many people as the sand
  - But God says He will be sanctified in Gog's destruction
  - And the people will see the Lord's faithfulness as He destroys the invaders
- Speaking of destruction, let's see how the Lord does that in Chapter 39

## 20E-22

**Ezek. 39:1** "And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am against you, O Gog, prince of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal;

**Ezek. 39:2** and I will turn you around, drive you on, take you up from the remotest parts of the north and bring you against the mountains of Israel.

**Ezek. 39:3** "I will strike your bow from your left hand and dash down your arrows from your right hand.

**Ezek. 39:4** "You will fall on the mountains of Israel, you and all your troops and the peoples who are with you; I will give you as food to every kind of predatory bird and beast of the field.

**Ezek. 39:5** "You will fall on the open field; for it is I who have spoken," declares the Lord GOD.

**Ezek. 39:6** "And I will send fire upon Magog and those who inhabit the coastlands in safety; and they will know that I am the LORD.

- The Lord sets about thwarting Gog's attack, and notice in v.3 the Lord says He will strike the bow and arrows from their hands

- This reminds us of what we learned in Chapter 38, that the war is prosecuted in very rudimentary ways
  - As Isaiah told us the time of the Kingdom is a time of ignorance when it comes to war
  - So Gog has recruited a vast army, but one that relies on the simplest of tools like bows and arrows
  - Why do they think they can win with such simple tools? They were deceived by Satan into thinking they could win
- But at the same time, Israel stands completely defenseless, so these simple weapons are a true threat to Israel's peace in the land
  - So the Lord defends Israel against this uncountable army by defeating it by His own might
  - Israel never engages in the battle at all
- As this army invades and attacks, they are struck down en masse by a supernatural act of God
  - Notice in v.6 the invaders are destroyed by fire from Heaven, a clear parallel to what John told us in Revelation 20
  - The army of the land of Magog will be completely consumed by fire from Heaven and the battle will end instantly
  - And Israel's peace will have remained intact during the Kingdom
- But there's one more interesting detail to this battle...

20E-23

**Ezek. 39:9** “Then those who inhabit the cities of Israel will go out and make fires with the weapons and burn them, both shields and bucklers, bows and arrows, war clubs and spears, and for seven years they will make fires of them.

**Ezek. 39:10** “They will not take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forests, for they will make fires with the weapons; and they will take the spoil of those who despoiled them and seize the plunder of those who plundered them,” declares the Lord GOD.

**Ezek. 39:11** “On that day I will give Gog a burial ground there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block off those who would pass by. So they will bury Gog there with all his horde, and they will call it the valley of Hamongog.



[Ezek. 39:12](#) “For seven months the house of Israel will be burying them in order to cleanse the land.

20E-24

[Ezek. 39:13](#) “Even all the people of the land will bury them; and it will be to their renown on the day that I glorify Myself,” declares the Lord GOD.

[Ezek. 39:14](#) “They will set apart men who will constantly pass through the land, burying those who were passing through, even those left on the surface of the ground, in order to cleanse it. At the end of seven months they will make a search.

[Ezek. 39:15](#) “As those who pass through the land pass through and anyone sees a man’s bone, then he will set up a marker by it until the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog.

[Ezek. 39:16](#) “And even the name of the city will be Hamonah. So they will cleanse the land.”

- After the Lord has vanquished the invading armies, the wasteland of dead and their wooden tools become huge supply of fuel
  - So the people of Israel will go out to scavenge from among these weapons
    - Notice the people of Israel weren’t involved in the battle at all since the Lord did the fighting
    - They stayed securely in their unwalled villages while the Lord fought the battle for them out in the plain
  - The people of Israel collect weapons of all kinds, including shields, bows, arrows, war clubs, and spears
    - And for seven years Israel will use these tools as fuel for fire
    - This is confirmation that the tools used by the invading army are made of wood, because wood burns, but steel does not
  - In fact, in v.10 the Lord says that the people won’t even bother to take wood from the field or gather firewood from the forest afterward
    - They have enough wood from these implements to satisfy their needs for fuel, so wood is the primary fuel for the Kingdom age
    - There were so many invaders that the materials collected keeps all Israel supplied with wood for burning to last seven years
    - That’s a huge quantity of wood, and it tells us how vast this invading army must have been

- Then Gog and all his multitude of army will be buried in the land of Israel where they fell
  - The location of burial will be in a valley east of the sea
    - The sea is the Mediterranean Sea, and the most prominent valley east of the Med. is the Jordan River valley
    - So more than likely, that's the valley in mind here
  - And the bodies in that area will be so numerous that the burial ground will block the passage of people through the valley
    - Remember, a Jew may not traverse over graves, so the number of bodies buried in this region makes passage impossible
    - They will rename the valley Hamon-gog, which means multitude or uproar, so the valley is called the multitude of Gog
  - The dead will be so numerous that the burial process will require seven months
    - Israel will go through the land meticulously looking for unburied bones of the fallen so they might cleanse the land
    - And as they find a bone, they will mark it carefully to prevent a Jew from stumbling across it and becoming defiled
    - Then having marked the bone, it will then be buried in the valley where no one may go
    - Notice in v.13 the Lord says that Israel will make a name for itself among all the nations by how they respond to the dead
- Turning back to the text, the Lord adds one more detail to help us understand how the Lord cleansed the land

20E-25

**Ezek. 39:17** "As for you, son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'Speak to every kind of bird and to every beast of the field, "Assemble and come, gather from every side to My sacrifice which I am going to sacrifice for you, as a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel, that you may eat flesh and drink blood.

**Ezek. 39:18** "You will eat the flesh of mighty men and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, as though they were rams, lambs, goats and bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan.

**Ezek. 39:19** "So you will eat fat until you are glutted, and drink blood until you are drunk, from My sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.

[Ezek. 39:20](#) “You will be glutted at My table with horses and charioteers, with mighty men and all the men of war,” declares the Lord GOD.

- In the Bible, the Lord directs people to make a sacrifice of animals
  - Our sacrifices of bulls and goats were intended to remind us of our sin and the need for a covering of blood
    - Now in this final act of war the Lord turns the tables
    - Remember, this event is the final moment of this world, the last event of human history on planet earth
  - And in that final moment, the Lord makes humanity a sacrifice to the animals
    - The animals gain the benefit while man pays the price and God is the One making the sacrifice
    - The message is that the need for sacrifice of any kind has come to an end
    - The Lord Himself conducts the final sacrifice and the final offering are those who oppose Him
    - And that final act of judgment to close the age gives opportunity for the Lord to be glorified

20E-26

[Ezek. 39:21](#) “And I will set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them.

