



SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOK OF
REVELATION

38 Day Devotional



foundations 
daily devotional

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

DAY 1**INTRODUCTION – PART 1**

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. – Revelation 1:1 (ESV)

This is the very first line in the book of Revelation and it shows us the purpose of the book. God gave us the book of Revelation so that we could know ‘the things that must soon take place.’ Unfortunately, many Christians today ignore the stated purpose of the book and believe it to be a mysterious allegory. Revelation is not an allegory! It was written to reveal actual events that are to take place. To emphasize this point, the book of Revelation finishes by repeating the same statement: *And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”* – Revelation 22:6 (ESV)

Why would God want to show us in advance the things that are to take place? Three reasons – (1) So we can be encouraged that Jesus is sovereign and awesome – no matter how bad things get we can be assured that the storyline is already written, and He will win in the end; (2) So we can be encouraged to persevere through persecution and suffering (Rev 13:7-10; 14:12; 21:7); (3) So we can know what we’re supposed to do (ie. ‘obey’) when the time comes.

The call to obey the book of Revelation is repeated twice, once at the beginning and once at the end (proving again that it is not meant to be an allegory – how does one obey an allegory?):

Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near. – Revelation 1:3 (ESV)

“And behold, I [Jesus] am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” – Revelation 22:7 (ESV)

Notice the blessing promised in each of these passages as well. The book of Revelation is the only book of the Bible that explicitly promises a blessing to those who read and obey it. Of course, this is not to say that there isn’t a blessing for reading and obeying the other books of the Bible, but it does emphasize a fact that is lost on many evangelicals today – the book of Revelation is not a weird or difficult book that should be ignored. The Holy Spirit commands us to study and obey it, and promises a blessing to those who do.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. What is your view on the book of Revelation? Ask God to reveal any doubts you may have going into this study.
2. Meditate on the three points that are made as to why we should study Revelation. Ask Jesus to show you His heart on each of these:
 - a. Be encouraged that Jesus is sovereign and awesome
 - b. Be encouraged to persevere through persecution and suffering
 - c. Know what we’re supposed to do (ie. ‘obey’) when the time comes.
3. Reflect on *how good God is* to send us not only warnings, but also encouragement to seek Him in all things. Spend some time journaling some of the things God has done for us as we have sought Him.

DAY 2**INTRODUCTION PART 2** – What is there for us to obey in the book of Revelation?

There are three types of commands found in the book of Revelation which believers need to obey. Each group of commandments comes with its own rewards or blessings for obedience:

1. **The command to PERSEVERE.** One of the primary reasons why the book of Revelation was written was to encourage persecuted and suffering Christians to persevere and not give up. Though the book specifically describes the awful events which will only occur in the End Times, this command to persevere applies to all the Christians who have ever lived throughout history.

Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and language and nation, ⁸ and all who dwell on earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. ⁹ If anyone has an ear, let him hear: ¹⁰ If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. – Revelation 13:7-10 (ESV)

Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. – Revelation 14:12 (ESV)

No reward for quitters: In addition to these passages, seven times in the letters to the seven churches, and once at the end of Revelation, believers are exhorted to ‘conquer.’ Rewards are only promised to those who persevere until the very end. The Greek word in each of these cases is the word *nikaō* which means to “hold fast the faith even unto death against the power of ones foes, and temptations and persecutions.”¹

- *‘To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life . . .’* – Revelation 2:7 (ESV)
- *‘The one who conquers will not be hurt by the second death.’* – Revelation 2:11 (ESV)
- *‘To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna . . .’* – Revelation 2:17 (ESV)
- *‘Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations . . .’* – Revelation 2:25-26 (ESV)
- *‘The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.’* – Revelation 3:5 (ESV)
- *‘I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. The one who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God.’* – Revelation 3:11-12 (ESV)
- *‘The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne . . .’* – Revelation 3:21 (ESV)
- *‘The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son.’* – Revelation 21:7 (ESV)

Persevere to the death: One of the key themes of Revelation is that believers must be willing to persevere to the death: *And they [the saints] have conquered him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.* – Revelation 12:11 (ESV) When you’re at a place where you are willing to give up your life for the Lord you’re in a place where the devil no longer has any power to defeat you – you have conquered him!

¹ Strong’s Concordance: G3528 – *nikaō* – accessed online <http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strong's=G3528&t=ESV> (Mar 14, 2013).

A whole new spin on death – ‘Death is a blessing.’ In Revelation God comforts His suffering people not by promising them they won’t die, but by promising them that death will be a blessing – *And I heard a voice from heaven saying, “Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!”* – Revelation 14:13 (ESV)

- Death in the End Times is a blessing because you don’t have to suffer any more (‘rest from their labors’).
- Death in the End Times is a blessing because your ‘deeds’ will ‘follow’ you . . . meaning you will be rewarded for your suffering, and that reward will gloriously far outweigh the little bit of suffering we see in the End Times (see Rev 2-3 and 21-22).

A whole new spin on death – ‘Better to suffer here on earth than to suffer in hell.’

The book of Revelation contrasts the suffering of persecution in this lifetime with the eternal suffering of punishment in hell, in order to exhort believers to persevere and not to let a little persecution in this lifetime cause them to give up the faith. It is better to suffer at the hands of persecutors in this lifetime than at the hands of God for eternity: *And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink the wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of his anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.” ¹² Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.* – Revelation 14:9-12 (ESV)

Jesus Himself used this motivational tool in the Gospels: *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* – Matthew 10:28 (ESV)

2. **Instructions to the Seven Churches.** There is a second group of commandments found in the book of Revelation and these are found in the letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3. These specific instructions were individually tailored by Jesus directly to seven different local churches in the Roman province of Asia in the first century AD. They include things like Jesus’ instruction to the church in Pergamum to get rid of false teachers, and Jesus’ command to the church in Thyatira to repent of sexual immorality and Jesus’ warning to the church in Laodicea to turn away from worldliness and materialism. Each set of instructions to each church ends with some kind of promise of reward in heaven for those who overcome.

Though the instructions found in these two chapters of Revelation were intended for specific local churches at a specific point in history, they can still all be applied in a general way by churches and Christians living today. God expects believers today to study these instructions and to apply them to their lives, all the while looking forward to the rewards that they describe.

3. **Key ‘survival’ instructions for End Time Christians.** This third group of instructions is the group of instructions that most Christians today are ignorant about when it comes to the book of Revelation – yet these ‘survival tips’ are one of the key reasons why the book was written. Remember, the stated purpose of the book of Revelation is to show

God's servants *'the things that must soon take place.'* Why would God want to show us the things that must soon take place? Because He is a loving Father and He also wants to give His children instructions for escaping some (not all) of the different threats that are coming.²

Ex 1. 'Get out of the Harlot.' For example, Revelation 18:4 contains very clear instructions to believers to get out of the Harlot Babylon, whichever country/city that may end up being. The stated reason for this command is that God wants to spare His children from the pain and suffering that will result from the terrible judgment He will bring on her head. *Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her [the Harlot Babylon], my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues.* – Revelation 18:4 (ESV)

The command to obey here is the command to 'come out' of the Harlot Babylon. The blessing for those believers who pay attention is that they will escape the awful judgments coming to the Harlot. Instructions like these are one key reason why the book of Revelation was written.³

Ex 2. 'Don't take the Mark of the Beast.' A more famous example of a 'survival instruction' in the book of Revelation would be the warnings not to take the Mark of the Beast, found in chapters 13 and 14. In these passages we receive 2 things:

- 1) Specific details about a future event – that the Antichrist is going to try to make everyone take a mark on their right hand or forehead (Rev 13:16), a mark which will serve an economic purpose (13:17) and a religious/worship purpose (13:15)
- 2) Instructions about how to handle this future event – in this case, 'Don't take the mark! Those who take the mark will be sent to hell' (Rev 14:9-12; 16:2; 19:20; 20:4).

This is a very specific 'survival instruction' about a very specific event that will take place in the End Times. Apart from a specific warning like this, many Christians might otherwise yield to the pressure and rationalize their decision to accept the mark.

Ex 3. 'Get out of Jerusalem – run to the wilderness.' In Matthew 24 Jesus clearly tells Christians and Jews who are living around Jerusalem to run for the hills when the final period of tribulation begins: ¹⁵ *"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),* ¹⁶ *then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.* ¹⁷ *Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house,* ¹⁸ *and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak.* ¹⁹ *And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days!* ²⁰ *Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.* – Matthew 24:15-20 (ESV)

2 Clearly we will not be able to escape all suffering in the Tribulation – that is not God's intention. Suffering in the End Times is part of God's tool to purify the Church and make her radiant before His return. But there are some things in the Tribulation that He wants to spare His children from, and this is part of what the book of Revelation accomplishes.

3 Sadly, many Christians today have no interest in studying the book of Revelation, nor any of the important prophecies contained within, like the Harlot Babylon prophecy. At some point in time it is going to be very important that Christians be able to identify who the Harlot Babylon is – otherwise 'coming out' of her will be impossible!

This End Time survival instruction is echoed in Revelation 12, with some added details given: ¹³ *And when the dragon [Satan] saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman [the Jewish people] who had given birth to the male child [Jesus].* ¹⁴ *But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle so that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.* ¹⁵ *The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with a flood.* ¹⁶ *But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river that the dragon had poured from his mouth.* ¹⁷ *Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.* – Revelation 12:13-17 (ESV)

We know from Zechariah 14:1-3 and many other passages (Jer 30:4-7; Dan 12:1) that Jerusalem and the nation of Israel are going to fall into the Antichrist's hands in the End Times and go through a period of tremendous suffering. Thus, in Matthew 24, Jesus in love warns anyone who will listen to flee the area when that time comes. In Revelation 12 we are told that some number of Jewish people will listen; they will flee into the 'wilderness' and be supernaturally protected by God during the period of Great Tribulation. Anyone who listens to these instructions will be spared much suffering!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Are there things in your life right now that God is calling you to persevere on? Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a personal revelation on this situation.
2. Spend some time thanking God for all the warnings He places in our lives. When we are young, warnings come from many sources, one of which is our parents. "Don't touch the stove, you'll burn yourself," or "the street is busy, stay in the yard." As we mature, those warnings become more choices on *our* part. Revelation is a book full of warnings to be on guard, watch your ways and stay steadfast. It's a warning from our Heavenly Father to watch.
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any places that you are not heeding His warning for you right now. Repent and be on guard!

DAY 3

INTRODUCTION PART 3 – A History Lesson!

Historical Precedence: Christians flee from Jerusalem to Pella in 66 AD because of a prophecy in Scripture. There is historical precedence for Jesus giving His followers warnings like this in order to protect them. In 33 AD Jesus warned His followers that a time was coming when they would see Jerusalem surrounded by armies (see Luke 21:20-24). He then went on to instruct them that when they saw this happening they were to get out of Jerusalem as fast as they could and not return.

Thirty-three years later, in 66 AD, the first Jewish-Roman war broke out (sometimes called the Great Revolt). Immediately the Romans, under a man by the name of Cestus Gallus, moved on Jerusalem, surrounding it and laying siege. For reasons nobody can figure out (God!) Gallus suddenly withdrew from Jerusalem towards the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, where he was ambushed and soundly defeated. It was one of the worst military defeats ever for the Roman army by a rebellious province, and the Romans were shocked.

Emperor Nero then appointed General Vespasian and his son Titus to crush the Jewish rebellion. As Vespasian, with more than 60,000 soldiers, began to make his way towards Jerusalem, however, the Christians in Jerusalem all fled to a town across the Jordan River called Pella. Why? Because they were paying attention to Jesus' warning, from thirty-three years previous, to get out of Jerusalem the moment they saw armies coming up to surround it.

Epiphanes, a writer from 2nd century Egypt, wrote about this event, saying: *"It is very remarkable that not a single Christian perished in the destruction of Jerusalem, though there were many there when Cestius Gallus [laid siege to] the city; and, had he persevered in the siege, he would soon have rendered himself the master of it; but, when he unexpectedly and unaccountably raised the siege, the Christians took that opportunity to escape . . . [As] Vespasian was approaching with his army, all who believed in Christ left Jerusalem and fled to Pella, and other places beyond the Jordan; and so they all marvellously escaped the general shipwreck of their country: not one of them perished."*⁴

Another early Christian scholar named Eusebius also wrote about this event: *"The whole body, however, of the church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella."*⁵

And it's a good thing that the Christians got out when they did. Four years later (70 AD), after a long siege in which many starved, Titus and the Roman legions broke into the city, and in their fury tore down the Temple and killed hundreds of thousands of Jews, taking tens of thousands more as slaves. Meanwhile, all the Christians from Jerusalem lived in safety at Pella. Pella would continue on as an important Christian center for more than seventy years, during the time that Jerusalem remained desolate.

Will we likewise study the prophetic Scriptures and pay attention?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

- How we view the scriptures in terms of importance to our lives has a huge bearing on our Christian walk. We cannot walk correctly when we are not using the "instruction manual" to guide us. It is here that the Holy Spirit can prompt us, move us, correct us etc. Ask the Lord the following, journaling your answers:
 - Is the way I view the Bible the way You want me to see it?
 - Am I spending time in the Word, allowing You to teach me from it?
 - Am I following through with the things You have been teaching me?
- Realize that, just like anything, you cannot move to perfect this side of heaven. Yet we can move closer! Pray for a heart that hungers after God's Word, and the strength to do that which is asked of you.

⁴ Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary: The Holy Bible containing the Old and New Testaments with a Commentary and Critical Notes*, 6 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, n.d.), 5:228-229.

⁵ *Ecclesiastical History*, tr. C.F. Cruse, 3rd ed., in *Greek Ecclesiastical Historians*, 6 vols. (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1842), p. 110 (3:5).

DAY 4**READ:** Revelation 1 – The Seven Spirits

Many people are intimidated by the book of Revelation because of the perception that it is full of symbols that are hard to understand. The fact of the matter is, however, that the book of Revelation has far less symbols than people realize, and when it does use symbols, it clearly defines them. Three examples:

- 1) Chapter 1 – Lampstands & Stars: ¹² *Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands . . . ¹⁶ *In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.**

What are the seven golden lampstands and the seven stars?

Verse 20 tells us: ²⁰ *As for the mystery of the seven stars that 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.* – Revelation 1:20 (ESV)

- 2) Chapter 12 – The Dragon: *Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, ⁸ but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.*

Who is the dragon?

The next verse says: ⁹ *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.* – Revelation 12:7-9 (ESV)

- 3) Chapter 13 – The Seven-Headed Beast: ^{13:1} *And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.*

What is this beast and what are the ten horns and seven heads?

Chapter 17 explains: ⁹ *This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰ they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while. ¹¹ *As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. ¹² And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.* – Revelation 17:9-12 (ESV)*

And this is how things go throughout the book of Revelation; wherever symbols are used, they are explained somewhere in the text.

The seven spirits. One question people often have after reading chapter 1 of Revelation is, *Who are the ‘seven spirits’ before the throne of God?* (1:4; see also 3:1, 4:5, 5:6)

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, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.* – Revelation 1:4-5 (ESV)

In the past some people have said that they are seven special angels who minister before God's throne, but very few theologians or scholars believe that anymore. The reason is that this clearly has to be the Trinity at work here: first we have a greeting from YAHWEH (also known as 'Him who is and who was and who is to come'), who is God, and lastly we have a greeting from Jesus, who also is God – and sandwiched between these two members of the Godhead we have a greeting from seven angels? No. The whole focus of this passage is God – He's the One in charge of the churches, and He's the One who gave John the revelation, and He's the One who wants to pass along a greeting to the churches. Thus, the 7 spirits in this passage must be some kind of a title or description for the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Which means that any references to the 'seven spirits' of God (or 'seven thunders', see Rev 10:3-4) in the book of Revelation is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

Some of you might be thinking right now, "THIS IS ALL SO CONFUSING! How can there be only *one* God, but here in this passage we get a greeting from *three* distinct persons, and one of the persons is referred to as a *seven*?" Many practical-minded people might be thinking, "Why didn't John just say 'Grace and peace to you from God,' and leave it at that?" Or, 'Grace and peace to you from Jesus' and leave it at that? But remember, John is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – which means he's just the messenger for how *God* wants to reveal Himself to us; this is who God is, and God wants us to know God as He really is.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Meditate on who Jesus is as revealed in verse 5 and verses 14 -18. Read these verses out loud to yourself a few times and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to you as you do so.
2. Write down one or two things that jump out to you from these verses about who Jesus is. Write out a prayer of worship to Jesus based on these qualities.
3. Verse 5 tells us that Jesus is the One who 'has freed us from our sins by His blood.' Write down 2 or 3 things Jesus has freed you from in your life. Write out a prayer of thanksgiving to Him for each of those things.

DAY 5

 **READ:** Revelation 1- A big God

There are so many of us with our practical little minds, all we want to think about is our practical little lives here on this earth, and our practical little jobs, and our practical little families, and our practical little homes, and the practical, puny little 70 or 80 years we get here in this lifetime. And we don't want to think about anything beyond or outside of that. And we want to have God in a box too – we only want to think simple, practical thoughts about Him – 'He's the Big Guy up in the sky; He's very powerful and He made the world' – put the lid back on the box, label it 'God,' and put it up on the shelf. Only bring it down when you have practical problems in your practical little life that you want Him to help you with. And the only parts we care about in the Bible are the ones that give us practical advice for our practical little lives.

And so it's no wonder that so many of us are anxious, fearful, and petty. When all you think about is your short little life here on earth, everything that happens to you will look big and insurmountable.

It's kind of like a goldfish. That little goldfish is in his little bowl up on the counter, and all he cares about is his little bowl. He doesn't realize that right outside of his little bowl there is this whole other world, this huge, massive other reality. But he's a very practical little gold fish and all he cares about is the life he can see and touch inside his little fishbowl – 'Don't talk to me about things I can't understand outside of my little bowl, they don't affect me.' But what he doesn't realize is that his whole life is dependent on that other reality. He doesn't realize that there are these creatures outside of his fishbowl called 'humans' that are far beyond his imagination in terms of intelligence, size, strength, the air they breathe and the way they function and the world they rule and live in. And his whole life is dependent on them. They are the ones who feed him and keep him alive; they decide how big or how small his fishbowl will be; they decide what will go into his fishbowl; they decide what kind of a fishbowl he will live in; and they are the ones who decide where his fishbowl will be put, and when it will be moved and when it will be cleaned. But he has no concept of any of this. All he cares about is managing the little world he can see and touch inside of his fishbowl. And that's okay because he is a goldfish.

But you are not a goldfish! You were made for something far bigger than just the fishbowl of this little life you're living here on planet earth right now. You were made for a much bigger world – a whole other reality – you just can't see it with your physical eyes yet. And that reality and this reality are on a collision course, and someday soon that reality is going to crash into this one and swallow this one up, and for all of eternity you will live in that much bigger, better and huger one. Life in the practical little fishbowl of this lifetime will be nothing more than a distant memory.

Passages like this are our invitation to step out of the fish bowl. You weren't made to just be in the fishbowl, you were made to know God. Everything that happens to you in this life, is just an excuse for you to get to know Him more. He is at the center of all of our existence. And yes, He somehow exists as three persons, but that's part of the glorious truth about Him – He's far beyond us; He exists in many more dimensions and facets than we do. We're like little 2-dimensional stick figures next to Him – we exist as 1-in-1, but He somehow exists as 3-in-1; He bursts through the page, and busts all of our categories, destroying any boxes we try to fit Him in. We'll spend all of eternity worshiping Him and getting to know Him, and we'll never get bored because there will always be more to discover and explore. The book of Revelation is our invitation to explore God!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. What area of your life have you been keeping "inside the fishbowl?" That is, what area are you keeping blinded to more that is available to you? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there is a reason you do this.
2. Ask the Lord to reveal more of Himself to you. Tell Him that you want to explore more of who He is. Wait quietly to see if He says anything to you in return.
3. List some of the attributes of God – loving, generous, holy etc. Thank Him for how He is applying these attributes in your life.

For further study – see Appendix 6 at the end of this devotional: The book of Revelation is filled with references to, and quotes of, the Old Testament. Literally hundreds! Because of so much ignorance about the Old Testament, however, many Christians totally miss these references. But these references are key to understanding Revelation; when you begin to see the Old Testament allusions everywhere the book of Revelation comes alive. Appendix 6, at the back of this devotional booklet, contains a list of Old Testament references in the book of Revelation – rip it out and keep it with you as you do the rest of your readings in Revelation.

DAY 6**READ:** Revelation 2:1-7 - Letter to the church at Ephesus.

Besides being the capital of the Roman province of Asia (modern day Turkey), Ephesus was one of the most important cities in the New Testament: it was where Paul made his home for three years (Acts 20:31), and his base for evangelizing the entire province of Asia (Acts 19:10); it provides the context for an entire book of the New Testament – Ephesians, a letter from Paul to the church at Ephesus in the mid first century; it was also the place from which Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians (see 1 Cor 16:8); and it was also the sphere of Timothy’s ministry (1 Tim 1:3; cf. 2 Tim 1:18), as well as the apostle John’s ministry according to later Christian tradition.⁶

In Roman times the city of Ephesus was a very religious city with many temples and idols (see Acts 19:23-27), and its primary temple – dedicated to the goddess Artemis (or Diana, see Acts 19:27) – was famous throughout the ancient world. The pagan spirit that pervaded Ephesus was very hostile to Christians making it a dangerous place to follow Jesus (see Acts 19:28-34 and 1 Cor 15:32).

Jesus starts His message by commending the church; “*I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance . . .*” In many Christian circles today the word ‘works’ has become a bad word; anything that smacks of Christians having to work hard on their character, or to do good deeds, is immediately labeled legalism. But notice here that Jesus is *commending* the Ephesian Christians for their works and toil. He was pleased with all the effort and work they were putting into serving Him and pleasing Him.

This should be an encouragement to us – many times we think of the phrase ‘Jesus is watching you’ as a negative thing, in the sense that He sees all of our mistakes and mess-ups and secret sins. But here we see that it is actually a positive thing; Jesus sees when we try so hard to please Him too! He sees our motives, that, even when we mess up, so often we desire to do right. He sees our brokenness, and how oftentimes we find ourselves trapped in patterns of behavior, but how we desire to be set free, and He sees our feeble attempts to follow Him and please Him. And He loves those efforts! Like a father with a toddler who is just learning to walk, He sees our efforts, picks us up again and again when we fall, and rewards us for our *works and toil and patient endurance* in not giving up.

Jesus moves on to encourage the Ephesians for rejecting false teaching and hating the works of the Nicolaitans. There is no consensus among commentators as to who the Nicolaitans were, but the context of the passage suggests strongly that they were a group who taught God’s grace in a way that allowed Christians to live comfortably with sin. This gives us an insight into the heart of Jesus – He is passionate about holiness and purity, and He really hates sin. Not in a condemning way where He’s mad at us all the time because we’re imperfect, but in an encouraging way that He loves our weak attempts to grow in character and walk in holiness in everything we do. Every small attempt by us to live with integrity, purity and righteousness, while growing in godly character and humility, is received by Jesus as a gigantic act of worship. On the other hand, if we live with our sin in a casual way, this angers Him deeply.

It’s all about loving Jesus . . .

To this point we’ve seen that the church at Ephesus was a great church – they worked hard to advance the gospel and the kingdom; they endured through persecution and suffering; and they were passionate about holiness, not tolerating any of the false-grace teaching that leads people into compromise. And yet, Jesus had a very serious warning for this

⁶ This whole paragraph based on information in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, Revelation 2*, accessed electronically in the WORDsearch 10 Bible program.

church as well: *But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.* ⁵ *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.* – Revelation 2:4-5 (ESV)

In the end, it really is all about passionately loving Jesus. If we don't have that, we have nothing. Christianity is not about just going to church and believing right stuff about Jesus in your head – it's about getting to know Him personally and then radically, passionately devoting your whole heart and soul and life to Him.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not find this to be good news; many are plagued with guilt because of the apathy and lack of passion for Jesus that they experience in their lives. Worse, they don't feel like they have any control over their apathy – they don't know how to move from apathy to wholehearted love.

Do the things you did at first!

The good news is that Jesus is not judging feelings here. He says; (1) Remember from where you have fallen; (2) Repent; and (3) *Do the things* you did at first. These are actionable commands we can actually follow. Feelings come and go . . . what we need to do is pursue Jesus, and make choices to do things to love Him, and then let the feelings follow. And that's what Jesus is saying here – He says 'Repent and DO THE THINGS you did at first.'

It's kind of like this – those of you who are married; if you remember back to the days when you were dating and you fell totally in love with your spouse. What did that look like? You planned elaborate dates; you went to great lengths to buy special gifts and pull off extravagant surprises; money was not an issue! You gladly burned money and sacrificed money; you went for long walks; you would stay up too late talking on the phone; you bought flowers; you wrote notes . . . you expended tremendous amounts of energy doing things to love each other. And the result is that passionate feelings were stirred in you.

Now the sad thing is, many couples stop doing these things after they get married, and that's why the love slowly dwindles from so many relationships. If you stop putting logs on a fire, the fire will eventually burn out. And it's the same in our relationship with Jesus! Which is why Jesus says, 'Remember from where you have fallen, repent and DO the things you did at first!'

And if there has never been a time in your life where you were passionately set on fire for Jesus, that's okay – He's inviting you to be set on fire for Him now. Don't miss the uncompromising priority Jesus places on us passionately pursuing Him. It's not that you have to become 100% wholehearted and sold out for Jesus overnight . . . but we should be pursuing a course in life that is taking us more and more in that direction, rather than the other way around.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Take prayerful stock of your relationship with the Lord:
 - Do you genuinely love Him, or are you just playing a religious game and going to church?
 - Are you experiencing Him at all in your life?
 - Are you getting to know Him more and more? When is the last time you heard His voice?
2. Write out an honest statement before the Lord, 'This is where I feel I'm at with You.' Be sure to include specific things you are dissatisfied with in your walk with Him, if there are such things. Ask the Lord to respond to you and show you His perspective on your relationship with Him. Wait quietly before Him, and write down anything He puts on your heart.

3. Ask Jesus to show you practical steps you can take to shed apathy and grow in love for Him:
- One thing you need to drop (or limit) in your life;
 - And one thing you need to start doing in your life to grow the relationship.

