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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes

## INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles please to the last book in the Bible, the book of Revelation. Where are we now in the book of Revelation? Now, a lot of people think the book of Revelation is a very serious, hard to understand book, but in essence it's not. It is shrouded in mystery, but tonight when I share with you the key to understanding the book of Revelation, I think you're going to be amazed at how simple it is to understand the totality of it.

There are a lot of different interpretations of the book of Revelation. I will go ahead and tell you that I'm what's called a “pre-millennialist,” I believe there's going to be a pre-Tribulation Rapture. That's the interpretation from which I'm teaching tonight. Not every Christian believes that, but Dr. Stanley Toussaint believes it, Dr. Billy Graham believes it, Chuck Swindoll believes it. If you want to believe differently, that's okay. You go your way, I'll go God's way. But I tell you, I'm excited about the fact that Jesus is coming back, and that's what this book is all about.

Revelation 1:1-3. “The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testifies to everything he saw. That is the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. Blessed is he who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are they who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.”

### Revelation means “unveiling”

Let's look at several important concepts in this introduction. First of all, the word revelation. It's a Greek word *apokalupsis*, and our English word *apocalypse* comes from that, which literally means an unveiling, something that is revealed. That's where we get the word revelation. By the way, folks, it is not the book of Revelations. Anybody that says I love the book of Revelations is just showing their ignorance about it. It is the Revelation, the unveiling. It's not the unveiling of the future.

### Jesus Christ is revealed—not the future

The second thing in this introduction I want you to see, it is the revelation of Jesus Christ. Some people want to study the book of Revelation because they say, “I want to know about the future.” But it's not the future that is revealed as much as it is Jesus Christ. Tonight at the conclusion of this study, if you don't have a clear picture of the character and nature of Jesus Christ, you've missed the whole point of the book of Revelation. It is the unveiling of Jesus Christ.

### Servants not “prophecy junkies”

The third thing in the introduction is the book written to servants. It says God gave it to his servants, not to what I call “prophecy junkies.” If you're offended by that term “prophecy junkies,” let me use another term, “prophecy nuts.” Because there are a lot of people out there, they're trying to read every little horn and every little eye and every little piece of symbol to mean something significant, and what you need to see is the totality of the book of Revelation, and it is written to those who are servants of Jesus Christ.

Isn't it amazing how sometimes in Hollywood, these producers will try to make a movie and use the book of Revelation as the basis of the plot of that movie? This book was not written to somebody that just wants to study the future or wants some kind of mysterious introduction to spiritual matters. It is written to the servants of Jesus Christ. If you're a servant, you'll learn something tonight.

### **Soon means "rapidly"**

The next thing in the introduction, it says in verse one, "It will soon take place." This book, written in 90 A.D., it did not mean it would happen soon after it was given. The word "soon" literally means it's something that will happen rapidly. When all of this begins to happen, it will occur with amazing rapidity.

The next thing in the introduction is the word "John." It was the revelation given to John. Who is this John? The beloved disciple of Jesus, one of the original twelve disciples. He was the disciple who on the night before Jesus was crucified, reclined on the bosom of Jesus, one of the best friends that Jesus ever had on earth. We're told that John was arrested during the persecution by the Roman emperor, Domitian, who was terribly cruel and vicious toward both Christians and Jews in Rome. Tradition says that John was sentenced to be executed. He was to be boiled in oil. And tradition says they placed this prophet John in a cauldron of boiling oil, but he did not die. He survived that attempt at execution. Why? Because God wasn't through with him yet. Did you know you're indestructible until God gets through with you? Apparently, the Romans had some kind of rule, like Double Jeopardy or something, once they try to execute you, if they fail, they don't do it again. So John was exiled to the island of Patmos, a little rocky island out in the Aegean Sea. That's where he was when he writes this book.

### **"Blessed" is a promise for study**

The next thing I want you to see in the introduction is the word blessed, because it says in verse 3, "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, blessed are those who hear it." Did you know this is the only time in the Bible, the only book in the Bible that this promise is given? That if you'll read this book, that's what we're going to do tonight, if you'll study this book, the Bible says there is a special blessing for you if you study it.

### **THE KEY TO UNLOCK REVELATION (1:19)**

Having looked at that introduction, I want to lead you immediately to what is the key to unlock the book of Revelation. It is chapter 1:19. Flip over one page to 1:19. Jesus Christ himself gives to the apostle John the outline, the three-part outline to the book of Revelation. Would you look at 1:19? "Write, therefore," Jesus says to John, here's part number one, "what you have seen." Here's the second part of Revelation. "What is now," present tense. And here's the third part of the book of Revelation, "And what will take place later."