- So with that all unbelief in Creation is gone though not yet judged
  - And that’s what we move into next week...the judgment moment for the souls of all unbelievers who have ever lived
    - Following that moment, the earth and its works will be burned up and a new world appears
    - We study that process over the next couple of weeks to finish our study



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

# 21

## Chapter 20:10-15, 21

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- The end of the Kingdom has come, and yet there are things left undone
  - We've studied the high points of the thousand years of Christ's rule on Earth
    - We learned about the amazing life in store for all of us in that place, which is soon to arrive on earth
    - And we learned that after this period ends, there will be a final war to bring Creation to an end
  - That war fulfills God's purpose for Christ's rule, and as Paul explained in 1 Corinthians 15, all Christ's enemies will finally be destroyed
    - Then we experience 7+ years of clean up before this Creation is eliminated
    - This additional time tacked on to the end of the Kingdom will be a testimony to God's faithfulness to Israel
  - And those seven years will be an interesting time all their own
    - It will be a unique time in which all humanity will be saved and believing and there will be no enemy of God at work on earth
    - Those seven years will be the closest anyone will have ever known to living in the Garden of Eden as Man and Woman did
- And now all that remains is a great judgment of all who opposed God throughout all the age of the Creation and Kingdom
  - That's where we start tonight...starting with Satan himself

**Rev. 20:10 And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**

- After the 1,000 years are over and the war has ended, Satan is judged
- But notice his judgment is not an end of his existence but rather the start of a new existence in torment
- Satan joins the false prophet and the Antichrist in the Lake of Fire
  - The false prophet and Antichrist entered the Lake of Fire at the start of the Kingdom
  - At that time, I said we would wait to examine that place until we reached the end of the Kingdom
- So today we learn what we can about the final place of judgment and how the enemy and ungodly humanity will enter it
  - Starting with the reality that this place actually exists and lasts forever
  - In fact, the place is already in existence now, but where is it? Back in Revelation 14 we learned this:

**Rev. 14:9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,**

**Rev. 14:10 he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in**

**full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.**

- It appears the lake exists in the heavenly places outside our sight and exists in “the presence of the angels”
  - It’s empty right now, and during the 1,000 year Kingdom it will hold only the false prophet and Antichrist
  - But immediately after the war of Gog and Magog, Satan will join them reuniting all three members of the False Trinity
- This place is the home of the ungodly and unbelieving for all of eternity
  - Notice in Revelation 20:10 that Satan is tormented there forever and ever
  - This is an unambiguous statement and it is confirmed by numerous other verses in the Old and New Testament
  - In Matthew 25:46, Jesus affirms that judgment for unbelief involves physical torment forever and ever without relief
- When we hear this, we instinctively wonder about the fairness of such an arrangement
  - We might think that the punishment doesn’t fit the crime, as if the Lake of Fire is a prison where the ungodly pay back their debt before God
    - Under that scenario, we would expect that eventually they would have completed that payment
    - But that’s not the right way to understand eternal punishment
    - It’s not a place of restitution or atoning...it’s a dwelling place for those who are unable to enter into the presence of God

**2Th. 1:6 For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you,**

**2Th. 1:7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire,**

**2Th. 1:8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.**

**2Th. 1:9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,**

- That’s the definition of spiritual death: it’s being eternally separated from the presence of God
  - Just as the believer’s future is “eternal” life so is an unbeliever’s future eternal too
  - The Bible also calls this the Second Death, which is defined as spending eternity away from God
- The Second Death is eternal because evil, the fallen nature of Satan, his demons, and all unbelieving humanity last forever
  - After death there is no second chance for redemption, therefore all remain in

torment away from the presence of God forever

- They aren't paying off their debt; they are living in an existence appropriate for their continually sinful nature
- So after the Kingdom and the War of Gog, there will be three creatures in the Lake of Fire, and certainly all deserve to be there
  - But the Lord cast them there without formality or conducting a public trial and obviously, the Lord's judgments are subject to inspection
    - His judgments are always righteous and no one stands in judgment over God
    - Nevertheless, the Lord will give the rest of humanity a public trial of sorts before they face their judgment
  - And in preparation for that moment, the unbelieving dead will be resurrected into new bodies just as we did at an earlier point

**Rev. 20:5 The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection.**

**Rev. 20:6 Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.**

- Remember that the First Resurrection was for all believers, while the Second Resurrection is for all unbelievers
  - The rest of the dead in v.5 refers to all those who were not resurrected in the First Resurrection prior to the Kingdom
  - This is the second resurrection, and it is not a blessed event
- That's where we are now...at the moment when the Kingdom has ended, all unbelievers have died and it's time to wrap things up
  - Just as the Kingdom could not start until all believers from this age were ready to enter together...
  - Neither could the final judgment take place until all unbelievers were ready to be judged
  - And now at the end of the Kingdom, all unbelievers are ready to face judgment

**Rev. 20:11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.**

**Rev. 20:12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.**

**Rev. 20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.**

**Rev. 20:14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the**

**second death, the lake of fire.**

**Rev. 20:15** And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

- John sees a great, white throne appear and an unnamed individual seated on it, but we know this is Jesus
  - John and Peter tells us that Jesus has been appointed by the Father to judge all

**John 5:21** “For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes.

**John 5:22** “For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son,

**Acts 10:42** “And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

- Earlier Jesus judged the living, meaning the believing, when He assigned us our eternal rewards at the Judgement Seat of Christ
- And now Jesus is seated at the Great White Throne Judgment ready to judge the dead, meaning the unbelieving
- And as this judgment commences, John says Earth and Heaven will have fled away
  - The term “heavens” in this context refers to the first and second heavens, the physical creation
  - So as this judgment starts, all the universe is gone in an instant

