

## Lesson 1 ... Getting the Most From This Study

---

### [\(Revelation 1:1-3\)](#)

The first five words of this book are actually the title—*The Revelation of Jesus Christ* ([1:1a](#)). The word translated *Revelation* (*apokalypsis*, uh-pock-uh-lip´-sis) is the word from which we get the English word “apocalypse.” It means “an uncovering” or “to reveal.” The book of Revelation contains events that have been concealed but are now revealed.

This book is a gift God gave Jesus to show *unto his servants* ([1:1b](#)). Concerning His second coming, Jesus said no one knows the day or hour except *the Father* ([Mk 13:32](#)). The book of Revelation was given to Jesus who, through the Holy Spirit, gave it to John to reveal to *his servants things which must shortly come to pass* ([1:1c](#)). The word *shortly* (*tachos*, tac-os´) means when the events begin to take place, they will happen in rapid succession—not that they will take place immediately. These events must be understood from the perspective of heaven rather than earth. Therefore, we must remember what fact in [2 Peter 3:8c](#)?

The events that *must shortly come to pass* will occur in rapid succession within a brief time. They are imminent, but not necessarily immediate. Getting the most from this study requires keeping three things in mind. First ...

### **The Author (1:1d-2)**

The Divine Author is Jesus, who originally revealed the events in the book of Revelation by sending *his angel unto his servant John* ([1:1d](#)). The name of the angel is not given, but many believe it was Gabriel, who also brought messages to Daniel, Zechariah, and Mary ([Dan. 8:16](#); [Lk 1:11-20, 26-31](#)). The human author is the apostle John, a former fisherman, who was the son of Zebedee and brother of James ([Mt 4:21](#)). He was part of Jesus’ inner circle of disciples. Who were the other two ([Mt 17:1](#); [Mk 5:37, 9:2, 14:33](#); [Lk 9:28](#))?

John probably wrote *Revelation* around a.d. 93 from the island of Patmos, a rocky island off the coast of present-day Turkey (see map on page 10). Threatened by John’s powerful leadership and ministry, Domitian, the cruel Roman Emperor who reigned a.d. 81-96, banished John to Patmos. Domitian was leading a horrific persecution against the church. He was the first Roman emperor to enforce worship of the Roman emperor. Once a year, every Roman citizen was required to confess “Caesar is Lord.” However, Christians refused, confessing what a person can only sincerely say through the Holy Spirit. What is that, according to [1 Corinthians 12:3c](#)?

That is the first Christian confession of faith, and it says it all. Sincerely making that confession is essential to salvation ([Rom. 10:9](#)).

During John’s time on Patmos, the Lord Jesus gives him the visions we now call the book of Revelation. After Domitian’s death, John returns to Ephesus—a church Paul established on his second missionary journey ([Acts 18:19-21](#)). Tradition tells us John

died in his nineties of natural causes around a.d. 100. He was the only one of the twelve disciples to escape a violent death. According to [Acts 12:2](#), what does Herod Agrippa do to John's younger brother, James?

This book was given to offer hope to believers enduring horrific persecution. John wrote in graphic terms and symbols about the ultimate victory of Christ over Satan. He also included the rewards to be given to God's tried and faithful servants. It was originally written to seven churches in present-day Turkey, which we will later discuss, beginning in Lesson 4.

John's role in this book is to *bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw* ([1:2](#)). John declares this book is *the word of God* in written form. The book of Revelation concerns all John *saw* and heard in visions given to him by Jesus Christ. To get the most from this study, remember the author and ...

### **The Application (1:3)**

John writes: *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein* ([1:3a-b](#)). This is the first of seven "beatitudes" in this book ([14:13](#), [16:15](#), [19:9](#), [20:6](#), [22:7](#), and [22:14](#)). If you *do his commandments* (specifically the ones about being saved), what does the last "beatitude" promise ([22:14](#))?

*Revelation* is the only book in the Bible that promises a special blessing to *he that readeth ... they that hear ... and keep those things which are written* in it. The participles (verbs used as adjectives) *readeth*, *hear*, and *keep* are present tense. This means reading, hearing, and obeying the commands and principles found in this book are to be a way of life. It is not enough just to read or *hear*. We must *keep* God's Word. Why, according to Jesus in [John 8:51c](#)?

The phrase *for the time is at hand* ([1:3c](#)) reiterates that the events described in this book are imminent. The word translated *time* (*kairos*, kair-os´) means season, era, or epoch. Another Greek word (*chronos*, kron-os´) is the word from which we get the English words "chronograph" or "chronology" and refers to time on a watch or calendar. *kairos* refers to the final era of God's plan for the redemption of the world. It describes a period of time, rather than a point in time.

The purpose of this book is not for us to mark a calendar with a date or year the Lord will return. Jesus said it is not for us *to know the times or the seasons* that only the Father has the *power* to set ([Acts 1:7](#)). *Revelation* was written to motivate us to live a holy life in a very unholy world. We shouldn't try to set a date for these events to begin. Instead, what does Jesus command in [Matthew 24:42](#)?

As we apply what we learn in this book, we will be motivated to remain unspotted by the world ([2 Pet. 3:14](#)). To get the most from this study, remember the author, the application, and ...

## **The Approach**

There are four basic approaches to interpreting *Revelation*:

*1. The preteristic approach* (pret´-er-ist, from Latin, meaning “the thing that is past”). This view teaches the events in this book have all been fulfilled in the distant past.

*2. The allegorical approach* (symbolic or idealistic). This view regards all the visions as an allegory of the age-old conflict between good and evil. It teaches neither historical nor future events are specifically portrayed.

*3. The historical approach.* This approach teaches that the predictions cover the entire period between John’s day and the return of Christ. This view sees the visions as symbols of the rise of the papacy, the corruption of the church, and various wars throughout history.

*4. The futuristic approach.* This view interprets all the events from chapter four on as future happenings. This is a more literal approach, interpreting the judgments described in chapters 6, 8, 9, and 16, as literal, future events expressed in symbolic terms. No events in history have even come close to these. For example, when the first of four trumpets is blown, *hail and fire mingled with blood* are thrown down on the earth ([8:7a-b](#)). As a result, what happens ([8:7d-f](#))?

Those who object to the futuristic approach charge that the book of Revelation would not have been a comfort to its original readers if it is largely futuristic. However, immediate application of distant events that reveal the ultimate victory of righteousness has been a source of comfort from the time of Old Testament prophets to believers today. Therefore, in this study we will use the futuristic approach.

Regardless of the approach followed in interpreting this book, all of the visions and symbols cannot be fully explained or understood. In [Daniel 12](#), which also deals with the end of time as we know it, we discover why some of the prophecies cannot be understood now. Why, according to what an angel tells Daniel ([12:9c](#))?

To get the most from this study, remember the author, the application, and the approach.

## Lesson 2 ... When Life Is Tough

---

*(Revelation 1:4-20)*

John now addresses the recipients of this letter: *the seven churches which are in Asia* ([1:4a](#)). These are the seven literal churches mentioned in chapters 2 and 3. *Revelation* is addressed to them, so it could be read and passed on by people traveling the main Roman road clockwise around *Asia*, which is now western Turkey. Coming from Patmos, the letter first arrives in the port city of Ephesus.

There were other churches in *Asia* at the time, such as Troas ([Acts 20:5](#)) and Colossae ([Col. 1:2](#)). Why did the Lord direct John to write to these particular churches? Probably because the condition of these seven churches represents all types of churches throughout the church age. They also represent seven kinds of Christians—one of which is much like you. Also, the number seven signifies completeness. These churches were enduring severe persecution; therefore, in this passage, we discover what to do when life is tough. First ...

### **Remember the Trinity (1:4b-8)**

John writes to his readers, *Grace be unto you, and peace* ([1:4b](#)). Only after experiencing God's saving *grace* can we know His *peace*. In [John 14:27a-c](#), what does Jesus tell His disciples the night before He is crucified?

John continues: *from him which is, and which was, and which is to come* ([1:4c](#)). This refers to the first person of the Trinity—God the Father, the eternal God who transcends time.

*The seven Spirits which are before his throne* ([1:4d](#)) refers to the Holy Spirit. There is only one Holy Spirit, but the number seven depicts His completeness. The *seven Spirits* probably refers to seven titles given to the Holy Spirit in [Isaiah 11:2](#). He is first called *the spirit of the Lord*. Then, in this verse, He is called *the spirit of* six other things. What are they?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

6.

The Hebrew word translated *fear* (*yir'â*, year-ah') refers to reverential awe. Next, John writes: *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness* (1:5a). All three persons of the Trinity are included in the greeting. Jesus is called *the faithful witness* because not only does He always speak the truth, but also He is *the truth* (Jn 14:6). Jesus is also *the first begotten of the dead* (1:5b). He is not the first person to be raised from the dead. The first recorded resurrection is Elijah's raising the widow's son (1 Kgs. 17:17-23). However, Jesus is the first to be raised and never die again (Rom. 6:9). The word translated *first begotten* also refers to priority and preeminence (Col. 1:18).

Next, John writes, Jesus is *the prince of the kings of the earth* (1:5c). What will happen one day *at the name of Jesus* (Philippians 2:10-11a)?

Jesus also *loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood* (1:5d) through His death on the cross. He did this to make *us kings and priests unto God and his Father* (1:6a-b). A priest has direct access to God and is chosen to serve God and share His Word. Because of this privilege, John writes: *to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen* (1:6c).

Jesus is coming *with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him* (1:7a-b). Even the dead will see Him. The high priest Caiaphas, who had Jesus condemned to death, is now dead and in Hades. However, what does Jesus tell him in [Matthew 26:64c-d](#)?

This refers to the Second Coming, in contrast to the Rapture of the church. At the Second Coming, *all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him* (1:7c). Unbelievers who have refused to repent (9:21) will mourn because they are facing the divine judgment later described in this book.

Next, the Lord declares: *I am Alpha and Omega* (1:8a). *Alpha* and *Omega* are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This means God is the beginning and the end of all things. He further describes Himself: *which is, and which was, and which is to come* (1:8c), the eternal God. He is also *the Almighty* (1:8d). He is all powerful; therefore, no one can resist Him.

When life is tough, remember the Trinity, each of whom is on your side and ...

### **Reflect On Christ's Power (1:9-16)**

John tells his suffering readers he is their *brother, and companion in tribulation* (1:9a). We have already discussed the persecution by Domitian and John's exile to the island of Patmos. John is sharing in their suffering. John also shares with them in *the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ* (1:9b). He next tells his readers he was exiled to *the isle that is called Patmos* for declaring *the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ* (1:9c-d). John is suffering because he is faithfully preaching the Gospel.

John receives the visions in the book of Revelation when he is *in the Spirit on the Lord's day*, or Sunday. On that day, John hears *a great voice, as of a trumpet* ([1:10](#)), which is the voice of the Lord Jesus. He tells John to write what he sees in a book, or scroll, *and send it unto the seven churches, which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea* ([1:11](#)).

When John turns to see the One speaking to him, he sees *seven golden candlesticks* ([1:12](#)), which represent the seven churches ([1:20](#)). Standing in the middle of them is *one like unto the Son of man* ([1:13a](#)). We know Jesus is present in His churches because of what promise in [Matthew 18:20](#)?

Jesus is referring to the time during which He will be present with us through His Holy Spirit, not in His body ([Jn 16:17](#)). Jesus refers to Himself as the *Son of man* more than eighty times in the gospels. It refers to the necessity of Him becoming a man who will suffer and die ([Mk 10:45](#); [8:31](#); [9:31](#)).

John sees Jesus *clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle* ([1:13b](#)). This identifies Him as the High Priest ([Ex 28:4](#); [39:2-4](#), [41](#)). Today, He is our *merciful and faithful high priest* ([Heb. 2:17](#)). *His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow* ([1:14a-b](#)). This represents wisdom and purity. *His eyes were as a flame of fire* ([1:14c](#)), which reveals the all-penetrating, all-knowing intelligence of Jesus. His eyes can penetrate the very depths of a person's thoughts and heart. Therefore, what does Jesus declare in [Matthew 10:26b-c](#)?