### **PAST: What you have seen, the vision of the glorified Christ (1:9-18)**

### **PRESENT: What is now, the seven churches, all churches of all time (Ch. 2-3)**

## **FUTURE: What will take place later, Rapture, Tribulation, Armageddon, Millennial reign of Christ, Final Judgement, New Heaven and Earth (Ch. 4-22)**

Now, with this one key, you can understand the entire book of Revelation. Let me review it with you a little bit. The past, that's the section 1:9-18, and is a vision of the glorified Christ. We're going to look at it in a moment. The present, that's chapters 2-3, where Jesus gives a message to seven churches, which represent all churches of all time. And in answer to the question "Where are we now in the book of Revelation?" that's where we are right now. We are in the church age. We're living in a time of the church of the Lord Jesus. Then the largest section of the book of Revelation begins in chapter 4, goes all the way to the end of the book, and that has yet to take place. It is still in the future. It describes all the way from the Rapture to the seven-year Tribulation to the mighty battle of Armageddon, to the millennial reign of Christ and then the Final Judgment and then a new Heaven and new earth. Once you understand that key, 1:19, suddenly the book of Revelation falls into three easy-to-grasp sections.

### **I. THE PAST: THE VISION JOHN HAD OF THE GLORIFIED CHRIST (1:9-18)**

First of all, let's look at part one, which is the past. This is the vision that John had of the glorified Christ. Let's read 1:9-18. Let's back up a little bit here. "I, John, your brother and companion in the sufferings and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Christ, was on the island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. On the Lord's day, –that was the first day of the week– I was in the spirit. –that means he was praying– And I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet which said, 'Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches.'" And then there are the names of the seven churches we're going to study those in a moment. Verse 12, "I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me and when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone 'like a son of man,' dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet with a golden sash around his chest." Now let me just tell you, this is the glorified Christ. I want you to catch this, what Jesus looks like now. "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like a sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance." John said, "When I saw him, I walked up and gave him a high five and said, 'Hey, Lord, how are you doing?'" No, John says, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said, 'Don't be afraid, I'm the First and the Last. I am the Living One. I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore and I hold the key to death and Hades.'"

### **What do you think Jesus looks like right now?**

Let me ask you three questions. Number one, what do you think Jesus looks like right now? When you see Jesus, if you think Jesus is going to have long brown hair, blue eyes and some kind of flowing robe and you just walk up and say, "Hey, Lord, I heard a lot about you, I'm glad to finally see you." Right now, in his glorified countenance, this is the description of what Jesus is going to look like. The brilliance of his countenance will be so bright, it will almost put out your eyes. This golden sash around his chest was something the high priests wore to symbolize

the beauty of his heart. It says that his hair was white as wool. That speaks of the purity that is his. His feet were like brass, which speaks of judgment.

### **What do you think you will do when you see Jesus?**

The next question I want to ask you is, what do you think you're going to do when you see Jesus? I think you and I are going to do exactly what John did. We're going to fall at his feet. Somebody said if Abraham Lincoln walked in this room or if William Shakespeare walked in this room or even some notable historian walked in this room, we would stand in honor, but if Jesus Christ walked in this room, we would fall to our face. That's the way we're going to react when we see him. If you haven't seen Jesus like that in his glorified countenance, you don't know what he looks like. And that's why we're having this study tonight, to reveal him to you.

### **What do you think Jesus will do when we see him?**

The third question I ask you is, what do you think Jesus will do when we see him? Do you think he's going to say, "You have been a bad boy or girl?" I think he's going to do the same thing he did to John. You see, his personality, his character hasn't changed, although his appearance has. Can't you see the compassionate Christ as he reaches down to a frightened John and says, "Get up John. Don't be afraid, it's me." In the arms of Jesus, that's where we find acceptance and lack of fear.