**Luke 21:33** “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

- The Greek word for fled is *pheugo*, which means to run away
  - It's the same word that the Apostle Mark uses to describe himself running naked after being seized in the garden
  - Imagine how fast a naked Mark must have run to hide, and that's a sense of how quickly the physical Creation will disappear
- And then all humanity from all history will be present before the throne in this moment
  - Imagine how many souls that will be? All who have ever lived on the planet for seven thousand years
    - How many billions and billions of people will be there? Hard to even imagine, but you will be there too
    - And yet we will occupy some “space” without a creation to hold us, and that too is impossible to imagine
    - The only light will be Jesus Himself, since the sun will be gone, and there will



be no earth under our feet or so we

- So all unbelievers are resurrected and stand before Christ in this moment, the great and the small (it's an equal opportunity judgment)
  - They are judged from books present in that moment, but first where do all the dead come from? Where have they been all this time?
    - First, let's review what happens when someone dies, since the result varies depending on who you are and when you die
    - Human beings consist of a spirit (or soul) and a body, and our spirit is eternal while our body is temporary
    - Our body always disintegrates when our spirit departs, but our spirit lives on in one of two conditions
  - For saints, the destination of our soul is comfort, and the exact location varies according to when in history we die, according to Scripture
    - Before Christ, believers went to Abraham's Bosom to await the Messiah's arrival
    - After Christ died and set these captives free, a believer's soul went directly to Heaven to be with Jesus
    - In the First Resurrection, believers from all time receive new bodies and are forever with Jesus from that point
  - But for unbelievers, the destination for the soul has always been the same place: torment in Hades (or Hell) followed later by the Lake of Fire
    - And in v.13 we are given the locations from which these dead will be raised
    - First, Hades or Hell gives up its dead which is a reference to the clearing out of all unbelieving humanity
  - Every unbeliever since Cain will be found living in Hades at this moment except for two human beings
    - The Antichrist and false prophet will be gone from Hades since they will already be in the Lake of Fire
    - The rest are now being cleared out of that place after having spent hundreds and thousands of years there waiting
- Secondly, the sea gives up its dead, and the reference to the sea is confusing because it's actually being used euphemistically here
  - This is a reference to the abyss, the holding place for the demons next to Hades in the center of the earth
    - In the Bible the sea is a picture or euphemism for the abyss, a place of confinement for the ungodly angels
    - In Hebrew the word *tehom* can be translated either as a pit (as in the abyss) or as sea
    - And that reflects how Jews understood the sea to be a metaphor for the abyss and that's how John is using it here
  - This judgment is for both the ungodly humans and the disobedient angels also, so they are brought up from their prison too

- Demons anticipate this moment and know it is coming

**Matt. 8:28** When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way.

**Matt. 8:29** And they cried out, saying, “What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?”

- Finally, John says “death” gives up its dead, referring to the first death which has been in effect until this moment
  - Notice that “death and Hades” are joined together in v.13 and are distinguished from the “sea” or the abyss
    - The abyss is reserved for demons, but death and Hades are reserved for humans since we have a body that dies
    - So the First Death is giving up its dead in the sense that it’s coming to an end
  - So death isn’t a location, it’s a state of being...so in that sense, “death” is giving up those who were in its grasp
    - And in its place will come the Second Death
    - And since death and the earth itself are passing away, then Hades itself will no longer exist
- So all unbelieving humanity will now stand together, rebels opposed to God and we can safely assume this must be a profoundly somber moment
  - All the unrepentant sin in the world will be on display in a single moment
    - We were born like them and but for the grace of God, we would stand in this place
    - Always remember you were spared from experiencing this moment for no reason except for the mercy of God
    - But at this moment, every knee will bow and tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord

**Phil. 2:9** For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

**Phil. 2:10** so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

**Phil. 2:11** and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. So if all their tongues confess Jesus as Lord, why are they still subject to His judgment?

- All their tongues confess Jesus as Lord, but it does not save them at this point because they confess the obvious
  - Their expression is not done as a matter of faith in God’s word

- Their confession is just self-evident truth, and since there is no faith required, then no salvation is possible
- Then in v.12 these souls are judged according to books that are opened before them and presumably the contents of the books are read aloud
  - Notice there are two different books described: a book of life and the books of deeds
  - The book of life is mentioned in various places in Scripture

**Phil. 4:3** Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

**Rev. 3:5** 'He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.

**Rev. 13:8** All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain.

- From these passages, we learn that the Book of Life is where the Lord has recorded the names of all those who receive His mercy
  - It's the family record of the sons and daughters of God, and these names are recorded in this book before the Creation was made
    - So the Lord had a certain family in mind even before Adam and Woman existed
    - And all of human history has played out according to God's plan leading to every name recorded in that book being born
    - And having been born, they were saved by faith and later resurrected at the first resurrection
  - So if the Great White Throne judgment is for unbelievers only, why is the book of life present?
    - Simply put, it proves that none of those souls standing for this judgment are worthy of acquittal or of eternal life
    - None of them have confessed Christ, none have received forgiveness, none are in the family of God
    - This is the closest moment you can find in the Bible to the old fable of Peter at the Pearly Gates checking a list
  - Since none will be found in the book of life, then it remains for them to be judged according to the other books present at this judgment
    - John says that the dead are judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds
    - So what are these books exactly? Two answers have been proposed

- One answer is that these books are a recorded history of every person's sinful deeds which make them deserving of judgment
  - Every person's life is a long tale of sin, and our deeds condemn us apart from God's grace in the provision of Jesus
    - At this point, we begin to wonder how long will this moment last?
    - How long will it take to judge billions of people involving a recitation of all the evil deeds done in every person's life?
  - A second possibility is that the books that are opened are the five books of Moses, the Law in other words
    - If so, then the reading of these books would be to enumerate the standards for righteousness
    - And then each person standing would be judged according to whether they meet the requirements of the Law
    - In that case, the judgment would be much shorter, because we need only recite a single sin in each person's case
    - Breaking one law makes a person a law breaker and therefore worthy of judgment
  - Notice John says in v.15 "if" anyone is not found in the book of life, then they suffer judgment, which seems to suggest some might be found
    - But none will be found, because the search isn't intended to vindicate but to confirm conviction
    - If anyone had been recorded in the book of life, they wouldn't be standing here in this moment
    - They would have been included in the first resurrection
  - So since all will fail this test, all will be thrown alive into the Lake of Fire, John says
    - They are thrown "alive" in the sense that they are conscious and aware of their situation
    - This is further confirmation that the Second Death is not annihilation but a new eternal existence
- So the present Universe and humanity's home for the past 7,000 years is now gone as are all those who opposed God
  - All that remains are saints in eternal bodies, the angels and the Trinity of the Godhead
    - And that brings us to the next age of eternity, a time of great mystery in Scripture
    - All that we know about what follows the Kingdom is given in just two chapters of the Bible, the final two chapters
  - Revelation 21 & 22 tell us about the New Heavens and New Earth that will replace the one we have now
    - It raises more questions than it answers though, and in that regard it follows in the biblical pattern of progressive revelation
    - The Lord has always revealed Himself to mankind progressively over a series

of revelations

- We see that as we read through the Old and New Testaments, as prophets increasingly received more and more understanding