*His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace* ([1:15a-b](#)). Feet of brass represents strength and stability. This describes an all powerful Victor. The phrase *burned in a furnace* denotes His red-hot, glowing feet symbolize judgment.

*His voice was as the sound of many waters* ([1:15c](#)). Like the roar of Niagara Falls, His voice will drown out all other sounds. *And he had in his right hand seven stars* ([1:16a](#)), which are the *angels*, or pastors, of the churches ([1:20](#)). Being held in His *right hand* could symbolize their divine calling.

*Out of his mouth went a sharp two edged sword* ([1:16b](#)), which is the Word of God ([Heb. 4:12](#)). *His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength* ([1:16c](#)). Jesus is described the same way at His transfiguration ([Mt 17:2](#)).

Life is often tough, and when it is, remember the Trinity and reflect on Christ's power. When you do these two things, the third will happen naturally ...

### **Repel Fear (1:17-20)**

Seeing the glorified Christ causes John to fall at Jesus' feet as if he is dead. Jesus lays His right hand on John and says, *Fear not* ([1:17](#)). For those who know Christ, there is no need to be afraid because He says, *I am the first and the last* ([1:17](#)). In other words, "I started everything and I will end it all." Christ explains He is the One *that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore* ([1:18a-b](#)). Then, what does our Lord say ([1:18c](#))?

Holding the *keys* refers to Christ's access and authority. The dead will remain dead until His key opens the door of death. The word translated *hell* (*hadēs*, ha' -dees) is the equivalent of the Hebrew term "sheol" (she' -ole). It is the intermediate state of those who die without Christ and are awaiting judgment. It is "hell's waiting room" until the degree of eternal punishment in hell (*gehenna*, geh-en' -nah) is pronounced at the Great White Throne Judgment ([20:11-15](#)).

Jesus tells John to write what he sees now and what he sees that will happen later ([1:19](#)). Jesus explains: *The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches* ([1:20c](#)). The word translated *angels* (*angelos*, ang' -el-os) means messengers and probably refers to pastors. The *seven candlesticks* are *the seven churches* ([1:20d](#)). Both the churches and their leaders are symbolized as light bearers. That's because what statement of Jesus should be true of all churches and every believer ([Matthew 5:14a](#))?

When life is tough, remember the Trinity and reflect on Christ's power; then, you can repel fear.

## Lesson 3 ... When You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'

---

*(Revelation 2:1-7)*

In chapters 2 and 3 of *Revelation*, Jesus—through the Apostle John—sends messages to seven churches in Asia Minor, which is now western Turkey. These seven churches are significant in several ways. First, they were actual churches in the cities mentioned, but they were not the most prominent churches of their day. Only two are previously mentioned in the New Testament. What are they ([Ephesians 1:1b](#) & [Colossians 2:1b](#))?

Next, these seven churches represent seven spiritual conditions that will remain true of churches until Jesus returns. So, you need to discover which church is most like your church. Also, they represent seven kinds of Christians—one of which is much like you. Therefore, in this study you also need to find yourself in these churches.

The first church Jesus addresses is in Ephesus. The characteristics of this church reveal what to do when you've lost that lovin' feelin'.

### **Recognize the Condition (2:1-4, 6)**

The Lord Jesus tells John: *Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write* ([2:1a](#)). As mentioned earlier, the word translated *angel* (*angelos*, ung'-el-os) means messenger and probably refers to the pastor of the church. In the first century, Ephesus was much like New York City today. It was one of the largest and most prominent cities in the ancient world, with an estimated population of at least 250,000. Ephesus was a world-famous seaport city, making it a mecca for trade. It was also the location of the temple of Artemis (or Diana), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Ephesus was a huge, prosperous, idolatrous, and immoral city.

To this church, Jesus identifies Himself: *These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand* ([2:1b](#)). As we learned earlier, the word *stars* refers to the *angels*, or pastors, of the seven churches ([1:20](#)). It is through the pastor that the *light* of God's Word ([Psa. 119:105](#)) is to be delivered to the churches.

Jesus says He *walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks* ([2:1c](#)). As also stated in Lesson 2, what do the *candlesticks* represent ([1:20](#))?

In the person of the Holy Spirit, Jesus walks among His churches, examining and evaluating them. Our Lord commends the church at Ephesus for several things: their *labour* (hard work), their *patience*, their intolerance of those who *are evil*, and their identification of false *apostles* ([2:2](#)). They also rejected *the deeds of the Nicolaitans* ([2:6](#)), who practiced idolatry and sexual immorality ([2:14](#)). False teachers were a problem in the Ephesian church, just as Paul had predicted to the Ephesian elders some forty years earlier. In his farewell address, what does Paul tell them ([Acts 20:30](#))?

The church at Ephesus looked great from the outside, but the keen, penetrating, and flaming eyes of our Lord (1:14) find fault. Therefore, He says He holds something against them: *thou hast left thy first love* (2:4).

It has been about forty years since Paul established this church and then stayed about three years leading it (Acts 19). Most of the church are now second-generation believers. Though they have retained their pure doctrine and have continued working hard in the church, they have *left* their *first love*—Christ. In other words, they are doing the same things, but not because of their *love* for Christ; it is all mechanical and habitual. Quoting Isaiah, how does Jesus describe this condition in [Matthew 15:8](#)?

Sometimes it's easy to go through the motions of serving the Lord. You can go to Bible study each week, attend worship services, tithe, and even teach a Bible class. Yet, it may all be just a religious show. What warning does Jesus give about doing righteous things just to be seen by others ([Matthew 6:1b](#))?

If you've lost that lovin' feelin', recognize the condition and then ...

### **Remember When You First Believed (2:5a)**

Jesus says to the Ephesian church: *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen* (2:5a). Forgetfulness is often the cause of losing your first love. *Remember* when you first believed? You were so excited and passionate about your Savior. *Remember* when your prayer time was always uplifting? *Remember* when you couldn't wait to go to worship services because you were so encouraged and refreshed every time? The Lord knows how forgetful we are. That's why Jesus gave us the Lord's Supper. After taking the bread and praying, Jesus gives it to His disciples ([Lk 22:19a-c](#)). As He does this, what does He say ([Lk 22:19d-e](#))?

If you've lost that lovin' feelin', recognize the condition, *remember when you first believed*, and then ...

### **Repent and Return (2:5b-d &7)**

Jesus says it like this: *repent, and do the first works* (2:5b). The word translated *repent* (*metanoēō*, meta-no-eh'-oh) means a change of mind followed by a change in behavior. It is a change for the better.

To *repent* means we confess and forsake our sin of just "playing church" or mechanically serving the Lord. We must rededicate our lives to our first love—Jesus Christ—asking God to reignite our spiritual passion. We need to tell the Lord we want our "spiritual honeymoon" with Him to never end. Basically, we need to pray what prayer of King David, recorded in [Psalm 51:12a](#)?

Jesus also gives a stern warning to those who refuse to *repent* of forsaking their *first love*. He says: *or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent* (2:5c-d). This means the church would cease to be a church. The church in Ephesus evidently did not heed Jesus' warning. The city of

Ephesus today is nothing but ruins, and the immediate area is uninhabited. The *candlestick* has been removed. The future of our individual churches, as well as the church as a whole, depends on our being faithful to our *first love*, Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, our Lord says: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (2:7)*. In a broad sense, *what the Spirit saith* is what is written in the Bible. How does [2 Peter 1:21b](#) describe divine inspiration?

The Bible is the result of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That's why the Bible says: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16a)*. The Bible—all of it—is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the Bible is *what the Spirit saith*.

Jesus concludes His words to the church at Ephesus by saying: *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God (2:7b)*. The *tree of life* is first mentioned as being in the Garden of Eden ([Gen. 3:22](#)) and last referred to as a part of the New Jerusalem ([Rev. 22:2](#)). It represents eternal life. *Him that overcometh* refers to all true Christians. How does [1 John 5:4a](#) express this fact?

One of the seven churches represents you. Is it the church at Ephesus? If so, you've lost that lovin' feelin'. Therefore, recognize the condition, *remember when you first believed*, then *repent and return*.

## **Lesson 4 ... When You're Suffering**

*(Revelation 2:8-11)*

The seven churches in *Revelation* represent seven different kinds of churches that will exist until Jesus comes. They also represent seven kinds of Christians, one of which is much like you. Therefore, you need to find yourself in the seven churches. We are now going to look at a suffering church, Smyrna. As Christians, we all suffer from time to time. We should expect it because what does Peter write in [1 Peter 4:12](#)?

In our last lesson, we looked at the church in Ephesus, the church that had forsaken her first love. Now, our Lord has a message for *the angel, or pastor, of the church in Smyrna* ([2:8a](#)). Smyrna was located about 40 miles north of Ephesus in Asia Minor, present-day Turkey, (see map on page 10). In contrast to Ephesus, which today is nothing but ruins, Smyrna is the modern city of Izmir (iz' -meer) in Turkey. It is a modern, beautiful seaport city with a metropolitan population of over three million. It was known as Smyrna until the Turkish Postal Service Law of 1930 made "Izmir" the internationally recognized name.

Smyrna built a temple to the Emperor Tiberius in 23 b.c. Later, under the cruel emperor Domitian, emperor worship was required of all Roman subjects. Part of the required worship was once a year to say "Caesar is lord" while placing incense on an altar. Many Christians refused to say those words and would instead say, "Jesus is Lord," which often resulted in torture and execution. "Jesus is Lord" is the first Christian confession. Therefore, the Christians in Smyrna were suffering horribly for their faith.

We are living in a country that is quickly becoming like Smyrna. There is an overt, militant aggression against Bible-teaching churches. There is also a covert attack by some Hollywood filmmakers, who glamorize profanity, immorality, and violence. This should not surprise us. Why, according to Jesus, in [John 15:18](#)?

This letter to the church at Smyrna reveals three things to do when we are suffering.

### **Remember Jesus Is Eternal (2:8b-c)**

Our Lord reminds the church at Smyrna that He is *the first and the last* ([2:8b](#)). This is an Old Testament title for God ([Isa. 44:6](#)). Our Lord is saying He is eternal. He also identifies Himself as He *which was dead, and is alive* ([2:8c](#)). Our Lord transcends time, life, and death. Jesus is addressing Christians who are suffering so horribly they may have to die for their faith. He wants them to remember He is *the resurrection, and the life* ([Jn 11:25b](#)). Therefore, He makes what promise in [John 11:25c-e](#)?

Even if our suffering leads to death, the promise of Him *which was dead, and is alive* is we will live again with Him for eternity in heaven. When it comes to suffering, life usually isn't fair. That's the reason there's a heaven and a hell. Because Jesus is *the last*, He will one day make all things just and right.

When suffering, remember Jesus is eternal and ...

## **Realize Jesus Knows and Cares (2:9-10c)**

Jesus continues, *I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty* (2:9a). The word translated *tribulation* (*thlipsis*, th-lip´-sis) means severe suffering that brings anguish and distress. It is long-term suffering that doesn't go away in a few hours or days. The word translated *poverty* (*ptōcheia*, toe-key´-uh) refers to extreme poverty, to the point of begging. Their *poverty* was probably the result of sanctions or persecution they faced in Smyrna. However, Jesus says, (*but thou art rich*) (2:9b). How does [James 2:5b](#) explain this phrase?

Our Lord says *I know* about a second thing. He knows *the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan*” (2:9c-d). Apparently, the Jewish synagogue in Smyrna was vicious in its *blasphemy*, or slander, of the Smyrnan believers. Because the Jews in Smyrna were trying to destroy the church, they were a *synagogue*, or instrument, *of Satan*.

Jesus knows the believers at Smyrna are suffering all sorts of persecution—governmental, economic, physical, religious, and satanic. He knows every detail of it all. When you are suffering, listen with spiritual ears of faith and you will hear our Lord say, *I know*. He knows all about it because He knows everything, even to the point of having all the hairs on our heads numbered ([Mt 10:30](#)).