## **II. THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION (Ch. 2-3)**

### **"Seven" is a representative number that communicates totality**

The next thing I want you to see, we're going to glance at this part two of the seven churches of Revelation. Let me tell you a little bit about this section, Revelation 2-3. There are seven churches. These were seven literal churches in Asia Minor. You need to understand, first of all, that seven, the number seven is a representative number that communicates totality. There are a lot of symbols in the book of Revelation. If you don't understand what the symbols represent, you'll be lost at sea. Let me give you a contemporary example of that. If the American culture does go on and survive for another 1000 or 2000 years, who knows, I don't think it will but if it does, let's say that two millennia from tonight, historians are digging in the ruins of what was the United States of America, and they pull out a newspaper dated November 1996. And in this newspaper, there is an editorial cartoon, and there is a picture of a donkey with Clinton written on his side with a baseball bat hitting an elephant over the head with the name Dole written on the side of it. November 1996. We all know what that represents, sure. But can you imagine the archaeologists 2000 years from now trying to figure out what those symbols represent? One of them says, "I know what that represents. In those days, they had circuses and in the circuses they had the animals that fought against each other. And here's a donkey named Clinton beating up on an elephant named Dole. They don't understand the symbols, so they miss the truth. Someone else says, "No, no, no. That is symbolic. Back in 20th century America, they liked to play baseball. Don't you see the baseball bat? What that means is that year in the World Series, the donkeys beat the elephants." If you don't understand the symbol, you miss the truth.

## **These churches represent all churches of all times**

One of the uses of symbols in the book of Revelation is the number seven. There are seven churches, there are seven spirits, which represents one complete spirit. There are seven lampstands, there are seven doxologies. We're going to see that number over and over again. These seven churches represent all churches of all times. And the truth is, you can find all seven kinds of churches today in America.

## **You can find all seven kinds of churches today**

Some people have read these seven churches to be seven stages of church history, but I don't agree with that position, because I think to say that would say that Jesus Christ won't come back until the church of Laodicea exists, and I think today you can find all kinds of Christians and churches represented by these seven. Let's look at them.

### **THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS (2:1-8)**

First of all, the church at Ephesus, that's the first of the seven. There is a pattern that is followed in all of these letters. Let's just read this one. Beginning in chapter 2:1, "To the angel of the church at Ephesus write: These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands: [which speaks of testimony] I know your deeds, your hard work, your perseverance. I know that you cannot tolerate wicked men, that you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false. You have persevered and endured hardships for my name and you have not grown weary."

#### **Compliment: Hard work, intolerance, perseverance**

The first thing, generally, in these letters to the churches is a compliment. If there's anything good Jesus can say to the churches, he gives them a compliment. The compliment to Ephesus was they worked hard, didn't tolerate false doctrine and persevered to the end.

#### **Complaint: They left their first love, Jesus**

The second thing that usually happened in these letters is there was a complaint. The Lord lodges a complaint against the church. Look at verse 4. "Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love." You know who the first love of the church is? Jesus. Did you know it's possible for churches and individual Christians to lose their first love, to really to fall out of love with Jesus and fall more in love with the church or a denomination or organization or church work or the business of Christian life and lose their love for Jesus? You know there could be somebody here today listening to me, and that's what Jesus is trying to say to you. "You remember how you used to love me? I was the first priority in your life. I was your first love." You lost it.

#### **Challenge: Remember, repent, repeat or else you will lose your place**

Also, he gives here a challenge to them. Look at verse 5. "Remember the height from which you have fallen." There are some of you in this room that there was a time earlier in your life, you

were much more committed to Jesus than you are tonight. There was a time when your spiritual fervor, your spiritual fire, your spiritual commitment was way up here, and you have fallen. You haven't fallen *from* your salvation, you have fallen *in* your salvation. You need to remember where you used to be.

Number two, he says repent. That just means change the way you think, change the way you act. And then the third thing he says is to repeat. "Do the things you did at first." Let me tell you what that means. That means that the key to the Christian life is in the basic things that you first did when you became a Christian. What was it that you learned when you first came to Christ? You learned to read your Bible every day. You learned to pray every day. You learned to fellowship with Christians. You learned to share your faith. And when you leave those basics of the Christian life, you'll lose your first love.

## **FIVE MORE CHURCHES**

### **Smyrna: The poor little rich church**

So that's just one of the seven churches. Keep reading there, because we're going to look at the other churches just briefly there. Five more churches. There was the church at Smyrna. We're not going to read about it. It was called a poor little rich church. In other words, it was a church that didn't have much in terms of finances, but they were rich in the Lord. Don't you know some churches like that? Don't you know some Christians like that? They don't have much money, but they are rich in Christ. They're represented by Smyrna.