DAY 7

 **READ:** Revelation 2:8-11 – Letter to the church at Smyrna.

Smyrna was a port city with a good harbor about thirty-five miles northwest of Ephesus. In the province of Asia it rivaled Ephesus and Pergamum in power and prestige, and its coins acclaimed it as the “first city of Asia in size and beauty.”⁷

Smyrna was also home to one of the most famous early church fathers, a man named Polycarp. In fact, it is quite possible that Polycarp would have been the one to receive this letter and read it to the church at Smyrna since he was the leader there, as well as a disciple of the apostle John.⁸

The letter starts with Jesus’ introduction, “*And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: ‘The words of the first and the last, who died and came to life.’*” – Revelation 2:8 (ESV)

Jesus does this at the beginning of each of the letters to the seven churches. And each introduction is different. In none of the introductions does He ever just introduce Himself as ‘Jesus,’ rather, in each of the letters He introduces Himself by different various aspects of who He is, and His character, or what He does, or what His physical attributes are like, etc. For example:

- In the letter to the church at Ephesus He introduces Himself as ‘*The words of Him who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.*’
- And in the letter to the church at Pergamum He introduces Himself as ‘*The words of Him who has the sharp two-edged sword.*’
- And in the letter to the church at Thyatira He introduces Himself as ‘*The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze.*’

And so on and so forth. In each of the introductions, the way Jesus introduces Himself directly corresponds to things that specific church needed to hear at that time and circumstances they were going through. So far this is nothing new – almost any commentary you read on the book of Revelation would tell you the same thing.

But what most people have failed to do is to apply this principle to their own lives. Lots of people have read these letters and gone, “Oh that’s so neat, in each of these letters Jesus introduces Himself in a way that exactly speaks to the things that particular church is going through and needs to hear.” But then very few people ever stop to think, “And maybe He wants to do the same for me!”

But that is exactly the principle we see at work here – Jesus wants to reveal different aspects of Himself to each of us, according to the season of life we’re in, the challenges we’re facing, and the circumstances we’re going through. In fact, we could say it a different way – everything that happens to you in your life is an excuse for you to find out more about some aspect of who Jesus is; an excuse for Jesus to reveal some new aspect of Himself to you.

⁷ This whole paragraph based on information in *The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, Revelation 2*, accessed electronically in the WORDsearch 10 Bible program.

⁸ A great book which tells the story of Polycarp’s life and martyrdom is William Chad Newsom’s *Polycarp: The Crown of Fire*.

So in the case of the Christians in Smyrna Jesus introduces Himself as ‘the first and the last,’ a clear reference to a title that in the Old Testament belonged to YAHWEH alone (see Isaiah 44:6 for example), and which communicates the idea of Jesus’ eternity (He existed before anything else that existed, and He’ll exist long afterwards), as well as His awesome sovereignty and control over all things.

Now think about what an encouragement a revelation like this would have been to a church like Smyrna, a church which was about to go through a severe trial of persecution. To people in a situation like that it must have looked like the evil, persecuting Roman Empire had all the power, while the church would have looked puny, weak, and helpless by comparison. But then Jesus upgrades their revelation of who He is – ‘I’m the first and the last, the one who died and came to life’ – and suddenly the tables are turned. Suddenly we see that Rome is the puny one; Jesus is the ‘first,’ which means He existed for billions and trillions of years (forever) before Rome, and He’s the ‘last’ which means He’ll be around for billions and trillions of years after into all eternity! In comparison to Jesus, ‘the first and the last,’ Rome is nothing more than a dot on the line of history.

And as ‘the one who died and came to life’ the Smyrnan Christians could be encouraged that in the event of martyrdom, the One they served had already overcome death!

So you can see how this *specific* revelation of who Jesus is, was absolutely necessary for the church in Smyrna in order for them to stand strong in the trial they were about to go through. And the same is true for you in your life! There are specific things that Jesus wants to reveal to you about Himself, that are absolutely critical for you to experience and take hold of, in order for you to overcome in the seasons, trials, and circumstances you are going through.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

- Take prayerful stock of your life – what kind of season are you in right now in your life?
 - A season of growing? Suffering? Uncertainty? Blessing? Change? Discipline? Rest? Stress? Loss? Strenuous work? Other?
 - Are you transitioning to a different life stage? Graduating from school? New career? New parent? Kids moving out? Grandparent? Retirement? Other?
- Ask Jesus – Who do You want to be for me in this season of life that I’m in? What do You want to reveal to me about yourself in this season of life?
 - (Eg. Father, Provider, Counsellor, Comforter, King, Shepherd, Friend, etc.)
- Ask Him for Scripture verses you can meditate on that match up with what He’s showing you.
- Thank Him and praise Him for what He is revealing to you.

DAY 8

 **READ:** Revelation 2:12-17 – Letter to the church at Pergamum.

Pergamum was the official capital of the province of Asia. It lay just inland from the coast, about sixty-five miles north of Smyrna, along the fertile valley of the Caicus River. It was famous for its beauty and wealth, as well as its library of two hundred thousand volumes (second only to the library of Alexandria).⁹ The main part of the city was built on the top of a small mountain that rose about 1000 feet up from the surrounding plain – so you could

⁹ The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Zondervan press), general editor Frank E. Gaebelain, Revelation 2:12 – 17.

see it for miles around. At the very top of the mountain was an image and temple to the emperor where people would come to worship the Roman emperor. Right next to it was a world famous and absolutely massive altar to the Greek god Zeus, as well as a temple to the goddess of wine Dionysus where debauched festivals full of sexual orgies, drunkenness, and all sorts of occult rituals were regularly held.

We get an idea of the occultic power and demonic presence that rested on this ancient city when Jesus labels it as the place where Satan himself 'dwells' (v. 13), and keeps his 'throne' (v. 12). Scary place to be a Christian! Yet Jesus commends the Christians at Pergamum for holding 'fast' to His name, and not denying the faith even when one of their leaders, Antipas, was martyred.

But then Jesus goes on to warn them as well: ¹⁴*But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality.* ¹⁵*So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.* ¹⁶*Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth.*

This is serious. Jesus says, "You have some people in your church who are living in sexual immorality and who are compromising with idolatry – if you do not deal with them, I will come to you with my sword" (Recall how in the first verse of this letter Jesus introduces Himself as the one 'who has the sharp two-edged sword'). The implication is that it would go better for the church if they purged *themselves* of sin and compromise, then if they waited for Jesus to come and do it Himself (more painful).

This flies in the face of the prevailing Christian mindset of our day which tends to view church discipline as unloving and legalistic, and which leans far more toward the side of not confronting sin, or making people feel uncomfortable in their sin. This is often called 'accepting' people for 'who they are.'

Yet here in the letter to the church at Pergamum, Jesus demands that the church deal with the idolatry and sexual immorality in their midst . . . OR ELSE. He takes this very personally. Jesus considers Himself to be the owner of the churches (rightfully so!), and jealously demands that they not be casual about the sin – particularly sexual sin – in their midst. They belong to Him.

The question for us then today must be, *is the Jesus we serve today any different from the One who sent this message to the churches in Pergamum almost two thousand years ago?* No. (See Hebrews 13:8 if you were unsure about this.) Which means He still considers Himself to be the owner of the churches, He still hates sin, and He still threatens to punish those people and churches who are casual about sin.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Confession: Is there any overt sin in your life that you are struggling with? Write down anything that comes to mind.
 - Ask the Lord to forgive you. If you do not feel any sorrow for this sin, ask Him to give you a revelation of His holiness, and His heart towards sin.
 - If this sin is a habit or bondage, ask the Lord to give you a next step (tell someone? Who? Get help how? Accountability? Etc.).
2. Confession 2: Is there any hidden sin in your life right now? Ask the Lord to reveal to you any hidden sins in your heart, and write down anything which comes to mind.
 - Ask the Lord for forgiveness.
3. After going through these confessions, ask the Lord where He is proud of you – specifically in terms of you taking steps of growth. Journal what He shows you.

DAY 9**READ:** Revelation 2:12-17 – Feeling condemned?

Yesterday we learned of the difficulties the Pergamum church was experiencing. Some people reading this may be feeling deeply condemned. You might be struggling with sexual sin, or some other sin, or you've got things from your past that you are deeply ashamed of. And you wish you could forget about those things, but the shame still haunts you. Now you read a passage of Scripture like this and you feel like Jesus must be really angry with you, and that He does not accept you.

But there's hope in this too: in the Old Testament, King David committed adultery with a woman, and then murdered her husband in cold blood. That's bad! But later when he repented God forgave him and loved him and even said he was a man after His own heart. And in the New Testament, the apostle Paul actually killed and tortured Christians before Jesus got a hold of him; yet after he repented Jesus made him into one of the greatest missionaries the Church has ever seen. No matter what you've done, you've never done anything worse than these two men. What you've done may be embarrassing and shameful, but you haven't done anything worse than killing someone in cold blood, or torturing them to death by stoning, beating, or whatever. If God forgave them, He can forgive you! And if He loved them, you can bet He absolutely loves you!

Different kinds of sinners.

You might be wondering to yourself, "If Jesus is so forgiving, why does He threaten war against the church at Pergamum over their sexual immorality and compromise?" And the answer is, because there are different kinds of sinners, and Jesus' heart towards each, and response to each, is completely different. Two different people could commit the same exact sin and yet Jesus' feelings toward each person could be totally different based on what their heart is. Three kinds of sinners:

1. The keep-it-hidden sinner.

This is the kind of person who, when they sin, they may feel kind of bad about it, but because of various things like pride, shame, or whatever, they refuse to actually humble themselves and bring their sin into the light (confession) where it can be dealt with. So they make things look good on the outside, but they don't deal with the sin on the inside. People who persist in dealing with sin this way end up on the receiving end of God's discipline, or even wrath. A good example is found in Acts 5:1-11 in the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

2. The indifferent and/or rebellious sinner.

This is the kind of person who doesn't feel any remorse or godly sorrow for their sin. The Bible would call it 'hardness of heart.' People like this may not feel any remorse for their sin because they are apathetic in their walk with the Lord and take the grace of God for granted, or they may be in a state of bitterness or anger towards God and are sinning unrepentantly out of that. Whatever the case, people who persist in sin like this out of an unrepentant heart will end up inciting God's wrath.

3. The repentant sinner.

God's grace is for the repentant. You may have done awful things, or you may be trapped in a sin you can't seem to get free of, but if you feel godly sorrow for your wicked deeds and turn to God for forgiveness and help, His heart towards you is pure mercy and grace. If you hate your sin, then your heart is in the right place and God is with you (not angry with you!), even though you may be far from perfect.

Sexual sin

There is something about sexual immorality in particular that affects us at a deep level. The apostle Paul said it this way: *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.* – 1 Corinthians 6:18 (ESV)

Sex is a powerful force in our lives for good or evil – never neutral. Which is why it is so important that we bring this area of our lives regularly to God, get accountability, and fight for purity. God will gladly forgive the most shameful of deeds so long as we repent of them, and go to Him for help being willing to do whatever He tells us!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Confession 3: Are there any sins from your past which you have not dealt with? Write down anything that comes to mind.
 - Confess them to the Lord. Ask Him to wash your heart with a sense of His forgiveness and peace.
 - Do you need to confess to someone else, or go back and say sorry, or make something right with someone you have wronged?
2. Condemnation: Are there any sins from your past that you have dealt with, but which still cause you a great deal of pain, shame, or guilt? Write down anything that comes to mind.
 - Ask the Lord to remove the burden of shame you are carrying. Listen to see if He responds with anything.
 - If the problem of shame persists, make an appointment to pray with someone at church – God doesn't want you carrying around a burden of shame for the rest of your life!

DAY 10

 **READ:** Revelation 2:18-29 – Letter to the church at Thyatira.

We leave Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum behind on the coast of the Aegean Sea (in modern day Turkey), and head inland to Thyatira, forty-five miles due east of Pergamum. Thyatira was not the cultural, political, or religious powerhouse that the first three cities were; it was more of a blue-collar town, a center for manufacturing in the province of Asia, a place with lots of wool workers, linen workers, dyers, leather workers, tanners, potters, bakers and bronze smiths.¹⁰ If the province of Asia had been the United States of America, then Ephesus, Smyrna, and Pergamum would have been New York City, Los Angeles, and Washington D.C. – and Thyatira would have been Detroit.

One of the things Thyatira was famous for was the colour purple. Whereas most of the purple dye made around the world in those days was manufactured using a process that involved oysters and shellfish, the dye-makers in Thyatira had perfected a secret process that used the root of a particular vine native to their area, which made a superior quality of purple. As a result, wealthy merchants would travel from all over the Roman world to Thyatira, just to buy purple fabrics from their markets. In fact, in the book of Acts we find that one of the first Christian converts that Paul and Silas made in the city of Philippi was a woman from Thyatira named Lydia, who sold purple fabrics: *“One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods . . .”* (Acts 16:14)

¹⁰ W.M. Ramsey, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia*, (Hodder, 1904), pp. 324-335; quoted on Wikipedia under *Thyatira* (accessed October 24, 2014).

One of the things that was tricky for Christians in Thyatira was the existence of the trade guilds; each trade in the city (eg. leather workers, dye-makers, tanners, etc.) had banded together to form its own association, or guild. And no one could embark upon a career in any given trade without first joining the guild for that trade. For example, the dye-makers guild would have controlled everything related to the making of dye – the dye-making tools, the knowledge of dye-making processes, and the markets where the dyes were sold. So only people who joined the dye-makers guild could learn how to make dye, buy the tools needed for producing dye, and/or sell products with dye in the markets. And this was true for each of the various trades in Thyatira.

The problem for Christians was that most of these trade guilds were overtly pagan. Each trade guild would attach itself to a different god or goddess from the Greek pantheon, and hold feasts in honor of that god(s) on various holidays and festivals throughout the year.

Thus, in order to get a job in one of these trades – or keep your job – you would have had to join a pagan association and participate in its idolatrous feasts, many of which included sexual immorality. Now, it's doubtful that any of the trade-guilds would have outright told their members, "You are absolutely forbidden from believing in Jesus." Most likely they would have said something more along the lines of, "You want to believe in Jesus privately? Fine! Add Him to the list of all the other gods we all worship." They would have been fine with a person worshiping Jesus – so long as that person also paid homage to the patron god of that particular trade guild.

Under this economic pressure some Christians in Thyatira had begun to compromise, arguing that it was okay for Christians to participate in the idolatrous feasts hosted by the guilds (see verse 20). No doubt some of them rationalized that it was okay to participate in the feasts so long as a person didn't 'mean it' and kept it straight in their head that really they were still only following Jesus. How else was one supposed to keep their job? Others may have rationalized that surely Jesus wouldn't want them to lose their job because, 'Who then would be left as a Christian witness in that workplace?'

But Jesus won't share worship (Mt 4:10; Ex 20:4-5; Col 2:18; Rev 21:8). Nor will He tolerate our participation in compromising activities or feasts (1 Cor 10:21). And He reinforces this fact with His severe rebuke of the church at Thyatira:

²⁰ But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹ I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. ²² Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³ and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. – Revelation 2:20-23

Notice how different the Jesus we encounter in this passage is from the hippy, 'I-accept-everyone-and-don't-care-about-sin' Jesus that is preached in so many churches today. This is the real Jesus speaking in the inspired and eternal Word of God – and He is glorious, jealous, holy, and awesome, as well as zealous about our fidelity to Him. He absolutely will not tolerate people within the church preaching a message of compromise.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Compromise always starts in the mind. Ask Jesus to show you if there are any areas in your thinking where the culture has begun to wear you down and change the way you think about certain issues. Are there places where you have begun to think differently than what the Scripture says? Journal your answers.
2. Standing for Jesus without compromise does not mean being unloving or unwise. Ask Jesus to show you if you lean more towards compromise, or more towards standing for Him in unwise, or unloving ways. There are times when stupidity can hurt the cause of Christ just as much as compromise.
 - Talk to Jesus about your workplace. What is He asking you to do? Is there anything He is asking you *not* to do?
 - Talk to Jesus about your family and extended family. What is He asking you to do? Is there anything He is asking you *not* to do?
 - Talk to Jesus about your use of social media and how that reflects on His kingdom. What is He asking you to do? Is there anything He is asking you *not* to do?

DAY 11



READ: Revelation 2:18-29 – Is this passage relevant to our lives today?

Today there are no trade guilds or idolatrous feasts (as we discussed yesterday) to exert pressure on Christians (at least in our country), but the pressure is still there. Increasingly in our culture there is economic and political pressure to not hold certain views or speak out publicly in defense of Biblical values concerning marriage, sexuality, abortion, or other such hot-button topics. In today's world calling sexual immorality a 'sin,' can get you labelled a legalist, a Pharisee, a bigot, or worse. Christians working in universities, schools, government positions, and the like, already know the fear that there are certain Biblical views they hold which they cannot talk about publicly – even when they are not at work – for fear of someone overhearing them and reporting them, and them then losing their job or being disciplined in some way.

As a result of these pressures, many churches and Christians have found reasons to go along with the flow, and to accept and promote things which are utterly contrary to God's Word. Such permissive teaching actually ends up encouraging and fomenting sexual immorality and compromise within the church, the exact thing that Jesus was so mad at the church of Thyatira for.

Of course, this is not to say that Christians and churches should be brash, argumentative, arrogant, loud, unloving or unwise in their defense of God's laws and morality, but it does mean that we cannot just simply go along with things that the Bible says are wicked, or twist the Scriptures to make them allow things which God hates. Much prayer and discernment will be needed in the days ahead to navigate these waters with righteousness, love and wisdom.

The letter to the church at Thyatira stands as a reminder however, that we should always remember to fear Jesus more than we fear the culture.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Are you living in fear because of what you see happening in the culture all around us? Are you living in fear in your workplace or in your family because of allegiance to Jesus? Ask the Lord to reveal any fear in your heart, and write down whatever He shows you. What is it, exactly, that you are afraid of?

2. Jesus does not want you living in fear! Fear Him, but nothing else. Talk to Him about your fears, and ask Him to speak to those fears. Meditate on the second half of the letter to the Christians in Thyatira, verses 24-29.
3. One of the best ways to worship Jesus and overcome fear, is to remember the things that Jesus has delivered you from and rescued you from in the past. Take a minute to quietly reflect and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind things that Jesus has delivered you from and rescued you from in the past. Write down whatever He shows you. Then spend time being grateful, and thanking Him for all He's done.

Common Question – Who was Jezebel?

In the letter to the church at Thyatira, Jesus rebukes the Thyatiran Christians for 'tolerating that woman Jezebel' (v.20). There has been much speculation about this woman, and whole teachings have been produced about the 'Jezebel spirit.' Though I do not doubt the existence of a Jezebel spirit, this is not primarily what this passage is speaking about. The name Jezebel here is a clear reference to the infamous queen Jezebel in the Old Testament (see 1 Kings 19-22, and 2 Kings 9) who seduced the Israelites to worship idols and commit sexual immorality – the same thing that was being caused by the permissive teaching of this woman in the church at Thyatira. Thus, the name 'Jezebel' is just a label linking what this woman's teaching was causing in the church to what the Old Testament Jezebel did in Israel. In reality this woman would have had a different name.

Also, it is important to realize that her teaching most likely would not have been overtly pagan – otherwise they wouldn't have let her keep teaching 'Sunday school,' so to speak. Her teaching would have been Christian in most senses, but it would have twisted the grace of God into permissiveness that allowed people to compromise when they should have been standing strong in the face of suffering. This kind of teaching is prevalent in Western Christianity today.

DAY 12



READ: Revelation 3:1-6 – Letter to the church at Sardis.

The city of Sardis was located about 30 miles south of Thyatira, about 50 miles due east of Ephesus. In the 600s BC, Sardis had been one of the most powerful cities in the ancient world, but by the time of John's writing of Revelation it was a has-been city, and much of its former splendor had passed into decay. Throughout history Sardis was a militarily significant city because of the fortified rock that rose 800 feet above the north section of the city. This fortress was virtually impregnable, and though Sardis was attacked many times throughout the centuries, it was only ever defeated twice – once by Cyrus the Great – and both times the defeat was due to negligence on the part of the soldiers watching at the walls.¹¹

Jesus has no words of encouragement for this church, only a very stern rebuke: *"I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead"* (verse 1). And just in case anyone's missing the seriousness of the word 'dead,' Jesus adds this in verse 5, *"The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life."*

¹¹ All the information in this paragraph taken from: *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Zondervan press), general editor Frank E. Gaebelin, Revelation 3:1-6.

Now if language means anything, then the clear implication of this verse is that those who are 'dead' and don't repent *will* have their names blotted out of the book of life. Otherwise there's no point in Jesus saying this. You don't say that some people in the church *won't* ever have their names blotted out of the book of life unless there is a very real possibility that some people in the church *will* have their names blotted out of the book of life. As an interesting cultural backdrop to this warning, criminals in many of the Greek speaking cities of the Roman world could have their names blotted from the civic register and lose the rights and privileges of citizenship.¹²

This is a sobering and serious warning coming from Jesus. Unfortunately, many Christians today are deaf to it because of the prevalence in Western Churches of the unbiblical doctrine known as 'Once Saved, Always Saved' (for a full discussion of Once Saved, Always Saved, and how to find real assurance of salvation see below).¹³ Too many Christians today who have absolutely no relationship with Jesus, no fruit of salvation, and no desire to pursue God or serve in His kingdom, are nonetheless confident of their 'salvation' because of a prayer they prayed once long ago, and the fact that they sit in a church pew every Sunday morning (grumpy more often than not). Often these are people who shamelessly cause disunity within their churches, and who bring a stain to the name of Christ by their behavior at work and in the marketplace. These are people that call themselves Christians – and believe all the right stuff about Jesus dying on the cross and all that – but have no desire to actually seek Christ, hear His voice, or know and follow Him.

And here in Revelation Jesus warns the Christians at Sardis that though they have a 'reputation for being alive' they are in fact spiritually dead.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Is your walk with the Lord alive . . . or do you just have a 'reputation for being alive?' Is your walk with the Lord fresh and personal, or are you just coasting off of experiences you had with Him in the past? Or are you just coasting off of the experiences other people have had with God? Here's a little check-list:
 - When is the last time God actually spoke to *you*? Last week, last month, last year? Write it down.
 - When is the last time God really set *you* free from something, or changed something in you? Is there any evidence of Him working in your life recently?
 - When's the last time one of *your* prayers got answered? Are you even praying about anything? Write it down.
 - When's the last time *you* had an adventure with God, and He asked *you* to do something, and you stepped out in faith to obey and take some risk? Write it down.
2. If you have a number of recent answers to the above questions praise God! Thank Him for what He is doing in your life, and ask Him to continue doing more.
 - a. If not, confess and repent to Him. Confess that your relationship has not been fresh and personal, but rather just an external show of religion. Ask Him to forgive you . . . and then receive His forgiveness. Know that He loves to welcome back all prodigals!

¹² Colin Hemer, Seven Churches Network: <http://sevenchurches.org/biblical-turkey/nt-turkey/john/> (accessed October 24, 2014).

¹³ For a full discussion of Once Saved, Always Saved, and how to find real assurance of salvation see the paper *Does the Bible teach Once Saved, Always Saved?* on the Southland church website: <http://mysouthland.com/images/DoctrinalPapers/Does%20the%20Bible%20teach%20Once%20Saved%20Always%20Saved.pdf>

- b. Ask the Lord to give you a next step you can take in having a fresh and personal walk with Him.
- c. Ask the Lord to bring to your mind a big prayer request that you need to start praying regularly (so you can start experiencing the joy of answered prayer)!
- d. Start asking the Lord regularly for an adventure. Tell Him you want to have an adventure for Him, and serve Him, and step out in faith for Him. Persist! (Only persistent prayers get answered.) He will lead you into something . . . document what happens!

DAY 13



READ: Revelation 3:1-6 – Letter to the church at Sardis

In continuation from yesterday, there is a flip side – there are those Christians who constantly worry ‘Am I saved?’ ‘Am I saved?’ This is not how Jesus wants His people to live either. A husband and wife in a good marriage don’t walk around all the time stressing about, ‘Are we still married?’ ‘Are we still married?’ No. So how can a person find true assurance of salvation in light of passages like this (see also Matt 7:21-23)? Here are two key principles for how to have assurance of salvation and confidence in your relationship with God:

1. *Closeness breeds confidence.*

In relationships, closeness breeds confidence. For example, the more time a married couple spends together loving each other, listening to each other, serving each other, and having fun together, the more confidence they automatically will have in their relationship. Confidence comes out of having a close, intimate relationship with someone. And the closer we get, the more confidence and joy we have in the relationship.

And the same is true of your relationship with God! The closer you walk with God the more confidence you’ll have in your relationship with Him, it’s just that simple. Romans 8 says: ¹³ *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* ¹⁴ *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.* ¹⁵ *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”* ¹⁶ *The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.* . . – Romans 8:13-16

That’s an incredible promise there: the Holy Spirit will bear witness inside of your spirit that you are a child of God . . . ‘*IF* by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body.’ That’s one of the Holy Spirit’s jobs – to take away any fear or uncertainty you have about your relationship with God, and in its place give you a blessed peace and rock-solid assurance in your heart that you are a child of God. God *wants* you to have 100% joy and confidence and assurance of your position in Him. Like it says here, He hasn’t given you a spirit of fear!

But how do we get that confidence? Romans 8 says: ‘Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God,’ and then the Spirit wells up within us, saying, ‘Abba, Father.’ So the more you are led by the Holy Spirit – the more you walk with Him, the more you listen to Him, the more you obey Him and try to please Him – the more this ‘Abba! Father!’ thing rises up inside of your heart and you feel this assurance of your position as a child of God.

But if you're living in the flesh you will reap from the flesh. If you sow into the flesh you don't reap assurance in your relationship with God. Look what it says up there, 'If you live according to the flesh you will die.' Now it's not saying that the moment you live in the flesh God divorces you. God is faithful even when we are unfaithful (2 Tim 2:12-13)! We all make mistakes, and having a bad day, or bad week, or bad year doesn't get you disowned by God! But if you live in the flesh you will reap the death and separation that comes from living in the flesh – and you're not going to reap that assurance and joy and confidence that come from walking closely with the Spirit.

This is not a quick fix. A lot of people when it comes to assurance of salvation they want a quick fix. When they're worried about their salvation they want to run to a pastor, and have him stroke their back and tell them 'Once Saved Always Saved,' so that they can feel good about their relationship with God again. But notice here, assurance of salvation comes from the Holy Spirit, not a pastor! When you want to have assurance about your relationship with God, the thing you need to do is go and pursue a relationship with God!

2. Ask God to give you assurance of salvation.

This brings up a second point – you can *ask* God to give you assurance of salvation. What a wonderful thing to ask for! He promises to give good gifts to anyone who asks (Mt 7:7-11), and confidence in His love is something He loves to give out. So you can be guaranteed that He *will* answer this prayer if you persist in asking Him, and seeking His face about this matter (1 Jn 5:14-15; James 1:5-7; Mk 11:24). Write out your prayer request, date it, get others praying for you as well, and then persist in seeking . . . until the Lord gives you that sweet assurance of salvation which brings joy and life to the soul!