Jesus knows, but there is something about our Lord's knowledge of our suffering that is even more comforting. It is the fact He also understands all our suffering. How does [Hebrews 4:15a](#) state this truth?

The word translated *touched* (*sympatheō*, sym-path-eh´-oh) means to feel sympathy, or be moved by our feelings. Jesus not only knows but also cares more than we will ever understand on this earth. That's why we are told to cast all our cares upon Him because He cares for us ([1 Pet. 5:7](#)).

One of the most difficult parts of suffering is feeling no one really cares how we feel or hurt. There is no suffering we go through that Jesus doesn't know about and, more importantly, care about. Therefore, when suffering, remember what promise in [Psalm 55:22a](#)?

In the letters to the seven churches, after the commendation there is usually a word of condemnation. However, there is no word of criticism for the suffering church in Smyrna. She's not perfect, but there is no outstanding sin in this church. The only other church that has no word of criticism from our Lord is the church at Philadelphia. It is no accident these two churches have no rebuke from the Lord. It is because they are enduring severe persecution.

There is truth in the old saying, “Persecution purifies the church!” Suffering can also be good for Christians. George Müller (1805-1898) was a famous English Christian who cared for over 10,000 orphans during his lifetime. He said, “Difficulties are food for faith to feed on.”

Our Lord tells the believers at Smyrna: *Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer* ([2:10a](#)). This means more persecution is coming. Then, our Lord says: *behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried* ([2:10b-c](#)). This reveals the power behind the persecution is ultimately *the devil*.

The spiritual battle in Smyrna is just one skirmish in the earthly war that will continue until Jesus returns. The phrase *ten days* probably refers to a limited time of suffering. Suffering will not last forever and must be kept in perspective. Therefore, remember what truth in [Romans 8:18](#)?

When you are suffering, remember Jesus is eternal, realize Jesus knows and cares, and ...

### **Refocus On the Eternal Reward (2:10d-11)**

Our Lord continues, *be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life* ([2:10d](#)). Even if their persecutors put them to death, that will only result in them going to heaven and receiving the *crown of life*.

The word translated *crown* (*stephanos*, stef'-an-os) refers to a garland, or wreath, of victory for an athlete or victorious general. The *crown of life* is an eternal reward for those who faithfully endure severe suffering. We will be *blessed* if we endure *temptation* ([Jas. 1:12a](#)). What does James write in [James 1:12b](#)?

As in all the letters to the churches, an exhortation is given to all who have *an ear* to listen to *what the Spirit saith* ([2:11a](#)). Then, our Lord says, *He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death* ([2:11b](#)). As mentioned in the previous lesson, all true believers are conquerors, or overcomers ([1 Jn 5:5](#)). However, in this passage Jesus is promising *the second death* will in no way affect true believers. The first death—physical death—is the separation of body and spirit. What is *the second death*, according to [Revelation 20:14b](#)?

At this *second death*, a person's spirit is separated from God for all eternity. If you are only born once, you will die twice—both physically and spiritually. On the other hand, if you are born twice, you will only die once—physically.

When you are suffering, remember Jesus is eternal, realize Jesus knows and cares, and refocus on the eternal reward.

## **Lesson 5 ... Avoiding Worldliness**

*(Revelation 2:12-17)*

The seven churches represent the spiritual condition of churches until Jesus returns. They also represent seven kinds of Christians, one of whom is much like you. In that church, you will find a personal message from the Lord Jesus. Therefore, you need to find yourself in the seven churches.

So far in this study, we have visited the church at Ephesus (who has left her first love) and Smyrna (the suffering church for whom our Lord has only words of comfort and commendation). Now, our Lord has a word for *the church in Pergamos* (2:12a). This city is about 55 miles north of Smyrna and about fifteen miles inland from the Aegean Sea (see map on page 10). Today, it is the city of Bergama (ber-gah'-muh), Turkey. It has a population of about 55,000.

In John's day, Pergamos was a flourishing city with a population of about 150,000. It had a library of 200,000 volumes; second only to the famous library in Alexandria, Egypt. Many pagan gods were worshipped in Pergamos. Also, emperor worship flourished there. This letter reveals five requirements for avoiding worldliness.

### **Read God's Word (2:12)**

How does our Lord introduce His remarks to this church (2:12b)?

The Romans conquered the known world with their *sharp*, two-edged swords. Therefore, this weapon is a symbol of authority, including the power of life and death. When Jesus speaks, He speaks the Word of God, which is *sharper than any two-edged sword* (Heb. 4:12). Our culture today is much like that of Pergamos because it worships many gods—money, success, fame, pleasure, etc. How do we know when these things become gods to us? Through reading the Bible! Why, according to the last phrase of Hebrews 4:12?

God's Word reveals any worldliness in our lives. Therefore, to avoid worldliness, read God's Word and ...

### **Recognize the Danger (2:13)**

Like the believers in Smyrna, the Christians at Pergamos were suffering severe persecution. Therefore, Jesus says, *I know ... where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is* (2:13a-b). This means they were living in a city ruled by sin. Many people think Satan is presently in hell, but he's not and won't be until the end of the age (20:10). What does 1 Peter 5:8c-d reveal about Satan's whereabouts and what he is doing right now?

He is doing this by tempting us with worldliness. He knows our weaknesses and will exploit them through what we watch, read, and the people with whom we associate.

Jesus commends the church at Pergamos: *thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth* ([2:13c-f](#)). Apart from this reference, nothing is known of *Antipas*. However, it is obvious he was a bold believer who refused to compromise the Gospel. We don't know anything about his death, but we do know about his reward. Antipas could say what words of Paul in [2 Timothy 4:8a](#)?

Whatever the *crown of righteousness* is, it is the greatest reward in heaven. It is given to those who remain *faithful* witnesses, even at the cost of death. Avoiding worldliness has real danger. You will be in danger of missing promotions at work, losing friends, being ostracized, slandered, etc.

To avoid worldliness, read God's Word, recognize the danger, and ...

### **Reject False Teaching (2:14-15)**

There is an old saying, "If Satan can't defeat a church, he'll join it." That's what happened in Pergamos. Therefore, our Lord says He has *a few things against* this church because some in the church *hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication* ([2:14](#)).

What is *the doctrine of Balaam*? Balaam was a "prophet for profit." He was hired by Balac, king of the Moabites, to curse Israel. When that failed, Balaam came up with a plan to get God to curse them. He advised Balac to seduce the Israelite men with pagan women ([Num. 31:16](#)). Therefore, what does [Numbers 25:1b](#) record about the Israelites?

Then, the men gave sacrifices and bowed down before the Moabite's pagan gods ([Num. 25:2](#)). As a result of the sexual immorality and idolatry, 24,000 Israelites died ([Num. 25:3-9](#); [31:16](#)). Therefore, the *doctrine of Balaam* is lowering God's standards and compromising with the world. It is trying to have one foot in the church and one foot in the world.

Jesus says the church at Pergamos also has some who *hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans* ([2:15](#)). Earlier, Jesus commended the church at Ephesus for hating the practices of the *Nicolaitans*, which He also hates ([2:6](#)). The Nicolaitans evidently taught it was acceptable for Christians to participate in pagan sex orgies.

The majority of the church didn't participate in the sinful behavior of these two groups. However, they tolerated it and apparently refused to condemn it as sin. Churches and believers of whom Jesus approves must declare the truth of God's Word and condemn all sin, including sexual immorality. However, they must also obey what command in [Ephesians 4:15a](#)?

To avoid worldliness, read God's Word, recognize the danger, reject false teaching, and ...

### **Repent of Sin (2:16)**

After making His divine diagnosis, our Great Physician prescribes the cure. What is it ([2:16a](#))?

There is not an alternative cure for compromising with the world. The responsibility of pastors and churches is to lead members and attendees to Christ, the only cure for the sin of compromise and immorality.

To those who refuse to *repent*, our Lord says, *or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth* ([2:16b](#)). Fighting with the *sword of His mouth* represents judgment ([19:15](#)). How does [1 Corinthians 11:31](#) describe the only way to avoid this judgment?

To avoid worldliness, read God's Word, recognize the danger, reject false teaching, repent of sin, and ...

### **Rejoice in the Reward (2:17)**

As with all seven churches, there is a call to heed what the Spirit says to the churches ([2:17a](#)). Then, our Lord says: *To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna*" ([2:17b](#)). The *hidden manna* probably refers to the golden pot, or urn, of manna kept in the Ark of the Covenant. It was a memorial of God's gracious provisions during Israel's wilderness wanderings ([Ex 16:32](#)). However, that manna was only a symbol of the *hidden manna* to come—the *living bread which came down from heaven* ([Jn 6:51a](#)).

Jesus also says: *To him that overcometh, He will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written*, known only to the one who receives it ([2:17c](#)). The *white stone* seems to connect to a *white stone* used to gain admission to special events. It may refer to [Revelation 19:9c](#). According to that verse, to what do you as a believer have a special invitation?

The *new name* ([2:17c](#)) is the name God will give us in heaven. To Abram, Sarai, Jacob, Simon, and others, God gave new names with special meanings that connected with their lives. He apparently will do the same with us.

To avoid worldliness, read God's Word, recognize the danger, reject false teaching, repent of sin, and rejoice in the reward.

## Lesson 6 ... When to Be Intolerant of Tolerance

---

[\(Revelation 2:18-29\)](#)

If there is a word that describes our “politically correct” culture today, it is the word “tolerance.” In this lesson, we will learn when to be intolerant of tolerance. We are continuing our study of the seven churches in *Revelation* who represent the various spiritual conditions of all churches until Jesus returns. They also represent seven kinds of Christians, one of which is much like you. Therefore, you need to find yourself in the seven churches. We first visited the church at *Ephesus* who had left her first love. Then, we visited *Smyrna*, the suffering church for whom our Lord had only words of comfort and commendation. In our last lesson, we visited the church at *Pergamus* who allowed worldliness into the church.

We now come to Christ’s letter to *the church in Thyatira* ([2:18a](#)). It is significant that the longest of the letters is written to a church located in the smallest city, Thyatira. This city is located about thirty-five miles southeast of Pergamum. Lydia was from Thyatira. What was her occupation ([Acts 16:14](#))?

Thyatira was famous for its expensive purple dye made from the madder root that grew around the city. Today, Thyatira is the modern city of Akhisar (ak-hee’-sahr), Turkey, which has a population of about 100,000.

Jesus describes Himself as *the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire* ([2:18b-c](#)). This refers to the penetrating power of His sight, from which nothing can hide, and His ability to see the secret places in our hearts. His feet being *like fine brass* ([2:18d](#)) refers to strength for executing judgment. This description reminds us of what words of Jesus about judgment in [Luke 8:17](#)?

This letter helps us know when to be intolerant of tolerance. First ...

### **Review Biblical Precepts (2:19-20)**

This is the only church the Lord commends for her *charity*, or love. Next, He commends her for her *service, and faith, and ... patience* ([2:19a-b](#)). He then praises the church’s *works* that *the last was more than the first* ([2:19c](#)), which means there is constant improvement in all these things. However, our Lord also has a complaint against this church. They are tolerating a woman Jesus refers to as *Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess* ([2:20a-b](#)). What is she teaching Christ’s *servants* to do ([2:20d](#))?

The church at Thyatira has the opposite problem as that of the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus had left her first love but was intolerant of a false teacher. The church at Thyatira has continued to grow in love but is tolerating a false teacher named *Jezebel*. The church at Thyatira, like many churches today, thinks if they are loving, anything goes.

Jezebel in the Old Testament is considered the most wicked woman in the Bible. She was the pagan wife of Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel. Although Ahab was

the king, Jezebel dominated him and ran the kingdom. Through her husband, Jezebel single-handedly led the nation of Israel into worshipping the pagan god Balaam, which involved sexual immorality. As a result, what does [1 Kings 16:30](#) record?