### **Pergamos: A worldly church**

The next one is the church at Pergamos. It was a worldly church. It was a church that was where Satan's throne was. If you look down there in verse 14 of chapter 2, it says, "I have a few things against you. You have people there who hold the teaching of Balaam." Balaam was a guy who was out for what he could make: A profit. And there were people in the church like that, and Christ didn't like it.

### **Thyatira: A too-tolerant church**

Number three, the next church was the church at Thyatira. They were a too-tolerant church. It says in verse 20 of chapter 2, "I have this against you, you tolerate that woman, Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess. By her teaching, she misleads my servants into sexual immorality and the eating of food sacrificed to idols." There was some woman in the church that was teaching false doctrine. Jezebel may or may not have been her actual name, but he said, "Don't you tolerate false teachers in your church."

### **Sardis: An active, but DEAD church**

Next was the church at Sardis. Look at 3:1. "To the angel at the messenger of the church at Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive but you are dead. They were a church or a

Christian who was active, but who was dead. You know, I've often said that Baptists are the busiest people on the face of the planet. Sometimes they can be the dearest. You've heard the little poem that said, "Mary had a little lamb that would have been a sheep, but became a Southern Baptist and died from lack of sleep."

Some Christians are so busy, some churches are so active, but they're dead. My grandmother used to say, "The most active chicken in the barnyard is the one that just had his neck wrung." That's a picture of a lot of Christians who are busy, busy, busy, busy, but they're spiritually dead.

### **Philadelphia: The church with the open door—and the promise of protection (3:10)**

Next was the church at Philadelphia. That was the church with the open door, 3:7 and following. There's a great promise in this letter to the church at Philadelphia. This is a clear promise that the church, believers, will not go through the Great Tribulation. Jesus says in verse 10 of chapter 3, "Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth." Did you know there has not yet in the history of this world been any kind of cataclysmic event that has come across the whole world, save the flood, that is going to compare to the Great Tribulation? Jesus says to the church, to Philadelphia Christians who were faithful to walk in the ministry God has given them, "I'm going to keep you from and out of the Tribulation that's going to come."

### **THE CHURCH AT LAODICEA (3:14-22)**

Finally, there's that last church, the seventh church, the church at Laodicea. Let's just read about it quickly, beginning in verse 14. "To the angel at the church of Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you're neither hot nor cold. I wish you were either one or the other. So because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

You say, "Hey, I'm rich, I've acquired wealth and do not need a thing," but you do not realize that you're wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. The church at Smyrna thought they were poor, but Jesus said they were rich. The church at Laodicea thought they were rich, but Jesus said they were poor. Verse 18, "I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you could see.

### **Problem: Spiritual apathy (lukewarmness)**

First of all, there's the problem that Jesus points out. Or you might say, the complaint. He has no good words for the church at Laodicea. He just starts with a problem. You know what it is? It's lukewarmness, spiritual apathy. You know there are some Christians and there are some churches that are on fire for Jesus. They're fired up. Then there are some Christians just kind of cold in their commitment. Jesus says, this may be strange for us to understand. He said, "I'd rather you be hot or cold, but because you're guilty of spiritual apathy," he says, "I'm just going

to spit you out of my mouth." By the way, that word *spit* is the Greek word "emeo." Those of you in the health care field that aren't in the hospital tonight, that's the word from which we get our word *emetic*. That means causes you to vomit. Literally, Jesus says, "Because you are lukewarm," Jesus said, "You make me sick, and I'm going to vomit you out." Those are some of the strongest words Jesus ever speaks, reserved for those who are spiritually lukewarm. As we approach this next year, and this next century, and this next millennium, it is not a time for spiritual lukewarmness; it is not a time to straddle the fence. It is a time to get in all the way or get out all together, if that's even possible. Live for Jesus and become a fiery hot Christian.

### **Punishment: Rebuke and discipline**

Here's the punishment. Jesus says, verse 19, "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline." By the way, Jesus never disciplines without first rebuking. He always warns you before he disciplines you. "So," he says, "be earnest and repent." And then here is the proposal he makes in verse 20. You've heard this verse over and over again, but it is really given in the context of a church." Here I am. I stand at the door and knock, and if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me." You know the proposal he makes to individuals and to a church? He says, "Open up your heart. Receive me in all of my fullness." My friend, *that* is the only cure for spiritual apathy.

Believe it or not, we've covered the first two sections of Revelation already. The past, the things you have seen, the glorified Christ. The things which are right now, seven churches, and I think that every person in this room who's a believer in Christ, can find yourself described in one of those seven churches.