Reputation for being alive.

"You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead." – Jesus to the church at Sardis (Rev 3:1)

On an individual level this can happen so easily, especially when you're in a good church where God's doing lots of stuff. And what can happen is, you can start to coast along on what God is doing in everybody else's life, and forget to actually press into God yourself. And you can get so excited about all the testimonies of what God's doing in everybody else's lives, that you forget to examine yourself to see if God's done anything in your life recently. And you can get talking the lingo so much – talking about hearing God and being set free and all that – that you get fooled into thinking you're actually doing it when all you're really doing is *talking* about it. And you totally neglect to look at your life to see – when's the last time God actually spoke to *me*? When's the last time He really set *me* free of something? When's the last time one of *my* prayers got answered? Am I even praying about anything? When's the last time *I* had an adventure with God, and He asked *me* to do something, and I stepped out in faith to obey and take some risk?

"You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead."

See, here's the thing – YOUR WALK WITH THE LORD NEEDS TO BE FRESH AND PERSONAL. We need to let this passage of Scripture really challenge us . . . Are we coasting on stuff we did with God years ago? Are we coasting on what God has done for others? Or are we actually pressing into God ourselves, right now in the present?

There's hope here too: *"Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent"* (Rev 3:3). We don't have to stay stuck in spiritual deadness – we can go to God and repent! Jesus wouldn't command us to repent if it wasn't possible to do so!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Assurance of salvation.
 - Do you have assurance of salvation? Do you feel completely confident that if you died today you would go to heaven?
 - Do you have a special memory, experience, or Bible verse that God used to give you assurance of salvation? If so, write it down.
2. If you do not have full assurance of your salvation, write down the following prayer request: "Lord Jesus, please give me an unshakable assurance that I am saved, and belong to You." Begin to pray for this daily/regularly until He answers – answers to prayer are only guaranteed to those who persist! (Mt 7:7-11; James 1:6-8)
3. Ask the Lord if there is anything standing in the way of you having this assurance. Write down whatever He shows you.
4. Ask Jesus if there are any steps He wants you to take in pursuing Him for assurance of salvation. Write down whatever He shows you . . . and obey!
5. Ask the Lord to show you His heart for you.

DAY 14



READ: Revelation 3:7-13 – Letter to the church at Philadelphia

The church at Philadelphia is one of only two – Smyrna is the other – that does not get a single rebuke from Jesus in the letters to the churches. All they get is pure encouragement. You might be wondering to yourself, "Does that mean these churches were perfect?" No. Only Jesus is perfect. No mere human being has ever been perfect – Billy Graham, Mother Teresa, the apostle Paul – all of them were just regular human beings who made tons of mistakes. The apostle Paul called himself the 'chief' of all sinners (1 Tim 1:15), and spoke candidly of his struggles with his sin nature (Rom 7:15-25). And that is true of all Christians.

And this is encouraging with respect to the church at Philadelphia because it means that we don't need to think of them as being a perfect church filled with perfect and highly spiritual people. They were regular people.

Someone may ask, "But why then does Jesus not rebuke them for anything?"

And this is what is so encouraging about the letter to the Philadelphian Christians; in Jesus' eyes, some sin just isn't worth mentioning! Yes Jesus is awesome and holy and pure and righteous, but at the same time, we shouldn't think of Jesus as nit-picky. A lot of Christians have this terrible picture of Jesus – maybe because that's how their parents were – that Jesus is constantly looking over their shoulders and condemning them and nit-picking at them every day over every little thing . . . but Jesus is primarily concerned with the heart – that's what He's looking at. He's not looking for people who will never make mistakes; He's looking for people who are genuinely seeking Him and who love and trust Him. And of course we all make many mistakes, but Jesus getting mad at us for every little mistake we make, rather, He's convicting us of our need for Him, to submit to Him, trust Him and love Him.

It's all about what direction a person's heart is going. If a person genuinely desires to grow in their walk with Jesus and follow Him, then He is infinitely patient with that person through an infinite number of faults, mistakes, and weaknesses. To a person like that Jesus is like a father to their little child who is learning to walk – He lovingly picks them up after each fall, and encourages them to keep going.

On the other hand, a person who is casual or cavalier about their walk with the Lord may have their life more together, and may look from the outside like the more 'spiritual' person because they make less external mistakes than others . . . yet Jesus may actually be deeply angry with them because there is no humble sense of dependency in them, or need for God.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. What's your picture of Jesus: do you picture Him as this nit-picky God always staring over your shoulder and condemning you for your every mistake? Write down 2 or 3 things how YOU FEEL God feels towards you. Be honest. Do you constantly feel condemned by Him? Do you often feel like you're not good enough? Do you feel ignored by Him? Do you often have feelings of inferiority, like others are way more spiritual than you? Do you just feel nothing? Other?
 - Bring these feelings honestly to God and tell Him that this is what your heart often feels.
 - If you generally walk in a place of feeling loved and accepted by God thank Him for that!
2. What were your parents like towards you? Did they love you conditionally or unconditionally? Did they make you feel like you never measured up? Quietly reflect and then write down 2 – 5 things that God brings to mind of how your feelings about God's heart towards you actually comes from how your parents have loved and treated you.
 - Have a conversation with God about this.
3. Confess out loud wrong pictures you have had about God's heart towards you.
 - Ask the Lord to give you a revelation of His love for you (this is Biblical – see Ephesians 3:14-21!). Sit there and let Him love you.
 - Commit to a daily program of praying for this and then listening every day for the next week.
4. Ask God to show you the truth about how He sees your heart: are you a weak and imperfect person struggling towards God, or a proud and indifferent person hiding behind a mask of religious respectability? Write down what He shows you.
 - Thank the Lord for what He shows you!

DAY 15



READ: Revelation 3:7-13

Letter to the church at Philadelphia – THE KEY OF DAVID

Revelation 3:7 – *“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.*”

What is the ‘key of David?’

One of the things you have to realize if you're ever going to understand the book of Revelation is that the book is built on hundreds of quotes and allusions and references back to passages in the Old Testament. Hundreds. Many Christians today totally miss this, in part because so many Christians today are ignorant of the Old Testament. The moment

you catch this the book of Revelation will come alive to you; more than 500 passages of Scripture from the Old Testament are referenced in Revelation. Which is really amazing when you consider that there are only 404 verses in the entire book! Some verses in Revelation will allude to 5 or 6 different passages from the Old Testament in the same verse. At least 60% of the verses in the book of Revelation contain references back to passages in the Old Testament.¹⁴ So as you're reading, more than half of the verses are pulling from something in the Old Testament.

And that is what is happening in Revelation 3:7; in His promise to the Philadelphian Christians Jesus is referencing a prophecy that appears in Isaiah – *“And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open”* (Isaiah 22:22).

So what is the ‘key of David’ in Isaiah 22? If we can figure that out, the ‘key of David’ in Revelation will become clear as well.

Let's look at the context. Verse 15 says, *Thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, “Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him . . .*

This is part of a prophecy Isaiah is making about Shebna, the head steward for King Hezekiah. The head steward was sort of the equivalent of what today would be called a ‘chief of staff’ for a president or prime minister or someone like that; he was the person who was in charge of all of the king's staff, as well as managing all of the king's estate and properties and investments and all of that.

And in Israel the steward was the one who was charged with keeping the key that unlocked the palace gates; thus he was the one who controlled access to the king's palace, and to the king himself. If you wanted to make an appointment with the king you had to talk to his steward and get permission.

Now in those days keys were not precisely engineered little devices you could fit in your pocket, rather, they were big and clumsy and often carved out of a small block of wood. And so these stewards would wear these big keys around on their shoulder, and over time this key on the shoulder became a sign of their power, authority, and status as the king's steward. In Judah where all the kings were descended from King David, this key became known as the ‘key of David.’

So why in the book of Revelation would Jesus introduce Himself to the church at Philadelphia as the One who holds the key of David, who shuts and no one opens, who opens and no one shall shut?

The answer to this lies in another question; Who controls all access to God Almighty? Who controls all access to the Father? **Jesus!**

“No one comes to the Father except through me.” – Jesus (John 14:6)

“For through Him [Jesus] we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.” – Ephesians 2:18

Why would this be so encouraging to the Christians in Philadelphia? The Jewish synagogue in Philadelphia was very powerful and influential, and also extremely antagonistic towards Christianity which they viewed as a dangerous threat to their religion and culture on account of so many Jews converting over to Christianity in the early years of the Church. And so these establishment Jews were using theological pressure (along with outright persecution) to argue that they were the true people of God, and that Jews who became followers of Christ were apostate and under God's judgment.

¹⁴ For a list of Old Testament references in Revelation email Kris Duerksen at the church: krisid@mysouthland.com.

So into this background Jesus speaks to the church at Philadelphia and says, “I’m the one who has the key of David!” “I’m the One who decides who gets into the kingdom of God and who doesn’t.” “I’m the One who decides who is part of the people of God!” You don’t become less of a Jew for following Jesus, who was the ultimate Jew! He’s encouraging them that they really are the saved ones, and that they really are the ones who are going to inherit His kingdom.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Because of Jesus you have access to the Father right now! (Recall: He holds the ‘key of David’ and what He ‘opens no one can shut!’) Declare that in faith as you sit with Him in prayer. When you pray, you have access into God’s presence and He hears you and loves you.
2. One of the reasons we often don’t feel like we are in God’s presence when we pray is because we don’t know how to be grateful. Gratitude is one of the keys to experiencing God’s presence (Ps 100:4).
 - Milestones/Moments with God – write down 2 - 5 things, whatever the Lord brings to mind:
 - a. Big answers to prayer from your life;
 1. Big things God has rescued you from;
 2. Special moments with the Lord;
 3. Memorable moments when He spoke to you.
 - b. Pick one of those things and ponder it (write down answers to each one).
 1. Why are you so thankful for this?
 2. What did God reveal to you about Himself in this?
 3. How does it make you feel? (Safe, joyful, thankful, hopeful)
 - Spend time worshiping the Lord!

DAY 16



READ: Revelation 3:7-13

Letter to the church at Philadelphia –Synagogue of Satan?

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

Over the centuries far too many Christians have used this passage to say terrible things about the Jewish people. They’ve used this passage to say that God has totally rejected the Jewish nation; they’ve used this passage to say that Jews aren’t Jews anymore and that the Church has replaced the Jews and now the Church gets all the promises God made to the Jews.

And we just need to stop for a moment and acknowledge history. Most Christians today are not taught history properly, the fact that over the past almost 2000 years – including recent history – many awful things have been done to the Jewish people in the name of Christianity. Not one or two isolated incidences. In fact, if Christians want to know one of the single biggest factors that makes Jewish people today suspicious of Christianity, and that makes it hard to win Jewish people to Jesus, it’s Christianity’s awful history of treatment of the Jewish people. And as Christians we need to first own up to that history, so that we can utterly reject it.

Truth: God has not rejected the Jewish nation as a whole. Of course, any *individual* Jewish person who rejects Jesus is not saved, just like any Gentile (non-Jew) who rejects Jesus is

not saved. But as a nation, as a whole, God has not abandoned His plans or promises for the Jewish *people*. If anything is prophesied in the Bible it is this – dozens of passages could be referenced – that in the last days when Jesus returns the entire nation of Israel is going to wholeheartedly give their lives to Jesus, and they are going to live in the land of Israel with Him forever and ever! Because God has not forgotten the everlasting promises He made to Abraham. The apostle Paul talks about this at length in Romans chapters 9 – 11.

So here in Revelation 3 Jesus is not rejecting the Jewish nation as a whole – remember, the man writing the book of Revelation, the apostle John, is a Jew! And all the disciples were Jews! And all the writers of the New Testament were Jews! And a huge chunk of the early church was Jewish! And Jesus Himself is a Jew! So in this one verse here Jesus is not cancelling the eternal promises He made to Abraham about the land of Israel or the many prophecies in Scripture about the mass revival that will sweep the Jewish nation at Jesus' return. Rather, He is speaking to a *specific* group of Jews at Philadelphia who had rejected Him, and who were rabidly persecuting His people, and to that specific group He says, "You may say you are working for God, but really you are following Satan!" (see also Mt 16:23)



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Lord to give you His heart for the Jewish people. Ask Him to show you 2 or 3 things He would like you to pray for them. Spend a couple of minutes writing out a prayer about these things, and that they as a nation would come to know Jesus as their Savior. Pray that God would give us opportunities to be a blessing to the Jewish people.
2. Pray for peace in Jerusalem. Ask the Lord for any specific things that He would like for you to pray over in regards to the current unrest in Israel.
3. Spend some time rejoicing that God is in control! He has made a covenant with the Jewish people and will not rest until it is completed. In the same way, He is in control over every situation in your life. He *will do* all that He has planned.

DAY 17



READ: Revelation 3:7-13

Letter to the church at Philadelphia – THE HOUR OF TRIAL

Because of their faithfulness under persecution and pressure, Jesus promises the Philadelphian Christians this: "*Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth*" (Revelation 3:10).

This is a very beautiful promise.

Unfortunately, before we can look at what this promise actually says, we have to first look at what it does *not* say. Over the past one hundred years a number of Christians here in the West have hijacked this verse in an attempt to build a case for the pre-Tribulation Rapture. They interpret this verse to be saying that Jesus is going to rapture all Christians off the earth before the Tribulation occurs. Their rationale: "God loves us too much to let us go through the Tribulation."

Pardon? Anyone who has paid any attention to the news lately (2014) knows of horrific stories in Nigeria, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and a host of other places, where masses of Christians have been forced from their homes, whole Christian villages burned down, Christians murdered, beheaded, burned, women and children sold into slavery – and some even

crucified and tortured. Does God not love these Christians enough to ‘rapture’ them before their time of tribulation?

The fact is, Jesus never promised to take us out of tribulation. Quite the opposite in fact:

“Then they will deliver you [Christians!] up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name’s sake” – Jesus (Mt 24:9; see also 10:17-22; 23:34; John 16:2; Rev 2:10).

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you WILL have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” – Jesus (John 16:33).

As Corrie Ten Boom¹⁵ once said:

“There are some among us teaching there will be no tribulation, that the Christians will be able to escape all this. These are the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days. Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China, the Christians were told, “Don’t worry, before the tribulation comes you will be translated – raptured.” Then came a terrible persecution [Speaking of the Boxer Rebellion in the early 1900’s]. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a Bishop from China say, sadly, “We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution, rather than telling them Jesus would come first. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes, – to stand and not faint.” I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation, but more than sixty percent of the Body of Christ across the world HAS ALREADY ENTERED INTO THE TRIBULATION. There is no way to escape it. We are next.”¹⁶

And besides, everything in this letter to the church at Philadelphia had to mean something to the people reading it. Whatever Jesus is saying here He was saying it to the *Philadelphian* Christians first – it is the ‘letter to the church at *Philadelphia*’ after all . . . not us. Of course, we can apply things from the letter to our own situations and lives, so long as we don’t forget that the letter was first written to them. So whatever the promise of Revelation 3:10 means, it first had to have meant something to them and to what *they* were going through in their lives. If this is a promise to End Time Christians about the Rapture, then it had no application to the persecutions those long-suffering *Philadelphian* Christians were going through 2000 years ago!

Thus, this isn’t a promise that all Christians will be ‘raptured’ before ‘the Tribulation.’¹⁷

What then is the ‘keep you from the hour of trial’ promise all about?

In English the promise to be kept ‘from’ a trial seems like a promise to be kept away from that trial, so as not to experience it. But that is not what the Greek term in this passage means. Let’s look at the Greek:

Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from [tereso ek] the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell on the earth. (Rev 3:10)

¹⁵ Famous heroine of the Christian faith – the Ten Boom family hid Jews from the Nazis during WW2, and were all sent to Nazi death camps as a result. Only Corrie survived. Her incredible story is told in the book ‘The Hiding Place,’ as well as a movie of the same name.

¹⁶ Corrie Ten Boom – 1974, quoted in “When Jesus Returns,” by David Pawson, p. 199.

¹⁷ For more on what the Bible says about the Rapture and the Tribulation email Kris Duerksen at krisd@mysouthland.com.

The phrase there ‘keep you from’ is taken from the Greek phrase *tereso ek*. This Greek phrase does not mean ‘bodily taken out of,’ or ‘bodily taken away from,’ in the sense of being physically removed from a trial, rather it has more the connotations of being kept and protected *in the midst* of trial. For proof, let me show you two other passages of Scripture where *tereso ek* is use:

1. “I [Jesus] *do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from [tereso ek] the evil one.*” [John 17:15]

This passage is taken from Jesus’ prayer in John chapter 17. The phrase ‘keep them from’ in this verse is the same *tereso ek*, as in Revelation 3:10. And what is the clear meaning of the passage? Jesus states it clearly: ‘I do NOT ask that you take them OUT of the world,’ thus indicating that He was not praying for a bodily removal of his disciples from temptation and trial, but rather that they would be ‘kept’ from evil in the *midst* of temptation and trial. In other words, Jesus is not asking the Father to keep the disciples from experiencing pain and evil, He is asking the Father to protect and watch over them in the midst of pain and evil.

2. Here is a second passage where the word ‘ek’ is used: “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, ⁴ who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from [ek] the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, ⁵ to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*” [Galatians 1:3-5]

In this passage does the word ‘from’ (*ek*) have the connotation of bodily removal from the ‘present evil age?’ Of course not! Jesus’ death on the cross did not deliver us from this present evil age in the sense that we are bodily removed from the earth and don’t have to experience trial and tribulation; instead, His death delivered us from the power of sin, and from the authority of the principalities of this dark world so that we can experience freedom and victory in the *midst* of all the evil that surrounds us.

Thus, the promise of Revelation 3:10 is not a promise for End Times Christians that God is going to rapture us before the Tribulation so we don’t have to experience it, rather, it is a promise to the *Philadelphian* Christians – and to all Christians throughout history – that if we walk with Jesus He will keep us strong in the midst of trials. Jesus promises to watch over our souls and protect us in the midst of the most severe and fiery trials we can face here on this earth.

And that’s an amazing promise! BECAUSE A LOT OF CHRISTIANS TODAY ARE AFRAID OF THE FUTURE. They’re afraid of what’s going to happen. What horrible things are going to happen in the world? What horrible things are going to happen in our country? What horrible things are going to happen to the economy? What horrible things are going to happen to our church and to us personally as individuals and families? One of the latest fears which Christians wrestle with is the fear, “I don’t know if I could stand up during persecution,” or, “I don’t know if my family and kids will hold together under pressure.”

And the answer is, **IN YOUR HUMAN STRENGTH, OF COURSE YOU CAN’T!** We’re weak creatures. We crack easily under pressure. And so we actually need Jesus’ strength in order to stay faithful to Jesus in tribulation and trial. And that’s why this promise is so amazing: if you will just depend on Jesus and hold on to Him, then He promises to keep you strong through the trial. **IT’S HIS STRENGTH THAT WILL KEEP YOU FROM BUCKLING IN THE TRIAL, NOT YOUR STRENGTH.** If you have to rely on your strength to get you through

a trial, that's scary; but if it's His strength and His promise that's on the line, then that's something you can be confident about for the future.

Because He's already proven Himself. He let them whip Him, torture Him and then nail Him to the cross and hang Him there for hour upon hour of agony. But He never buckled. He didn't run away; He didn't call the angels to let Him off the hook; He didn't shirk His mission or deny who He was. He stayed utterly true and obedient and strong throughout it all. And here's the thing – if you're following Jesus, that same Spirit is in you today. So it's not your strength you have to rely on when the trial comes, it's His! And if you will depend on Him, rather than yourself, and hold onto Him, rather than yourself, then the promise of Revelation 3:10 is that it is His strength that will keep you from falling away in the face of any possible trial you could go through here on this earth. THAT'S SOMETHING TO GIVE YOU HOPE FOR THE FUTURE AND THANK JESUS FOR!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Do you fear the future? Fears for your kids? Our country? The economy? Persecution? Sickness? Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any fears you have for the future. Write them down.
2. Declare the promise that Jesus will keep you through your hour of trial too. Praise God!
3. Quietly reflect and then make a list of things in your life that God has delivered you and your family from. Write out a prayer of praise for each one of the trials that God has already kept you 'from' (through)!
4. Ask the Lord to speak to you about your fears . . . write down whatever He brings to your mind. Then have a conversation with Him about this, and tell Him you want to walk in the 'peace that passes all understanding' (Phil 4:7) with regards to your fears about the future. Keep bringing this matter to Him throughout the week until He begins to show you the way out, and bring you into His peace.

DAY 18



READ: Revelation 3:14-22

Letter to the church at Laodicea: I know your works

"I know your works . . ." (Revelation 3:15)

The church at Laodicea felt smug in their Christianity because they had correct beliefs in their heads, but Jesus says "Your beliefs are worthless and I can tell by your works."

In many evangelical Christian circles today the word 'works' has become almost a swear word. The moment anyone wants to talk about the importance of holiness, or good behavior, or obeying the commandments in the Christian life, some of the 'grace' Christians start jumping up and down because you're promoting what they call 'works salvation.'

But the thing you have to notice here is that this is *Jesus* speaking here, and in five out of the seven letters to the churches, right after His introduction, He starts His address to the church with, 'I know your *works*.' Five of them! (see Rev 2:2; 2:19; 3:1b; 3:8; 3:15) Not one of them does He start with 'I know your beliefs.' Now, of course, in a couple of the letters He does commend them for holding to the truth, which certainly includes right beliefs, and so right believing and beliefs are certainly very important. But the point is, right beliefs don't mean anything unless they lead to right behavior.

See, what you do – your works – really matters to Jesus because your actions reveal your heart. And Jesus cares very much about the state of your heart. He said this in the Gospels:

- a) *“So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits” (Matt 7:17-20).*

Jesus says you can recognize a person by their ‘fruit,’ which is just another word for works. Our actions, attitudes and words reveal what is inside our hearts.

- b) Jesus was big on this and talked about it often. Consider Matthew chapter 12: *“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. ³⁴ You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matt 12:33-34).*

There it is again! You know what kind of a tree you have by what kind of fruit it produces. How you act and talk is the outward expression of what your inward heart is like, because whatever is in your heart will spill out in the words you say, and the way you behave.

- c) If we keep going in Matthew 12 we find this: ³⁵ *The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. ³⁶ I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷ for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matt 12:35-37).*

Jesus says here, “On Judgment Day I’m going to judge the state of your heart and your faith in me by your behavior and attitudes and actions.” Not by your beliefs.

When you stand before Jesus on Judgment Day He’s not going to give you a written test to see “Did you believe in me?” Or a bunch of questions to see if you believe all the right doctrines, so if you check “Yes, I believe Jesus is the Son of God, and I believe He rose from the dead and all that,” then you get your reward. No; Jesus says, “Throw away the written test, I can see what you *really* believed by your actions and attitudes and words!”

You say, “But I thought we were saved just by believing in Jesus?” You are (Rom 10:9-11)! But the kind of belief that saves is not just a mental check in your head, it’s a conviction that leads to you to actually give your life to Christ. Just believing in your head that Jesus is God and that He died for your sins doesn’t save anyone. As James says, “*You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe – and shudder!*” (James 2:19) He then goes on at length to refute the notion that a person can be saved simply by having the right answers about God in their head.

See, what Jesus wants is not just for you to think some right thoughts in your head about Him, He wants you to obey Him, pursue Him, listen to Him, love Him, and serve Him. That is what salvation is. It’s not a test question, it’s the act of surrendering your life to Jesus. And of course you have to believe correctly about who He is to be able to do that, so right believing *is* important. But the kind of belief that saves is the kind of belief that leads a person to pursue and love Jesus with their whole heart.

Some of you might be really scared right now. You might be thinking to yourself “I better improve my works quickly, or I’m not saved!” No! That is not the point of what Jesus is saying here! You most certainly cannot earn your salvation just by doing good things. And you cannot please Jesus just by going out and trying to do lots of good things. That is

utterly empty and it won't work. The only thing that pleases Jesus is when you love Him and depend on Him and follow Him. But the point is, your works will show whether you're doing that or not. Our focus is supposed to be on Jesus, not on trying to be good enough. But our works and our attitudes and our words will show us whether we're actually focused on Jesus or whether we're actually just focused on ourselves.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. "Right beliefs don't mean anything unless they lead to right behavior." Ask the Lord if there is anything He wants to say to you in regards to this statement. Is there anywhere in your life where your behavior doesn't display your beliefs?
2. Go through Galatians 5:19-21 and ask the Lord to convict you if any of those fruits of the flesh are manifesting in your life. Write down whatever He shows you.
 - If He shows you any, repent!
 - Listen to Him: "What do you want me to do about this?"

DAY 19



READ: Revelation 3:14-22 - Letter to the church at Laodicea:

So what kinds of works show that we're in close fellowship and dependence on Jesus?

Jesus is not looking here for all kinds of religious duties, or do's and don'ts. That's not the sign of a good heart. The sign of a good heart is not all kinds of religious activity, or super-spiritualism . . . nor is the sign of a good heart necessarily the fact that on the outside you are an all-around nice and respectable person. Some of the nicest and most respectable people out there – who call themselves Christians – are also the most indifferent towards God on the inside. Because you can be nice and respectable on the outside and be totally self-satisfied, materialistic and indifferent on the inside.

So Jesus isn't looking for nice or respectable, He's looking for any evidence in your life that you love Him – even in the weakest way – and desire to walk with Him. Because that kind of a heart bleeds a certain kind of attitude and way of thinking and speaking and treating people that goes way beyond 'nice.' Paul makes a short list of the behaviors and attitudes which show you are actually walking with the Lord in Galatians 5: "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law*" (Gal 5:22-23).

Of course, nobody's perfect. Not even close! Nobody matches that list above all the time, or even most of the time. But the point is, what direction is your heart pointed in? Are you growing in these things as you get to know Jesus? Because when these are the things you are growing in – joy, kindness, sacrificial love and generosity – as you pursue Jesus and get to know Him more and more, that's the fruit that comes from a heart where the Holy Spirit is living in that heart.

But you can have all the right doctrine you like, and be nothing like this. You can be a nice, respectable Christian who believes all kinds of right things and goes to church all the time, but actually your beliefs are just about worthless because on the inside the fruit of your life shows that in your heart you are not really pursuing Jesus: "*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, ²¹envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*" (Gal 5:19-21).