Like her counterpart in the Old Testament, this woman at Thyatira was leading an entire church astray with the sins of sexual immorality and idolatry. In His Holy Word, God has given us all we need to know about when to be intolerant of those who tolerate sin. For example, what does [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#) declare is God's will?

To recognize when to be intolerant of tolerance: review biblical precepts and ...

### **Remember the Divine Penalty (2:21-23)**

What is the penalty for tolerating sin? About this woman, our Lord says, *And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not (2:21)*. Because of her refusal to repent, our Lord says, *Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds (2:22)*.

This could refer to sexually-transmitted diseases, such as gonorrhea and syphilis, which were common in the ancient world. When sin is so hellish it can cause serious harm to the Gospel, God's judgment can be severe, even in this life. The church at Corinth was making a drunken party of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, what does Paul write in [1 Corinthians 11:30](#)?

When sin begins to do serious harm to the Lord's church, He judges accordingly. Therefore, Jesus says to the church at Thyatira, *And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works (2:23)*. Her children refers to her spiritual children—those who follow her teachings.

Our Lord makes it clear when a church tolerates teachings that pervert the clear teaching of Scripture, especially in the area of sexual morality, the divine penalty is severe. For example, what warning does [1 Corinthians 10:8](#) give?

This refers to [Numbers 25:1-9](#) when Israelite men engaged in sexual immorality with Moabite women, resulting in the deaths of over twenty thousand Israelites. When His people are being corrupted, especially by sexual immorality, God takes drastic action. For example, the only sin for which God destroyed cities with fire and brimstone were those guilty of sexual immorality ([Gen. 19](#)).

To know when to be intolerant of tolerance: review biblical precepts, remember the divine penalty, and ...

### **Reflect On the Promise (2:24-29)**

Not everyone in the church at Thyatira is following the teachings of Jezebel. Therefore, our Lord says: *But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put*

*upon you none other burden* ([2:24](#)). The *depths* may refer to claims of deeper insights into the spiritual life. However, Christ calls them teachings of *Satan*.

To the faithful believers, Christ says: *But that which ye have already hold fast till I come* ([2:25](#)). The faithful members in Thyatira would probably be tempted to leave the church, but Christ tells them to *hold fast* till He comes. He could be referring to His coming in the person of a true teacher or preacher, rather His Second Coming.

To encourage believers to *hold fast*, our Lord says: *And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: <sup>27</sup>And he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father* ([2:26-27](#)). This promise refers to a messianic psalm describing Christ's rule during the millennium ([Psa. 2:8-9](#)). Christ's rule will be shared with those who remain faithful *unto the end*. This refers to those who have part in the *first resurrection* and over whom the second death will have no power ([Rev. 20:6a-b](#)). What does the rest of this verse reveal ([20:6c](#))?

To His faithful, Christ will give *the morning star*, which is Himself ([2:28](#), [22:16](#)). As with all the letters to the churches, this letter ends: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*" ([2:29](#)). This means to pay very close attention to what Jesus says to this church through *the Spirit*.

The church at Thyatira represents the church or Christian who thinks as long as you love, false doctrine and sexual immorality can be tolerated. There are many modern-day "Jezebels" who are trying to persuade believers to be tolerant of sexual immorality. They accuse those who are intolerant of tolerance of being too narrow-minded. However, what does our Lord declare in [Matthew 7:14](#)?

True followers of Jesus Christ will always be in the minority. The majority will be tolerant of at least some forms of sexual immorality. However, the minority—those who know when to be intolerant of tolerance—are the only ones who will find the gate that leads to eternal life.

To know when to be intolerant of tolerance: review biblical precepts, remember the divine penalty, and reflect on the promise.

## Lesson 7 ... Rekindling Your Spiritual Life

---

[\(Revelation 3:1-6\)](#)

As we continue to study the seven churches, remember they represent the various spiritual conditions of churches until Jesus returns. They also represent seven kinds of Christians—one of which is much like you. Therefore, you need to find yourself in the seven churches so you can see what Jesus says to that particular church. Then, you can know the changes you need to make to continue growing as a Christian. We are now going to visit the church at Sardis.

Sardis was about thirty miles southeast of Thyatira. Centuries before Christ, it was politically and economically one of the most important cities in Asia. Sardis is also the place where the first coins in the world were minted. However, by the time of the Roman Empire, it had declined dramatically. It retained its wealth but was no longer a famous or important city. Apparently, like the city, the church in Sardis was also in decline and living on its past glory. Today, the small village of Sart, Turkey, sits near the ruins of the once magnificent Sardis.

Our Lord introduces Himself to the *angel, or pastor, of the church in Sardis*, and says, *write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars* ([3:1a-b](#)). The *seven Spirits of God* are mentioned four times in *Revelation* ([1:4](#), [3:1](#), [4:5](#), & [5:6](#)). It refers to the fullness of the Holy Spirit. (See comments on page 11.) Only the power of the Holy Spirit can revitalize a church or a believer. Why, according to [Ephesians 3:16b](#)?

Rekindling your spiritual life has four components:

### **1. Recognize (3:1-2)**

To rekindle your spiritual life, first recognize your need. Addressing the previous four churches, our Lord began with a word of commendation. However, our Lord's first word to the church at Sardis is: *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest* ([3:1c-d](#)). Then, what does our Lord say to the church at Sardis ([3:1e](#))?

In its glory days, the church at Sardis had the reputation of being a vibrant, spiritual church. However, when Christ sends this letter, He pronounces them spiritually *dead*. Christ always knows the difference between our spiritual reputation and its reality.

Without Christ, we are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins ([Eph. 2:1](#)). However, this kind of spiritual death is not the problem with the church at Sardis. They are spiritually dead because they have lost their spiritual vitality and are just going through the motions of serving the Lord. They are spiritually asleep.

That's why our Lord tells them: *Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain* ([3:2a-c](#)). The word *things* doesn't refer to people but to what spiritual power remains in the church.

The spiritual fire in the church at Sardis is dying. Therefore, the Lord wants them to *strengthen* the few signs of spiritual life that remain. How does our Lord describe their condition ([3:2d](#))?

The word translated *perfect* (*plēroō*, play-ro´-oh) means their *works* lacked spiritual motivation. Their *works* may have been impressive to people but not to God. Their service was formality, not reality. The Lord Jesus wants them to recognize this.

To rekindle your spiritual life, recognize the condition of spiritual slumber.

## **2. Remember (3:3a-b)**

Jesus says to the church at Sardis: *Remember therefore how thou hast received* ([3:3a](#)). There are two things to *remember* if you want to rekindle your spiritual flame. First, you must *remember* the salvation you *received* in Christ. You need to *remember* how you were saved. According to [2 Corinthians 5:21](#), what did God do for your sake so you might be *the righteousness of God* in Christ?

Our salvation is free, but it is not cheap; it cost God His only Son. Therefore, remember also what you *heard* about the cross. The Bible is the basis for rekindling your spiritual life because it constantly reminds you of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross for your sins.

Once you see what the Bible says about your condition, *hold fast* ([3:3b](#)), which means to obey. It is not enough to know what the Bible says. How does [James 1:22](#) express this fact?

This means you weave God’s Word into every area of your life. Christians who need to rekindle their spiritual lives must *remember* and obey what they have been taught from God’s Word. Therefore, to rekindle your spiritual life, recognize, *remember*, and ...

## **3. Repent (3:3c-f)**

To obey God’s Word in the area of rekindling your spiritual life, you must first *repent* ([3:3c](#)). This requires more than just being sorry for the sin of letting your spiritual flames die down. The word *repent* (*metanoēō*, meta-no´-oh) refers to a change of mind based on reflection. It means a change of mind followed by a change in behavior. You must do a spiritual “about face” and start living whole-heartedly for Christ. How does [Lamentations 3:40](#) describe what it means to *repent*?

What will happen if the believers at Sardis don’t wake up and *repent*? Christ says, *I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee* ([3:3d-f](#)). Coming as a *thief* means “by surprise” or unexpectedly. This coming doesn’t refer to the Second Coming, but to the coming judgment on the church. The judgment could be just leaving the church to self-destruct, as is happening today in many churches and in many Christian lives.

To rekindle your spiritual life, recognize, *remember*, *repent*, and ...

## **4. Refocus (3:4-6)**

Refocus on the reward of rekindling your spiritual life. There are at least some godly believers in the church at Sardis. Therefore, Jesus says the church has *a few ... which have not defiled their garments* (3:4a-b). Not having *defiled garments* depicts moral purity and service, uncontaminated by self-glory or hypocrisy. To these undefiled, Christ promises two things.

*1. Attire.* He says: ... *they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy* (3:4c). These are not earthly *white* clothes, but heavenly *white* clothes that will be given to the righteous in heaven. They are like the clothes of the glorified Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. How are they described in [Mark 9:3](#)?

Christ promises: *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment* (3:5a). The reward of the undefiled overcomer is not only heavenly attire, but also ...

*2. Assurance.* *I will not blot out his name out of the book of life* (3:5b). Some take this as a threat, rather than a wonderful promise of assurance. This promise assures us our names will never be erased from *the book of life*. When we are truly born again, we will overcome the world through *our faith* ([1 Jn 5:4](#)).

Besides having the assurance our names will never be blotted out, or erased, from *the book of life*, Christ also says He *will confess* our names *before His Father, and before his angels* (3:5c). The word translated *confess* could be translated “acknowledge” or “announce.”

I remember when I played basketball. At the beginning of the game, it was always a great feeling to hear the announcer call out the names of the starting players as we ran out to line up at center court. What a special time! I think it will be that way in heaven. Christ will announce the *name* of each of His true followers before God the *Father and before His angels*. In [Matthew 10:32b](#), what does Jesus promise if you confess, or acknowledge, Him before *men*, or people, (*anthrōpos*, awn´-throw-pos)?

The letter to the church at Sardis ends like all the other letters. Anyone *that hath an ear* should listen to *what the Spirit saith unto the churches* (3:6). So, if your spiritual life needs rekindling, listen to what Jesus says through the Holy Spirit to the church at Sardis.

Rekindling your spiritual life requires four things: recognize, *remember*, *repent*, and refocus.

## Lesson 8 ... Letting God Do Extraordinary Things Through Ordinary You

---

[\*\(Revelation 3:7-13\)\*](#)

In our last lesson, we visited the church at Sardis, the church who needed to rekindle her spiritual life. We will now visit the church at Philadelphia. The name *Philadelphia* is composed of two Greek words that combine to mean “brotherly love.” Philadelphia was located about 28 miles south of Sardis (see map on page 10). The church at Philadelphia was small and had neither wealth nor prestige. The earthquake that destroyed Sardis in a.d. 17 was also devastating to Philadelphia. Because the area was prone to earthquakes and tremors, much of the population lived outside the city walls.

Today, Alaşehir (al-uh-she-here´), Turkey, exists on the ancient site of Philadelphia. This ancient church is a great example of how to let God do extraordinary things through ordinary you by remembering three things about Jesus. First ...

### **Remember Jesus’ Power (3:7)**

Christ describes himself to this church: *These things saith he that is holy (3:7b)*. The word *holy* (*hagios*, hag´-ee-os) means separate, set apart, or undefiled by the world. The holiness of Christ, who is God in flesh and blood, is our Model. Why, according to [1 Peter 1:15](#)?

Christ also calls Himself *he that is true (3:7c)*. He is authentic, genuine, and trustworthy. He is *true* in all He says and does.

Christ’s awesome power is seen when He says He is the one *that hath the key of David (3:7d)*. This refers to [Isaiah 22:22](#), when Eliakim (ih-lye´-uh-kim) is given the *key* to the house of *David* during the reign of King Hezekiah. This gave Eliakim access to all the wealth and power of the king. *The key of David* refers to Christ’s power and authority. Therefore, what does Christ say [\(3:7e\)](#)?

Christ is the One who opens the door of salvation and the doors of ministry opportunities. Therefore, when we feel like God can’t accomplish much through us because we don’t have great talents, we need to remember Moses at the burning bush. He tells God he isn’t an eloquent speaker and is slow of speech. God replies by asking Moses who made his mouth ([Ex 4:10-11](#)). What does God next say to Moses in [Exodus 4:12](#)?