### **III. OUTLINE OF FUTURE SECTION OF REVELATION (Ch. 4-22)**

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 4. Let's look at our review of the outline of the book of Revelation. I'm going to say again, if you understand this key, chapter 1:19, you'll understand how the book divides itself. The past, Jesus said, "Write what you have just seen." What was it John had just seen? The vision of the glorified Christ. That's what we talked about. Then he said, number two, "Write the things which are right now." The seven churches, which represent all churches of all time. Where are we now in the book of Revelation? We are living right now, Revelation 2-3. But beginning in chapter 4, that is the third section of Revelation, and I believe, and many other Bible scholars believe that from chapter 4 to the end of the book is all future, that has not yet been fulfilled. Some of the things we talked about that is going to be happening, you look on the overhead there, the rapture of the church, the Tribulation, battle of Armageddon, millennium reign of Christ, judgment, new heaven and new earth. That's where we're going tonight. I want to spend some time in my third and final session in a moment with you talking about when Christ literally comes back in chapter 19, and talk about the millennium and the new heaven and the new earth.

Let's talk about this outline of the future section of Revelation. Just to let you know where we're going in this section, first of all, there is the scene in heaven that takes place after the Rapture of the church. The church, that's us, Christians, we're caught up into heaven to worship Jesus, the lamb, on the throne. That's going to be chapters 4-5.

Then the second thing in this section is the suffering that takes place on planet earth. This is called the Great Tribulation. It's going to be seven years of terrible natural and supernatural disasters on the earth. I want to say to Christians, listen carefully: I believe with all my heart that Christians *will not be here* during the Tribulation. That's really why we're going to run through this kind of quick, because I'm not going to be here. If Jesus comes back tonight, some of y'all are going to have to have church next Sunday. I'm not going to be here for the Tribulation.

Number three, we're going to look at the Savior on earth, when Jesus comes back, and the millennial kingdom of Christ, that's in chapter 20, and the last two chapters are an epilogue.

### **THE SCENE IN HEAVEN AFTER THE RAPTURE: THE CHURCH IS CAUGHT UP INTO HEAVEN TO WORSHIP THE LAMB ON THE THRONE (Ch. 4-5)**

Let's go to 4:1. This is the scene in heaven after the Rapture. I'll tell you why I believe that in a moment. "After this," John says, "I looked and there before me was the door standing open in heaven, and a voice I had first heard speaking to me [Jesus] like a trumpet said, 'Come up here and I will show you what must take place after this.'"

**Revelation 4:1 coincides with the Rapture. Note: A voice like a trumpet saying, "Come up here."**

**1:19 "Write the things which shall take place later" – *genesthai meta tauta***

**4:1-2 "I will show you what will take place later – *genesthai meta tauta* (same words)**

Let me tell you what I believe, and many other scholars believe that Revelation 4:1 coincides with the Rapture. It says there's a voice like a trumpet. Elsewhere in the Bible, it says at the Rapture of the church there's going to be the sound of a mighty voice, the sound of a trumpet. I don't know what else Jesus would say to us. He's going to meet us in the clouds and say, "Come on up here." There are some reasons right within the text why we believe this starts this third section. You remember 1:19 where he said, "Write the things which shall take place hereafter?" The exact Greek phrase is *genesthai meta tauta*. That's what he says in 1:19. That's the key phrase for the third section. In chapter 4:1-2, exactly the same thing, exact grammar, I will show you what will take place hereafter. The same exact words, *genesthai meta tauta* as if Jesus said, "Here's the key to understanding Revelation. Here's where this third section begins."

**"The church" is not mentioned again until 22:16**

I'll tell you there's another reason why I believe this represents the Rapture of the church. It is because of a glaring absence so far in the first three chapters of Revelation. We have been reading about the church, the church, the church, the church, the church 15 times. But did you know, beginning here in 4:1, that the word "church" never appears again? The church is not mentioned again during this time of Tribulation until chapter 22 when it's all over. To me, that let's us know that the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, you and I who know and love Jesus, aren't going to be here during that time of Tribulation.

**WHERE WILL YOU BE AFTER THE RAPTURE? (Ch. 4)**

### **Notice the One on the throne (4:2-3)**

Revelation 4. My question to you tonight is where will you be after the Rapture? That's what chapter 4-5 is all about, what takes place in heaven. First of all, in chapter 4, let's notice the one who is on the throne, because the scene in heaven is in a throne room. Look at verse 2. "At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it." We're going to see who this one was. "And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper." He wasn't jasper. That's another one of the symbols. But jasper is a clear crystal, which speaks of purity, and Carnelian which is a deep red crystal which speaks of God's judgment. A rainbow resembling an emerald." An emerald is a green crystal which represents grace and mercy. An emerald encircled the throne. This is God Himself on the throne, God the father.