Idolatry – that can just straight up be money and materialism. You are just living your life purely for pleasure and riches and accumulation. You're nice and respectable on the outside, you still go to church and believe right doctrines; but your entire heart and thought life is fueled by money and pleasure and the accumulation of wealth. And if that's you, it doesn't mean you've lost your salvation, but it's certainly something you need to repent of.

So which things are you growing in: the fruit of the Spirit, or the fruit of the flesh?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Make a list of the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23. Prayerfully go through each one and ask the Lord, "Am I growing in this one, or not?" Ask Him to show you evidence – can you actually see areas in your life where you are growing in these fruits?
 - Beside each one write 'Growing,' 'Stagnant,' or 'Losing ground.' Thank God for what He's showing you! He is a tender and loving God, merciful and forgiving. The Holy Spirit is powerful and will gladly produce His fruit in you, if you will let Him.
2. Ask the Lord to show you a fruit of the Spirit He wants to grow you in. Write it down.
 - Ask Him for a promise of what He wants to do in your life in that area. Write it down.
 - Ask Him to encourage you about this. See what He says.
 - Ask Him to give you a next step; what are you going to do about this now?

DAY 20



READ: Revelation 3:14-22 – Letter to the church at Laodicea
NEITHER HOT NOR COLD.

"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot!¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:15).

This is an oft-misunderstood passage; over the years many people have taken the hot-cold thing here to be talking about the temperature of a person's passion for Jesus. In that interpretation hot means a person is red-hot passionate for Jesus; cold means they're dead to Jesus (ie. they don't love Him, and they don't follow Him); and lukewarm means a person is somewhere in between – a follower of Jesus who is apathetic and has no passion for Jesus.

But that makes no sense. Would Jesus rather that people be utterly cold towards Him than lukewarm? No. Is it better to be utterly dead to Jesus than to struggle with apathy? Certainly not. Having any sort of relationship with Jesus is better than having no relationship at all.

The problem with this popular interpretation is that it imposes a modern Western metaphor onto a two thousand year old text; we like to use hot and cold temperatures as a metaphor for the level of passion a person has – but that wasn't Jesus' intention in this passage.

Context: Three cities, three different kinds of water. In order to properly understand what Jesus is saying here, you have to understand a bit about Laodicea's water, as well as the water of its two sister cities Hierapolis and Colossae. These three cities were all very close to each other (see Colossians 4:13-16), and each was known for its water – but for totally different reasons.

Six miles north of Laodicea, Hierapolis was famous for the huge hot springs which bubbled up in the middle of the city and then flowed outward across a huge plateau. And essentially what they had was these huge spas, and people would travel there from all

over Asia for medicinal reasons, to rest and to heal and to relax in these hot springs. So Hierapolis was known for the healing effects of its hot water.

Ten miles east of Laodicea, Colossae was actually known for the exact opposite. It was known for the coldness of its water. It was located next to some cold springs of water and everyone in the area knew that Colossae had the best drinking water – very cold and refreshing and clean. So you’ve got Hierapolis known for its hot water, and you’ve got Colossae known for its cold water.

And then there was Laodicea. Laodicea was close to Colossae but was located high up on a plateau, several hundreds of feet up above the surrounding plains, meaning no springs or rivers nearby. And the result is that they had to pipe their water in over long distances through stone pipes, so that by the time the water reached them it was lukewarm and tepid – neither hot nor cold – and full of calcium from the rock.¹⁸ It was infamous in the area as being terrible for drinking.

With this in mind we can now begin to make sense of Jesus’ statement, “I wish you were hot or cold;” hot water is good for something because you can sit in it and it has healing properties; cold water is good for something because you can drink it and it is refreshing. But lukewarm water is good for nothing – it’s not good for sitting in and it’s not good for drinking. It’s useless! So when Jesus says that the Laodicean church is ‘lukewarm’ and that He wishes they were either ‘hot or cold,’ He is not saying that He would rather they be ‘cold’ in their passion for Him than ‘lukewarm,’ He is saying that He wishes they were good for something, just as cold water is good for something and hot water is good for something.

See, there are different kinds of churches that, though imperfect, are still useful to Jesus. For example, the church at Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7) was big on holiness and truth (v. 2, 5), but lacking in love (v. 4-5). Jesus sternly rebuked them for their lack of love, but their zeal for holiness and truth meant that there was some good there for Him to work with. On the other hand, the church at Thyatira (Rev 2:18-29) was really big on love and service (v. 19), but they were weak on holiness and truth (v. 20-23). Jesus very severely rebuked them for their tolerance of sexual immorality and false teaching, but the fact that they were big on love and service meant they had some good in them to work with. But the Laodiceans were different – they had *neither* a zeal for holiness and truth, *nor* passionate hearts full of love; and so Jesus says essentially, ‘you are good for nothing, you are neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.’

Notice in these next verses how self-satisfied and complacent these people are: ¹⁷ *For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.* ¹⁸ *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. – Revelation 3:17-18 (ESV)*

‘I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing’ – that was the heart attitude of these people. It is doubtful anyone in this church ever said such a thing out loud, or even consciously thought it; when it comes to complacency and pride we human beings are masters of self-deception – we would never allow ourselves to ever consciously think or say such a thing out loud. Instead we would paper over the true state of our hearts with pious language: “We’re not perfect;” “We don’t have it all together;” “We need Jesus.” But our actions and attitudes tell the true story of whether or not there is any thirst for Jesus, any dependency on Him, or desperation for Him in our lives.

¹⁸ Tyndale Bulletin 38 (1987) 143-149: *Why the Laodiceans received lukewarm water (Revelation 3:15-18)*. (Accessed online: http://www.tyndalehouse.com/TynBul/Library/TynBull_1987_38_06_Porter_LaodiceansRev3.pdf, Dec 3, 2014.) See also the Holman Bible Dictionary article on *Laodicea*. (Accessed online: <http://www.studydrive.org/dictionaries/hbd/view.cgi?n=3759>, Dec 3, 2014).

The fact that they thought themselves rich is also probably not referring to the fact that this church was actually overtly bragging about their money – again too obvious. Though no doubt they were indeed a wealthy, prosperous church financially, the whole point of what Jesus is saying here is that in their hearts these Laodiceans think they have it all together; they think they have everything they need; they think they’re a great church and they’re on their way to heaven, and they just feel so satisfied and safe and good about themselves as a church. In other words, they believe right doctrines; they have very respectable services every weekend with Bible teaching and nice worship; they have a missions budget and some pictures of missionaries on their walls . . . it’s a really good, successful, respectable, Bible-believing church.

But Jesus says to them, ‘BUT YOU ARE WRETCHED, PITIABLE, POOR, BLIND, AND NAKED.’ You have all the trappings and appearances on the outside of being a solid, good and doctrinally sound church, but you are wretched and poor and blind and naked.

- **BLIND** – you have doctrines and Bible teaching, but you have no actual knowledge of God; of who He is, or what His will is, or what He’s doing, or what His desires are. You have no experience of Him, and you have no intimacy with Him.
- **NAKED** – ‘And you are naked’ . . . the Christian is supposed to be clothed in white robes of righteousness, but in Jesus’ eyes these believers are naked. That’s scary. No doubt they have some programs and some good works they could point to, and other Christians would think everything’s fine, and what an upstanding church this is, but Jesus says none of those works count because they haven’t been done out of the right heart of actually walking with Jesus and depending on Him. They are the self-satisfied good works of a people who pay lip-service to Jesus, but do not truly love or know Him.

Now it’s scary in some ways that these people looked so good and so respectable on the outside, yet were so far from Jesus on the inside. **BECAUSE THE QUESTION THEN IS, HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU’RE A LAODICEAN CHRISTIAN OR IF YOU’RE IN A LAODICEAN CHURCH?** You can’t just go by outward appearances of godliness and Christian-ness. Just because you believe the Bible, and you go to a church that has nice services and Sunday School and Bible teaching every Sunday doesn’t mean Jesus is automatically happy with where you’re at, or that you are in right relationship with Him. What Jesus wants is people who are thirsty for Him and seeking Him and listening to Him and following Him (Mt 22:37).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask Jesus to show you where you are “hot or cold” (where you are being useful, doing well).
 - Spend time in thanksgiving that He is able to use you in these areas
2. It is lukewarm that we are to guard against – areas that are not useful. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you 1 area to work on:
 - What is a practical step you can take to move out of lukewarmness?
 - Is there someone that you can talk with to help keep you accountable?
 - By and far, the best teacher is the Word. Spend a few extra minutes reading a passage that is a favorite of yours and allow God to speak a new truth into that text.

DAY 21**READ:** Revelation 3:14-22 – Letter to the church at Laodicea**COMPLACENCY AND NO POWER!**

So let us consider two potential warning signs which might signal that you are a Laodicean Christian, or that you are in a Laodicean church. The purpose of offering these is not so that we might judge others (wrong!), but that we might examine of ourselves:

1. Complacency . . . as evidenced by lack of prayer (corporately & individually).

The root problem these Laodiceans had was they were complacent – “I have everything I need, I need nothing.” There was no thirst for Jesus; no deep sense of dependency and need; no longing, no pursuing, no listening or seeking after Him. **AND THE NUMBER 1 SIGN THAT THIS KIND OF COMPLACENCY HAS TAKEN UP RESIDENCE IN OUR HEARTS OR IN OUR CHURCH IS A LACK OF PRAYER.** It’s as simple as that. A person who feels a deep, ongoing sense of their need for Jesus is a person who prays, period. And I’m not talking about legalism here, where Christians pray and do devotions every day because otherwise they feel guilty. No, what I’m talking about is where, if a person actually feels like they need Jesus in their lives, prayer just spills out of their life as a matter of course; “Oh Jesus I need You to help me with this;” and “Oh Jesus, I need you to help me with this situation;” and “Oh Jesus, I need You to speak to me and guide me about this.” A person who recognizes their need for Jesus will talk to Jesus in prayer, and call out to Jesus, and seek Jesus and listen as a matter of course throughout their life.

AND A CHURCH THAT RECOGNIZES HOW MUCH IT NEEDS JESUS IS A CHURCH THAT WILL SET ASIDE TIME TO SEEK HIS FACE AND LISTEN TO HIM AND PRAY TO HIM CORPORATELY AS A BODY. Period. The level to which a church does not pray and seek God’s face is the level to which the people in that church really believe they can do it on their own strength. The level to which a church just runs its programs and services from week to week and doesn’t seek God in prayer, sometimes with fasting, is the level to which that church thinks it’s got things covered on its own human strength and there’s no need to bother ourselves desperately seeking Jesus or interceding or listening to His voice.

And of course out of that comes the next trait . . .

2. NO POWER OR ABIDING PRESENCE OF GOD – no answers to prayer; no changed lives; no miracles; no big faith stories and no risks taken.

There’s no power or abiding presence of God in the person or church that is not desperate for God. Oh – **THEY HAVE SERVICES!** Nice services every Sunday, with Bible teaching and Sunday School, and some neat programs during the week, but the power and activity of God is nowhere evident in that place.

- **THERE ISN’T A STEADY STREAM OF TESTIMONIES** of people’s lives being radically changed; people being saved, people being set free of bondage, and being healed of old wounds and marriages and families and children being restored.
- **AND THERE AREN’T HARDLY ANY FAITH STORIES:** stories of God speaking to people and asking them to take big kingdom risks with their family or their business or their finances or in their workplace to advance His kingdom.
- **AND THERE’S NO ANSWERED PRAYER.** In a church like this, you ask someone “When’s the last time you guys really sought God about something and He answered in a big miraculous way?” And they’re like – ‘Answered prayers?’

Ummm . . . ahhh . . . hmmm . . . There's no power of God in that place – it's just a compilation of nice services and programs. But where's God? There's no deep hunger for Him.

- And THERE'S NO DEEP ABIDING SENSE OF HIS PRESENCE. No moments in the life of the church where the conviction of sin comes heavy on people, or where you can feel tears of joy streaming down your face because of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Not that emotional experiences are everything, or that we build our faith on them, but when the power of God is at work in your life or in the church there will be moments when His Presence is evident.

Paul talks about people and churches like this in 2 Timothy 3:5, “. . . *having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power.*”

And so Jesus says to us “BE ZEALOUS AND REPENT!”¹⁹ *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. BE zealous. This is a command – it's unacceptable to God for us to be indifferent and complacent. In fact, it's disobedient. And there's hope here – Jesus wouldn't command us to do anything we weren't capable of doing. We can take action to become zealous . . . we're not just doomed to indifference and apathy and lack of desperation for God. We can take practical steps in our lives to stir zeal, and repent – and when we do Jesus says . . .*

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 eat with him, and he with me.*

So the ball is in our court: if we will be zealous and repent, Jesus will answer. He's waiting at the door. Just waiting for you and me to respond. His answer is already 'Yes!' And if we do He will come in and fellowship with us, and we won't just be playing this religious game anymore, it will be the real deal.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Prayerfully examine yourself to see if you are in a place where you are truly depending on God and passionately seeking Him, or if you are in a place of self-satisfied complacency.
 - What is the state of your prayer life?
 - a. Do you regularly spend time in communion and fellowship with the Father?
 - b. Do you do it only out of duty?
 - c. Do you regularly hear God's voice? When's the last time? Over the past week to a month, how regularly have you heard God speak to you?
 - Is God's abiding presence and power evident in your life?
 - a. When is the last time you had an actual answer to prayer? How many answers to prayer have you had in the past month? Do you even have specific prayer requests you are bringing to the Lord right now?
 - b. What has God been changing in you this past year? Has He changed you at all? Is there any real evidence of the Holy Spirit's work in your life?
2. 'Be zealous and repent.' Tell the Holy Spirit that you want to be zealous and repent. Tell Him that you want to answer the door of your heart that Jesus is knocking on, and to have fellowship with Him 'as friends' (Rev 3:20-21).
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how He sees you – write down whatever He shows you.
 - Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a next step in growing in passionate wholeheartedness for Jesus. Write down whatever He shows you.

DAY 22**READ:** Revelation chapter 4 – The Throne in heaven.

² “At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.” – **Revelation 3:15 (ESV)**

Immediately after the letters to the churches are completed John is caught up into a vision of heaven. This is very important – before Jesus gives John a vision of End Time events (chapters 6 – 20), He first gives John a revelation of God’s Throne in heaven. It’s all about perspective; if you view the terrifying events of the End Times from a human perspective, they will overwhelm and terrify you (the same is true of scary events in the present). But when a person has a revelation of God’s Throne, and the awesome, glorious, sovereign God who is seated on that Throne, future events come into perspective and they no longer have the power to overwhelm. When we see the events of the future through the lens of heaven, we see those events with hope-filled eyes rather than fear-filled eyes.

The throne of God is referred to 36 times in the book of Revelation.¹ It is the guarantee of the certainty of God’s plans. It is the governmental center of the universe. The Throne shows us God as the ruler over everything; the One who sees everything; the One who is in control of everything; the One who commands things to be done, and the One who commands things to be stopped.

John sees a real person on the Throne. A Person with fiery emotions, a vast intellect and who possesses all power . . . yet who watches over us and cares for us. He sees when we endure trials instead of giving up. He sees the positive. He rewards every small act of obedience, especially those hidden from the eyes of others (Mt 6:1-6, 16-18). He remembers and rewards all of our acts of service (Heb 6:10). Even small acts, such as giving a cup of cold water, do not go unnoticed by the Lord (Mt 10:42).²

This One who sits on the Throne is absolutely without fear. How could He fear? He knows all things, even the future, and nothing that is created can compare to His limitless power. Even Satan himself, and the antichrist, are mere pawns in His eternal plan to prepare for Himself a people of His own, to live with Him forever!

And He invites us to live without fear as well. More than 100 times in Scripture the One on the Throne invites us to ‘fear not.’ How do we live without fear? Only by encountering Him, and getting a revelation (in our hearts, not just our heads!) of how awesome, and sovereign and powerful and glorious He is. The bigger our picture of God, the smaller our fears of the future.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Make a list of 2 – 5 things that are causing you anxiety and/or fear right now in your life. (eg. My kids’ future; finances; cancer diagnosis; marital future; death; other, etc.)
2. Read verses 2 – 6 several times over. Get a picture in your head of the scene John is painting. Then picture yourself boldly approaching that throne as Hebrews 4:16 commands us.
 - Now (eyes closed, picture firmly planted in your mind) picture yourself bringing each fear/anxiety individually to the throne and giving it to the One seated on that throne.

¹ English Standard Version

² This paragraph and the one previous borrowed with minor revisions from Mike Bickle: *Studies in the beauty of God, Session 6, page 1* (Accessed online, December 3, 2014).

3. Ask Him to speak to you about each fear. Ask Him for a revelation of His glory, power and sovereignty.
4. Finish by asking Him to give you victory over your fears. Thank Him in advance for what He is going to do! (Note: praying this once won't probably be enough – this is something you'll probably need to do over and over again many times before you have a strong, consistent and more permanent confidence in these areas of fear.)

DAY 23



READ: Revelation chapter 5 – The Lion and the Lamb:

Jesus is worthy, and Jesus wins.

⁵ *And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”* – **Revelation 5:5 (ESV)**

Chapter 5 is part two to chapter 4. In chapter 4 John gets a revelation of the Father seated on His throne in heaven, fully sovereign and in control over everything that happens in the universe. In chapter 5 we see the result of this on the earth – the man Jesus takes possession of planet earth. Jesus – who is also fully God, and who is worthy of all honor and glory and praise – will first ensure that the Great Commission is successfully completed (compare Rev 5:9 with Mt 28:19 and 24:14), and then will physically return to earth to conquer all evil, and set up His throne and rule on the earth. It's a great ending, and it is set in stone.

All the Father's resources, power, and majesty from Revelation 4 are backing His promise to the Son in chapter 5. God the Father specifically promised in Philippians 2:10 that “at the Name of Jesus every knee will bow” – every knee on earth, and above earth, and under the earth (see also Isa 45:23; Rom 14:11). Jesus is His human name. That is the name He received when He was conceived in the womb of Mary. And according to Philippians 2:9 that name has now been raised up to the same place of honor and power and praise and glory as God's own name, YAHWEH. To this human son of David every knee in heaven will bow, all the angels, and every knee on the earth.

Chapter 5 plays out like a drama – at the beginning of the chapter a strong angel asks ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?’ The scroll here is kind of like a title-deed to planet earth; the one who opens the scroll is the one who owns the earth. And each of the seals on the scroll represent fore-ordained judgments that God is going to release on the earth as part of its preparation for Jesus' return. So the one who opens the scroll is the one who both owns the earth, and who has the authority to release God's end-time judgments on the earth.

So who is worthy to take the scroll? The One who is both a Lion (v. 5) and a Lamb (v. 6). He is a Lion in fierceness: a bold and fearless leader who strikes terror in Satan himself, and will crush the worst of evil's power merely with the breath of His mouth (2 Thess 2:8). Who dares to even look Him in the eye (Rev 1:14b)? Who can even stand in His Presence without falling prostrate (John 18:6; Rev 1:17; Phil 2:10)? And yet He is a Lamb as well! One who meekly allowed Himself to be killed in the place of sinful and undeserving men!

Have you worshiped this Jesus recently? Have you spent time with Him in sweet fellowship and communion (Rev 3:20)? Have you brought Him your worries and cares? Have you listened to His voice and obeyed His leadership?



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Make a list of specific big things in your life that Jesus has saved you from, and blessed you in. Without Jesus where would you be?
2. Picture yourself going up to Him in the Throne room as He holds the scroll in His hand . . . bring to Him each of the things you are so thankful for and worship and thank Him.
3. Sit quietly before Him – ask Him what He wants to say to you. Write down whatever He shows you.
4. Ask Him if there is anything in your life you need to confess and repent of.
5. If there is time . . . picture Him again and bring Him each of your fears and anxieties.

DAY 24



READ: Revelation chapter 6 – The Seal Judgments.

The six Seal judgments outlined in Revelation chapter six perfectly mirror the ‘birth pains’ Jesus prophesied would intensify on the earth in the time before His return (Mt 24:4-14, 29-31). If you would like to see a comparison of the two passages see Appendix 1 at the end of this devotional book.

It is important as you read about these judgment events that you maintain a heaven-perspective. These events are not happening because events are spinning out of control; rather, they are all part of God’s divine plan, and Jesus Himself is sovereignly releasing each of them, in His perfect time, as He personally opens each of the seals (see verses 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12).

One thing to note about the Seal judgments is that they are all TREND EVENTS. This in contrast to Trumpet and Bowl judgments later in Revelation which predict SPECIFIC EVENTS. Here’s what is meant by the term ‘trend events;’ the Seal judgments include things like war, famine, pestilence and the persecution of Christians – none of these things is a one-time event where a person could say, ‘At this point in time Seal judgment number X occurred.’ Why? Because these are all things that are going on all the time, and have been going on for thousands of years. When did ‘war’ happen (v. 4)? It’s going on all the time. When did famine happen (v. 6)? It’s going on all the time. When did pestilence and disease happen (v. 8)? It’s going on all the time. Thus the Seal judgments do not predict specific events, but rather trends which will increase in intensity the closer the earth gets to Jesus’ Return.

Contrast this to the Trumpet and Bowl judgments which predict very specific events that will occur in the future at specific points in time; like a mountain being thrown into the sea and destroying a third of the ships and the living creatures in the oceans (7:8-9); or a 200 million man army marching through the Middle East butchering huge quantities of people (9:15-16); or painful sores breaking out on people who have taken the Mark of the Beast (16:2).

The first seal (v. 1-2) is a rider on a white horse going out ‘conquering, and to conquer.’ This represents the Antichrist’s empire expanding. Note that the Bible is a Middle-East centric book. It was written by Middle-Eastern people (Jews specifically), with a Middle-Eastern perspective, centered on the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem in particular. Thus, contrary to the popular imagination of so many Western Christians, we should not be looking to Europe or other places on the earth to be the center of the Antichrist’s power base – we can be certain that his empire will be a Middle Eastern empire,

primarily comprised of the nations surrounding Israel. This is just a simple fact of the Bible's Middle-East-centricity, and is confirmed by a vast quantity of specific Scripture about the Day of the Lord that specifically names the nations surrounding Israel as the primary focus of Jesus' anger and vengeance when He returns (for example Ezekiel 38-39 (specifically 38:1-6, 16), Joel 2:30-3:4; Ezekiel 30:1-5; Zephaniah 2:3-5, etc.). We can see that this prophecy already has shadows of fulfillment in the past, in the Babylonian, Persian and Greek empires of old (all Middle Eastern empires), as well as in the rapid rise and conquest of the entire Middle East by various Islamic empires over the past 1400 years. We can expect another mighty empire to arise out of the Middle East in the future, one intent on ridding itself (and the world) of both Christians and Jews.

The second seal (v. 3-4) is war. A rider on a red horse is permitted to take peace from the earth.

The third seal (v. 5-6) speaks of famine. Verse 6 describes severe food shortages where the cost of food skyrockets, so that a denarius (a day's wage) buys barely any wheat or barley.

The fourth seal (v. 7-8) speaks of killing and famine and pestilence breaking out all over the earth. The reference to 'wild beasts' probably does not refer to wild animals killing people, but rather to violence associated with the Antichrist's empire (the word 'beast' is the predominant title for the Antichrist and his empire throughout Revelation). Is there some foreshadowing here in the violence we see breaking out all over the world today, on almost every continent, in relation to militant Islam? This is the kind of thing that this passage is talking about.

The fifth seal (v. 9-11) speaks of martyrdom and describes martyred Christians in heaven crying out to God for justice. Nowhere is the sovereignty of God more on display than here; in His answer to their prayers God tells the martyrs that they must wait a 'little longer' until the number of fellow martyrs is made 'complete.' In other words, God has a number in His mind of how many Christians are going to be martyred, and it's not going to be one more, or one less! And the moment the last one is in the fold, that will be the end of this Age, and Jesus will return to put an end to the Antichrist, and evil in general.

Unlike the first five seals, the sixth seal (v. 12-17) describes an actual specific set of events (not a trend event) which will occur at a point in time in the future. More specifically, Seal Six describes the cosmic events that will occur on the day when Jesus returns: the sun will go dark (v. 12 – solar eclipse?) and the moon will go blood red (v. 12 – lunar eclipse?); the stars will fall to earth (v. 13 – a gigantic meteor shower?); a massive earthquake (v. 14); and terror among the peoples of the earth. Compare this passage with Matthew 24:29-31, which describes Jesus coming back on the clouds in the midst of the identical cosmic events.

What a sovereign God we serve! He has painted out for us a detailed roadmap of the future. And though there is suffering and upheaval in our future we can trust that He is firmly in control of all things, and He returns in the end. We can also stand in awe at the thought of His Return – gigantic, glorious, and catastrophic signs in the heavens and on the earth will announce the day of His Coming. No one will be able to miss it! And though these events will be terrifying to the rebellious peoples of the earth (Rev 6:15-16), Jesus specifically tells us to look forward to these events, and not to fear them since they herald the day of our rescue and redemption (Lk 21:28).


JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Are you afraid of the future? Afraid for yourself? Afraid for your children? Afraid for your livelihood? Afraid of suffering? Afraid of death? Write down specific fears you have for the future.
 - Meditate on Luke 21:25-28.
 - Like the martyrs in verse 10 picture yourself taking your fears to the Father in heaven. Ask Him to help you look forward to His return, rather than fearing and dreading it. Listen to see if He responds in any way.
2. Are there people in your life (family, friends, co-workers) who are not ready to meet Jesus at His return? Make a list of the 2 or 3 that are closest to your heart.
 - Ask God to give you a burden in prayer for these people.
 - Spend time listening in prayer for what God would tell you about these people. What are some specific things you could pray for these people? What are some specific things He would have you do?
 - Lay out a prayer (fasting too?) commitment over the next month of when and how much time you will spend time praying for the things He's shown you.

DAY 25

READ: Revelation chapter 7 – The Great Commission completed.

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb . . . – **Revelation 7:9 (ESV)***

There is a very important story line to the End Times that many people miss. It has to do with the Great Commission, as recorded for us in Matthew 28 – just before Jesus left earth to go back to heaven, He entrusted His followers with the following monumental task:

*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of ALL NATIONS (ethnos), baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” – **Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)***

The Greek word for nations in this passage is the word *ethnos* meaning ethnic group. So Jesus wants His Church to go to all the nations – all the ethnic groups of the world – and make disciples there, baptizing the people in His Name, and teaching them to obey and follow Him.

This is THE primary purpose and mission of the Church around the world – not humanitarian work (though humanitarian work is good and important) or social justice (also good and important), but discipleship; to bring people everywhere into a saving relationship with Jesus, whereby they hear His voice, obey and love Him.