In our day of mega churches and big-name pastors with huge TV ministries, those of us who serve in smaller churches can sometimes feel discouraged. Jesus wants us to know our spiritual success is not measured by the size of the church we attend or our own personal abilities. Spiritual success is determined by His power. What matters is not the size of your church or your spiritual gifts; it is the size of your God! In the words of the old hymn, “Little is much when God is in it.” Don’t feel cheated because you don’t attend a mega church with a famous pastor. Instead, feel blessed you serve the all-powerful Lord Jesus, who has *the key of David*. When you wonder what God can do with ordinary you or your small church, remember what fact about God in [1 Corinthians 1:27b](#)?

To let God do extraordinary things through ordinary you, remember Jesus' power and ...

### **Remember Jesus' Perspective (3:8-11)**

Christ says to the church at Philadelphia: *I know thy works* (3:8a). The Lord knows their deeds, and like the church at Smyrna, has no word of condemnation for them. Therefore, He moves on and says, *behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it* (3:8b). The *open door* could represent opportunities for sharing the Gospel.

Our Lord continues, *for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name* (3:8c). This doesn't mean the believers in Philadelphia were weak in faith, but they were small in number and resources. The believers in Philadelphia were faithful followers of Christ because they *kept His word* and had *not denied His name* in spite of enduring the same terrible persecution the other churches were facing. Therefore, they could say what words in [Job 23:12a](#)?

Our Lord next says, *Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie.* (3:9a-b). The *synagogue of Satan* refers to Jews who are hostile to the Gospel and actively persecute Christians. They claim to be *Jews* but *are not*, so they are liars and children of the devil ([Rom. 2:28-29](#); [Jn 8:42-44](#)). Of them, Christ says, *behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee* (3:9b). This apparently is a part of what will happen when Christ comes again ([Philip. 2:10-11](#)).

Christ continues, *Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth* (3:10). This promise extends beyond the church at Philadelphia to all faithful believers of all times. The Lord Jesus will *keep* them and all true believers *from the hour of temptation* that will come *upon all the world*. This probably refers to the Great Tribulation described in chapters 6-19, because what does Christ say next ([3:11a](#))?

What does the word *quickly* mean? It is a matter of perspective. When the Lord uses the word *quickly*, it has a different meaning than it does to us, who use calendars and watches every day. We know this because *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day* ([2 Pet. 3:8b](#)).

Our Lord continues: *hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown* (3:11b). The *crown* doesn't refer to salvation but to rewards. There are several different kinds of rewards, called "crowns," in the New Testament. Examples are: the *crown of life* ([Jas. 1:12](#)) and the *crown of glory* ([1 Pet. 5:4](#)). The *crown* Jesus refers to here is probably the *crown* described in [2 Timothy 4:8](#). What reward, or *crown*, will all who love and eagerly await His coming receive ([2 Timothy 4:8a](#))?

Because of Jesus' perspective, He not only knows what is going on in our lives now, but also how all things began and how they are going to end.

To let God do extraordinary things through ordinary you, remember Jesus' power, perspective, and ...

### **Remember Jesus' Plan (3:12-13)**

Christ concludes this letter with a word of comfort about His final plan for all faithful believers. *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God (3:12a)*. The *temple of my God* refers to heaven. The word *pillar* symbolizes permanence and stability. The Philadelphian believers lived in constant fear of earthquakes and tremors that would destroy their homes. They, and we also, are comforted by knowing we will have a wonderful, permanent, safe home in heaven. Summarizing [Psalm 31:20](#), [Isaiah 52:15](#), [64:4](#) & [65:17](#), what does Paul write about God's wisdom ([1 Corinthians 2:9b-c](#))?

Next, Paul writes: *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10a)*. This wisdom enables us to interpret spiritual truths found in the Bible. The book of Revelation contains many spiritual truths about coming judgments and heaven that can only be understood by those who have the wisdom that comes from God.

Not only will believers be a *pillar* in God's *temple* in heaven, but also our Lord says, *and he shall go no more out (3:12b)*. This was of special comfort to the believers at Philadelphia. The comfort continues: *and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God (3:12c-e)*. These names symbolize ownership, like a brand on cattle identifies the owner. Jesus' writing the *name of God* and the *name of the city of God* on us identifies us as belonging to God.

Our Lord also says He will write on believers His *new name (3:12f)*. The *new name* suggests that in heaven we will know the glorified Christ as He really is. In this life, we can never fully comprehend the glorified Savior in all His heavenly splendor. Therefore, what does [1 John 3:2c-d](#) tell us will happen when Christ appears?

Like all the other letters to the churches, this letter concludes with the warning to *hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches (Rev. 3:13)*.

To let God do extraordinary things through ordinary you, remember Jesus' power, Jesus' perspective, and Jesus' plan.

## Lesson 9 ... How to Avoid Making Jesus Sick

---

[\(Revelation 3:14-22\)](#)

Remember, the seven churches in *Revelation* represent the various spiritual conditions of all churches until Jesus returns. They also represent seven kinds of Christians, one of which is much like you. Therefore, you need to find yourself in the seven churches to see where you are spiritually and what to do to grow spiritually. We will now visit the final church—Laodicea [la-od-uh-see´-uh]. The letter to this church reveals how to avoid making Jesus sick, which requires four actions:

### **Concentrate On Jesus’ Character and Power (3:14)**

Our Lord now writes to the *angel, or pastor, of the church of the Laodiceans* (3:14a). Laodicea was about forty-five miles southeast of Philadelphia and about 100 miles east of Ephesus (see map on page 10). Laodicea was the wealthiest of the seven cities; therefore, this is the richest of the seven churches. The city was famous for expensive, rare, black wool and eye salve that was believed to cure eye problems.

Our Lord introduces Himself to this church as *the Amen* (3:14b). The word transliterated *Amen* (*amēn*) is the Hebrew word for truth and refers to that which is fixed, unchangeable, and trustworthy. The phrase *the faithful and true witness* (3:14c) simply explains the title *Amen*. More than seventy times in the gospels Jesus uses the word *verily* (*amēn*). One of the most important times is in [John 3:3](#). Write it below:

Jesus is also *the beginning of the creation of God* ([Rev. 3:14c](#)). This means He is the “Origin” or “Source” of *creation*. In his gospel, John tells us *the Word* [Jesus] ... *was in the beginning with God* ([Jn 1:1-2](#), explanation added). Then, what does John write in [verse 3](#)?

To avoid making Jesus sick, concentrate on Jesus’ character and power because He is *the Amen, the faithful and true witness* and the Source of all *creation*. Then.

### **Eliminate Self-Righteousness (3:15-17)**

As with the other churches, Jesus says, *I know thy works* (3:15a). He then usually has words of praise. However, our Lord has nothing good to say about the church at Laodicea. Therefore, what does He say in [3:15b](#)?

The city of Laodicea always had water problems. It was part of a tri-city community that included Colossae, about ten miles east, and Hierapolis (hi-er-op´-uh-lis) six miles north. The city of Hierapolis, like Hot Springs, Arkansas, was famous for its hot mineral springs. An aqueduct was built to bring the hot mineral water to Laodicea. Since the water had to travel several miles before it reached the city, it wasn’t hot enough to bathe in and had too many minerals to drink. Therefore, they got their drinking water from Colossae, which had good, cold drinking water. However, by the time the water got to Laodicea, it was lukewarm, not cold and refreshing as it was in Colossae. The lukewarm water was useless until something was done to change its condition or temperature.

Therefore, Jesus says he wishes they were either *cold or hot* (3:15c). Because they are *lukewarm*, what does our Lord say to them (3:16c)?

The context of the word *lukewarm* seems to suggest the people in the church have some degree of interest in the things of God—they go to church and even profess to be Christians.

No one is more difficult to reach than a *lukewarm* person who is moral and just religious enough to go to worship services. Prostitutes, murderers, or adulterers will see their need for Christ much easier than the lukewarm, self-righteous, moral person. Therefore, Jesus says He will *spue* them out of His *mouth*. The word translated *spue* (*emeō*, em-eh´-oh) means “vomit.” Therefore, their self-righteousness makes Him sick.

Our Lord gives us a description of their nauseating self-righteousness: *Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing* (3:17a-b). The self-righteous Laodiceans thought since they were *rich*, they didn’t need anything, not even the righteousness found only in Christ (Rom. 10:3). However, how does Jesus describe them (3:17c)?

Though they wear impressive, expensive clothing (like the dark wool) to church, they are *naked* and *poor* in God’s sight. Even though Laodicea was famous for its healing eye salve, because of their self-righteousness, they are *blind* to their spiritual poverty.

To avoid making Jesus sick, concentrate on Jesus’ character and power, eliminate self-righteousness, and ...

### **Evaluate Jesus’ Offer (3:18-19)**

The commands of our Lord correspond to the spiritual condition of the Laodiceans. Therefore, He counsels them to *buy* from Him *gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich* (3:18a). The verb *buy* doesn’t mean salvation or spiritual blessings can be purchased or earned. We receive salvation by grace as a gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9).

Jesus exhorts them to *buy* from Him *gold tried in the fire*. Spiritually, they only have “fool’s gold,” but His *gold* is genuine because it has been refined by *fire*. It represents genuine salvation that has been proven genuine through testing (1 Pet. 1:7). If they accept Jesus’ offer, what does He promise (3:18b-c)?

Christ tells the Laodiceans that He has salve to put on their eyes so they can *see* their spiritual condition (3:18d). In the Bible, blindness often represents being blind to spiritual truth and one’s spiritual condition. The reason lost people can’t understand spiritual truth or see their true spiritual condition is found in 2 Corinthians 4:4a. What is it?

Only Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, can cause the spiritually blind to *see* spiritual truth.

Jesus continues, *As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent* (3:19). This doesn’t mean the Laodiceans were believers, because they lacked

genuine spiritual *gold*, garments of Christ's righteousness, and spiritual salve so they could see spiritual truth. Fortunately, for them, and everyone, Christ's love extends to the lost ([Jn 3:16](#)).

To avoid making Jesus sick concentrate on Jesus' character and power, eliminate self-righteousness, evaluate Jesus' offer, and ...

### **Participate in Jesus' Invitation (3:20-22)**

The next verse makes it clear Jesus is not inside the church but on the outside. He says, *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me* ([3:20](#)). This is an invitation to a church. However, salvation is always personal and individual. If anyone, just one person, would open the door of his or her heart, Christ would enter into that heart in the person of the Holy Spirit. Then, because of that one individual, Christ would be in the church. Christ's being outside indicates there was not a single true believer in the Laodicean church. How does [Romans 8:9c](#) validate this fact?

Although the invitation is to an entire church, the decision must be made individually. To anyone who opens the door of his heart, Christ will *come in to him, and will sup with him*. This is a picture of intimate fellowship.

To those who open the door and receive Him as Savior and Lord, He promises: *To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne* ([3:21](#)). This doesn't refer to a literal, huge throne where all believers will sit with Christ. The word *throne* means we will share in Christ's reign. *If we suffer*, as all true believers do, *we shall also reign with him* ([2 Tim. 2:12a](#), explanation added).

Many people who attend church every Sunday are like the Laodiceans because they are not true believers. Therefore, every churchgoer needs to obey what command in [2 Corinthians 13:5a](#)?

As with the other six churches, Jesus ends by telling everyone who has ears to hear what He says through *the Spirit* to the seven churches ([3:22](#)).

To avoid making Jesus sick, concentrate on Jesus' character and power, eliminate self-righteousness, evaluate Jesus' offer, and participate in Jesus' invitation.

### ***Answer the following questions:***

Which two churches have no word of condemnation? \_\_\_\_\_

Which church has no word of commendation? \_\_\_\_\_

Which church is most like you? \_\_\_\_\_

Your church is probably like you because people are drawn to and stay in churches that are spiritually like themselves.