### **Notice the ones around the throne: 24 elders represent all the redeemed of the ages—that's us! (4:4-8)**

Elsewhere in just a few moments, we're going to see the seven spirits of God. There's not seven spirits. The word seven is symbolic of the perfection, the totality of the one Holy Spirit, and in just a moment, the Lamb of God, Jesus, is going to come forward and take up the scroll. So here in heaven we see, of course, the Trinity, but God the father on the throne. Let's notice secondly those who are the ones around the throne. Surrounding the throne were 24 other thrones, and seated on them were 24 elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

Now, I believe these 24 elders represent all the redeemed of all the ages. Now, they could represent angels, but angels are never pictured on thrones and angels are never pictured having been redeemed or wearing crowns. I believe this represents all the redeemed of all the ages. And by the way, that's us, that's me and you. Twelve elders representing the Old Testament saints who were saved in faith, believing in the Messiah who would come. Twelve representing New Testament saints, those of us who believe in Jesus Christ who has come, because the Bible says we're going to be seated on thrones, and it says in Ephesians 1, "We are seated with Christ in the heavenlies." It says we're going to be wearing white robes. We see later in the book of Revelation that's the righteousness of Christ that covers us. And then number three, it says we're going to be wearing crowns. The New Testament talks about five different crowns that Christ is going to pass out.

There's something that is not mentioned in the book of Revelation, but you find it elsewhere in the New Testament. We believe immediately after the Rapture of the church and before we're seated on these thrones wearing our crowns, we will go through what the New Testament calls the judgment seat of Christ. Not the great White Throne judgment, but the judgment seat of Christ, where Christ rewards us for our faithfulness in service. That's where he passes out crowns, because now we have our crowns on our head. You say, "Well, am I going to wear a crown for all eternity?" Don't worry, you're going to throw it at the feet of Jesus in just a moment, all right? You're not going to wear it for very long. So don't get very comfortable in your crown.

## **Notice the activity of heaven (4:9-11)**

Number three, I want us to notice the activity of heaven, 4:9. "Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne—these are just four special heavenly creatures—who lives forever and ever, the 24 elders—that's the key, that's the symbol of us—fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and they say, 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.'" There are seven doxologies in the book of Revelation. Throughout this entire book, the theme that the 24 elders, that's us, are going to be doing for all eternity is worshipping Jesus. Isn't that great to know?

I said this in my book that I wrote, on angels, the Bible never speaks of angels singing, and it never does. It only speaks of Christians, saints who sing. You know why? Angels have never been lost, they've never been redeemed. We are the only ones who have great privilege of singing praises to the lamb. So, my friend, don't you ever stand in church and say, "One of these days I'm going to sing like an angel." There are probably angels invisible standing around you saying, "Man, I wish I could sing like a saint. And why isn't that saint singing?" My friend, you know what worship is on earth? It is practice for what we're going to be doing in heaven. If you don't love to sing praises to Jesus right now, what makes you think when you go to heaven you're going to love it then? Get used to it right now. We're going to be doing it a long time in heaven.

## **WHO CAN OPEN THE SCROLL? (Ch. 5)**

### **The sealed book: The title deed of our lost inheritance (5:1-5)**

Who can open the scroll? 5:1 speaks of a sealed book or scroll in heaven. "Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals." These are like tabs. These would be like a rolled papyrus scroll, and at the top there are seven wax seals, and as each seal is broken a section of the scroll can be unrolled and read. When the second seal is broken, more of the scroll can be unrolled and read. What does the scroll represent? I believe it represents the title deed of our lost inheritance as Christians. You see, the reason John's going to cry in just a moment, he says, "Who can open it?" Look at 5:4. "I wept and wept, because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, [that's us, we're talking to John here] 'Do not weep. See the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.'"

### **The slain Lamb (5:6-10)**

The second thing we see in heaven, this is still in the throne room, is the slain lamb. This is Jesus. John writes, "Then I saw a Lamb looking as if it had been slain," This is a very specific word that means its throat was ceremonially cut, "standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures of the elders. He had seven horns," which speaks of his power, "seven eyes," which speak of his ability to see everything, "which are the seven spirits of God

sent out unto all the earth. He came and he took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the 24 elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp, and they were holding golden bowls of full incense, which are the prayers of the saints, and they," that's us, literally "sang a new song."