**Heb. 1:1** God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways,

**Heb. 1:2** in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.

- This pattern seems to continue with the New Heavens and New Earth, since the Lord only gives us a little to know now
  - Perhaps when we are in the Kingdom, the Lord will grant us more understanding of what is coming after
  - So we can say that with respect to the New Heavens and New Earth, we are like the Old Testament saints knowing only a little

**Rev. 21:1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.

**Rev. 21:2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

**Rev. 21:3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them,

**Rev. 21:4** and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."

**Rev. 21:5** And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

**Rev. 21:6** Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

**Rev. 21:7** "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son.

**Rev. 21:8** "But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

- As we study the final two chapters of the Bible, we will also be referring back to the first two chapters of the Bible because one is patterned on the other
  - Notice right away how Chapter 21 opens saying a new heavens and earth have been created
    - Compare that to Genesis 1:1

**Gen. 1:1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

- This parallelism will continue through Chapter 22, and as we encounter it, we will make note of it and explain its purpose
- Unlike Genesis 1, we don't get a clear description of what the new earth looks like, apart from a few tantalizing details
  - The first detail we receive is in v.1, that this new world will lack seas altogether
  - This is in stark contrast to the current earth which is more sea than land
- Why did God include a sea in the first Creation but not in the new Creation?
  - Scripture says God makes no mistakes and never changes His mind so we can't say He just improved on the design
  - There must be some reason why seas were good the first time but not necessary the second time
  - Because this issue will come up again in these chapters, we will wait until we have all the details before solving the riddle
- Next, the Lord places a city on this new earth, called the New Jerusalem but the city isn't built by human beings on the new earth
  - Instead, the Lord delivers the city to earth, remade from heaven
  - Scripture teaches us that this city already exists right now in the heavenly realm waiting for this future day to appear

**Heb. 11:15 And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.**

**Heb. 11:16 But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one.**

**Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them.**

**Phil. 3:20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;**

- The arrival of the New Jerusalem will be witnessed from the earth, and its appearance will be like that of a bride made ready for a husband
  - Imagine the moment you turn to look down an aisle to watch a bride appear and walk toward her groom
    - It's dramatic, anticipated and celebrated, and so it will be for the New Jerusalem at this moment
    - We can safely assume that we will never have seen it before this moment, even while we were present with Jesus in heaven
    - It will be a special moment, giving us something to look forward to even while we live in the 1,000-year Kingdom
  - In the original creation, the Lord also prepared a special city for mankind and then placed man in it

**Gen. 2:7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.**

**Gen. 2:8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.**

- Notice that the city was created on earth and man was placed in it, meaning Adam descended into it
- But in the New Heavens and Earth we are on the earth and the city descends to us
- In vs.3-8 John hears a declaration that the arrival of New Jerusalem means that all things have been restored to a perfect state
  - All the negative impacts of Adam's sin and the resulting curses have now been rectified and restored
  - And that's why we're seeing this repeat connection between Genesis 1-2 and these chapters
- First, in v.3 John says the Triune God may once again dwell among men
  - For the first time since the garden of Eden, the Father will dwell on Earth
  - We will dwell with God the way Adam once did
- Secondly, the creation has been cleansed of sin and all its consequences – there will be none of the markers of sin
  - No tears, no death, no mourning, no crying, no pain...all things that exist because of sin, they were not part of God's perfect creation
    - It was sin that corrupted mankind and led to the curses on earth and all creation
    - All sources of rebellion and sin find their source in Adam and before him, Satan
    - But all that is past, and the Lord has corrected it all
  - Reinforcing this imagery of a full circle conclusion, Jesus reminds us in vs.5-6 that He is making all things new as He promised to do
    - And He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end
    - Remember in the beginning was the Word, Jesus, and the Word created the heavens and earth
    - And now at the end, Jesus is again creating all things new again, so truly He is the Beginning of creation and the End of creation
  - And Jesus adds He is also the source of all life and righteousness which brings life
    - The key to being present to experience these amazing things is to have believed in the Alpha and Omega
    - If you thirst for the water of life, which is an illusion to the Spirit of Life, then Jesus is your supply
    - And those who overcome sin and death and the enemy and this corrupt life are those who place their faith in Jesus
  - As we reach the end of this book and the end of the Bible, we will increasingly find calls to believe and receive salvation in Jesus

- And that's what we would expect, because this story exists in our Bible not just to encourage the believer of their future
  - It's here to persuade the unbeliever to seek for Jesus while they still can, and so that point will be made repeatedly in 21 & 22
- Nevertheless, there will be many who insist on living apart from God now and so they will spend an eternity apart from Him later
  - And in v.8 John provides a list of the sins representative of an unbeliever's lifestyle
    - This list of sins are not unique to unbelievers, and in fact we may share one or more of these from our past or even our present
    - The point is that these are the natural fruit of unbelief, while they are the unnatural fruit of believers
    - It's possible for a believer to live this way, but it's contrary to our new nature, yet is consistent with an unbeliever's nature
  - More importantly, in that day unbelievers will be the only ones who practice these things...all our sin will be gone
    - So it will be true to say in that moment that those who conduct themselves in these ways are going into eternal punishment
    - For these behaviors will be unique to this group, and as we saw already, they will experience the second death
  - The ultimate criteria for exclusion is they were unbelieving and so they enter the Lake of Fire
- So after the city has descended, we who have received the grace of God in Christ will enter the city as Hebrews promises