This task is so important to Jesus that He has timed His return around its completion. In other words, He refuses to come back until it is finished. In Matthew 24, in His response to the disciples' question *‘What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?’* (Mt. 24:3), Jesus gave this as an important piece of His answer: *“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations (ethnos), and then the end will come”* (Mt. 24:14).

Thus, according to Jesus, once the gospel is successfully taken to every ethnic group that's when the end will come. Do we believe Him?

And just to underscore the importance of the Great Commission to the End Times storyline, consider the following three passages in Revelation which all promise that the Great Commission will be completed in the days before Jesus returns:

*And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you [Jesus] to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from EVERY TRIBE and LANGUAGE and PEOPLE and NATION (ethnos), ¹⁰ and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." – **Revelation 5:9-10 (ESV)***

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from ALL TRIBES and PEOPLES and LANGUAGES, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" . . . ¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." – **Revelation 7:9-14 (ESV)***

An amazing prophetic picture here of heaven, that in the end heaven will be populated by people from every tribe and ethnic group and language – an immense number of people. Note too how this commission will be completed in the days just before Jesus returns, as evidenced by the fact that the elder tells John that these people are coming 'out of the great tribulation.' This could mean that the Great Commission will be completed just before the time of great tribulation, but more likely it means that the Great Commission will be fulfilled *during* the time of great tribulation, just before Jesus returns.

*Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to EVERY NATION (ethnos) and TRIBE and LANGUAGE and PEOPLE. – **Revelation 14:6 (ESV)***

In this passage we see that in the final days of tribulation, Jesus will even send the Church angelic help in order to ensure that the Great Commission is completed.

People sometimes look at the evil that goes on around the world and wonder why Jesus hasn't returned yet – THIS IS WHY! It's not that He doesn't care; it's not that He doesn't yearn to return and take us in His arms and wipe away all of our tears . . . it's that He is patient and merciful not wanting entire ethnic groups to perish without having the chance to acknowledge Him (2 Pet 3:9). He doesn't want any ethnic groups missing in heaven! So the moment the Great Commission is completed He will pull the trigger on the final events that culminate with His return.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a greater understanding and heart for making disciples.
Ask Him:
 - What does that look like for me specifically?
 - Is there an investment of time that You want me to make?
 - How does that fit in with my schedule (in order to do this, you have to be willing to surrender your schedule!)

2. Seek the Lord as to whether there would be anything that would hinder you from doing the things He showed you in questions #1. Submit these things to God and ask for His help in this/these areas.

DAY 26

 **READ:** Revelation chapter 7 – The Great Commission completed

Where are we at with the Great Commission?

(As of 2014)

Very close (for the first time in human history)!³

The Gospel has been directly preached to over FOUR BILLION people in this world:

1. Churches exist in all 251 countries and territories of the earth;
2. And the Bible has been translated into 2,062 languages;
3. Which means that 95 percent of the world's population can now read the Bible in their native language.

But there are still 2100 languages left which do not have a Bible translation yet available.

This might seem like a huge number, but the truth is that the number of translations and missions efforts to these unreached groups has been increasing exponentially over the past couple of decades. Take for example Wycliffe: they are the world's biggest Bible translation organization. They have translated the Bible into literally hundreds of different languages over the past few decades. Of the 2100 languages left which do not have a Bible translation yet available, Wycliffe has people on the ground, right now, in 1500 of those ethnic groups, working on translating the Bible into that language. Wycliffe has a stated goal of translating the Bible into every language on earth by 2025 – and because of tremendous leaps in technology and language translation techniques in the past decade they are now successfully completing a new translation of the Bible, into a brand new language, every 5 days! And that's just Wycliffe – many other organizations from around the world are also making similar efforts.

And that is why an increasing number of number of prominent believers are convinced that not only will the Great Commission be completed in our lifetime, but that it will be completed in the next ten to twenty years. The following men (prominent, respected Christian leaders) have all gone on record with their conviction that the Great Commission will be completed by 2020:

1. Stephen Douglass, president of Campus Crusade for Christ International;
2. Loren Cunningham, author of numerous books and the founder of YWAM;
3. Mike Bickle, author of numerous books and the founder and leader of International House of Prayer.

Jesus said that after the Gospel went to all nations, 'THEN the end would come.' Do we really believe Him? As evangelicals we take Jesus the Teacher seriously, and Jesus the Savior – but do we take JESUS THE PROPHET SERIOUSLY?

Does this mean that Jesus is FOR SURE coming back in the next 10 – 20 years?

No. First of all, Jesus didn't say in Matthew 24 that He would come back immediately, the moment the Great Commission is completed – His exact words were, "and then the end will come," probably meaning that a number of End Time events would be triggered by that event, but not necessarily that He would come back that very moment (though He could, assuming everything else is in place).

³ For more information on these statistics and on other Great Commission stuff, visit http://www.wycliffe.ca/wycliffe/events/race_2025.jsp; www.call2all.org

The only thing He did promise was that, “*Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place*” (Mt 24:34), speaking of all the signs of His return earlier in Matthew 24, including the completion of the Great Commission (24:14). So the generation that sees the Great Commission completed will also see Jesus Return.

Furthermore, at what point exactly does Jesus consider the Great Commission to be completed? We don’t know . . . is it the moment one person is saved from every ethnic group? The moment there are a small group of believers in every ethnic group? We can’t know for sure, which is why we cannot predict exact dates of His Return. But we do know that the Great Commission is getting close to being completed, and we do know that Jesus will come back within a generation of that happening, and we do know that Jesus really wants to come back and make everything right – so He won’t delay once everything is in place for Him to return!

For further study (those who are interested). Read the following books:

- *Dreams and Visions: is Jesus awakening the Muslim world?* by Tom Doyle;
- *Miraculous Movements*, by Jerry Trousdale.

These amazing books document the incredible, miraculous End-Time movement of God that is happening in the Muslim world right now, and will give you a sense of the mighty Great Commission tsunami that is currently sweeping the globe. Jesus is coming back soon!

For further questions about Revelation chapter 7, specifically about the 144,000, see Appendix 2 at the back of this devotional.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Are you looking forward to Jesus’ Return with gladness (2 Tim 4:8), or do you feel apprehension? Take a moment to prayerfully reflect, and write down honestly, the feelings you have about Jesus’ Return. When you think that it could actually be very close, how does that make you feel? Write out your feelings specifically, and if you have fears, write out what those are – the fear of missing out on something? The fear of judgment? What?
 - Bring your emotions to Jesus one by one and talk with Him about those things. See what He wants to respond.
 - Ask Jesus to give you a heart that yearns for His return!
2. Read Luke 21:34-36. Are you living with an End Times sense of urgency, or are you living distracted? Are you living in such a way that you are ready for Jesus to come back? Ask the Lord to convict you or encourage you on this matter. Write down whatever He shows you.
 - Ask the Lord to graciously show you one practical change you make in your life at this time to grow in living with urgency instead of distraction.

DAY 27



READ: Revelation chapters 8-9 – The first six Trumpet Judgments.

In Revelation chapters 8 – 9 we have recorded the first six Trumpet Judgments. Several things need to be said about these judgments:

1. **First of all, these are SPECIFIC, FUTURE judgment events.** Unlike the Seal Judgments which describe trends that are already going on in the present, but which will increase in the future (eg. war, famine, pestilence, persecution, etc.), the Trumpet Judgments describe specific events in the future. For example, the second Trumpet

judgment describes a mountain being thrown into the sea and killing a third of all sea life and a third of the ships on the sea – that is a specific event being predicted, not a trend. And it’s not something that has ever happened before either. All of the Trumpet judgments are like this; they predict specific, cataclysmic future events that will take place in the time just before Jesus returns.

2. Secondly, the Trumpet judgments parallel the plagues God sent on Egypt in the Exodus. This is not an accident. In Micah 7:15 God compares what He will do in the last days to what He did in Egypt. (Incidentally, we’ll see the same parallel with the Bowl judgments in Revelation chapter 16.)

- ◊ Trumpet #1 (8:7) parallels the seventh plague of hail with fire and blood (Ex 9:22-26);
- ◊ Trumpets #2 and 3 (8:8-11) parallel the first plague of the Nile turning to blood (Ex 7:19-25);
- ◊ Trumpet #4 (8:12) parallels the ninth plague of darkness (Ex 10:21-23);
- ◊ Trumpet #5 (9:1-11) parallels the eighth plague of locusts (Ex 10:12-20).

3. Thirdly, the Trumpet judgments can be broken into two parts – natural disasters, and non-natural disasters. The first four Trumpet judgments describe cataclysmic natural events, but the last three trumpet judgments (called the ‘three woes’ in 8:3) are all explicitly non-natural; Trumpets 5 and 6 involve massive demonic outpourings and oppression, and Trumpet 7 (chapter 11) describes the return of Christ.

Trumpet 1 Hail and fire thrown down on the earth; 1/3 of earth, trees and grass burned up.	Specific NATURAL events
Trumpet 2 Mountain thrown into sea; 1/3 sea to blood; 1/3 fish dead; 1/3 of ships dead.	
Trumpet 3 Great star falls from heaven; 1/3 of fresh water turned to blood.	
Trumpet 4 1/3 of the light darkened (sun, moon & stars)	
Trumpet 5 Woe #1 – Demonic locusts torment people.	Specific NON-NATURAL events
Trumpet 6 Woe #2 – 200 million man army kills 1/3 of mankind	
Trumpet 7 Woe #3 – Jesus returns amid cataclysmic earthquakes and hail to judge the wicked (ch. 11)	

Because the events described in the Trumpet judgments are so immense and cataclysmic, many people have written them off as symbolic. But recall that the explicitly stated purpose of Revelation is to tell us the ‘things which must soon take place’ (Rev 1:1). In the same way that the cataclysmic supernatural plagues of Egypt actually occurred, the Trumpet judgments of Revelation describe actual events which will occur in the future.

Furthermore, it is important to see that these judgment events are released on the earth in answer to the prayers of God’s people: *And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer, and he was given much incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar before the throne, ⁴and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. ⁵Then the angel took the censer*

and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake. ⁶ Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them . . . – **Revelation 8:3-6 (ESV)**

Immediately following the prayers of the saints being thrown to earth, the Trumpet judgments are released. This is not a coincidence. God's End Time plans are released in partnership with the praying Church. Our prayers are powerful!

Of course, our heart in all of this will not be that we enjoy watching people suffer. On the contrary, these prayers will be motivated by our desire to see Jesus return, and evil vanquished. At the same time that we are partnering in prayer to see God's righteous judgments done on earth, we will be warning the people of the world of what is about to come, and offering them the answer to their problems and suffering – Jesus!



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Are you convinced of the power of prayer? You might answer 'yes' to this question because you know that's what the right answer is . . . but your actions reveal the truth. A person who really believes to the core of their being that prayer is powerful, and that God always answers prayer (see Mt 7:7-8; 21:22; Mk 11:24; Jn 14:13-14; 15:7; 16:23-24; 1 Jn 5:14-15) is a person who will pray! Ask yourself the following questions:
 - Do I even have a list of important prayer requests that I'm regularly bringing to God right now?
 - When's the last time I had an actual answer to prayer? I pursued God about a particular prayer request, and He answered?
 - Answered prayer is actually an important component of a joy-filled relationship with Jesus (see Jn 16:24). People do don't see regular answers to prayer probably aren't in an actual relationship with Jesus – because part of having a relationship with Him is bringing Him into every part of your life, and seeing Him work!
2. Do you feel guilty about the state of your prayer life? Do you feel guilty because you don't have hardly any stories of answered prayer? Do you feel unspiritual? Do you feel hopeless about your prayer life, that you'll never be consistent in prayer? Tell God how you feel! Tell Him exactly how you feel about your prayer life. Do you feel dry? Do you lack faith? Are you fearful? Tell Him! Write it out in your journal.
 - Ask the Lord to respond to what you have unburdened to Him. Write down whatever comes to your mind.
 - Now write out what you would like in a prayer life. What, specifically, would a good prayer life look like to you? Write out 2 – 4 things describing. Then listen to God and see what He thinks of what you've written.
 - Spend time praying to God to improve your prayer life!
3. Start a prayer journal. Preferably on a computer so it's neater, and you won't throw it out by accident. Prayerfully begin a list of important prayer requests. Date them. Make them specific (vague prayer requests are very difficult to get into) – what, specifically, are you praying for?

Commonly asked question from ch. 9 – Will the demonic locusts be able to torment believers? (See Appendix 3)

DAY 28**READ:** Revelation chapters 10-11 – The Pause.

Revelation 10 – 11:13 gives us a pause in the storyline of the Trumpet Judgments; chapters 8 - 9 tell the story of the first six Trumpets, but Trumpet seven is not described until verses 14-19 of chapter 11. And in between is this pause in the storyline. (Note: There are many such pauses in the book of Revelation – for a full explanation of the different ‘pauses’ in Revelation see the outline of the book of Revelation in Appendix 4 at the end of this devotional booklet.)

The purpose of this particular pause in the story in chapter 10 is to give the apostle John (and us) a breather (the first six Trumpets are quite bloody and intense after all), and to encourage John to keep prophesying (verses 8-11) because Jesus is about to return (verse 6-7).

Then in the first 13 verses of chapter 11 (still part of the ‘pause,’ along with chapter 10), God shows John the Two Witnesses who will prophesy and do mighty miracles in the city of Jerusalem throughout the whole 3 ½ year period of tribulation (11:3 – “1260 days”) just before Jesus returns. This is supposed to be another encouragement for believers. In the midst of the intense natural cataclysms and world-wide demonic oppression of the Trumpet judgments, there will be these two prophets of God openly defying Satan and the Antichrist, along with all of their demonic powers. They will be like Old Testament prophets, shutting up the skies so they do not rain (v. 6 – like Elijah, see 1 Ki 17-18), and able to turn water to blood and call down various plagues (v. 6 – like Moses, see Exodus) as often as they desire. Think of how encouraging these witnesses will be to the persecuted Body of Christ around the world during those final days. They will be a living testament to the fact that God has not abandoned planet earth, and that God’s power is greater than Satan’s (the Antichrist will be unable to kill them for 3 ½ years though they are living in Jerusalem, the very place where he has his throne).

Furthermore, their prophetic witness during those final days will be a much-needed beacon of truth and clarity in a world full of deception and compromise. In this too they will be a huge encouragement to the Body of Christ around the world; there is something about truth spoken openly and fearlessly that causes good people to take courage. Silence breeds fear. And so these Two Witnesses will be a gift from God to the saints in the final time of tribulation. And in the prophetic ‘pause’ of Revelation chapters 10 and 11 they function as an encouragement to the reader, so that the reader is not overwhelmed by the intensity of the Trumpet judgments.

The second section of chapter 11, verses 15-19, picks up again the storyline of the Trumpet judgments. Trumpet 7 heralds the return of Jesus Christ to earth: *“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever”* (11:15). There has been much confusion about this over the years; since Trumpet 7 comes before the Bowl judgments in chapter 16, does that mean Jesus comes back before the Bowl judgments occur? There are several ways to resolve this, here are two of the most solid possibilities:

1. Jesus does return first, and then releases the Bowl judgments on the Antichrist’s kingdom as He and His resurrected saints march to Jerusalem for Armageddon;
2. Unlike the rest of the Seals, Trumpets, and Bowls, the seventh Seal, the seventh Trumpet, and the seventh Bowl all very closely parallel each other in a number of unique ways (compare 8:5 with 11:19 and 17:18) – so perhaps each of these judgment number sevens skips ahead to the end of the story and describes the same thing: Christ’s Return. Which would mean we should pull the seventh Seal, seventh Trumpet, and seventh Bowl out of the general sequence of judgments and place

them together at the end. (To see how this could look see the diagram in appendix 5 at the end of this devotional booklet.)



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. In your reading of chapters 10 and 11, was there a verse or section in particular that jumped out at you, or spoke to you? If not, ask God to give you one. This is His Divine Word . . . it is living and active (Heb 4:12), and can speak directly to your life and situation from even those passages where you would least expect it. Ask God confidently to speak directly to your life through these two chapters.
 - ‘What are you saying to me through these words today Lord?’
 - Write down whatever He shows you. Have a conversation with Him about that.
2. In the last days the Two Witnesses will be a tremendous encouragement to the Body of Christ by boldly proclaiming the truth. Like them, we can be a tremendous encouragement to believers around us by standing for truth in the places where we work and go to school. It’s amazing how even a small act like folding your hands and praying before your meal can lend courage to other believers who are watching, and maybe feeling afraid.
 - Ask the Lord, “How can I stand up for You in the place where I work, or go to school? In my family?” “How can I be an encouragement to other believers by standing up for Jesus, and standing for truth and right?”
 - Listen and write down whatever He shows you.

Commonly asked question from ch. 11 – *What’s the significance of the ‘1,260 days’ and ‘42 months’ that pop up in chapter 11 and throughout the book of Revelation? (See Appendix 3)*

DAY 29



READ: Revelation chapter 12 – War in heaven.

⁷ Now *war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back,* ⁸ *but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.* ⁹ *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. . . .* ¹² *Therefore, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!* – **Revelation 12:7-12 (ESV)**

Revelation 12 and 13 go hand in hand with each other, explaining for us why the final 3 ½ years of tribulation before Jesus returns will be so terrible on the earth. And the simple answer is: Satan will be mad. Very mad.

- Revelation 12 gives us the *behind-the-scenes* look at why Satan will be so mad – his unceremonious dumping out of heaven; while Revelation 13 gives us the *physical outworking of that anger* here on the earth – he will raise up a mighty beast empire to carry out his hatred of God against Jews and Christians (12:17).
- While chapter 12 describes what *we can’t see* – a spiritual battle raging in the heavenlies between *angelic armies* (12:7-9); chapter 13 describes the physical consequences of that battle here on the earth which *we can see* – a Satanically empowered *human* empire.
- Chapter 12 tells us *why* Satan is so furious, while chapter 13 tells us *what* he is going to do with that fury.

One of the common questions people ask after reading about Satan being thrown from heaven is, ‘Satan is *still* in heaven today?’ And the answer is, yes, he still has access. We see throughout Scripture that Satan has access to both heaven and earth and that he bounces between both:

- In Job 1 Satan appears before God in order to accuse Job after roaming about on the earth: *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them.* ⁷ *The LORD said to Satan, “From where have you come?” Satan answered the LORD and said, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.”* – Job 1:6-7 (ESV) See also Job 2:1-2.
- In Zechariah 3:1 we see Satan standing before God in heaven in order to accuse the Israelite high priest, Joshua.
- In Luke 22:31 Jesus says that ‘Satan demanded’ to have Peter in order to ‘sift him like wheat.’ This sounds similar to Job, and suggests that Satan had been to heaven again in order to make accusations against Peter.
- Revelation 12:10 explicitly states that Satan has access to heaven in order to accuse us – ‘*the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.*’

But the day is coming when – 3 ½ years before Jesus returns – Satan will be thrown down to earth, and will no longer have access to heaven in order to accuse believers before the Throne of God. On the one hand this will be a wonderful thing for those who walk with Jesus, but on the other hand it will also unleash a tsunami of suffering on all the people of the earth.

Chapter 12 can be broken up into three basic sections

- 1) Verses 1 – 6 tell the story of Jesus’ birth in prophetic pictures. The woman here is both the Jewish people generally, and Mary the mother of Jesus specifically. The dragon with seven heads is Satan, and when his ‘tail sweeps down a third of the stars in heaven’ it is speaking of the angels who followed him in rebellion towards God.

In verse 4 it says that the ‘dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth . . . so that he might devour the child.’ This is speaking of Satan’s plan to kill the Messiah – Jesus – as soon as He was born. The physical outworking of this plan was Herod’s failed attempt to kill the newborn king by killing all of the male babies in Bethlehem (Mt 2:16-18).

Verse 5 describes Jesus as the ‘male child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron’ and then skips ahead to the end of Jesus’ life (as prophecies often do) saying that He ‘was caught up to God and to His throne.’ Verse 6 then skips ahead to the end of the Age when faithful Jews (‘the woman’) will have to flee into a wilderness for 3 ½ years in order to escape the final explosion of Satan’s wrath.

Interesting note: all of the images in the first five verses of chapter 12 correspond to actual star constellations in the sky, and to important movements within those constellations around the time of Jesus’ birth! For more fascinating information about this see Rick Larson’s documentary *The Star of Bethlehem* and prepare to be astounded!

- 2) Verses 7 – 12 describe the heavenly war between the archangel Michael and his army, and Satan and his army. It also tells us that Satan will be furious as a result of losing this battle.
- 3) Verses 13 – 17 describe how Satan will focus his fury on Jews and Christians. First he will attempt to wipe out the Jewish people (‘the woman’) entirely (v. 13). But a remnant of them will be supernaturally protected in a ‘wilderness’ for 3 ½ years (v.

14-16). As a result, verse 17 describes how Satan will turn his attention onto the rest of the Jewish people around the world ('the rest of her offspring') and Christians (those 'who hold the testimony of Jesus').



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

- Has Satan been harassing you with accusations recently? He's very good at this; he constantly reminds us of our shortcomings, weaknesses, mistakes, hang-ups, and issues. He wants us to feel unworthy, unspiritual, and condemned so that we will not walk closely with God or pray bold prayers. But the Lord knows that we are weak and imperfect (Ps 103:14) – and He loves us anyway (Ps 103:8-13)! And in Jesus He forgives all of our sins and erases our condemnation (Rom 8:1). Therefore, we can boldly come into God's Presence each day (Heb 4:16) knowing that God gladly accepts us there!
 - Have you been feeling condemned and distant from God recently? Do you have feelings of unworthiness? Take a moment to silently reflect before the Lord about how you feel God feels towards you. Resist the urge to write down what you know you *should* write – write down how you actually feel God feels about you. Be specific.
 - Have a conversation with God about this! Tell Him how you feel He feels about you – then ask Him to speak to your heart and respond to what you have told Him. Wait before Him quietly, and then write down whatever He shows you.
- Ask the Lord to encourage you and to tell you what He loves about you. Do not be ashamed! Write down what He shows you.
- Sign out the *Star of Bethlehem* DVD from the church library, or purchase it for yourself. Watch it with your family, or with some friends – be amazed at God's sovereignty, and worship Him!
 - Ask the Lord, "How can I stand up for You in the place where I work, or go to school? In my family?" "How can I be an encouragement to other believers by standing up for Jesus, and standing for truth and right?"

DAY 30



READ: Revelation chapter 13:1-10 – War on earth.

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads. ² And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority. – Revelation 13:1-2 (ESV)

In chapter 13 we have described for us the weapon that Satan will wield in his attempt to subjugate the earth and destroy Jews and Christians – an evil and powerful empire labelled 'the beast.' This empire will be like a leopard, a bear, and a lion (v. 2), a direct reference to the prophecy in Daniel 7:2-6 that speaks of three empires symbolized by the same three animals. By comparing Daniel 7 with Daniel 2 (specifically verses 36-40) we can identify with confidence the lion as the Babylonian empire, the bear as Persia, and the leopard as the Greek empire under Alexander the Great. These three successive empires were all centered in the same place – the Middle East – and spanned much of the same territory. Thus we can expect the Antichrist's empire to likewise be a Middle Eastern superpower geographically spanning much the same territory as those original three empires (For an exceptionally thorough, rational, and biblical study of this topic see Joel Richardson's

Mideast Beast – maps below courtesy of Richardson).



Babylonian Empire (c. 600 BC)



Medo-Persian Empire (c. 530 BC)



Greek Empire (c. 323 BC)

This Middle Eastern superpower will blaspheme God, slander Christians, and make all-out ‘war’ on the saints. There will be no magical pre-Tribulation rapture to rescue Western Christians from this suffering, as verses 9 – 10 make clear: ⁹ *If anyone has an ear, let him hear:* ¹⁰ *If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain.* Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Already today, in places all around the world, Christians are undergoing persecution and harassment that ranges from oppressive to brutal. If God allows these Christians to suffer and die for their faith, how can we say that He loves us too much to let us suffer in the Tribulation? The pre-Tribulation rapture is nothing more than escapism, but the call of Revelation is not to escape, but to endure! After standing strong for the Lord through a Nazi death camp Corrie Ten Boom had this to say (she lost the rest of her family to the Nazi camps): *“There are some among us teaching there will be no tribulation, that the Christians will be able to escape all this. These are the false teachers that Jesus was warning us to expect in the latter days. Most of them have little knowledge of what is already going on across the world. I have been in countries where the saints are already suffering terrible persecution. In China, the Christians were told, “Don’t worry, before the tribulation comes you will be translated – raptured.” Then came a terrible persecution. Millions of Christians were tortured to death. Later I heard a Bishop from China say, sadly, “We have failed. We should have made the people strong for persecution, rather than telling them Jesus would come first. Tell the people how to be strong in times of persecution, how to stand when the tribulation comes, – to stand and not faint.” I feel I have a divine mandate to go and tell the people of this world that it is possible to be strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are in training for the tribulation, but more than sixty percent of the Body of Christ across the*

world has already entered into the tribulation. There is no way to escape it. We are next."⁴

In the End Times God's love will not be manifested to us by keeping us safe *from* suffering, but rather by Jesus walking closely with us *in* our suffering (Jn 16:33, 17:15, Mt 28:20b).

There is a theme of encouragement that runs through Revelation 13, and it is important we not miss it – the sovereignty of God:

*And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. . . .⁷
Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.*
– **Revelation 13:5-10 (ESV)**

Notice how the beast can do nothing on his own; he is 'given' a mouth to speak, 'allowed' to exercise authority, and 'allowed' to make war on the saints. Everything he does he can do only because God allows him! This is God's sovereignty. Even in the final years of great tribulation, Satan and the Antichrist will not be out of God's control. God's sovereignty over the beast empire is so complete that He determines exactly the time period during which the beast is allowed to operate – 42 months. Not one month less, not one month more. Exactly 42 months.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Are you anxious about anything right now? Fearful? Are you afraid for the future? You need a revelation of the sovereignty of God. Make a list of things that make you anxious, worried, or fearful.
 - Picture yourself taking each thing individually to the Throne of God, and declare out loud, "_____ is not out of God's control."
 - With each individual thing, ask God to give you His hopeful perspective about that thing. (When you are all powerful and in control you see all things with hope!) Wait before Him, and then write down whatever He puts on your heart.
 - Ask God for a promise for each issue – a verse, a word, a picture, that you can hold onto in the future.

1. Some things just need to be endured. Are you in the midst of anything right now that just requires endurance?
 - Ask the Lord for a word of encouragement and comfort in the midst of the thing you are enduring.
 - Pray a prayer of commitment that you will not give up, and you will not get bitter, but you will trust in Him and continue to endure until the end.