Here we are again. We're going to praise the Lord again in heaven. "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation." Verse 10, "You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth." That's speaking about the millennium we're going to study a little bit later.

### **The shouting crown (5:11-14)**

Then it says, also, there's a third group here. I'm going to call this the shouting crowd, because the angels are included now. Verse 11, "Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They circled the throne, and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice," and although the NIV says *sang*, it is the Greek work *lego*, which means to shout, "worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and glory and praise." Each one of these doxologies keeps building. "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the sea, and all that is in them, singing." Again, it is speaking, shouting, the word *lego*, not the word *singing*, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!"

You see, this scroll represents, as I said, an inheritance. A Roman will was a seven-sealed document. Because Jesus was able to take this scroll and open the seals, he was the only one able to claim the right to a fallen inheritance, which is fallen mankind, a world that needs to be redeemed. So that's why we see this scroll. Now, that leads up to the next chapter, chapter 6.

### **The seven seals/tabs: The suffering on earth: The seven-year Tribulation on earth (Ch. 6-19)**

Now, beginning in chapter 6, we're going to start a series of three sevens once again. There's going to be seven seals, seals that are broken, and each one of these seals represents judgment on the earth during the time of Tribulation. Later there's going to be seven trumpets that are blown. That represents another seven outpourings of judgment on the earth. Then there are going to be seven bowls or vials of wrath that are symbolically poured out on the earth during the time of Tribulation. Once again, folks, we're not going to be here. For the rest of this section, those three groups of sevens: Seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials, that represents the chronological sequence.

Now, scattered in between those three groups of sevens, there are several parenthetical sections that have nothing to do with the sequence of time. It's just sort of placed in there. You've got to understand it. Keep track of these three sevens: Seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, because that keeps you moving toward the end of the book. Let's look at these seven seals. We

won't read all of them, but will read about the first four, because these are called the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. This is when the judgment begins.

### **Seal 1: The rise of the antichrist (6:1-2)**

"I watched as the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. Then I heard one of the four living creatures say in a voice like thunder, 'Come!'" Here's the first seal: "I looked, and there before me was a white horse. Its rider held a bow and he was given a crown, and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest." This first seal represents the rise of the antichrist. We're going to learn a lot more about the antichrist a little bit later over in another chapter. But let me say at this point, that the antichrist in the beginning of the Tribulation, is going to appear to be a man of peace, a great world leader and he's going to appear to be a great righteous judge. That's why he's pictured as riding a white horse. In chapter 19, Jesus is riding a white horse, and you know, Satan is always the great imitator. So this represents the rise of the antichrist.

By the way, you know, after the Rapture of the church, when millions of Christians disappear, the world's going to be chaos and the world's going to need some world leader to step on the scene and say, "Hey, folks, there's been some terrible tragedy. We don't know what's happened. Millions of people disappeared, but we need to pull together as a human family, as the brotherhood of mankind." So to begin with, this antichrist is going to appear to be a very kind, loving, peaceful man.

### **Seal 2: War (6:3-4)**

Let's read the second seal. This is the seal of war, represented by a red horse, verse 4. "Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other. To him was given a large sword." There's going to be a time of great war during the Tribulation. Many people are going to be killed, represented by this red horse.

### **Seal 3: Famine (6:5-6)**

The third seal represents famine, 5-6. "When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, 'Come!' and there before me was a black horse. Its rider was holding a pair of scales in his hand, and I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for day's wages, and three quarts of wheat of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine.'" In other words, food and commodities are so expensive, it represents famine.

### **Seal 4: Death (6:7-8)**

#### **Pause between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet**

Seal four just represents death. This is a pale horse, verse 8. "I looked, and before me was a pale horse. Its rider was named Death." Then the fifth seal represents the martyrs who are going to be slain during the time of Tribulation. Then the sixth seal represents a time of great world chaos.

You can read that chapter for yourself. Then there's always a pause between the sixth and the seventh seal, and the sixth and the seventh trumpet.

## **WHO CAN STAND? (Ch. 7)**

Look at verse 17 of chapter six. After these six seals have been opened and all this terrible disaster comes during the time of Tribulation, here's the question asked in verse 17. For the great day of their wrath has come. Here's the question: Who can stand? Or literally, who can withstand, who can endure during this terrible time of Tribulation? Chapter seven is all about two groups who do withstand the Tribulation.