***The Letters to The Seven Churches***

Church	Commendation	Condemnation	Command	Comfort	Modern Example
Ephesus ( <a href="#">2:1-7</a> )	Worked hard and did not tolerate those who were evil.	Had left their first love and service was mechanical.	<i>Remember and repent.</i>	Overcomers will eat of the tree of life.	Church or believer whose Christianity has become mechanical and routine
Smyrna ( <a href="#">2:8-11</a> )	Endured suffering, poverty, and persecution.	NONE	<i>Be ... faithful unto death.</i>	Overcomers will receive the crown of life and not be hurt by second death.	Church or Christian who must endure severe persecution
Pergamos ( <a href="#">2:12-17</a> )	Had been faithful to Christ and had not denied the faith.	Had compromised with the doctrines of Balaam and the Nicolaitans.	<i>Repent.</i>	Will receive hidden manna, a white stone and a new name.	Church or believer who compromises doctrinally or morally
Thyatira ( <a href="#">2:18-29</a> )	Love, service, faith, patience, and works	Tolerated Jezebel, her teaching, and immorality.	<i>Repent.</i>	Will have power over the nations and receive the morning star.	Church or believer who follows enticing, false teachers
Sardis ( <a href="#">3:1-6</a> )	Some had not defiled their spiritual garments.	Had a reputation for being alive but were dead.	<i>Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remains; remember what was</i>	Will walk with Christ in white and be confessed before the Father.	Church or believer who is spirituality past tense

Philadelphia (3:7-13)	Had kept Christ's words and not denied His name. Were patient.	NONE	received and heard	<i>Hold fast to what they had. Christ will deliver them from the hour of tribulation.</i>	Will be pillars in the temple of God and will have new names.	Faithful, evangelistic church or believer
Laodicea (3:14-22)	NONE	Lukewarm, wretched, poor, blind, and naked	Buy from Christ gold, white clothes, eye salve, and <i>repent.</i>	Overcomers will sit with Christ on His throne.	Church or professing Christian who has never let Christ into his or her life as Savior and Lord	

## Lesson 10 ... Responding to a Description of God's Throne Room

---

*(Revelation 4:1-11)*

In chapter one of *Revelation*, John is commanded to *write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter* (1:19). That is the basic outline of this book. *The things which thou hast seen* refers to the vision of the glorified Christ in chapter one.

*The things which are* refers to the letters to the seven churches in chapters two and three. These letters describe the seven kinds of churches and Christians who will exist throughout the church age.

*The things which shall be hereafter* begins in 4:1. Everything in *Revelation* from this point forward is future tense. John looks and sees a door standing open in heaven. Then, he hears a voice like a trumpet speaking to him (4:1). What does the voice say?

The word *hereafter* refers to what will happen after the church age. This gives credence to the view that John's going up to heaven is a picture of the future Rapture of the church.

This view is reinforced by the fact that in chapters two and three, the churches are the central theme. However, after chapter three, the churches disappear. The next time the church is mentioned, she is not on earth, but in heaven as the bride of Christ (Rev. 19).

How did she get to heaven with Christ? This mystery is explained in [1 Thessalonians 4:16-17](#). The Rapture will occur with the sound of *the trump of God*. That connects with John writing he hears a voice speaking to him like *a trumpet*. At the Rapture, *the Lord himself shall descend from heaven ... and the dead in Christ shall rise first* ([1 Thess. 4:16](#)). Then, what happens to believers who are still living on earth ([4:17a-b](#))?

This mystery is called the "Rapture." The word "rapture" is not found in the New Testament but comes from a Latin word (*rapere*, ra-pair), which means "caught up" or "to snatch away." So, the word "rapture" refers to the snatching away of the church from the earth. How does the Lord Jesus describe the Rapture ([Matthew 24:40](#))?

This is the Lord keeping His promise to His church: *I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world* ([Rev. 3:10](#)). Therefore, we can conclude the church will be raptured before the Great Tribulation described in chapters 6-19.

John now gives us a description of God's throne room in heaven, which should cause us to respond in three ways.

### **Visualize the Majesty of the Person On the Throne (4:2-3)**

Chapter four is John's vision of God's throne room. John describes the Person on the throne in terms of two precious stones, *jasper* and *sardine*, or "sardius" ([4:2-3a](#)). Words do not have the power to describe this room; therefore, John can only use inadequate,

earthly comparisons. The *jasper* John sees is evidently not typical because it is *clear as crystal* ([21:11](#)). These stones represent the flashing, dazzling beauty of God's throne room.

Also, the *sardine* ["sardius"] and *jasper* are the first and last of the twelve precious stones God told Moses to use on the breastplate of the High Priest ([Ex 28:17-20](#)). This is a reminder God has not forgotten His covenant with Israel. During the Tribulation (chps 6-19), most evangelism will take place through the witness of the Jews ([7:4](#)).

John continues: *there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald* ([4:3b](#)). The *rainbow* is not merely an arc; it completely circles the throne with a dominant *emerald*, or green, color. The rainbow is reminiscent of what covenant God makes with Noah in [Genesis 9:11c](#)?

As John is transported into heaven, the first thing he sees is the indescribable beauty, brilliance, splendor, and majesty of God seated on His throne.

John's description of God's throne room in heaven should cause us to visualize the majesty of the Person on the throne and ...

### **Emphasize Living a Holy Life (4:4-8)**

John writes, *And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold* ([4:4](#)). The *white raiment* represents purity and holiness. But who are the twenty-four *elders*? They are best understood in light of [1 Chronicles 24](#) & [25](#). In this passage, King David divides the Levitical priesthood into twenty-four courses, or groups. Each was to serve in the temple at an appointed time because there were so many priests they could not all serve at once. However, when one of the twenty-four courses served, they represented the whole priesthood.

Therefore, the twenty-four *elders* could represent the entire heavenly priesthood. According to [1 Peter 2:5, 9](#) and [Revelation 3:21](#), whom do they represent?

The majesty of God's throne room is enhanced by this fact: *And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thundering and voices* ([4:5a-c](#)). This is reminiscent of the happenings at Mount Sinai ([Ex 19:16](#)). Before the throne, John sees two things. First, *there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God* ([4:5d-e](#)). As already mentioned in this study, the phrase *seven Spirits of God* describes the Holy Spirit in all His fullness ([Isa. 11:2](#)).

Also, *before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal* ([4:6a](#)). The *sea of glass* is a metaphor since there is no *sea* in heaven ([21:1](#)). What John sees is like brilliantly shining *crystal*, as vast as the *sea*. Again, words do not have the power to adequately describe what he sees.

*And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts* ([4:6b](#)). The word translated *beasts* (*zōa*, *zo'*-ah) translates the Greek word from which we get

the English words “zoo” and “zoology.” So, these are not vicious, wild beasts; they are living beings. One clue as to whom these *beasts* represent is found in Ezekiel’s visions. He identifies these four living beings as *the cherubims* ([Ezek. 10:9-15](#)). They are *full of eyes before and behind* ([4:6c](#)), which means they see everything.

Cherubim are angels charged with protecting God’s holiness and carrying out His decrees. For example, after Adam and Eve sin, God drives them out of the Garden of Eden. Then, what does He do ([Genesis 3:24](#))?

In addition, two golden cherubim were on each end of the Ark of the Covenant ([Ex 25:18](#)). They were also embroidered on the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place ([Ex 26:31](#)).

John continues, *And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle* ([4:7](#)). In the Jewish mind, this describes all created life. The *lion* represents wild animals, the *calf* domestic animals, the *eagle* flying creatures, and *man* the pinnacle of God’s creation.

Each of *the four beasts* has *six wings* ([4:8a](#)). The only living creatures in the Bible with *six wings* are the seraphim, found in [Isaiah 6:2](#). This is another order of angels. The name literally means “the burning ones.” Each has three pairs of wings. In Isaiah’s vision, with one pair they cover their faces—a token of humility. With the second pair they cover their feet—a token of respect. With the third pair of wings they fly—signifying the speed with which they carry out God’s commands.

The *four beasts* connect both with Ezekiel’s cherubim and Isaiah’s seraphim. Continuously, *day and night*, they say, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come* ([4:8](#)). Of course, *day and night* do not exist in heaven ([21:23](#); [22:5](#)), but the point is clear. *Holy* is used three times, perhaps one for the Father, one for the Son, and one for the Holy Spirit. This description also emphasizes the fact God is completely separate from all sin and evil. That’s why God gives what command in [1 Peter 1:16b](#)?

John’s description of God’s throne room in heaven should cause us to visualize the majesty of the Person on the throne, emphasize living a holy life, and ...

### **Vocalize Praise to the One On the Throne (4:9-11)**

When the four living creatures sing their song of praise, the twenty-four elders *fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever* ([4:9-10a](#)). They also *cast their crowns before the throne* because no one else is worthy of worship. They do it all while *saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power ...* ([4:10b-11b](#)). According to [4:11c](#), why is God worthy of such praise?

It’s not enough to think praise; we must vocalize it for God to get His deserved *glory and honor*. The Bible begins in *Genesis* with paradise lost and ends in *Revelation* with

paradise restored. It all began with God, and it will all end with Him, because He *created all things*.

John's description of God's throne room in heaven should cause us to visualize the majesty of the Person on the throne, emphasize living a holy life, and vocalize praise to the One on the throne.

## Lesson 11 ... The Seven-Sealed Scroll

---

### [\(Revelation 5:1-14\)](#)

In chapter four, John is caught up into the very throne room of God. In chapter five, the focus shifts to *the right hand* of God, who is seated on His throne. In His hand is a *book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals* ([5:1](#)). In John's time, books as we have today didn't exist. Instead, people wrote on scrolls, which were made from single, long strips of papyrus (paper-like material made from the papyrus plant) or from parchment (specially treated leather). They were kept rolled up on a stick.

This chapter doesn't reveal what is written on the scroll. However, when the seals are broken in chapter six, the judgments of God will be poured out on the earth. When the seventh seal is opened, the trumpets begin to sound (chps. 8-9). Then, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, *the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets* ([10:7](#)). At least in part, the scroll is the fulfillment of the angel Gabriel's answer to Daniel's question regarding the end of time. What does Gabriel tell him in [Daniel 12:9c](#)?

This seven-sealed scroll contains the unfolding of the end of the age. Since God is holding the scroll, He is in complete control, even when there is chaos on earth. Therefore, those who know God through Jesus Christ have nothing to fear ([Rev. 3:10](#)). This passage can be divided into three parts: the crisis, the Conqueror, and the chorus.

### **The Crisis (5:2-4)**

As God is holding the *book*, a *strong angel* asks with a loud voice, *Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?* No one was found in heaven, or on earth, or under the earth who has the divine right to open the *book* or look inside it ([5:2-3](#)). Why? Because of its nature! This scroll contains earth's redemption. Understanding the *book* requires knowing what the Old Testament teaches about the redemption of land. What does God say about the land in [Leviticus 25:23a-b](#)?

If an Israelite loses the land God allotted to him, a plan of redemption must be granted. Therefore, a provision is made for an Israelite who falls into poverty and forced to sell the family land. In such a case, who is worthy to redeem the forfeited land, according to [Leviticus 25:25b](#)?

Lost land could always be redeemed by a kinsman redeemer with the specified redemption price. The provisions were usually written down and sealed in a *book* that could only be opened by this kinsman redeemer. This kept the transaction a private matter and would not embarrass the family for losing the land.

Therefore, the seven-sealed scroll contains the terms of redemption for the entire earth. The only one worthy to open it is a kinsman redeemer who can pay the price of redemption. John begins to weep *much* because no one worthy to open the *book* can be found ([5:4](#)). This is the only record in the Bible of tears being shed in heaven. John's tears represent the tears of all God's people throughout history. Failure to find a

kinsman redeemer means the earth would forever remain under Satan's control. That's the crisis. Now, let's look at ...

### **The Conqueror (5:5-7)**

One of the elders tells John to *weep not* (5:5a-b). Why (5:5c-f)?