DAY 31



READ: Revelation chapter 13:11-18 – The Mark of the Beast.

There is a lot of confusion and misinformation about the Mark of the Beast. People worry about being tricked into getting the Mark, or being forced into getting the Mark. Others spend large amounts of time worrying about the technological advancements that allow barcodes and chips to be implanted in people's bodies. As Christians it is important that we get clarity and proper understanding about this issue.

John warns us very strongly here in Revelation, "DON'T TAKE THE MARK." Those who take the Mark of the beast will be sent to hell (Rev 14:9-11), and will have no further chance

⁴ Corrie Ten Boom, 1974 – quoted in "When Jesus Returns," by David Pawson, p. 199. You can read Corrie's whole story in the Christian classic, *The Hiding Place*.

of repentance. But do we need to worry about every technological advance that could be potentially implanted in our bodies? Should we be worried about the Antichrist forcing people to take the Mark of the beast, or tricking people into taking the Mark of the beast? No.

You won't be forced or tricked into taking the Mark. First of all, our God is a just and loving God. Nobody's going to go to hell because they were tricked into doing something they didn't know they were doing, or because they were forced to do something they didn't want to do. Nobody's going to be in hell who actually loved Jesus, but too bad, they got tricked into taking the Mark, so now they're in hell. No! The only people who are going to be in hell are people who rejected Jesus. Thus we can say with certainty that it is not the Mark itself that gets people sent to hell, it's the heart behind getting the Mark that gets people sent to hell.

Secondly, it wouldn't be in the Antichrist's best interest to put the Mark on people who aren't loyal to him – that's the whole point of the marking system in the first place. The Antichrist wants to reward those who worship him, and punish those who don't – so he's only going to give the Mark to those who worship him and are loyal to him. He wants everyone who doesn't worship him to be to starve to death, or be killed or executed outright.

THIS IS ABOUT WORSHIP.

Notice that the whole context of chapter 13's description of the Mark of the Beast is the worship movement the Antichrist wants directed at himself (v. 15). This is a struggle for worship – Satan and the Antichrist want worship, and Jesus wants worship. Eternal destinies hang in the balance; those who worship Jesus are saved, but those who worship the Devil are condemned.

It's clear from the passage, then, that the problem with the Mark of the Beast is that it is tied to worship of the Antichrist. It is worshiping the Antichrist that gets people sent to hell, not the simple act of getting a mark or chip. The problem with the mark the Antichrist is going to give out in the last days is that in order to get that mark people will have to give their allegiance and worship to him – that's the part that will get people sent to hell.

It's not the technology that God is mad at! Getting a chip implanted in your body, or a medical tattoo, or whatever will not get you sent to hell. Technology is not sinful in and of itself. It can be used for evil purposes, certainly, but it is not in and of itself sinful. So if an implanted chip – even in the forehead or hand – can help a Christian's heart function better, or starve off a stroke, or give doctor's valuable information to know how to treat the person better, it is not a sin for a person to get that chip implanted. Now if, on the other hand, in order to get the chip implanted, a person has to swear an oath of allegiance to a demonic power, or offer worship to anyone other than Jesus, THEN THAT WOULD BE A SIN to get the chip.

Will the Mark of the Beast actually be 666 (v. 18) – isn't that a bit obvious? There are many theories about this. What many people don't realize is that the text is disputed; some of the earliest manuscripts say 616, not 666. That difficulty aside, it is quite possible that the number is simply a code for what the Antichrist's name is. The Jewish alphabet also doubled as numbers, and so every person's name had a number attached to it by definition (eg. the letters of the name 'David' make the number 14, which is why Matthew, in chapter one of his gospel, records his whole genealogy in sets of 14). People have even played with the various names and titles of wicked Roman emperor Domitian who was in power at the time John wrote Revelation, and have come up with combinations that fit with 666. Even if that is true, of course, there would still have to be a future fulfillment in the Antichrist, since the rest of the prophecy was not fulfilled by any of the Roman emperors.

Thus, it is probably impossible at this time to figure out exactly what the Mark of the Beast will actually be or what the number 666 means. John does say that those with ‘understanding’ should ‘calculate the number of the beast,’ so we can be confident that in the right time the Holy Spirit will make things clear to us about this number. But ultimately that isn’t the most important thing; the most important thing is don’t ever worship anyone but Jesus, and never take an oath of loyalty or allegiance to the Antichrist. No matter how bad the pressure gets. If you remember that, Jesus will be pleased with you.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. The End Times is all about worship. The events of the End Times are meant to bring human beings to a place where they are each forced to choose for, or against, Jesus. But we are already confronted with this choice today: will we follow Jesus with our whole hearts, or will we chase after other gods?
 - Ask the Lord to reveal to you if you have any idols in your heart. Write down whatever He shows you – including encouragement! He does not always rebuke, He also loves to encourage us.
 - Maybe you don’t have any idols in your heart, but maybe you’ve just become distracted in your pursuit of the Lord – ask Him to reveal this to you if that is what has happened to you. Write down whatever He shows you.
2. On Judgment Day the thing that is going to matter most is, Did you love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Ask Jesus to graciously give you one or two steps you can take to grow in wholehearted love for Him. Write down whatever He shows you.

DAY 32



READ: Revelation chapter 14 – Jesus is going to win!

We are coming to the end of the three chapter ‘pause’ that spans chapters 12, 13 and 14; chapters 15 and 16 will take us back to the storyline of the Seal, Trumpet and Bowl judgments which we left off at the end of chapter 11. The purpose of this chapter is to assure believers of the certainty that Jesus will win in the end, and to give understanding as to why God’s wrath is so severe in the End Times.

Chapter 14 can be divided up into three basic sections:

- 1) Verses 1 – 5. This is another passage all about the 144,000 (see also chapter 7). Here they are described as worshipers who lead pure and blameless lives, singing to Jesus and enjoying close intimacy with Him. They serve as a model for believers everywhere of how to live victoriously for Jesus in the End Times: intimacy, worship, and holiness.
- 2) Verses 6 – 13. The second section outlines four messages that need to be boldly proclaimed in the last days:
 1. **The message of the Gospel** (v. 6-7): God will lend the Church angelic assistance and power in the last days in order to preach the Gospel successfully to every last nation (ethnic group) on the planet, thus bringing in a tremendous harvest of souls, and completing the Great Commission in the midst of enormous hostility during the Antichrist’s reign on earth.
 2. **The message of judgment on the Harlot Babylon** (v. 8). There will be more on this topic when we reach chapter 18 of Revelation, but whichever city/nation of the world ends up being the Harlot, the Spirit wants to both encourage the Church and warn the world that her destruction is certain.

3. **The message of eternal judgment** (v. 9-11). In the Western Church today there is much compromise on this issue already, with an increasing number of popular 'Christian' teachers and authors stating that there is no such thing as hell, or eternal judgment. Yet this passage is clear that eternal judgment is real, and that it is the Church's responsibility to warn people of that fact. God means for the message of eternal judgment to help motivate people not to take the Mark of the Beast. How unloving and irresponsible for the Church to ignore this important message!
 4. **The message of eternal rewards for obedience and endurance** (v. 12-13). In these precious verses God promises to reward in the after-life all those who are faithful to the death, and to remember every single good deed done by His followers during their lifetimes. The rewards He promises are so wonderful, that John writes "BLESSED are those who die in the Lord from now on!"
- 3) Verses 14 – 20. The third section of chapter 14 emphasizes the dual harvest of both salvation and judgment that Jesus will reap in the Tribulation.
- On the one hand Jesus is going to reap a gigantic harvest of souls in the Tribulation: *Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man [Jesus], with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.* ¹⁵ *And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."* ¹⁶ *So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped (14:14-16).* When compared with Revelation 7:9-14 this passage makes clear the fact that the greatest evangelistic harvest of souls the world has ever seen will occur during the time of great tribulation just before Jesus returns.
 - But at the same time that Jesus is reaping this End Time harvest of souls, He is also going to be reaping a different kind of harvest – a harvest of wrath and judgment: ¹⁷ *Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle. . . .* ¹⁹ *So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.* ²⁰ *And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia (14:17-20).* This is the dual nature of the End Times: on the one hand revival on a grand scale like never before, but on the other hand, at the very same time, wrath and judgment on a cataclysmic scale like never before.

And through it all chapter 14 rings through with this assurance – Jesus wins! He will win out with evangelism (the Antichrist will not be able to obliterate the Church, or keep people from being saved), and He will win out by judging the wicked in the end, and not letting them get away with their wicked deeds.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Pick out 3 – 4 things from this chapter that you love about Jesus – who He is, how He acts, what He does, whatever. Write out a psalm of worship to Him for who He is!
2. How does the revelation of Jesus that you find in this chapter apply to your life? What areas of your life does it impact? What areas of your heart? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you with this question, and to reveal to you what Jesus wants to show you about Himself, and how He wants to apply that to your life.
3. Prayerfully ask the Lord to show you one thing He wants you to do based on this chapter. Write down whatever comes to your mind.

DAY 33



READ: Revelation chapters 15-16 – The Bowl Judgments.

We are coming to the end of the three chapter ‘pause’ that spans chapters 12 through 14. Chapters 15 and 16 will take us back to the storyline of the Seal, Trumpet and Bowl judgments which make up the chronological backbone of the book of Revelation.

Some people teach a confusing interpretation of the book of Revelation whereby the Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl judgments do not occur in order (one after the other), but rather, repeat the same events over and over again. If we actually put the Seal, Trumpet and Bowl Judgments side by side, however, it quickly becomes clear there are so many blatant differences as to make it impossible that the Seal, Trumpet and Bowl Judgments could be speaking of the same events – except for the seventh seal, seventh trumpet, and seventh bowl which do clearly parallel each other:

	Seal Judgments	Trumpet Judgments	Bowl Judgments	Comments
1	White horse rides out conquering and to conquer.	Hail & Fire: 1/3 of earth, trees and grass burned up.	Foul and loathsome sores break out on those who take the mark.	No similarities between any of these 3.
2	War breaks out on the earth.	Mountain thrown into sea: 1/3 sea blood; 1/3 fish dead; 1/3 ships dead	Angel turns the whole sea into blood, everything dies.	There is <i>superficial</i> similarity btwn the Trumpet and the Bowl in this case.
3	Famine.	Great star falls from heaven: 1/3 fresh water blood.	Angel turns rivers and springs (fresh water) to blood.	Definite similarity btwn Trumpet and Bowl, but the Trumpet is limited to 1/3.
4	Sword/Famine/Pestilence/Wild Beasts.	1/3 light darkened (sun, moon & stars)	Sun scorches people with fire and fierce heat.	No similarities between any of these 3 – in fact the Trumpet and Bowl are opposite!
5	Martyrs pray for judgment on persecutors.	Demonic locusts torment people.	Total darkness cloaks the Antichrist’s kingdom.	No similarities between any of these 3.
6	Solar & lunar eclipses, meteorites & giant earthquake.	200 million man army; 1/3 die.	Demonic gathering of kings to Armageddon.	Only superficial similarity between Trumpet and Bowl.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silence in heaven for ½ hour. • ‘peals of thunder’ • ‘rumblings’ • ‘flashes of lightning’ • ‘an earthquake’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loud voices in heaven. • ‘flashes of lightning’ • ‘rumblings’ • ‘peals of thunder’ • ‘an earthquake’ • ‘heavy hail’ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loud voice – “It’s done!” • ‘flashes of lightning’ • ‘rumblings’ • ‘peals of thunder’ • ‘a great earthquake’ • ‘great hailstones’ (100lbs) 	<p>MANY SIMILARITIES HERE.</p> <p>These are parallel descriptions of the same event – Jesus coming back.</p>

Furthermore, chapter 15 begins with;

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished. – Revelation 15:1 (ESV)

The language here is clear that the Bowl Judgments are the ‘last’ in a series of judgments, God’s *final* and culminating expressions of wrath before Jesus returns. Thus, if language means anything, the Bowl Judgments must be separate from, and follow after, the Trumpets and Seals. Moreover, the Bowl Judgments are clearly more severe than the Trumpets or Seals: whereas Trumpet 2 turns only 1/3 of the sea to blood, Bowl 2 turns the *whole* thing to blood; where Trumpet 4 sees 1/3 of the light darkened, Bowl 5 brings *total darkness* on the Antichrist’s kingdom; where Trumpet 3 turns only 1/3 of the fresh water to blood, Bowl 3 turns it all to blood, etc.

Like with the Trumpet judgments, the Bowl judgments parallel the mighty plagues God sent on Egypt in the Exodus (incidentally, since the Christian Church has historically believed the plagues of Egypt to be literal, why do so many Christians today argue the judgments of Revelation to be symbolic?):

- Bowl 1: Painful sores break out on people (16:2) just like the sixth plague on Egypt (Ex 9:10-12);
- Bowls 2 and 3: Waters turned to blood (16:3-4) just like the first plague on Egypt (Ex 7:20-21);
- Bowl 5: Antichrist’s kingdom covered in darkness (Rev 16:10) just like the ninth plague on Egypt (Ex 10:21-23);
- Bowl 6: Waters dried up so people can cross (Rev 16:12), similar to the crossing of the Red Sea (Ex 14);
- Bowl 7: Catastrophic hail storm (Rev 16:21), much like the seventh plague on Egypt (Ex 9:22-25).

In spite of the severity of these judgments however, chapter 16 repeatedly tells us that the people of the earth refuse to repent, and in fact curse God (v. 9, 11, 21). This is proof of God’s justice (v. 5-7), that the severity of the Bowl Judgments is necessary. And with the end of the Bowl Judgments comes the end of God’s wrath (15:1b) – the next event after the seventh bowl is recorded in Revelation 19:11-21, Jesus returns to earth on a white horse to destroy the Antichrist and his kingdom! (Chapters 17 and 18 constitute another ‘pause’ in the storyline in order to give more explanation of the Antichrist’s kingdom, as well as the Harlot Babylon.)

Some Christians get disturbed by the severity of the judgments described in Revelation 16. Remember, however, that God is both holy and loving: He will inflict the least amount of pain possible, in order to bring the maximum number of people possible into His kingdom, and to refine the Church into a pure and spotless, holy bride! Furthermore, we must not underestimate the severity of wickedness that will be manifested all over the earth in the days before Jesus’ Return.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Thank the Lord for how merciful He is; He would be perfectly justified in sending every unbeliever to Hell immediately . . . but instead He sends judgment after judgment after judgment as warning, giving people as many opportunities as possible to repent.
2. Prayerfully reflect and think of a time (or two or three) in your life where God allowed pain and suffering in your life in order to get your attention, turn you to repentance, or grow you in some significant way. Write down whatever memories come to your mind.
 - Have you found it to be true that even when God allows discipline/judgment into our lives that He does it in a merciful, gentle way?

- In what special ways did you experience God's presence in your pain?
- Write out a prayer of thanks and worship to God for how He has mercifully used pain in your life to stop you from doing things that would have eventually led to worse pain.

DAY 34



READ: Revelation chapter 17-18 – The Harlot Babylon.

The longest single-topic prophecy in the entire New Testament, Revelation 17-18 (42 verses), is all about the Harlot Babylon. Obviously God wants us to study this subject. Yet many Evangelical Christians today consider the Harlot to be a weird topic that only 'unbalanced' Christians would spend any time thinking about. For comparison, think about the following: there are 56 verses in the New Testament about marriage, and 42 about the Harlot Babylon. Almost the same amount! Yet many churches spend gigantic amounts of time studying the one, while totally ignoring the other.⁵ Yet Jesus Himself commanded us to study and obey *all* the words of the book of Revelation: *"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."* – Revelation 22:7 (ESV)

Why should we study the Harlot? In His infinite wisdom God probably has many reasons, but here are two:

1. ***The events surrounding the Harlot's fall are going to be catastrophic and traumatic for the world, bringing tremendous suffering – and the world will be desperate for an explanation.***

"And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire." – Revelation 17:16 (ESV)

"Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come." – Revelation 18:10 (ESV)

On September 11, 2001, Islamic terrorists flew two jetliners filled with people into the World Trade Towers in New York City, killing almost 3000 people. The world changed that day. Ask almost any person alive on planet earth (who is old enough to remember) what they were doing when they heard the news and they will most likely be able to tell you. It was so big an event that we even think of the world now in terms of pre-9/11 and post-9/11.

What does this have to do with the Harlot Babylon and Revelation 17:16 above? Everything. If one terrorist attack like 9/11 could traumatize the world, think of what an entire city being 'burned with fire' in 'one hour' will do. The prophesied burning of the Harlot will be cataclysmic, sudden (Rev 18:8, 10, 19), and terrifying on a level far surpassing 9/11. People all over the world – including many Christians – will be appalled and terrified (Rev. 18:9-11, 15-17, 18-19). Part of our job will be to give the world the answers it needs: *"This was all predicted in the Bible. If you turn to God and repent you need not fear!"*

2. ***Jesus commands believers to come out of the Harlot lest they 'share' in her sufferings. Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her [the Harlot], my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; ⁵for her sins are heaped high as***

⁵ Of course, this is not to say that churches should devote an almost equal amount of time to studying and teaching the Harlot as they do marriage. But the point is, neither should we totally ignore the Harlot . . . if God devoted two whole chapters of His eternal Word to the Harlot, then it is important that His Church pay attention!

heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. – Revelation 18:4-5 (ESV)

This is a direct command and warning from God: He expects us His followers to be studying this Harlot prophecy prayerfully, and, when the time is right, to know who the Harlot is so that we can flee the area before she gets burned.

Of course the difficulty in all of this is that John also calls the Harlot a ‘mystery’ (17:7). Thus, though much detail is given in the chapters 17 and 18, we will not be able to confidently identify which city/nation is the Harlot until the time is right and the Holy Spirit reveals it to us.

In the meantime however, Revelation 17-18 gives us at least 11 key identifying characteristics to prayerfully watch for as we seek to discern the identity of this city:

1. The Harlot is an actual city somewhere on the map of the world (17:18, 18:10,16,18-19, 21).
2. The Harlot is the center of a very large religion (Not Christianity; she seduces the people of the world away from the one true God – 17:1-2, 5).
3. The Harlot will be closely tied to/dependent on the Beast Empire (17:3).
4. The Harlot is located in a desert and bordered by the sea (put together verses 1 and 3 – the word for ‘wilderness’ in the Greek means desert; see 18:11,17-18 that she is on the sea).
5. The Harlot will be a gathering place for people from many nations (17:15).
6. The Harlot exerts tremendous influence over the kings/nations of the world (17:15,18).
7. The Harlot is immensely wealthy and renowned for her luxuries (17:4; 18:7-8, 9-10).
8. The Harlot’s merchants are the ‘great men’ (ie. wealthiest men) of the world (18:23).
9. The Beast really hates the Harlot (17:16-17).
10. The Harlot has an appetite for slavery (18:11-13).
11. The Harlot is responsible for the blood of many saints (17:6; 18:24).

Whoever the Harlot is, she is so wicked that God actually tells His people to rejoice when she is destroyed: *“Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!”* (Revelation 18:20 ESV)

This is significant because elsewhere in Scripture God rebukes His people for rejoicing when His judgment falls on people. For example, in Luke 9 the disciples asked Jesus if they could call down fire on a town that had rejected Him – our Lord promptly and sternly rebuked them (Lk 9:55). In the famous Old Testament story of Jonah, Jonah got angry with God because God didn’t burn up the wicked city of Nineveh. God then rebuked Jonah for not having compassion on the Ninevites (Jonah 4). This story of Jonah is especially significant for our discussion of the Harlot: Nineveh was the capital city of the evil Assyrian Empire, an incredibly wicked, violent, idolatrous empire . . . and yet, when they repented God had mercy on them!

With the Jonah story firmly in mind, consider now the apostle John’s exhortation to the saints in Revelation 18:20 to ‘REJOICE’ at the Harlot’s fiery downfall and judgment. What a contrast: instead of desiring mercy for whichever city ends up being the Harlot, followers of Christ are supposed to be happy and rejoice when the Beast ‘burns her with fire’ (Rev 17:16-18). Whoever this Harlot is then, she must be beyond repentance, so thoroughly and abominably evil that God – who elsewhere commands us to ‘love our enemies’ (Mt. 5:44) – here orders us to rejoice at her burning. She will be a city full of burning hatred towards Jews and Christians, a religious center for a major religion, a city which cheers for acts of terrorism, a city that supports blood and violence around the world, and a city

full of money and corruption, with some of the wealthiest men in the world living there in unimaginable excess, luxury and wealth. There are a handful of cities in the world which begin to resemble this description already – they will get worse.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. When you read the prophecy about the Harlot Babylon do not apply the descriptions of God's wrath to yourself! This is most certainly not how God feels about you. In fact, the reason God is so wrathful with the Harlot Babylon is because she hates *Christians* (17:6; 18:24). Thus, when you read this prophecy you need to picture the Father's protectiveness towards you, that, imperfect and weak as you are, He loves you so much that when other people hate you it makes *Him* incredibly angry. Revelation 18 in particular is an expression of God's 'mother bear' posture towards us His cubs!
2. The Lord is the One who defends and vindicates us (Ps 37:1-11) – take a moment to quietly reflect and ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of times in your life where other people attacked, accused, or lied about you and you were powerless to do anything about it . . . but then as you waited, *He* came to your defense (Rom 12:19); *He* was your protector and your deliverer. Write down whatever comes to mind – and then write out a prayer of thanksgiving, thanking Him that even though you are far from perfect, He loves to protect and defend you from those who want to harm you.
3. Do you need to be defended from anyone or anything right now? Could be something impersonal like slander, accusation, attack, or impersonal, like a cancer diagnosis, or bankruptcy, or something like that. Write down 2 or 3 things you need defending from. Now picture yourself going to Jesus and hiding yourself behind Him as you let Him defend you against those things that are coming against you. Ask Him to show you how to be still in the situation and let Him defend you. Write down whatever He shows you.

Commonly Asked Question: “What do the seven heads of the beast represent?” (See Appendix 3, commonly asked questions number 4)

DAY 35



READ: Revelation chapter 19 – Jesus Returns.

We now come to the climax of the book of Revelation, and indeed the entire Bible. After countless years and centuries of evil, chaos, war, and natural disasters, Jesus finally returns! This is the moment the whole Bible has been pointing towards, the time of consummation when God will come to earth and make all things new and right forever.

Of course, in keeping with His character, Jesus' return is a messy, real-world, very physical event. Jesus is not snapping His fingers here and fixing everything in an instant by magic. He's not washing away evil with a wave of some magic wand. He never does things that way. When He came to earth the first time He went through the messiness of a real birth to a real woman who will have cried out and bled as she birthed Him. Then He grew up in the real world, with real people, eating real food, doing real life, until He died a bloody, messy, real death on an actual wooden cross. No magic snapping of fingers there. And in that sense His second coming will be no different; He will personally and physically march to Jerusalem at the head of a real army, and personally wage a bloody and real war against the Antichrist and his armies, utterly destroying all of the forces arrayed against Him.

And Revelation 19 goes into some detail about this. Verse 13 describes Him wearing a 'robe dipped in blood.' Some have poetically imagined the blood on this robe to be

symbolic of the blood He shed for us on the cross. Certainly not. Revelation 19 is saturated with allusions to Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah's return, and verse 13 is a clear reference back to Isaiah 63:1-4, specifically verse 3:

¹Who is this who comes from Edom [speaking of the Messiah], in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save." ²Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress? ³"I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments, and stained all my apparel. ⁴For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come. – Isaiah 63:1-4 (ESV)

From this passage we see clearly that the blood that is on Jesus' robes in Revelation 19 is the blood that has been spattered on His garments as He tramples them in battle (compare also Rev 19:17-18 with Ez 39:17-20). The Western Church needs to become familiar with this glorious picture of Jesus because many Christians today know only the Jesus of Christmas – the Jesus who came as a baby bringing peace and goodwill to men. We are right to love and adore that Jesus, but we would do well to remember that He's not a baby anymore! And the good news is that the Jesus of Armageddon is the same as the Jesus of Christmas. There is no contradiction between the two. He does not have two different personalities. The man who brings peace and goodwill to the earth does it through the cross and resurrection AND through waging a just war to finally conquer evil. And He does it all for love. What He does in Revelation chapter 19 is not because He got into a strange mood and lost His temper. No – His anger is related to His zeal for love and righteousness.⁶

The picture of Jesus described in Revelation 19 is glorious and stunning – it should cause us to worship Him and love Him and trust Him. His 'eyes are like a flame of fire' (v. 12), on His head are many crowns (v. 12b), He is called 'Faithful and True,' and on His thigh is written 'King of kings and Lord of lords.' Amen! The Jesus we serve is not weak or passive. He is mighty and strong and afraid of nothing! And His sovereignty cannot be challenged; the moment He decides that time is up He rides in and utterly exterminates evil. No one can stop Him from accomplishing His plans.

And the joyous thing for us to remember today is that this is the same Jesus who also said "And behold, I am with you ALWAYS, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20)! What a promise. Already this glorious, victorious, fearless, warrior king walks beside us every day, through the monotony of day to day life and through every struggle and dark place. We need to become like little children and receive that truth with joy, while learning to let go of our fears and trust in Him.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Read Revelation 19:11-16 several times over slowly and meditate on the description. Ask the Holy Spirit to imprint it on your heart and mind. Ask the Holy Spirit to upgrade your revelation of who Jesus is. As you sit in this place of meditation begin to worship Him.
2. Picture Jesus on His white horse with His eyes aflame with fire; now picture yourself getting onto the back of His horse with Him and clinging to Him as the various storms of your life buffet you. Ask Him what He would like to say to you about the stuff you're going through.

⁶ The second half of this paragraph taken with only minor changes from a talk by Mike Bickle on this chapter – I just couldn't say it better than him in this instance.

3. Make a list of the things you are most afraid of. Bring them with you into this picture of Jesus. What does Jesus feel about these things? Is He afraid? Confess to Him that your picture of Him has been too small, and in an act of trust release those things you are most afraid of into His hands.

DAY 36



READ: Revelation chapter 20

The Millennium Age (Thousand Year Reign of Christ).

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, . . . ⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its Mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. . . . ⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison . . . – Revelation 20:1-15 (ESV)

Many people wonder what the purpose of the 1000-yr Millennium Age is. Why is Satan bound for a thousand years and then released again (for a short time) – wouldn't it be better to just put him away forever? How is that so many people choose to follow Satan at the end of the Millennium Age? Can people still sin after Jesus is on the earth? Why doesn't the New Jerusalem come down to earth immediately following the Tribulation? The Millennium age seems, to many, like an unnecessary middle step between this Age (full of sin and death) and the final Age (for all eternity) of the New Heavens and the New Earth. Of course, we don't know all of God's reasons for the Millennium Age (no doubt He has many!) but here are 2 important ones: (1) to prove the wickedness of the human heart; (2) to fulfill God's promises to the Jews.