**Heb. 12:22** But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels,

**Heb. 12:23** to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

**Heb. 12:24** and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.

- According to Hebrews, the city will be home to several categories of Creation
  - First and foremost, the Godhead will dwell in the city
  - Secondly, the entire host of angels will live there
  - Next, the church of the firstborn which is a reference to the church saints, the New Testament Bride of Christ
  - Finally, the spirits of the righteous made perfect, which is a reference to all other believers
- That will be quite a neighborhood and it sure beats any exclusive zip code you might have today
  - And next John gives a bit of a tour of the city, and since there is no cross



referencing available we will just take it for what it is



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# Revelation

## 2020 - Lesson

### 22

## Chapter 21:9-27, 22

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- We've reached the final lesson of our study of Revelation, and as we do we finish with probably the most mysterious content in the book and the Bible
  - John has been asked to describe the New Heavens and New Earth (NH&E), and you can certainly sympathize with his challenge
    - He doesn't tell us much about this world, and what he does give us is focused on the capital city of the new world: New Jerusalem
    - Last week John was given an introduction to the new world as a place without crying, pain, tears and death
    - In other words, the complete fulfillment of all God has promised to us comes in that place
  - This world was never revealed to the Old Testament saints...the prophets prior to Christ were only told of the Kingdom period
    - But now the Lord begins to open the curtain of that coming period of history even as we still wait for the Kingdom to come
    - In a sense, we can say what will be true for Israel in the Kingdom will finally be made true for all humanity in the NH&E
  - John's vision of this world is fleeting, and yet there's enough detail to appreciate that it will differ in significant ways from our present world
    - As I said last week, we are going to note the differences between the present world and the NH&E to understand God's purposes
    - That understanding will build tonight until we see it come together in the end
- Our tour begins with John seeing the city from a distance and preparing to measure the dimensions of the city and describe its appointments

**Rev. 21:9** Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and spoke with me, saying, "Come here, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb."

**Rev. 21:10** And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God,

**Rev. 21:11** having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

**Rev. 21:12** It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names were written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel.

**Rev. 21:13** There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west.

**Rev. 21:14** And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

- The angel escorting John on this tour describes the city of New Jerusalem as the Bride of Christ
  - In the rest of the New Testament, the term "Bride of Christ" is a title reserved for

the Church saints

- But when we arrive in the NH&E, that title will transfer to the city itself
  - This makes sense when we remember that the term “Bride of Christ” refers to the dwelling place of Christ’s Spirit
- Just as a man and wife become one flesh in marriage, so did Jesus and the Church become one body by the indwelling of His Spirit
  - In the Church Age, the Bride of Christ is the body of Christ, His Temple
  - But in the eternal age, Christ dwells with the Father in the Temple of the City, so the city has become the Bride of Christ
  - And we dwell in the city as well, so we too are dwelling with Christ
- John’s first view of the city is remarkable, to say the least, beginning with its shape: it’s a perfect cube
  - The length and width of the city is equal to the height of its buildings
  - John doesn’t describe the nature of the New Earth itself which the city rests upon, but John watches from a high mountain
  - So apparently there is land outside the city, some of which John will describe later
- John says the city gleams with the glory of God like a diamond, meaning it will be brighter than our sun is today
  - Curiously, the city is surrounded by a high wall with three gates on each side for a total of twelve gates
    - Normally, walls are for defense, which makes us wonder why this city needs defenses?
    - But later in v.25 we will learn that the gates never close, so clearly no one is worried about an attack
  - These walls and gates are not defensive fortifications, they are memorials remembering God’s work in the prior Creation
    - John says in vs.12-13 that each gate had an angel stationed at it and each gate was named for one of the twelve tribes of Israel
    - We know that Israel eventually had thirteen tribes, so we’re left to wonder which twelve names are used for the gates
    - Manasseh and Ephraim are probably represented by Joseph
- Gates are an entry point, so naming the gates after the twelve tribes reminds us Israel is literally the gateway to redemption and to a knowledge of God
  - God worked through Israel to fulfill His promises of redemption as Paul explained

**Rom. 9:4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,**

**Rom. 9:5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.**

- So it's appropriate that the gates into the city would memorialize the twelve tribes, because without Israel there is no entry
- Without Israel, there are no covenants, no prophets, no Law, no temple, no Christ...so truly everyone enters through Israel
- But notice the gates are arranged in threes for a total of 12 entry points, and these numbers are also significant
  - The number three is the number for the Godhead, which reminds us that the architect behind everything is God
  - All the work was God's alone and yet he accomplished it through the nation of Israel
  - And the number 12 represents God ruling through people, specifically through the sons of Jacob
  - So the gates will forever remind us that the Lord brought us into this city by working through a family called Israel
- Similarly, John says the foundation will memorialize the role of the Apostles
  - The foundation of the walls will contain twelve different layers of precious stones representing the twelve men who Jesus called
    - The Apostles were the men God used to establish the Church and the opportunity for Gentiles to enter into the city as well
    - And it's appropriate that the apostles would be foundation layers for the walls
  - The memorialization of the two groups together reinforces that Israel and the Church are distinct and yet work together in God's plan
    - Paul explain this relationship in Ephesians 2

**Eph. 2:12 remember that you [Gentiles] were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

**Eph. 2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

**Eph. 2:14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall,**

**Eph. 2:15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace,**

**Eph. 2:16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.**

**Eph. 2:17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;**

**Eph. 2:18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.**

**Eph. 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,**

**Eph. 2:20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,**

**Eph. 2:21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,**

- Paul describes Gentiles in the Church as fellow heirs with Israel in the household of God
  - The two groups were once separated by a law that God gave to Israel but not to Gentiles
  - But now that Christ has done away with the Law of Moses, He has broken down the dividing wall allowing both groups to join
- This new combined family is built on a foundation of the apostles and prophets, Paul says, meaning their roles in bringing God's revelation
  - So in the NH&E we will live in a city constructed to remind us of Israel's role in allowing all people to enter God's grace
  - And of the apostles' role in bringing the Good News to all Gentiles
  - And the two work together to give God glory, for He used both to His purposes reflected in the number 12
- Now we tour the city beginning with John taking measurements of the city and noting the materials used in its construction

**Rev. 21:15 The one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall.**

**Rev. 21:16 The city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal.**

**Rev. 21:17 And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, according to human measurements, which are also angelic measurements.**

**Rev. 21:18 The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.**

**Rev. 21:19 The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;**

**Rev. 21:20 the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.**

**Rev. 21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass.**

- As we saw at the temple in Ezekiel's book, measurements are taken by prophets to give the reader perspective and to validate the reality of the prophecy
  - But more than anything, the measurements simply amaze us
    - John says in v.16 that the city is designed as a perfect square 1,500 miles in each direction
    - Obviously, the city is beyond anything we have ever seen on earth today