The *tribe of Juda* is God's kingly tribe, chosen to rule His land. Therefore, Jesus is the Kinsman Redeemer with royal rights as *the Root of David* (heir to David's throne). Jesus is the only one worthy to open the *scroll*. The elder explains to John that Christ is worthy because He has *prevailed* (5:5). The word translated *prevailed* (*nikaō*, ni-kah'-o) is transliterated "nike," which means "victor" or "conqueror." Christ is the Conqueror of death, hell, and Satan.

John looks to see the Conqueror who is worthy to open the scroll, but instead of a lion, he sees *a Lamb* standing, *as it had been slain*. The *Lamb* is standing, emphasizing the resurrection. The sacrificial *Lamb* is alive, yet His hands, feet, and side reveal He has *been slain* (5:6a-b).

The *Lamb* has *seven horns* (5:6c), which may be a reference to the incident when the children of Israel enter the Promised Land. They first encounter the wicked city of Jericho blocking their way. God commands seven priests, each carrying a ram's horn, to walk ahead of the Ark. On the seventh day of marching around Jericho seven times, the priests are to blow the *seven trumpets* and all the people are to shout (Josh. 6:3-5b). At that instant, what will happen (6:5c-d)

Just as the walls of Jericho fell when the *seven trumpets* blew, so the invisible wall that has kept Jesus from His promised inheritance will come tumbling down when the *seven horns* are sounded.

The *Lamb* also has *seven eyes*, *which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth* (5:6d-e). This describes the Holy Spirit in all His fullness (See comments on 1:4d, page 11.). According to Jesus, what does the Holy Spirit do in *all the earth* (John 16:8)?

The *Lamb* comes forward and takes *the book out of the right hand of God*, who is seated *upon the throne* (5:7). Christ alone is worthy to redeem the world by taking and opening the seven-sealed scroll.

After the crisis and the Conqueror comes ...

### **The Chorus (5:8-14)**

When *the Lamb* takes *the book*, *the four beasts and four and twenty elders* fall down before Him. They are holding *harps*, *and golden vials full of odours*, *which are the prayers of saints* (5:8). These *prayers* have been unanswered until now. One prayer of all true saints since the time of Christ will now begin to be answered. It is found in [Matthew 6:10](#). What is it?

Then, the *four beasts and four and twenty elders* praise the Lamb: *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof* ([5:9a-c](#)). He alone is *worthy*, because the chorus sings: *for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation* ([5:9d-f](#)). Through His sacrifice, all believers have been made *kings and priests* who will *reign on the earth* ([5:10](#)).

Next, John sees and hears an even greater multitude numbering *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands* ([5:11](#)). *Ten thousand* is the highest number in ancient Greek. *Thousands of thousands* denotes a countless, or infinite, quantity. Therefore, John sees an innumerable heavenly host singing a sevenfold chorus of praise to the Lamb. They say with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive seven things* ([5:12](#)). List them below:

In the Bible, the number seven represents completion and perfection. Therefore, these seven words suggest that all possible tribute and homage belongs to Christ.

Included in this chorus of praise is *every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea* ([5:13a](#)). This is the answer to what prayer found in [Psalm 150:6](#)?

Every breathing creature joins in the chorus, *saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever* ([5:13b](#)). Then, the *four beasts* say *Amen*, and the *twenty-four elders* fall down and worship the Lamb ([5:14](#)).

All this praise is the result of the Lamb taking the scroll from the Father's right hand. This act indicates the final part of God's eternal plan for the redemption of all creation is about to be accomplished. One day, probably sooner than any of us realize, the seals will be broken. Then, the eternal Kinsman Redeemer will redeem the earth and all of creation. All this should encourage you to keep what exhortation in [Hebrews 10:23](#)?

After looking at the crisis, the Conqueror, and the chorus, we should all say with the *four beasts: Amen*. Say it now!

## Lesson 12 ... The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

---

### [\(Revelation 6:1-8\)](#)

In chapter four, John is caught up to God's throne room in heaven, where the focus is on God's rainbow-encircled throne. Then, in chapter five, the focus shifts to the seven-sealed scroll and the One worthy to open it. This scroll contains the terms for the redemption of earth and can only be opened by Christ, our Kinsman Redeemer.

Beginning in chapter six, as the seals are opened, judgment takes place on earth. The judgments do not end until chapter nineteen. Therefore, thirteen of the twenty-two chapters of *Revelation* describe judgments.

As Jesus opens the seven seals, horrible judgments begin on earth. This is the fulfillment of what words of Jesus in [John 5:22](#)?

The lost world likes to see Jesus as exclusively love, but He will mete out God's judgment on the earth. In this passage, as Jesus opens the first seal, the scene shifts from God's heavenly throne room to earth. First comes ...

### **The White Horse (6:1-3)**

John sees the Lamb—Jesus—open the first seal and hears *as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see*. John looks and sees *a white horse* ([6:1-2a](#)). How does John describe its rider ([6:2b-d](#))?

This *crown* (*stephanos*, stef'-an-os) is a victor's crown, not a king's crown (*diadēma*, dee-ah'-day-mah), from which we get the English word "diadem" (used in [19:12](#)). Therefore, this is not Christ because He is opening the seals. The rider on this white horse represents the Antichrist.

The combination of the rider having *a crown* and *a bow*, but no arrows, indicates he will *conquer* through diplomacy ([6:2d](#)). In the beginning, the Antichrist will not appear to be the diabolical leader he is.

Paul warns that *the day of the Lord* [judgment] *so cometh as a thief in the night* ([1 Thess. 5:2b](#), explanation added). It will happen while people are saying, *Peace and safety*. Then suddenly, *destruction cometh upon them*, as abruptly as a pregnant woman's labor pain begins, and no one will escape ([1 Thess. 5:3](#)).

The future world leader will come, promising *peace and safety*, and many will be deceived. Next, Christ opens *the second seal*, and a second living creature says, *Come and see* ([6:3](#)). Then comes ...

### **The Red Horse (6:4)**

This begins the second part of the Great Tribulation we will discuss later. When the second seal is opened, a rider is allowed *to take peace from the earth* ([6:4c](#)). Therefore, what happens on earth ([6:4d](#))?

As an indication of the extensive bloodshed, the rider on the red horse is described as having a *great sword* (6:4e). While the Bible doesn't give any details, it will be a time of unimaginable destruction and death, which could suggest the destructive power of nuclear weapons.

Some interpreters think this could be a reference to one of the persecutions against Christians, like that of Domitian. However, this passage tells us that people are killing *one another*. During the persecutions, Christians did not kill their persecutors. During Jesus' teaching of His disciples, they often represent end-time believers. For example, in [Luke 21](#), Jesus tells them they will hear of wars and rebellions but not to be *terrified* (21:9a-b). Then, what does Jesus tell them in [Luke 21:9c-d](#)?

The wars that begin with the opening of the second seal will continue for a brief period before the coming of the millennial kingdom. Following the red horse is ...

### **The Black Horse (6:5-6)**

At the opening of the third seal, a black horse appears with a rider who has a *pair of balances in his hand* (6:5). The *balances* indicate everything must be weighed or rationed. That's why John hears one of *the four beasts say*, *A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny* (6:6a-c). A *penny* represents one day's wages for an average worker ([Mt 20:2](#)). It will take a day's wages to purchase a *measure of wheat* to make a loaf of bread.

*Three measures of barley* could be bought for the same price. *Barley* was readily available and much cheaper than wheat. Therefore, it was used as a major source of animal fodder. In the last phrase of verse six, what does John hear a voice say?

Some suggest the rich will be able to afford oil and wine, while the average person cannot. Whatever the reason, olive and grape crops will not be harmed. Therefore, it is a command to limit judgment.

After the black horse comes ...

### **The Pale Horse (6:7-8)**

When Christ opens the fourth seal, John sees a *pale horse* (6:7-8a). The word translated *pale* (*chlōros*, clo-ros') means "pale green." It is the word from which we get the words "chlorophyll" and "chlorine." The pale green symbolizes the color of a decomposing corpse.

The rider's name was *Death* (6:8b). *Death* on a massive scale is the result of widespread war and famine. *Death* claims the body and *Hell* (6:8c) the soul, or spirit. The word *Hell* translates the Greek word *hadēs* (hay'-dees).

*hades* refers to the region of departed spirits of the lost. Greek Scholar W. E. Vine explains that in the New Testament, *hades* "never denotes the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost; in point of time it is, for such, the intermediate state between decease and the doom of Gehenna" (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament*

*Words*, Volume II, pages 187-188). The final location of the lost is *the lake of fire* ([Rev. 20:15](#)).

The rider of the *pale horse* is given authority *over the fourth part of the earth* ([6:8d](#)). This seems to mean one-fourth of the population of the earth will die. At today's population figures of more than six billion, the total death count would be more than one and a half billion. Nothing like this has ever happened in human history. That's why Jesus makes what statement about the *great tribulation* in [Matthew 24:21](#)?

The *pale horse* rider has authority *to kill with sword*, or make war ([6:8e](#)). Before the atomic and hydrogen bombs, such losses were not thought possible. The hydrogen bomb is 1,000 times more potent than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

The war is followed by more *hunger* [food shortage] and *death* ([6:8d-e](#)). Besides killing many people, others will be left alive but injured and helpless to defend themselves. Therefore, what will kill them, according to the last phrase of verse eight?

No one can positively say exactly what this all means. However, it must not be overlooked that there is a remarkable parallel between the four horsemen of [Revelation 6](#) and what our Lord says in His Olivet Discourse in [Matthew 24](#). In that passage, Jesus is talking about Jews who become believers during the Great Tribulation. Many interpreters think He is referring to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman general Titus in a.d. 70. However, the devastation of that event doesn't even come close to what Jesus describes.

The *white horse* represents deception and peace ([6:2](#)). Jesus says, *For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many* ([Mt 24:5](#)). The red horse's rider has a *great sword* and takes peace from the earth ([6:4](#)). Jesus says there will be *wars and rumours of wars ... but the end is not yet* ([Mt 24:6](#)). What does Jesus then say ([Matthew 24:7a-b](#))?

The black horse ([6:5](#)) represents famine. Jesus says, *there shall be famines* ([Mt 24:7c](#)). *Famines* are always followed by diseases, such as the bubonic plague (Black Death) that killed about 50% of the population of Europe in the 1340's. The influenza pandemic of 1918-19 killed 600,000 Americans and 30 million people worldwide. That is more than all the casualties of World War I, which were about 15 million.

The opening of the first four seals is only the beginning of judgment. There are still three seals left to open. Therefore, we can better understand what words of Jesus in [Matthew 24:8](#)?

The four horseman of the apocalypse remind us: *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God* ([Heb. 10:31](#)).

## **Lesson 13 ... The Fifth and Sixth Seals (Revelation 6:9-17)**

---

In chapter four, John is caught up into God's throne room. In chapter five, the focus shifts to the seven-sealed scroll in God's right hand and the One worthy to open it. The scroll contains the requirements for reclaiming the earth and can only be opened by the Kinsman Redeemer. As the seals are broken and the scroll opened, the unfolding of the consummation of the age—God's plan for the redemption of all creation—is revealed. At the breaking of the fifth seal, the scene shifts from events on earth to happenings in heaven. After the four horsemen, comes ...

### **The Fifth Seal (6:9-11)**

When the Lamb—Jesus—opens the fifth seal, John sees under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held (6:9). What do they ask God in verse 10d?

These are martyrs killed during widespread persecution of believers. Because their murderers are still on earth, the martyrs (who have been recently killed) cannot be Christians of the first century. Neither can they be the church, which was symbolically raptured (pictured in 4:1) and represented by the twenty-four elders around the throne (4:10). Therefore, they must be martyrs slain early in the Great Tribulation.

Shortly after the rapture of the church, the seals are broken, the first of which speaks symbolically of peace on the earth. However, at the breaking of the second seal, peace is taken from the earth and people begin to kill one another (6:4). This is the beginning of what Jesus calls the great tribulation (Mt 24:21). From Matthew 24, it is evident people will be saved during the Great Tribulation. Because this time of tribulation will be so horrible, what does Jesus say (24:22a-b)?