1. **To prove the wickedness of the human heart:** Many unbelievers through the years have used the excuse, "If Jesus would physically show Himself to me, I would believe in Him." God knows that these same people will want to throw this excuse in His face on Judgment Day, when they stand before Him. In the Millennium Kingdom, then, He is proving to humanity how empty this excuse is: during the Millennium Age Jesus will physically live on the earth and reign over the entire world for 1000 years, and everyone on earth will *physically* see Him with their own two eyes (and experience the many blessings of living under His just government) . . . and yet, even after all that time, a huge number of human beings will still choose to reject Him when given the chance! At the end of the 1000 years human beings will be given a choice one last time; between sin and Satan and selfishness and pride on the one hand, and continuing to follow and serve Jesus on the other – and *many* (Rev 20:8) will choose to reject Jesus. Even after physically seeing Him. This fact will serve as proof on Judgment Day that the excuse "If only I could have seen Jesus, physically, I would have followed Him," is empty.

Others will want to use the excuse (like Eve): "IT'S NOT MY FAULT I TURNED OUT BAD: I WAS TRAPPED IN SIN BECAUSE OF THE DEVIL AND HIS TEMPTATIONS." After the Millennium Age no one will be able to blame their wickedness on Satan either, because for 1000 years Satan will be bound in the Abyss (Rev 20:1) and people will still find ways to sin and live in rebellion to God. At the end of the

thousand years God will release Satan one last time so that people can choose between Satan and Jesus, thus revealing their hearts – and many will choose Satan even after experiencing the goodness of Jesus during His 1000-yr reign.

2. **To fulfill God's promises to Abraham and the Jewish people:** The 1000-yr Millennium Age is the fulfillment of many of the hundreds of blessings promised to Abraham and his descendants (the Israelites) in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the Millennium Kingdom, the Jewish people will be exalted above all the nations (promised in Deut 28:1, fulfilled in the Millennium, see Zech 8:22-23); every Jewish person will have a heart that loves God deeply (Jer 31:33-34; Ez 39:22, 25-29); the land of Israel will prosper tremendously (Isa 60-62; 65:17-24); and Jesus Himself will choose Israel, specifically Jerusalem, out of all the earth to live in (Zech 14:8-11, 16-17); Jerusalem will be the capital city of the world, and the nations will flow to it (Isa 2:1-4; Zech 8:22).

The Millennium Age (Thousand Year Reign of Christ).

The Millennium is a unique period of time in that there will be a mixture of resurrected and non-resurrected bodies. The Millennium Age is a kind of in-between Age: there will be a mixture of people on the earth during that time, some in resurrected bodies (believers) and others, still as yet, in their death and sin-susceptible, non-resurrected bodies. Death and sin will be greatly minimized during the Millennium Age, but will still be in existence. The saints in their resurrected bodies will no longer be able to sin, nor will they ever again taste death or pain, nor will they marry or procreate (Matt 22:29-30); but those Jews and unbelieving survivors of the Tribulation who live on into the Millennium Age in their un-resurrected state will still be susceptible to sin and death, and will continue on marrying and procreating in the Millennium Age.

Passages proving that there will be people in their natural bodies on earth during the Millennium Age, and that death and sin and marriage and procreation will still be a part of their lives during the Millennium Age:

1. Zechariah 14: ⁵ *Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.* ⁶ *On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost.* ⁷ *And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.* ⁸ *On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.* ⁹ *And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.*
 - This is clearly a prophecy about the return of Jesus to earth. But look what happens later in the chapter . . . very interesting:

¹⁶ *Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.* ¹⁷ *And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them.* ¹⁸ *And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.* ¹⁹ *This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. – Zechariah 14:1-19 (ESV)*
 - Notice that after Jesus returns to earth to set up His kingdom there is still choice. People can still choose to follow Him, or not. This just confirms what we read in Revelation 20:8-9 where we see that at the end of the thousand year reign numerous people will choose to follow Satan and rebel against Jesus after He has

- already been physically present on the earth and ruling for a thousand years.
- And this proves that not everyone is in their resurrected bodies during the Millennium Age. Many of the ‘survivors’ of the Tribulation that Zechariah 14:16 (above) talks about will not be believers, and thus will not receive their resurrected bodies at Jesus’ Return. This is further confirmed in the passages below:
2. *“For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. ¹⁸ But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness. ¹⁹ I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress. ²⁰ No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall DIE a hundred years old, and the SINNER a hundred years old shall be accursed.”*
 – **Isa 65:17-20 (ESV)**
 - In this famous Millennial prophecy God promises that after Jesus returns to earth, the world (and Israel, in particular) will be tremendously blessed; in that time a person who dies at a hundred years old, will be considered to have died ‘young,’ while sinners will be considered ‘accursed.’ What this passage proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, is that there will be people still dying and sinning on the earth during the Millennial Age. These un-resurrected people will live much longer than people do now, and be much healthier, and there will be much less sin on the earth during that time – but there will still be sin and death on the earth (though resurrected believers will already be immune to both).
 3. *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷ The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder’s den. ⁹ They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. – Isaiah 11:6-9 (ESV)*
 - This passage is clearly referring to the time after Jesus returns, and verse 8 refers to both nursing children and weaned children, thus showing that some people will be marrying and having babies in the Millennium Age. But again, people with resurrected bodies will not marry or have children (see Lk 20:34-36), thus proving again that after Jesus returns there will be people on the earth who are not resurrected.
 4. *He [Jesus] will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. – Isaiah 40:11 (ESV)*
 - Jesus will gently lead those who are ‘with young,’ thus showing, again, that some people will be marrying and having babies in the Millennium Age; something that people with resurrected bodies will not do (see Lk 20:34-36).
 5. *Isa 60:12 – “For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you [Jesus in Jerusalem] shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste.”* This verse shows that there will be people in the Millennium Age who are not resurrected because they are still sinning and refusing to serve Jesus. Also, they will ‘perish’ showing they aren’t yet in their resurrected bodies because they are still dying.
 6. *Isa 65:20b – “. . . and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.”* This verse shows that non-resurrected people will live longer lives in the Millennium (you’re young if you die at 100!), but it also shows that people will still be dying.

7. Isa 65:22 – “. . . *for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.*” God’s promise to the Jewish people during the Millennium Age is that they will live long lives – the length of their lives will be comparable to the life span of trees. This is a wonderful promise, of course, but it also shows that people will still be dying because they will ‘only’ live as long as trees. This verse also shows that the Jewish people will not yet have their resurrected bodies in the Millennium Age.
8. Jer 31:29-30 – in this prophecy about the Millennium Age, one of the promises for the Millennium is that God will no longer allow people to suffer for other people’s sins. “*But everyone shall die for his own sin.*”(v.30a) But this implies that there still will be people sinning in the Millennium!
9. Zech 14:16-21 – this passage shows that un-resurrected Gentiles (with the potential for sin) will be in the Millennium: whoever survives after the attack on the Jews (Armageddon) will then celebrate the feasts in the Millennium Kingdom (v.16); ‘families of the earth’ are referred to in verse 17; Egypt specifically named as one of the nations in the Millennium (v.18). We know that these Gentiles are un-resurrected and still have the potential for sin because of the threats of punishment on them for disobedience while living in the Millennium period (v.17-19).
10. Rev 20:7-9 – at the end of the 1000 years Satan will be released from the Abyss to deceive the nations one last time. Many people (like the ‘sand of the sea’) will be deceived and will join him to fight against Jesus, thus proving again that there are many non-resurrected people – with the potential for sin – on the earth during the Millennium Age.

4 types of people on the earth when Jesus returns – 3 remain for the Millennium Kingdom:

1. **Believers:** All believers, from all of history – both dead and alive (1 Thess 4:15-17) – will be raptured and given their eternal resurrected bodies when Jesus returns to earth at the end of the Tribulation (Matt 24:29-31; 1 Cor 15:51-53). They will then rule with Jesus on earth during the Millennium Kingdom (2 Ti 2:12; 1 Cor 6:2-3), in their resurrected bodies (Rev 20:6). Because these resurrected believers will be in their resurrected bodies already, they will not be able to sin during the Millennium Age (or in eternity beyond) and will not experience death or sickness or sorrow anymore, for all of eternity.
2. **Reprobates:** All the people who take the Mark of the Beast (Rev 13:16-17; 14:9-11) during the Tribulation will be judged when Jesus returns and sent to the Lake of Fire (Rev 14:9-11; Matt 25:31-33, 41-46). They will not be allowed to continue living on the earth into the Millennium Age.
3. **Jewish survivors:** All the Jewish people who survive the Tribulation will repent, turn to Jesus and be saved (Zech 12:10-14; Rom 11:25-26; Jer 50:20; 31:31-34; Ez 39:22, 25-29) when Jesus Returns.⁷ They will then live on into the Millennium kingdom in their non-resurrected bodies (only people who are followers of Jesus *before*

⁷ Note: Any Jews who are followers of Christ *before* He returns will be resurrected at the same time as the Gentile believers. They are Christians, so it’s not like their resurrection will be delayed simply because they are Jewish. This point about Jewish survivors is specifically speaking of all the Jews who survive the Tribulation but who aren’t believers in Jesus, yet, when He arrives. Every one of these surviving Jews will repent and turn to Jesus when they see Him at His Return (Ez 39:22, 25-29; Zech 12:10-14; Jer 31:33-34) – but because they weren’t believers before-hand, they must wait until the end of the Millennium Age to be resurrected to eternal life.

He returns, get resurrected). During these thousand years they will carry on with marrying, having children and dying (Isa 65:19-23). Part of the reason for this is that so many Jews will be killed during the Tribulation (two thirds of them, see Zech 13:8-9) that God wants them to be able to rebuild their population before the final, eternal age, when the New Jerusalem comes down and all further procreation ceases (Matt 22:30). At the end of the Millennium Age, then, these believing Jews who lived and died during the Millennium Age will all be resurrected to eternal life at the *second* resurrection (Rev 20:5, 11-15), joining all of the saints from history who had already been resurrected at the *first* resurrection (a thousand years previous).

4. **Gentile Resister-Survivors:** A fourth group of people will be alive on the earth when Jesus returns; these are Gentiles who are not followers of Jesus, but who resisted the Antichrist and refused to take his Mark (Rev 13:15-17) and worship him during the Tribulation. Jesus will allow *many* of these Gentile resisters to continue living out their lives on the earth after He returns (in other words, He won't execute them). They won't be given resurrected bodies, since they aren't believers, but they will be allowed to live out the rest of their natural lives on the earth – during which time they will have the ongoing opportunity to either accept or reject Jesus' offer of salvation up until the time of their death. After their death these people will be resurrected in the second resurrection (Rev 20:5, 11-15), which occurs at the end of the Millennial Age; at that time they will be either welcomed into God's kingdom or sentenced to Hell, depending on whether or not they ever ended up putting their faith in Jesus before they died.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Make a list of 2 – 4 people who are close to you (family, work, friends, etc.) who do not yet know the Lord. Ask Jesus to give you a heart for these people, and faith that they can yet be saved. Listen for a moment and see if God shows you anything about your heart in this matter.
2. Ask Jesus to give you a picture, word, verse, or promise for each person on your list. Ask the Lord what kind of a commitment He would like from you in terms of praying for these people. Begin praying for them on a regular basis (not daily), as the Lord leads.
3. Ask the Lord to show you how He is already working in each person's life. Write down whatever He shows you.
4. Ask the Lord what practical steps He would like you to take in order to show them Christ's love and bring to win their hearts.

DAY 37



READ: Revelation chapter 21 – The New Heaven and New Earth.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ²And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. ⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." – Revelation 21:1-4 (ESV)

The greatest moment in all of history will be this moment when heaven comes down to earth, and death, pain, sin, and sadness are finally banished from existence – forever! This is the moment God Himself is looking forward to with anticipation, the moment He has yearned for since the dawn of creation, the day when He gets to ‘move in’ with His family for all of eternity.

Notice the personal intimacy of the language used here; “and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will dwell with them . . .” We will finally get to be with God! And He will meet all of our deepest needs, and heal all of our deepest hurts, and fill us with joy, satisfaction, hope and love beyond our wildest imaginations.

Notice that our final destination for eternity is not up in the clouds ‘in heaven’ somewhere, but rather, that heaven is coming down to earth. This is important because God did not create us to be fairies with wings, floating in the clouds, playing harps forever and ever. Who even wants that? Nobody. God made us to be physical beings who work, and eat, and play, and rest, and love, and laugh, and sing, and build, and invent, and write, and cook, and explore, and learn . . . and we will do all of these things for eternity on the renewed earth. We were not made to float in the clouds, we were made to be physical beings who live gloriously physical and wonderful lives. Boredom will be an utter impossibility in eternity! God will surprise, fill, and satisfy us in ways we cannot even begin to imagine: we will have relationships, and celebrations, and work to do (which we will love), and challenges to conquer, and food to eat, and memories to create . . . and all of it without despair or pain or sin or hurt. Amazing!

There will still be countries and nations on the earth even after the heavenly city touches down (God loves diversity), which means that not all the saints will live in the city all the time. We will all have access to the heavenly city, and spend much time there no doubt (Jesus says He’s preparing rooms for us all there, John 14:1-3), but the rest of the earth will still be inhabited (see Revelation 21:24).

The rest of the universe – sun, moon, stars, galaxies, etc. – will still exist as well. There has been some confusion about this because of verse 23 which states that the city ‘has no need of sun or moon.’ But the key word here is ‘need.’ This verse is not teaching that there isn’t a sun or a moon, just that in the city where God dwells, He is so bright that no other light is needed. The earth however, still being round, will continue to experience a day and night cycle for all of eternity . . . night-time is not part of the curse of sin! It is a wonderful component of God’s ‘very good’ creation (see Genesis 1).

Some people are disturbed by verse 27 which says that ‘nothing unclean’ will ever enter the city – they fear this implies that there are still evil people on the earth *outside the city* during eternity. No. The point of verse 27 is just to emphasize the wonderful goodness and purity of the heavenly city – nothing unclean will ever enter it – not to teach that there are evil people outside of it. We know from the rest of Scripture that all the ungodly will be banished to hell in eternity.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to imprint on you a picture of heaven. Ask Him to touch your heart with a longing for heaven that will stay with you all your life.
2. Thank Jesus that He is ‘preparing a place’ for you already in His city! (John 14:2-3)
3. Make a list of things in your life that are causing you pain right now. Then specifically thank God that nothing that causes pain will last forever! All pain is coming to an end! The day will come when we no longer hurt, all we must do is endure and hold on to Jesus.

DAY 38

READ: Revelation chapter 22 – Jesus is coming soon.

“And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.” – Revelation 22:7 (ESV)

“Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” – Revelation 22:12 (ESV)

“Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! – Revelation 22:20 (ESV)

This is not a fairy tale. Jesus *is* actually coming back. And the words we read on these pages are at some point in the near future going to come to life and be experienced by us in real time, flesh and blood. There is an actual day in the future, somewhere on the calendar, when Jesus Christ Himself will actually physically return to earth to set up His kingdom.

The question is, are you preparing for that reality? Are you living your life in such a way as to make that day a day of great joy, or are you living your life in such a way as to make that day a day of regret, or a day to dread? I’m not just talking about salvation here. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 that some believers will get into heaven ‘as through fire,’ meaning there will be those who get into heaven who wasted their lives and who will suffer regret and pain on the day when they meet Jesus.

This is not a harsh or condemning message. Jesus does not expect you to read your Bible all the time, and pray for 5 hours every day, and be this super-spiritual giant. He just wants you to seek Him and get to know Him, and not spend your life completely distracted by the things of this world. He loves you immensely and has infinite grace and mercy towards you – any small move you make towards Him is always met with a resounding ‘YES!’ (James 4:8) The only thing that matters when He comes back is; Did you love and know Him?

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. In order to grow in love for Jesus we must first encounter His love for us. Pray Ephesians 3:14-19 for yourself. Then ask Jesus to open up your heart to His love, and set you on fire for Him. Spend some time listening and write down anything He brings to your mind/heart.
2. Ask Jesus to show you something practical He wants you to begin doing, to grow in your love for Him. Write down whatever He shows you.
3. Ask Jesus to show you any false pictures/lies in your heart that are keeping you from drawing close to Him. Write down whatever He shows you, and then confess each one. Prayerfully begin to replace lies with truth.

**Appendix 1 - Comparison of Matthew 24 'Birth Pains,'
and the first six Seals of Revelation 6.**

<p align="center">'Birth Pains' of Matthew 24:4-9</p>	<p align="center">Seal Judgments of Revelation 6:1-11</p>
<p>False Christ(s)</p> <p>⁴ And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. ⁵ For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.</p>	<p>¹ Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" ² And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer. ³ When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" ⁴ And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that <u>people should</u> <u>slay one another</u>, and he was given a great sword.</p> <p align="center">Seal 1 – False Christ. [Commentators almost unanimous that the rider on the white horse represents a false christ(s), since Jesus will return on a white horse.]</p> <p align="center">Seal 2 – War.</p>
<p>War</p> <p>⁶ And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. ⁷ For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom,</p>	<p>⁵ When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. ⁶ And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"</p> <p align="center">Seal 3 – Famine.</p>
<p>Famines & Earthquakes</p> <p>and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.</p>	<p>⁷ When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" ⁸ And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.</p> <p align="center">Seal 4 – War, famine, disease and wild beasts. (Note: Seal 4 is nothing new – just Seal 2 and 3 repeated, essentially)</p>

<p>Believers put to death and persecuted</p>	<p>9 "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake."</p>	<p>9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. 10 They cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.</p>	<p>Seal 5 – Martyred believers call out to God for justice.</p>
<p>The return of Jesus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun goes dark; • Moon goes dark (lunar eclipse?) • Stars fall (meteor shower?) • Powers of heavens shaken (huge earthquake?) • Earth sees Jesus and mourns. 	<p>29 "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 heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken." 30 Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.</p>	<p>12 When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. 14 The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, 16 calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"</p>	<p>Seal 6 – Wrath of the Lamb</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sun goes dark; • Moon goes blood (lunar eclipse); • Stars fall (meteor shower?); • Huge earthquake; • Earth sees Jesus and is terrified.

3 further points to consider about the close parallels between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6 (continued on back side):

1. Both Matthew 24:29-30 and Revelation 6:12-17 closely parallel Joel 2:30-31, an important Day of the Lord prophecy in the Old Testament which foretold a darkened sun and the moon turning to blood in the great and awesome 'Day of the Lord.'
2. Matthew 24:31 speaks of angels gathering the elect 'from the four winds,' while Revelation 7:1 (following right after the sixth seal, and before the seventh seal) speaks of four angels 'standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds . . .' Clearly, John is continuing to echo Matthew 24 here.
3. Matthew 24:14 clearly prophesies that at the completion of the Great Commission (gospel to all nations) Jesus will return; Revelation 7:9-14 echoes this, right after the 6th Seal, John sees a vision of people from every nation and tribe and language standing before God's throne praising Him. Compare the two passages below:

Matthew 24 – Gospel *And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.* – Matthew 24:14

⁹ *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb . . . These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* – Revelation 7:9,14

Revelation 7 – The end comes, and worshipers of Jesus are found in every nation, tribe and language.

Appendix 2 – Who are the 144,000?

1. *Who are the 144,000?*

Revelation chapter 7 says that 144,000 Jews will be sealed by God in the End Times, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Many Christians have made this passage about the 144,000 to be symbolic, and then speculated wild and strange things about what they could be symbolic of. Nothing in the chapter, however, suggests that they are symbolic, so it is best to understand them at face value – 144,000 Jews who are specifically set apart by God and sealed against various demonic plagues (see Rev 9:4). This does not mean they will not suffer in the time of tribulation, but they will be spared at least some of the demonically-caused torments which will come on the earth.

Too many Christians have made a big deal about the ‘apocalyptic’ style of Revelation and determined based on that, that it is symbolic. A better approach would be to see what the book says about itself – it says that it was written to tell us the ‘things which must soon take place’ (Rev 1:1; 22:6), and that it was written to be obeyed (Rev 1:3; 22:7). Thus, the book itself tells us what it is about – it is about actual events which will occur, and it must be plain enough for our understanding that we can obey it. Thus, we should assume that we can take it at face value, unless the text itself indicates that we are not to do so.

This is not to say that Revelation does not contain symbols – it does. But where it uses symbols, it also interprets those symbols.

Why are the 144,000 Jews sealed? Revelation 14:4 says it is because they are God’s ‘first fruits.’ In the Old Testament the feast of first fruits was the time of year when the Israelites would give the first of their crops to God. The first of their crops belonged to God, and then they had to trust God to take care of them with the rest. In the same way, the 144,000 are the first of the final harvest of the Jewish nation. When Jesus Returns the entire surviving Jewish nation will turn to Jesus and be saved (Rom 11:26; cf. 11:1-26; Zech 12:10-14; Ez 39:22-29; Jer 30-31, etc.). The 144,000 Jews of Revelation chapter 7 are the first fruits of that final harvest.

2. *Are only the 144,000 sealed by God?*

Though Revelation 7 only mentions the 144,000 being sealed it is my opinion that all believers will be sealed by God. We will still all be subject to much suffering in the tribulation through persecution, martyrdom, and war, as well as the environmental effects of the cataclysmic judgments that are coming on the earth . . . but the seal of God will protect all of God’s people from the explicitly demonic torments which people on the earth will suffer in the last days (eg. Rev 9:4).

3. *Will the 144,000 evangelize the world?*

The Bible doesn’t say anything about their role. Pre-tribbers speculate that they will evangelize the world, but this is only because of their unbiblical belief that the rest of the Church will be raptured already. So for them this is nothing more than ‘Somebody has to evangelize the world during the Tribulation, maybe it’s the 144,000.’ Other people think of the 144,000 as an army. The important thing to realize, however, is that the Bible doesn’t say. The only thing the Bible does say is that they are the first fruits – they may not fulfill any other purpose.

Appendix 3 – Commonly Asked Questions

1. **From chapter 9: *Will the demonic locusts be able to torment believers?*** Because Revelation 7 only mentions that the 144,000 Jews will be sealed with God’s seal (Rev 7:4), and Revelation 9:4 states only that ‘those sealed by God’ will not be tormented by the demonic locusts, some Christians fear that believers living in the Tribulation period will be tormented by the demonic locusts of chapter 9 along with unbelievers.

But this would miss John’s heart in writing Revelation entirely. His point in writing Revelation is to encourage believers that God is on their side! When he writes about the 144,000 in chapter 7 being sealed, his point is not that all other believers *aren’t* sealed. And though Christians will suffer much from persecution in the Tribulation, as well as from war and cataclysmic natural disasters, it is not theologically sound to believe that demons will have the power to torment believers because we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us! In the Gospels Jesus gave us authority to cast *out* demons (Mt 10:1,8; Mk 6:7; 16:15-17; Lk 10:19; Acts 5:16; 8:7; Eph 1:20-21), and that authority is not going to be suddenly revoked in the days before Jesus returns.

Furthermore, as was mentioned in the devotional on Revelation 8-9, the Trumpet Judgments are clearly meant to parallel the mighty plagues God sent on Egypt in the Exodus. And one of the primary themes of the Exodus plagues is that God sent those judgments on the *Egyptians*, while sparing and protecting the Israelites in the midst of those plagues (see Ex 8:22; 9:6; 9:26; 10:23; 12:27). So while the Israelites suffered much persecution at the hands of Pharaoh throughout the course of the plagues, they were spared the worst brunt of the plagues themselves (though no doubt the after-effects of some of those plagues still would have affected them).

Thus, John’s point in Revelation 9 is not to scare believers that they are going to be tormented by demons; his point is that the *unbelievers* of the world will be tormented by these creatures. Believers will be protected in the midst of this demonic plague.

2. **From chapter 9: *What are the demonic locusts?*** Revelation 9:1-11 describes a horde of demonic locusts that look like horses, have teeth like lion’s teeth and hair like a woman’s hair, that are released onto the earth. Many people have interpreted this symbolically simply because the description seems so wild. But again, this is a real event which will actually happen (Rev 1:1). Some commentators have suggested that the locusts could be military attack helicopters, mostly because in verse 9 the ‘noise of their wings’ is like the ‘roar of many chariots rushing into battle.’ But again, this is not necessary. These are clearly demonic beings that will be released onto the earth from the place where they are currently locked up in the ‘bottomless pit’ (9:1-3); their ‘king’ is the angel ‘Abaddon’ which means destroyer (9:11).

So in the End Times will people physically see these hideous creatures rampaging over the earth? Probably not. John was seeing into the spiritual realm, and in the same way that we don’t (as a usual rule) see demons with our physical eyes today, the people of the earth won’t see these demonic creatures in the End Times. But in the same way that demons today wreak havoc in people’s lives, these demonic creatures will create painful havoc on the earth for ‘five months’ when they are released (9:5).

How will they torment people? It’s impossible to know exactly . . . but think of how in the Gospels demons would afflict people with blindness, deafness, muteness, seizures, etc., and then those afflicted would be healed the moment Jesus cast out the demon. From this we see that demons can torment people in all kinds of physical ways; extrapolating to Revelation chapter nine, we see that the demons that are released at the fifth trumpet (Revelation 9) will cause a particularly brutal and severe set of scourges on the earth.

4. **From chapter 11: *What is the significance of the ‘1,260 days’ and ‘42 months’ that pop up in chapter 11 and throughout the book of Revelation?***

The Bible is very clear about the length of time that the Great Tribulation will last – 3 ½ years. How do we know this? Because that same number, in different ways, pops up again and again in both Daniel and Revelation. Daniel prophesied that the saints would be given into the Antichrist’s hand for a ‘time, times, and half a time’ (Dan 7:25). Then in Daniel 12 this number gets repeated when an angel tells Daniel that the ‘time of trouble’ (12:1) and the ‘shattering of the holy people’ (12:7) would last for a ‘time, times, and half a time’ (12:7). If a ‘time’ is equal to one year, and ‘times’ is two years, then a ‘time, times, and half a time’ is exactly equal to three and a half years.