- A city that is 1,500 long and 1,500 miles wide would span most of the continental U.S.
  - And then even more amazing, the city is a cube, extending upward into the sky by an equal distance of 1,500 miles
    - On today's planet, the outer reaches of Earth's atmosphere only extend about 50 miles or so
    - Satellites orbit at between 100 miles and 26,000 miles
    - So this city will reach up into the range of orbiting satellites today
  - Obviously, this means the world supporting this city must be vastly different than today's world
    - Our atmosphere must be very different or else we don't need an atmosphere any longer
    - Having the penthouse apartment in this world means having a stunning view
- The measurements in vs.15-17 also serve to reinforce a certain meaning
  - My english bible translates the measurements as 1,500 miles in every direction with a wall 72 yards high
    - But the original Greek measurements are in cubits and stadion
    - So the text actually says the city is 12,000 stadion and the wall is 144 cubits
  - These original measurements are important because the city is built on 12s and multiples of 12
    - Again, the number twelve is the number of God's perfect rule through men
    - So this city is a memorial to God's perfect plan which He accomplished in Christ through Israel and the Church
  - Finally, the city is a testimony to the beauty of God's creation in all its extravagance
    - Twelve precious jewels everywhere, the gates are made of a solid carved pearl (i.e., the pearly gates) and pavement is gold
    - The thing we value so much today and work so hard to obtain will be the paving under our feet in that day
    - And once again, the materials come in twelves speaking of God's power to work through the history of mankind
- Moving on in our tour, John begins to describe the city's inhabitants, beginning with its more honored residents

**Rev. 21:22 I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.**

**Rev. 21:23 And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.**

**Rev. 21:24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it.**

**Rev. 21:25 In the daytime (for there will be no night there) its gates will never be closed;**

**Rev. 21:26 and they will bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it; Rev. 21:27 and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

- John says there will be no temple in the city because the Godhead is the temple of the city
  - Before, the Lord dwelled among men in a building or inside a human body but in the NH&E there will no longer be need for a physical home
    - Temples existed in the past to separate man from God because sinful man could not be in the presence of a holy God
    - With all sin erased and all enemies gone, the Godhead in fullness will dwell with us in His Person and thus He IS the temple
  - Moreover, notice both the Father and the Son reside together in this age, since finally the Father is able to fellowship with man again
    - Not since Adam walked in the Garden has this been possible
    - And Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that the Spirit will dwell there as well

**1Cor. 15:24 then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.**

**1Cor. 15:28 When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all.**

- Paul tells us that after the Kingdom, the Son returns all authority to the Father so God may be all in all
- That phrase is a bit mysterious but it suggests the Godhead being fully present as we see here in the New Jerusalem
- And because the Godhead is fully present, the light of this world comes entirely from God
  - John says the Godhead is the source of the light and there is no sun or moon to cast light on the new earth
  - The glory of God is itself light to the world
- In v.24 John adds that the nations in this world walk by the light of the Lamb
  - Apparently, there will be nations on the earth outside the city of Jerusalem
  - And we hear that kings of the earth bring their glory into the light but we know Paul said that all authority is abolished
  - So the phrase “the kings bring their glory into the light” must mean the kings of the earth hand back their authority
  - So that all glory is now for and from God
- Finally, in v.25 John says that there is never a period of night in the new world, which



raises some interesting questions for us

- First, it causes us to wonder about the construction of the new world
  - If God is the only light and He is resident in the city, then it suggests that the world is flat
  - If the world was a sphere, then the light of God couldn't reach the back side of the planet, causing darkness there
  - Or perhaps the entire universe is equally lit or the laws of physics have been changed...the answer is unclear
- Secondly, we have more things being subtracted from our experience of the world
  - Earlier we heard there is no sea on this new world, and now we hear no sun, no moon and no dark
  - Once again, this raises the question of why the Lord is changing the design?
  - Why did He design a world with these features the first time if the "better" world doesn't need them?
- Let's review the Creation account...beginning with the fact that the world was made out of water, as Peter tell us

**2Pet. 3:5** For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,

**2Pet. 3:6** through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.

- Peter says that God's use of water as the beginning of physical creation was a reflection of His longterm plan for earth
  - He knew a day was coming when He would destroy the planet with water, so water was present from the beginning
- Furthermore, the Creation started with light and darkness in the beginning even before the planet existed and before the sun existed

**Gen. 1:2** The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.

**Gen. 1:3** Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

**Gen. 1:4** God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

**Gen. 1:5** God called the light day, and the darkness He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day.

- So the Lord intended for alternating periods of light and dark and constructed a Creation to fit that plan
- This alternating of light and dark produced the ability to measure the passing of time, so time was created on Day 1

- And the addition of the sun and moon on Days 4 was for seasons and years

**Gen. 1:14** Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years;

**Gen. 1:15** and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so.

- In the design of the original earth, day and night made it mark the passage of time, and the presence of the sun and moon gave periodicity to that cycle
  - They were not created to provide light, strictly speaking, though they did that too
    - Light existed on Day 1 and so it can exist again without a sun to create it or a moon to reflect it
    - Their principle purpose was to be used as signs, to count time and control earth’s seasons
  - But in the NH&E there will not be a need to count time in the same way (nor will there be seasons or signs needed)
    - We think of time as something endless that we count upward to remember how far we’ve come
    - But from God’s point of view, time has a limit, and so our calendar is not a count up, but a count down
    - It’s a countdown to the end of this earth and to the end of time itself
  - And so when the need to count time ends, so will the objects that were created merely for that purpose
    - Without night there are no “days” to count and without a sun there are no “years” to count
    - So time is endless in the NH&E, although as we will see soon we still count months
- Now we move into the final chapter and John’s final few details about this new and strange world to come

**Rev. 22:1** Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb,

**Rev. 22:2** in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

**Rev. 22:3** There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him;

**Rev. 22:4** they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.

**Rev. 22:5** And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.

- Now John moves to describing a few tantalizing details of the geography and other features of the city
  - From the throne of God come a crystal clear river of water called the water of life which flows through the city
    - The river runs down the middle of a broad street and on either side of the river is the tree of life
    - So the tree straddles the river it appears, and gains its life from the water
  - Then the tree in turn produces fruit in a unique pattern of monthly with a different fruit each month
    - And the leaves will have a healing power for the nations of people living in the NH&E
  - The tree is a special, singular tree called the Tree of Life, and the last time we saw this tree was in the Garden before the fall