This will be the most horrible time in history to be a Christian because persecution will be the most severe ever. However, Jesus says, Immediately after the tribulation ... everyone living ... shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Mt 24:29-30).

Therefore, the souls under the altar are apparently those who are saved after the Rapture and martyred during the Great Tribulation. Now, they cry out to God to avenge their blood (6:10). This cry is in complete contrast to how Jesus responded to His executioners (Lk 23:34). Also, what does Stephen pray as he is being stoned to death (Acts 7:60b)?

Why the difference in attitude for the souls under the altar? The age of grace is over, and the Day of Judgment has begun on earth for all who have rejected Christ. However, during this time of judgment, the Lord will continue to be long-suffering, allowing many to be saved.

God's response to the prayer of the souls under the altar is two-fold. First, He gives them white robes (6:11a), symbolizing purity. But how can souls wear white robes? The word translated souls (psychē, soo-kay´) has various meanings in the Bible. It is the word

from which we get the word “psychology.” It often represents people with bodies (Acts 2:41).

It could be when those under the altar are martyred during the Great Tribulation, they are immediately translated to heaven and given glorified bodies. However, the Bible doesn't say.

God also tells them to rest yet for a little season (6:11b). God has a divine purpose that must be fulfilled and can only be understood from His perspective of eternity. We must always remember this statement: God is not in the business of explaining; He is in the business of sustaining. In our lives, we must often remember what words of Jesus in John 13:7b-c?

After the fifth seal, the Lamb opens ...

### **The Sixth Seal (6:12-17)**

Now, the scene switches back to earth, where there is a great earthquake (6:12a). There have been many earthquakes throughout history. However, this one is far more powerful than any before. During the opening of the first four seals, there was war, famine, pestilence, and violence on earth. Yet, things will get much worse (Mt 24:8).

After the great earthquake, John writes, the sun became black as sackcloth of hair (6:12c). Sackcloth is a garment made from black goat or camel hair and is worn as a sign of mourning and anguish (Isa. 58:5). Also, the moon will appear to be red as blood due to whatever causes the sun to be black, or blocked.

John continues, And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places (6:13-14). This could be the result of a natural earthquake of catastrophic proportions, resulting in volcanic ash that would blot out the sun and make the moon appear red. The result on earth would be tidal waves and tsunamis that would cause worldwide destruction. This is the fulfillment of what words of the Lord in Haggai 2:6b-d?

What John sees might also be nuclear warfare. The atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima shook the earth for several miles. The sun was darkened by a pillar of smoke that rose 8,000 meters, or 26,000 feet. It also produced what is called a “mushroom cloud” that looks as a scroll placed upside down. The bomb produced total destruction for a radius of one mile. Today, nuclear weapons are 1,000 times more powerful. The stars John sees falling to earth could be nuclear missiles. John may call them stars because the only weapons he has ever seen are swords, spears, bows, and arrows. How does Jesus describe this in Luke 21:11c?

The destruction could also be meteorites or asteroids impacting the earth. Asteroids, also called planetoids, are celestial bodies that orbit the sun. They can range in diameter from a mile to hundreds of miles. If a one-mile-wide asteroid impacted the earth at

30,000 mph, it would have ten million times greater destructive power than the bomb that fell on Hiroshima. The dust and debris thrown into the atmosphere would block out the sun worldwide and wipe out most life on earth. There is a gigantic asteroid, RQ36, on course to make contact with earth between 2169 and 2199. It is more than 1,800 feet wide and has a one in 1,000 chance of coming into contact with the earth. Whatever the cause, John is describing worldwide devastation.

Because of the devastation, the kings of the earth ... great men ... rich men ... chief captains ... mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man hide in caves and among the rocks in mountains. They cry out for the mountains and rocks to fall on them and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne [God], and from the wrath of the Lamb [Jesus] (6:15-16, explanation added). During the cold war, Nikita Khrushchev (leader of the Soviet Union, 1953-1964), warned that in the event of a nuclear war, the living would envy the dead. The rich and mighty hiding and wanting to die is a reminder of what truth in Proverbs 11:4?

The reaction of unbelievers during this terrible time is not one of repentance but of panic and wanting to die.

All these catastrophes describe the great day of his wrath, which is also called “the Day of the Lord” (6:17a). The great day of his wrath is the Tribulation, Daniel’s seventieth week (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; & Joel 2:2), which we will discuss later.

The chapter closes with John asking the rhetorical question, who shall be able to stand? (6:17b). Only whoever believeth on the Son (Jn 3:36a). However, what does Jesus say in the last phrase of that verse about those who do not believe in Him (3:36c)?

These judgments are temporary, but unbelievers will find God’s wrath abideth on them throughout eternity in the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10, 14-15). The fifth and sixth seals are a chilling warning to all unbelievers. They are also a motivation for believers to do everything possible to win their friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors, so they will avoid God’s wrath.

## **Lesson 14 ... The 144,000 and the Innumerable Multitude ([Revelation 7:1-17](#))**

---

The opening of the sixth seal resulted in catastrophic destruction on earth and all mankind hiding in fear. However, before the seventh seal is opened, God shows He is still a God of mercy, even in the time of judgment. His mercy reveals itself in the form of a break in the judgments, beginning with ...

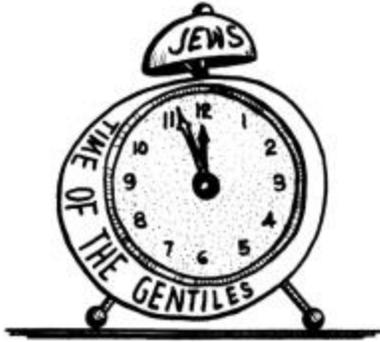
### The Sealing of the 144,000 (7:1-8)

Just when total destruction of the earth seems certain, John sees *four angels standing on the four corners of the earth* ([7:1a](#)). Some skeptics see John's reference to *the four corners of the earth* as the primitive belief the earth is flat. However, the phrase refers to the four basic points on a compass (north, east, south, and west). The *four angels* hold back *the four winds of the earth*, which refers to the judgments (the Great Tribulation) taking place on earth. What does [Hebrews 1:14](#) reveal about angels?

Next, John sees *another angel ascending from the east*, who has *the seal of the living God* ([7:2a-b](#)). In ancient times, a king used his signet ring to press into the wax on a scroll or letter. This was his seal to protect the letter's content from unauthorized opening or fraud. God places His own seal on His children, identifying them as His and protecting them. How does [2 Corinthians 1:22](#) express this truth?



The fifth angel calls *with a loud voice to the four angels* who have been given power to *hurt the earth and the sea* ([7:2c](#)). This angel instructs the four other angels to withhold judgment on earth until he has finished sealing God's servants on their foreheads ([7:3](#)). This means many will become believers during the Great Tribulation. They apparently come to faith after witnessing the Rapture of true believers.



In verse four, John gives the number of those sealed as 144,000. They are identified as being from *all the tribes of the children of Israel* ([7:4](#)). These 144,000 Jews from the twelve tribes should be taken literally because John goes into great detail to reveal exactly who they are in [verses 5-8](#). As Christians, we must never forget the Jews are a special people to God because of His covenant with Abraham. When the church is raptured from the earth, God will again work through Jews. In [Romans 11:25c](#), how does Paul foretell God's working through the Jews in the future?

Chapter seven of *Revelation* is the Day of Pentecost for Jews. It appears the 144,000 Jews will preach the Gospel to the whole world during what Jesus called the Great Tribulation ([Mt 24:21](#)). However, it will be the most terrible time ever to be a Christian, much less an evangelist like these 144,000.

Jesus was a Jew; all twelve disciples were Jews. All but two books in the New Testament were written by Jews. Luke, a Gentile, wrote *Luke* and *Acts*. God is not finished with the Jews; He has another divine mission for them during the Great Tribulation. It will take a special kind of believer during that time, and Jews are perfect for this divine assignment. When Jews decide to do something, they are almost impossible to stop—as Israel's existence today proves.

Some find it difficult to take the 144,000—12,000 from each of the twelve tribes—literally. They believe these are “spiritual Israel,” their title for the church. It is true Jews have lost their tribal identity. Not one Jew in the world knows from which tribe he or she comes. However, we must remember that before the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 a.d., the Jews had the most intricate, accurate genealogical records the world has ever known. For example, the first chapter of *Matthew* contains an amazing, detailed genealogy of Christ, dating back to whom ([Matthew 1:1](#))

For the time being, Israel has lost its tribal identity, as far as this world is concerned. Yet, God still knows everything, including the genealogy of every Jew. For example, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Him. How does Peter respond when Jesus asks him the third time ([John 21:17f](#))?

God will deal with Israel as a people in the future, as Paul makes clear in Romans eleven. After the sealing of the 144,000 comes ...

### **The Innumerable Multitude (7:9-17)**

John looks and sees *a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands* (7:9). Who is the *great multitude*, according to 7:14d?

It is probable this multitude was saved through the evangelistic efforts of the 144,000 Jews during the Great Tribulation. The redeemed *multitude* cries out with *a loud voice: Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb* (7:10). Also, all the angels standing around the throne, as well as the elders and four living creatures, fall on their faces before the throne and worship God. They say, or sing, seven words of praise: *Blessing ... glory ... wisdom ... thanksgiving ... honour ... power and might belong to God for ever and ever. Amen* (7:12, emphasis added). This is because He has given salvation to all the redeemed. This scene is an example of what words of Jesus in [Luke 15:10](#)?

Anticipating John's question, one of the elders asks him, *What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?* John responds, *Sir, thou knowest.* The elder then tells John these have come *out of great tribulation* (7:13-14). This clearly distinguishes them from those redeemed throughout history; therefore, the *great multitude* is not the entire church.

He also tells John, they *have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb* (7:14). The *robes* represent the believers' garments of salvation. *White* symbolizes purity and holiness, which can only be given to people who accept *the blood of the Lamb* as the only sacrifice for their sin. How does [1 John 1:7c](#) describe this fact?

This innumerable multitude will *serve* God *day and night in his temple* (7:15a-b). The word translated *serve* (*latreuō*, lat-re-yoo'-o) means to serve in worship and refers to priestly service. They will *serve* Him *day and night*, which describes continuous service because there is no night in heaven (21:25). Therefore, this indicates believers will not be floating around on clouds playing harps for all eternity, as some pictures indicate, but will be performing important duties.

John continues, *and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them* (7:15c). The word translated *dwell* (*skēnoō*, skay-no'-o) means "tabernacle." Therefore, the Greek reads, "He will *spread his tabernacle over them.*" These believers will have suffered terrible persecution at the hands of the Antichrist and his followers. But now, they are in God's presence, sheltered from their former terrors. This is the ultimate fulfillment of what promise in [Psalm 91:1](#)? (See also [Psa. 27:5](#); [61:4](#).)



The redeemed multitude will *hunger no more, neither thirst any more* ([7:16a](#)). The absence of hunger and thirst in heaven seems to contrast with the extreme hunger and thirst on earth experienced by those saved during the Great Tribulation ([6:6-8](#)). The phrase *neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat* ([7:16b](#)) implies there must have been suffering on earth from extreme light and heat ([16:9](#)).

However, for all eternity, *the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them* ([7:17a](#)). The word translated *feed them* (*poimainō*, poy-mi'-no) refers to a shepherd feeding his sheep. It is a beautiful picture of pastoral care. It is the fulfillment of what wonderful promise of Jesus in [John 10:14](#)?

John closes this chapter with this wonderful promise: *He shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes* ([7:17b-c](#)). In heaven, there will be no more sadness, pain, sorrow, or suffering.

In the midst of the horrible judgments of the Great Tribulation on earth, there is great news revealed through the 144,000 and the innumerable multitude.

**References:**

1. *Journey Series: Journey Through Revelation, Tom Higl*
2. *The Enduring Truth Commentary*
3. *Opening Up Revelation*
4. *John MacArthur*
5. *Matthew Henry Commentary*
6. *The Interpreters Bible Commentary*