Are we stretching things a bit here? Not when the three and a half year time period is repeatedly confirmed in the book of Revelation as well. Revelation 12:14 states that the ‘woman’ (faithful Jews) will flee to the wilderness to be ‘nourished’ for ‘a time, times and half a time,’ a direct link back to Daniel. How can we be sure that this period of time equals three and a half years though? Because in Revelation 12:6 the same

prophecy is repeated, but in this case it is said that the ‘woman’ will be ‘nourished’ for *1,260 days*. It is important to note that the Jewish calendar was lunar, which means that each of its months was exactly 30 days (the length of time it takes the moon to revolve around the earth). Twelve months of 30 days each month makes 360 days a year . . . which, multiplied by $3\frac{1}{2}$, makes exactly 1,260 days. Thus, by the Jewish calendar, 1,260 days is $3\frac{1}{2}$ years exactly. And this number is repeated elsewhere in Revelation (11:3).

But it is also confirmed in another way in two other passages: in Revelation 11:2 it is said that the nations (ie. the Antichrist) will trample Jerusalem for ‘42 months.’ This time period is repeated in Revelation 13:5 where it is said that the ‘beast’ (ie. the Antichrist) will exercise authority for ‘42 months.’ How long is 42 months? 42 months divided by 12 months in a year equals exactly $3\frac{1}{2}$ years.

Thus we have multiple confirmations that the Antichrist’s reign of terror will last for exactly $3\frac{1}{2}$ years.

$3\frac{1}{2}$ years = 42 months = 1,260 days = a ‘time, times, and half a time.’

5. From chapter 17: *What do the seven heads of the beast represent?*

⁹*This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while. ¹¹As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction. – Revelation 17:9-11 (ESV)*

In Revelation 17 the Beast Empire (ie. the Antichrist’s Empire) is said to have ‘seven heads.’ These seven heads represent seven empires from history, with the final Antichrist Empire being an ‘eighth’ beast empire. From this passage we see that at the time John was writing the book of Revelation five of these empires had already come and gone (‘fallen’ – see v. 10b), a sixth was in existence right then (‘one is’), the seventh had ‘not yet come,’ and then the eighth would be the Antichrist’s empire.

Bible scholars are unanimous in identifying the first six empires; the first five being empires from Old Testament times who conquered and oppressed the Jewish people, the sixth one being the Roman empire since that was the empire presently in power and oppressing the Jewish people at the time of his writing:

1. Egypt
2. Assyria
3. Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar [identified by Daniel, Dan 2:37-45; 7:3-7]
4. Persia [identified by Daniel, Dan 2:37-45; 7:3-7]
5. Greece [identified by Daniel, Dan 2:37-45; 7:3-7]
6. Rome
-
7. Some empire after Rome [scholars disagree as to who this was]
8. Future: The final Antichrist empire [scholars disagree as to who this will be]

Who are the seventh and eighth beasts? Over the past century the vast majority of Western Bible teachers have identified the Antichrist’s empire as the Roman Empire revived. This is primarily due to our Western-centric mindset; to us history revolves around the Roman Empire and European civilization. With regards to the Antichrist’s empire, however, it makes no sense – if Rome is the sixth and the eighth beast empire on the list, who is the seventh? Is that Rome too? There’s a gap here. The list of beast empires according to many Western Bible teachers today:

1. Egypt
2. Assyria
3. Babylon
4. Persia
5. Greece
6. The Roman Empire
7. Rome again at some later point in history? (When did this happen? Most teachers just conveniently forget about this seventh empire and skip straight over to the eighth and final one.)
8. The Roman Empire revived again (for a third time?)

When most Western Christians picture the End Times they picture the Antichrist as a white European guy leading a revived European empire that conquers the world. But this is far from what the Bible actually describes; the Bible is not a Western book, nor is it concerned with European civilization – it is a Middle Eastern book, geographically centered on the happenings in and around the land of Israel. Furthermore, the Bible explicitly and repeatedly names the nations who will war against Israel and God in the final battle before Jesus returns, and they are all from the Middle East (dozens of passages, for just a few examples see

Zephaniah 2:3-5, Ezekiel 25, Ezekiel 30, Joel 3, Ezekiel 38-39).

Moreover, the first six empires all had two things in common: they conquered the land of Israel and oppressed the Jewish people to at least some extent.¹ Number seven must have done the same (and in the future, so will number eight). If we look at history we see that after Rome there arose a succession of Islamic empires which conquered Jerusalem and ruled the Middle East for nearly 1300 years (AD 632 – 1923). From the perspective of the Bible, which is Jerusalem-centric, it would seem unlikely that the seventh head could be anything else.

Thus, one possible interpretation of the seven heads of Revelation 17 would be:

1. Egypt
 2. Assyria
 3. Babylon
 4. Persia
 5. Greece
 6. The Roman Empire
 7. A combination of one or more of the succession of Islamic empires that ruled the Middle East from AD 632 – 1923? (For example the Ottoman Empire conquered Jerusalem and ruled over the Middle East for over 400 years, from 1453-1922.)
-
8. Future: Another powerful Middle Eastern Empire ('an eighth' see Rev 17:11) will arise and conquer Israel and persecute Jews and Christians.

¹ Christianity only appeared during the reign of the Roman Empire so the first 5 beast empires didn't have a chance to persecute Christians. Empires 6 and 7 certainly did, and so will the final one.

Appendix 4 – Outline of the book of Revelation

A. 4-Part Structure of Revelation:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| 1. John's PURPOSE for writing | (Rev 1) |
| 2. Jesus' 7 LETTERS to the 7 churches | (Rev 2-3) |
| 3. HEAVENLY SCENE – God is awesome and sovereign | (Rev 4-5) |
| 4. CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE of End Time events | (Rev 6-22) |

B. Outline of chapters 6 – 22.

Only the last 17 chapters of Revelation (6 – 22) are actually about the End Times. The back-bone of these chapters is the series of Seal, Trumpet, and Bowl judgments. These 21 judgment events (7 in each) form a chronology of End Time events which happen one after the other.

If Revelation 6 – 22 just contained the Seal, Trumpet and Bowl judgments, these chapters would be easy to understand in terms of chronology. What confuses people is all the 'extra' stuff in these chapters that are not part of the Seals, Trumpets or Bowls – what to do with these things? Do they happen chronologically in the order in which they appear? For example, the seven Seal judgments are broken up between Revelation chapter six (the first six seals) and Revelation 8:1 (the seventh seal); in between is chapter seven which completely changes subjects, not speaking of any judgments, but rather describing the sealing of 144,000 Jews, and an incredible scene in heaven where saints who are dying in the tribulation are before the throne of God worshipping Him. The question then is, 'Is the stuff we see happening in chapter 7 supposed to happen in between seal 6 and seal 7 chronologically?' No.

In order to make sense of Revelation 6 – 22 one has to realize that there are 'pauses' in the storyline of the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls, where God gives us explanations and background information to help us process and understand what is happening during the End Times. These 'pauses' shouldn't be read chronologically in terms of, 'Chapter 13 happens after Chapter 7, therefore the *events* of Chapter 13 happen after Chapter 7,' or, 'The Beast Empire only rises up after the 7 Bowl Judgments are finished, since it is described in chapter 17 and the Bowl Judgments are described in chapter 16.' No. Revelation very quickly ceases to make sense if you automatically read all the chapters as happening in a chronological sequence. The thing to remember is this: the Seals, Trumpets and Bowls all happen chronologically, everything else is a 'pause' in the story for explanation, with the exception of chapters 20-22 which are chronological as well, since they detail the Millennium Age and then the New Heavens and New Earth. The 'pauses' should not be understood chronologically, rather they should be viewed as angelic explanations giving us further insight into the events of the End Times (see outline next page).

Thus the chronological sequence of events in Revelation is:

1. The Seven Seal Judgments. (Rev 6 & 8:1)
2. The Seven Trumpet Judgments. (Revelation 8-9. Jesus returns at Trumpet 7 – Rev 11:15-19)
3. The Seven Bowl Judgments. (Revelation 15-16)
 - ◊ Exception: the seventh Seal, seventh Trumpet, and seventh Bowl do not happen in sequence with the other judgments.
4. Jesus defeats the Antichrist. (Revelation 19:11-21)
5. The Millennium Age. (Revelation 20)
6. The New Heaven and New Earth. (Revelation 21-22)

Everything else – the fall of the Harlot Babylon (chapter 18), the rise of the Beast Empire (chapter 13 & 17), the saints worshiping before the throne (chapter 7), happen at unspecified times throughout the above storyline, not chronologically in the order that they appear in the book.

Chronology of Revelation 6 – 22

1. Revelation 6

Pause: Revelation 7

Seal Judgments

1st Angelic Explanation: The purpose of this pause is to encourage believers that there is protection in the midst of the judgments, and we win in the end.

2. Revelation 8-9

Pause: Revelation 10-11:13

Trumpet Judgments

2nd Angelic Explanation – the purpose of this pause is two-fold:
Chapter 10 – a mighty angel encourages John to keep prophesying
Chapter 11 – The Two Witnesses: these witnesses will be a tremendous encouragement to believers in the great tribulation as they publicly stand against the Antichrist in Jerusalem.

3. Revelation 11:14-19

Pause: Revelation 12-14

7th Trumpet – Jesus Returns

3rd Angelic Explanation: The purpose of this pause is to explain why Jesus needs to be so violent at His return, by describing how violent and evil Satan and the Antichrist will be.

4. Revelation 15-16

Pause: Revelation 17-19:10

Bowl Judgments

4th Angelic Explanation: The purpose of this pause is to warn of the wickedness of the Harlot Babylon.

5. Revelation 19:11-19:21

Jesus Triumphs

6. Revelation 20

The Millennium Age

7. Revelation 21-22

New Heavens & New Earth

APPENDIX 5 – Outline of Seal, Trumpet and Bowl Judgments			
Seal 1 Beast Empire conquering and expanding.	The Seals describe trends, rather than specific events. War, Famine, Pestilence, Economic Crisis – these are things that are always going on in the world all around us. So there is no specific point in time when we could say that a specific Seal has started or ended. These are things that have already started, and will continue to get worse until Jesus Returns. The Seals describe TREND events:	The Trumpets and Bowls describe SPECIFIC events: They've either happened or they haven't. The moment they <u>happen</u> , we will know it!	
Seal 2 War		Start of Great Tribulation? (3 ½ yrs)	
Seal 3 Famine & economic crisis		Trumpet 1 Hail & Fire: 1/3 of earth, trees and grass burned up.	Specific NATURAL events Possible comet impact/fly-by?
Seal 4 Sword/Famine/Pestilence/Wild Beasts.		Trumpet 2 Mountain thrown into sea: 1/3 sea blood; 1/3 fish dead; 1/3 ships dead	
		Trumpet 3 Great star falls from heaven: 1/3 fresh water blood.	
		Trumpet 4 1/3 light darkened (sun, moon & stars)	
	Trumpet 5 Woe #1 – Demonic locusts torment people.	Specific NON-NATURAL events	
Trumpet 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 million man army – 1/3 die (9:12-19); • Two Witnesses killed and raised – great earthquake in Jerusalem (11:11-14) 			
Seal 5 Martyrs pray for judgment on persecutors.	Bowl Judgments follow after the trumpet judgments – they are the 'last' (15:1)		
Seal 6 Sun goes dark, moon to blood, meteorites & gigantic earthquake.	Bowl 1 Foul and loathsome sores break out on those who take the mark. (compare with Exodus 9:10-12)	Specific events – PLAGUES. God sends plagues on the Antichrist kingdom which parallel the plagues He sent on Egypt in the OT. (Including Bowl)	
	Bowl 2 Angel turns the whole sea into blood, everything dies. (compare with Exodus 7:20-21)		
	Bowl 3 Angel turns rivers and springs (fresh water) to blood. (compare with Exodus 7:20-21)		
	Bowl 4 Sun scorches people with fire and fierce heat.		
	Bowl 5 Total darkness cloaks the Antichrist's kingdom. (compare with Exodus 10:21-23)		
	Bowl 6 Demonic gathering of kings to Armageddon.		
End of 3 ½ year Tribulation – Jesus Returns			
Seal 7, Trumpet 7, and Bowl 7 all parallel each other and announce Jesus' Return.			
Seal 7 <i>"Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake."</i> – Revelation 8:5	Trumpet 7 <i>"Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen within His temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail."</i> – Revelation 11:19	Bowl 7 <i>"The seventh angel poured out his bowl ... And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been ... And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each ..."</i> – Revelation 16:17,18,21	
Anticipation <i>"When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence for about half an hour."</i> – Revelation 8:5	Proclamation <i>"Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, 'The kingdom of the world ...'"</i> – Revelation 11:19	Manifestation <i>"The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, 'It is done.'"</i> – Revelation 16:17	

Appendix 6 – List of Old Testament References in the book of Revelation

This list was made by Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Th.M., Ph.D., founder and director of Ariel Ministries.²

There are over five hundred references to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation. The following is a list of such references, but it makes no claim to being exhaustive or complete.

Some of these references back to the Old Testament do speak to the very same thing as the Revelation. However, in others, the Revelation merely borrows a phrase or motif for the purpose of developing a new area. This distinction should be kept in mind in the study of those Old Testament references.

Revelation	1:1	Daniel 2:28-29	
	1:4	Isaiah 11:2	
	1:5	Genesis 49:11; Psalm 89:27	
	1:6	Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6	
	1:7	Daniel 7:13; Zechariah 12:10-14	
	1:8	Isaiah 41:4	
	1:12	Exodus 25:37; 37:23	
	1:13	Daniel 7:13; 10:5, 16	
	1:14	Daniel 7:9; 10:6	
	1:15	Ezekiel 1:7, 24; 43:2; Daniel 10:6	
	1:16	Judges 5:31; Isaiah 49:2	
	1:17	Isaiah 41:4; 44:6; 48:12; Daniel 8:17-18; 10:9-10, 12, 15, 19	
	1:18	Job 3:17; Hosea 13:14	
	Revelation	2:4	Jeremiah 2:2
		2:7	Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24; Proverbs 11:30; 13:12; Ezekiel 31:8
2:12		Isaiah 49:2	
2:14		Numbers 25:1-3	
2:17		Exodus 16:33-34; Isaiah 62:2; 65:15	
2:18		Daniel 10:6	
2:20		1 Kings 16:31-32; 2 Kings 9:7, 22	
2:23		Psalm 7:9; 26:2; 28:4; Jeremiah 11:20; 17:10	
2:27		Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 30:14; Jeremiah 19:11	
Revelation	3:4	Ecclesiastes 9:8	
	3:5	Exodus 32:32-33	
	3:7	Isaiah 22:22	
	3:9	Isaiah 43:4; 49:23; 60:14	
	3:12	Isaiah 62:2; Ezekiel 48:35	
	3:14	Genesis 49:3; Deuteronomy 21:17	
	3:18	Isaiah 55:1	
3:19	Proverbs 3:12		
Revelation	4:1	Ezekiel 1:1	
	4:2	Isaiah 6:1; Ezekiel 1:26-28; Daniel 7:9	
	4:3	Ezekiel 1:26, 28; 10:1	
	4:5	Exodus 19:16; 25:37; Isaiah 11:2; Ezekiel 1:13	
	4:6	Ezekiel 1:5, 18, 22, 26; 10:1, 12	
	4:7	Ezekiel 1:10, 10:14	
	4:8	Isaiah 6:2-3; Ezekiel 1:18; 10:12	
	4:9	Deuteronomy 32:40; Daniel 4:34; 6:26; 12:7	
4:11	Genesis 1:1		
Revelation	5:1	Ezekiel 2:9-10; Daniel 12:4	
	5:5	Genesis 49:9-10; Isaiah 11:1, 10	
	5:6	Isaiah 11:2; Zechariah 3:8-9; 4:10	
	5:8	Psalm 111:2	
	5:9	Psalm 40:3; 98:1; 144:9; 149:1; Isaiah 42:10; Daniel 5:19	
	5:10	Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6	
5:11	Daniel 7:10		

² Accessed online: <http://johnsnotes.com/documents/OldTestamentReferencesintheBookofRevelation.pdf> (January 22, 2015)

Revelation	6:2	Zechariah 1:8; 6:3
	6:4	Zechariah 1:8; 6:2
	6:5	Zechariah 6:2
	6:8	Jeremiah 15:2-3; 24:10; 29:17; Ezekiel 14:21; Hosea 13:14; Zechariah 6:3
	6:12	Isaiah 50:3; Joel 2:10
	6:13	Isaiah 34:4
	6:14	Isaiah 34:4; Nahum 1:5
	6:15	Psalm 48:4-6; Isaiah 2:10-12, 19
	6:16	Hosea 10:8
	6:17	Psalm 76:7; Jeremiah 30:7; Nahum 1:6; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Malachi 3:2
Revelation	7:1	Isaiah 11:2; Jeremiah 49:36; Ezekiel 7:2; 37:9; Daniel 7:2; Zechariah 6:5
	7:3	Ezekiel 9:4-6
	7:4	Genesis 49:1-28
	7:9	Leviticus 23:40
	7:10	Psalm 3:8
	7:14	Genesis 49:11
	7:15	Leviticus 26:11
	7:16	Psalm 121:5-6; Isaiah 49:10
	7:17	Psalm 23:1-2; Ezekiel 34:23
Revelation	8:3	Psalm 141:2
	8:4	Psalm 141:2
	8:5	Ezekiel 10:2
	8:5-6	Exodus 19:16
	8:7	Exodus 9:23-24; Psalm 18:13; Isaiah 28:2
	8:8	Exodus 7:17-19
	8:10	Isaiah 14:12
	8:11	Jeremiah 9:15; 23:15
	8:12	Isaiah 13:10
Revelation	9:1	Isaiah 14:12-14
	9:2	Genesis 19:28; Exodus 19:8
	9:3	Exodus 10:12-15
	9:4	Ezekiel 9:4
	9:6	Job 3:21
	9:8	Joel 1:6
	9:9	Joel 2:5
	9:11	Job 26:6; 28:22; 31:12; Psalm 88:11; Proverbs 15:11
	9:14	Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7; Joshua 1:4
Revelation	10:1	Ezekiel 1:26-28
	10:4	Daniel 8:26; 12:4-9
	10:5	Deuteronomy 32:40; Daniel 12:7
	10:6	Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 32:40; Nehemiah 9:6; Daniel 12:17
	10:7	Amos 3:7
	10:9	Jeremiah 15:16; Ezekiel 2:8-33
	10:11	Ezekiel 37:4, 9
Revelation	11:1	Ezekiel 40:3-4; Zechariah 2:1-2
	11:2	Ezekiel 40:17-20
	11:4	Zechariah 4:1-3, 11-14
	11:5	Numbers 16:35; 2 Kings 1:10-12
	11:6	Exodus 7:19-25; 1 Kings 17:1
	11:7	Exodus 7:3, 7, 8, 21
	11:8	Isaiah 1:9-10; 3:9; Jeremiah 23:14; Ezekiel 16:49; Ezekiel 23:3, 8, 19, 27
	11:9	Psalm 79:2-3
	11:11	Ezekiel 37:9-10
	11:15	Exodus 15:18; Daniel 2:44-45; 7:13-14, 27
	11:18	Psalm 2:1-3; 46:6; 115:13

Revelation	12:1	Genesis 37:9-11
	12:2	Isaiah 26:17; 66:7; Micah 4:9-10
	12:3	Isaiah 27:1; Daniel 7:7, 20, 24
	12:4	Daniel 8:10
	12:5	Psalms 2:8-9; Isaiah 66:7
	12:7	Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1
	12:9	Genesis 3:1; Job 1:6; 2:1; Zechariah 3:1
	12:10	Job 1:9-11; 2:4-5; Zechariah 3:1
	12:14	Exodus 19:4; Deut 32:11; Isaiah 40:31; Daniel 7:25; 12:7; Hosea 2:14-15
	12:15	Hosea 15:10
	12:17	Genesis 3:15
Revelation	13:1	Daniel 7:3, 7, 8
	13:2	Daniel 7:4-6, 8
	13:3	Daniel 7:8
	13:4	Daniel 8:24
	13:5	Daniel 7:8, 11, 20, 25; 11:36
	13:7	Daniel 7:21
	13:8	Daniel 12:1
	13:10	Jeremiah 15:2; 43:11
	13:11	Daniel 8:3
13:13	1 Kings 1:9-12	
Revelation	14:1	Psalms 2:6; Ezekiel 9:4
	14:2	Ezekiel 1:24; 43:2
	14:3	Psalms 144:9
	14:7	Exodus 20:11
	14:8	Isaiah 21:9; Jeremiah 51:7-8
	14:10	Genesis 19:24; Psalms 75:8; Isaiah 51:17
	14:11	Isaiah 34:10; 66:24
	14:14	Daniel 7:13
	14:18	Joel 3:13
	14:19	Isaiah 63:1-6
	14:20	Joel 3:13
Revelation	15:1	Leviticus 26:21
	15:3	Exodus 15:1-18; Deut 31:30-32:44; Psalms 92:5; 111:2; 139:14
	15:4	Psalms 86:9; Isaiah 66:23; Jeremiah 10:7
	15:5	Exodus 38:21
	15:6	Leviticus 26:21
	15:7	Jeremiah 25:15
	15:8	Exodus 40:34-35; Lev 26:21; 1 Kings 8:10-11; 2 Chron 5:13-14; Isaiah 6:1-4
Revelation	16:1	Psalms 79:6; Jeremiah 10:25; Ezekiel 22:31
	16:2	Exodus 9:9-11; Deuteronomy 28:35
	16:3	Exodus 7:17-25
	16:4	Exodus 7:17-21; Psalms 78:44
	16:5	Psalms 145:17
	16:6	Isaiah 49:26
	16:7	Psalms 19:9; 145:17
	16:10	Exodus 10:21-23
	16:12	Isaiah 11:15-16; 41:2, 25; 46:11; Jeremiah 51:36
	16:13	Exodus 8:6
	16:14	1 Kings 22:21-23
	16:16	Judges 5:19; 2 Kings 23:29-30; 2 Chronicles 35:22; Zechariah 12:11
	16:19	Jeremiah 25:15
16:21	Exodus 9:18-25	
Revelation	17:1	Jeremiah 51:13; Nahum 3:4
	17:2	Isaiah 23:17
	17:3	Daniel 7:7
	17:4	Jeremiah 51:7; Ezekiel 28:13
	17:8	Exodus 32:32-33; Daniel 12:1
	17:12	Daniel 7:24-25
	17:16	Leviticus 21:9

Revelation	18:1	Ezekiel 43:2
	18:2	Isaiah 21:9; 34:13-15; Jeremiah 50:30; 51:37
	18:3	Jeremiah 51:7
	18:4	Isaiah 52:11; Jeremiah 50:8; 51:6, 45
	18:5	Jeremiah 41:9
	18:6	Psalm 137:8; Jeremiah 50:15, 29
	18:7	Isaiah 47:7-8; Zephaniah 2:15
	18:8	Isaiah 47:9; Jeremiah 50:31-32
	18:9-19	Ezekiel 26:16-18; 27:26-31
	18:9	Jeremiah 50:46
	18:10	Isaiah 31:1
	18:12	Ezekiel 27:12-25
	18:20	Jeremiah 51:48
	18:21	Jeremiah 51:63-64
	18:22	Isaiah 24:8; Jeremiah 25:10; Ezekiel 26:13
18:23	Jeremiah 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; Nahum 3:4	
Revelation	19:2	Deuteronomy 32:43; Psalm 119:137; Jeremiah 51:48
	19:3	Isaiah 34:9-10; Jeremiah 51:48
	19:5	Psalm 22:23; 134:1; 135:1
	19:6	Psalm 93:1; 97:1; Ezekiel 1:24; 43:2; Daniel 10:6
	19:11	Psalm 18:10; 45:3-4; Isaiah 11:4-5; Ezekiel 1:1
	19:13	Isaiah 63:3
	19:15	Psalm 2:8-9; Isaiah 11:4; 63:3-6
	19:16	Deuteronomy 10:17
	19:17	Isaiah 34:6-7; Ezekiel 39:17
	19:18	Isaiah 34:6-7; Ezekiel 39:18
	19:19	Psalm 2:2; Joel 3:9-11
	19:20	Isaiah 30:33; Daniel 7:11
	19:21	Ezekiel 39:19-20
Revelation	20:2	Genesis 3:1, 13-14; Isaiah 24:21-22
	20:4	Daniel 7:9, 22, 27; 12:2
	20:5	Isaiah 26:14
	20:6	Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 26:19
	20:8	Ezekiel 38:2; 39:1, 6
	20:9	Deuteronomy 23:14; 2 Kings 1:9-12; Ezekiel 38:22; 39:6
	20:11	Daniel 2:35
	20:12	Exodus 32:32-33; Psalm 62:12; 69:28; Daniel 7:10
	20:15	Exodus 32:32-33; Daniel 12:1
Revelation	21:1	Isaiah 65:17; 66:22
	21:3	Leviticus 26:11-12; Ezekiel 37:27
	21:4	Isaiah 25:8; 35:10; 51:11; 65:19
	21:9	Leviticus 26:21
	21:10	Ezekiel 40:2
	21:11	Isaiah 60:1-2; Ezekiel 43:2
	21:12-13	Ezekiel 48:31-34
	21:15	Ezekiel 40:3, 5
	21:19-20	Exodus 28:17-20; Isaiah 54:11-12
	21:23	Isaiah 60:19-20
	21:24	Isaiah 60:3-5, 16
	21:25	Isaiah 60:11; Zechariah 14:7
21:26	Isaiah 60:5, 16	
21:27	Isaiah 52:1; Ezekiel 44:9; Zechariah 14:21	
Revelation	22:1	Psalm 46:4; Ezekiel 47:1; Zechariah 14:8
	22:2	Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24; Ezekiel 47:12
	22:3	Genesis 3:17-19; Zechariah 14:11
	22:4	Psalm 17:15; Ezekiel 9:4
	22:5	Isaiah 60:19; Daniel 7:18, 22, 27; Zechariah 14:7
	22:10	Daniel 8:26; 12:4, 9
	22:11	Ezekiel 3:27; Daniel 12:10
	22:12	Psalm 62:12; Isaiah 40:10; 62:11
	22:13	Isaiah 44:6
	22:14	Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24; Proverbs 11:30
	22:15	Deuteronomy 23:18
22:18-19	Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32	
22:19	Deuteronomy 29:19-20	



The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation is the only book of the Bible that explicitly promises a blessing to those who read and obey it (see 1:3 and 22:7). Of course, this is not to say that there isn't a blessing for reading and obeying the other books of the Bible, but it does emphasize a fact that is lost on many evangelicals today - the book of Revelation is not a 'weird' book that should be ignored. The Holy Spirit commands us to study and obey it, and promises a blessing to those who do.

Revelation 1:17-18 (NIV)

"Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!"



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