**Gen. 2:8** The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.

**Gen. 2:9** Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

- Interestingly, Adam and Woman ate of this tree before their corruption and they were barred from it after they sinned
- God said they couldn't eat of it any longer because they would live forever

**Gen. 3:22** Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” —

**Gen. 3:23** therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

**Gen. 3:24** So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

- So while Adam and Woman had no sin, they ate of a tree that provided for eternal life, and after they ate they were barred from the tree
  - In effect, barring Adam and Woman from the tree of life produced physical death in keeping with God's curse
  - They came from dust, and now without access to the tree of life they would return to dust
- We remember something similar from the description of the temple to be found in the Kingdom as told by Ezekiel and Zechariah
  - They described a river that comes from the temple and exits the building to split and flow east and west

- In Ezekiel's description, that river causes life everywhere it goes including fruit trees that have the power to heal in their leaves
    - So in some sense, access to the tree of life is the means of eternal life both in the Kingdom and in the NH&E
  - This explains why the tree is also a part of the landscape in the Kingdom
    - Physical immortality is made possible by the tree, it appears, both in the Kingdom and the NH&E
    - But why did God institute this mechanism in the first place?
  - Notice, the tree itself is sustained by the water coming from the throne, which clearly communicates that all life comes from God
    - So each time we eat of the tree or use the leaves, we are reminded that life is flowing from God to us through the tree
    - In that way the tree is merely a mechanism to remind us where our life comes from
  - When death is ever present and health is fragile, we are constantly reminded of our mortality and our dependance on God
    - But when those worries are gone, what will cause us to remember God's goodness and His life sustaining power?
    - Without a mechanism like the tree, we could easily take immortality for granted and forget the source of all life is God
  - Finally, notice that the tree produces fruit on a monthly schedule, and this will be the time mechanism for the NH&E
    - Time continues to pass and be measured, but it's only measured in months, not years
    - So we always know what month it is but no one is keeping track of the years because it doesn't matter
  - We aren't counting down to anything and time itself is endless for us
    - But we are keeping track of months in a cycle of 12, probably to observe certain celebrations and memorials of Christ
    - The point will be to honor God though the pattern of observance
- Moving forward in the passage, in v.3 John confirms that the curse God pronounced on the earth after the sin of Adam is gone
  - In Genesis 3 God cursed the ground because of Adam, leading to physical death and the eventual destruction of the Earth
    - That curse has now been carried out, and so the curse itself has been removed
    - Without a curse on the earth, the world is idyllic and without flaw
    - More importantly, we are not under any condemnation nor are we dealing with the effects of sin in the earth itself
    - No weeds, no hard work, and especially no sin or death
  - The work we will do will be in service to Christ, and we can't say what that will look like, but we know it will be something worthwhile and enjoyable

- Our perfect nature means we will work in His very presence and see His face
  - And He will mark us as His with His name on us, a seal that assures us that we will never face death or sin again
- Lastly in v.5 John repeats that there is no night, and no need of lamps or the sun because God's light will be everywhere
  - You won't find darkness anywhere, not even shadows
  - There will be no such thing as a dark room or dark closet...light will simply exist in all places
  - We might also assume that we will not sleep either
- Before we finish the chapter, let's conduct that review of all the differences between the first creation and this new creation
  - When we put the differences between the two creations side by side, we notice a pattern
    - The first Creation would soon be corrupted by sin in the Garden leading to the curse on the world and judgment
    - Therefore, in the original Creation the Lord incorporated certain features in the design of the earth in anticipation of sin's arrival
    - These features would become useful to God in illustrating to man important spiritual truths concerning sin and redemption
  - For example, the Lord created a world with light and dark so that He could use the terms to illustrate righteousness and sin

**John 8:12** Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

- And the Lord created the sea knowing He would use it to destroy the world when sin became rampant in Noah's day
- More than that, the Lord uses the covering of deep water as a picture in the Bible of Sheol, the place of the dead

**Gen. 49:25** From the God of your father who helps you,  
 And by the Almighty who blesses you  
 With blessings of heaven above,  
 Blessings of the deep that lies beneath,  
 Blessings of the breasts and of the womb.

- The Hebrew word for deep is *tehom*, the same word translated "deep oceans" other times
- So the Lord created a world with night and seas to allow Him to illustrate sin and death and eternal punishment
  - And the Lord included objects like the sun and moon to institute the counting down of time and the giving of signs of the end

- Counting time was needed to allow men to mark the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the end of the age
- And the sun and moon are used by God as signs of the approaching end of the age and the coming judgment against sin
- Most of all, notice that the Lord made these design choices for the first earth long before man existed or the fall of Adam took place
  - In other words, God's plan for the first Creation fully anticipated the arrival of sin and His design made accommodations for it
  - The Lord planned to speak about the meaning of these things and explain a plan to correct for them in His Son Jesus
- But now that there is nothing unclean in the Universe and no one is sinning and there is no death, these elements have been removed
  - The NH&E itself has been designed without these illustrations because the things themselves no longer exists
    - Now that sin has gone and will never return, God designs a different world, one suited for a new purpose
    - While the first world was to be a home for a fallen man, the new world is a home designed for glorified sinless man
  - God's very plan for creation necessitated an arrival of sin so that eventually Christ could enter that Creation and die for it

**Eph. 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love**

**Eph. 1:5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,**

**Eph. 1:6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

- Without being the author of sin, God expected and accommodated the arrival of sin
  - Because the Creation must know sin and the judgment that sin requires to fully appreciate the love of God
  - We must understand that God is a God of wrath and judgment if we are to praise Him for grace and mercy
  - And now in the NH&E we will forever remember and praise God for His plan of redemption for our sake
- With that we move into the closing comments of Christ to John and to us

**Rev. 22:6 And he said to me, "These words are faithful and true"; and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show to His bond-servants the things which must soon take place.**

**Rev. 22:7 "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."**

**Rev. 22:8 I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I**

**heard and saw, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed me these things.**

**Rev. 22:9** But he said to me, “Do not do that. I am a fellow servant of yours and of your brethren the prophets and of those who heed the words of this book. **Worship God.”**

**Rev. 22:10** And he said to me, “Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near.

**Rev. 22:11** “Let the one who does wrong, still do wrong; and the one who is filthy, still be filthy; and let the one who is righteous, still practice righteousness; and the one who is holy, still keep himself holy.”

**Rev. 22:12** “Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.

**Rev. 22:13** “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”

**Rev. 22:14** Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city.

**Rev. 22:15** Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.

- Christ finishes the vision of this book in a personal way for John, first saying these words are faithful and true
  - We can trust the record of this book and receive it in complete confidence that this is the future, and that future is not long away
  - The same Spirit who gave the prophets their words is the One Who gave John these words
    - Read Isaiah and notice all the things written long ago about Jesus that came true
    - Read Daniel and notice all the world events that transpired exactly as Daniel said
    - Did those men get lucky? Impossible! They knew the future because God revealed it to them
  - And John is exactly the same...he saw things that represent your future, and these things are no less certain than the word of the prophets
    - Jesus says He is showing us, His bondservants, the things that soon must take place
    - Yet we know these words were written 2,000 years ago...how is that soon?
    - Because once they begin to unfold, they will move quickly, and in the light of eternity it will be very brief
- So what are we to do with all this in the meantime? Jesus answers that in v. 7 saying, note that He is coming quickly, which is a reference to the Rapture
  - In light of what will transpire, Jesus says we must be thinking about the end at all times
    - We must live with eyes for eternity, prepared for the Lord’s return

- And heeding the words of the book means allowing the reality of these coming events to bear on the decisions you make in life
    - It's one thing to acknowledge intellectually that these things will one day take place
    - But it's another thing to allow that knowledge to influence your life
  - Almost to emphasize the importance of our response, John then relates a moment in v.8 when he fell to worship the angel escorting him
    - But John is rebuked by the angel and reminded that we do not worship fellow servants of God
    - Let that be a reminder not to elevate any servant of God, whether man or spirit, to a point beyond what's appropriate
  - Next in v.10 John is told that unlike John's predecessor, Daniel, John isn't to seal up the prophecy...he's told to leave it unsealed
    - Remember, Daniel was told to seal his vision because it wouldn't be revealed until John's day, which we studied in Chapter 11
    - The prophecy Daniel was given was so far in advance that it couldn't be useful in that earlier day
  - But now the time is short, so the world needs to hear and know the meaning of Revelation
    - This is not a book to be feared or avoided...on the contrary, the book itself pronounces a blessing on those who study it
    - And now the angel tells John that the time is near and we need to understand the meaning of this book
    - In fact, the meaning of this book will be increasingly clear to us as we approach the end
    - That's one reason why I believe we are so close, because the meaning of the book has become so clear to us
- On the other hand, in v.11 John is reminded that the fact this book may be understood in our time doesn't mean that unbelievers *will* profit from it
  - On the contrary, the angel says unbelievers will continue to go about their sinful ways
    - Only when and if the Spirit interrupts that course by bringing them saving faith will it change
    - Meanwhile, those who have the truth will remain in Christ's hand until the end
  - Then in vs.12-15 Jesus Himself gives a final call to the believer and to the unbeliever
    - Consider this the ultimate altar call of the Bible, a final chance for the reader to reflect on all the Bible testifies
    - For the believer, Jesus says He is coming quickly, meaning without warning and He brings a reward with Him
    - He will repay us for our deeds done in service to Him
- And in v.14 Jesus speaks to unbelievers calling them to desire for the good things



described in this book

- To be washed clean of sin by the blood of Jesus, to eat of the tree of life rather than to perish in the lake of fire, to enter into the gates of the city
  - Jesus reminds those who refuse His call in v.15 are those who practice and love the unrighteous acts of sin
  - Remember, Jesus isn't saying that those who do these things are automatically unsaved
  - He's saying that these behaviors typify the lifestyle and attitude of unbelievers
  - And if those who practice such things do not repent and believe, they will be left "outside" the city
- We know that unbelievers exist eternally in the Lake of Fire and now we get a hint of where that place may be
  - Since the original Heavens and Earth have gone, the lake of fire must have been allotted a place in the new Heavens and Earth
  - And that new place is somewhere outside the city
  - This leaves open the possibility that the location could be visible from the city or least somewhere on earth
- Finally, our book ends with a benediction...

**Rev. 22:16** "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

**Rev. 22:17** The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost.

**Rev. 22:18** I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book;

**Rev. 22:19** and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.

**Rev. 22:20** He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

**Rev. 22:21** The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.

- Jesus testifies one last time that we should trust and believe what He has given to us and trust in Him as Messiah, the descendant of David
  - You get a sense from the ending that Jesus knew this book would be doubted, misinterpreted and even dismissed
    - But there is no other book of Scripture in which Jesus speaks to the reader in the first person as the incarnate Christ
    - And there is no other book of Scripture where Jesus emphasizes so strongly

that the word should be trusted and heeded

- And then Jesus offers one final altar call, the final call to believe in the entire Bible
  - In v. 17 the Spirit and the Church say to the world “Come” meaning come to faith in Jesus
  - Since the first century, the Spirit of God and the Church of believers has been calling the world to know Jesus
  - And anyone who comes thirsty for righteousness and for peace will take of the water of life without cost
- But in stark contrast to that invitation, the book ends with a warning that should make anyone think twice about adulterating Scripture
  - Jesus says that anyone who makes changes to this book, they will not enter the city of God
    - They will experience all the plagues of this book, culminating with the Lake of Fire
    - They may not live through the Tribulation, but the point is they will experience one or more of the torments of this book
    - At the very least, they will know the Lake of Fire
  - Jesus is saying that the desire to undermine the word of God is a trait characteristic of unbelief
    - Altering God’s word is a sure sign that the person has no relationship with the Spirit Who authored the work
    - That’s why He says they will not be found in the book of life
    - The language of v.19 may sound as if Jesus is saying someone could lose salvation
    - But that is merely a consequence of Jesus using parallel language...He’s saying “You remove my words, I remove you”
  - And since the Spirit is the author of the entire Bible as a single work, then by logical extension this warning is true for all books of the Bible
    - The entire work of Scripture was inspired, including the specific number of books included in the canon of scripture
    - So God knew these words would be the final words of the Bible
    - Which makes it clear He was warning against changing anything in the word of God, not just in the book of Revelation
- Lastly, Jesus assures us He is coming quickly, to which John adds, Amen, come Lord Jesus
  - To which I add, amen as well
    - The Grace of the Lord Jesus be with all of us...until He comes
    - Please learn these things, and share them with others