### **Sealed Jews: 144,000 protected by God, witnessing (7:1-8)**

The first group in chapter 7:1-8 is a group we could call the "Sealed Jews." Just glance down at chapter seven for a moment. We won't read it. There's going to be 144,000 Jewish servants of Jesus, 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes. You say, "The Jews today don't know which tribe they're from." God knows which tribe they're from. These are going to be Messianic Jewish evangelists who go throughout the whole earth preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and they're going to be protected. They're going to be sealed, it says.

### **Saved Gentiles: Multitude too big to number, many die in tribulation, often called "tribulation saints"**

Number two, the second group that's going to withstand are the group that we could call "Saved Gentiles." They're described in 7:9-17. This represents a multitude that is too big to number. This represents what we might call "tribulation saints" who are saved during the Tribulation. Now, you say, "Well, will people be able to be saved during the Tribulation?" Yes. But it is not the age of grace as it is right now.

My friend, can I tell you right now, it's easy to be saved, it's easy to live for Jesus? But during the Tribulation, if you're left behind and you're not raptured with the church, it will cost you your life, it will cost you your job, it will often cost you your health, your family, to live for Jesus Christ. That's why so many of these tribulation saints are going to be killed for their love for Jesus. So my friend, don't wait until Jesus raptures the church to give your life to him. You don't want to be one of the tribulation saints. But there will be some who will be saved in that time, and they will be protected.

## **THE SEVENTH SEAL: THE SEVEN TRUMPETS THAT ANNOUNCE MORE JUDGMENTS (Ch. 8-9)**

Chapters 8-9 of Revelation, this represents the seventh seal, and the seventh seal introduces the seventh trumpet. Chapter 8:1, this is a verse that some people have said proves that there will be no women in heaven. No women in heaven. "When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." I said *some* people say that. *I* don't say that. Some people say that. *I* don't.

**First Trumpet: fiery hail—the earth is burned**  
**Second Trumpet: A mountain crashes into the sea**  
**Third Trumpet: Fresh waters are polluted**  
**Fourth Trumpet: Cosmic catastrophe**  
**Fifth Trumpet: Demonic army swarms from Hell**  
**Sixth Trumpet: Four death angels wreak havoc**

That does lead into the seven trumpets. Let me tell you what they are. First of all, this fiery hail that falls from the sky. A mountain crashes into the sea, that's the second trumpet. Third trumpet, fresh waters are polluted. The fourth trumpet, there's a cosmic catastrophe. The earth and the moon and the stars the sun get all out of whack. The fifth trumpet, there's a demonic army that swarms from hell. It's a demonic army. It says their sting is like that of a scorpion. It's like a swarm of locusts. Sixth, there are four death angels that are loosed. You remember at the Passover in the Old Testament in Egypt, there was one destroyer angel who passed over the land of Egypt and destroyed the firstborn in every home that didn't have the blood? There are going to be *four* destroying angels released on the earth as part of this seal.

### **PAUSE—surely people will repent?**

Then, of course, there's a pause. Could I call your attention please to 9:20? You would think after all these seven seals, these seven trumpets, wouldn't you think everybody would repent and come to Jesus? Look at verse 20 of chapter nine. "The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshipping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood—idols that cannot see or hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts," it is the Greek *farmakeio*, does that sound like *pharmacy* to you? drug abuse. "Their sexual immorality or their thefts."

### **THE MIDDLE OF THE TRIBULATION: 3 YEARS, 6 MONTHS (Ch. 10-14)**

**Jerusalem trampled for 3 ½ years (11:2)**  
**The two witnesses preach first 3 ½ years (11:3)**  
**Jewish remnant protected for 3 ½ years (12:6)**  
**Satan restricted to earth for 3 ½ years (12:12)**  
**Antichrist enraged for 3 ½ years (13:5)**

Let me tell you that Revelation 10-14 represents the middle of the Tribulation. We know that the Tribulation is going to be seven years long from several sources. First of all, Daniel 9 speaks of 70 weeks, and when you add up all the weeks—and by the way, I'm preaching through Daniel on Sunday in a couple of weeks; we'll get there soon enough—you figure out there are 483 years out of 490 that have already been accounted for, and there's one seven-year period not yet accounted for, that's how we know it's going to be this last week of the Tribulation. There are four or five references in Revelation to the period of three years and six months. We don't have time to read it, but look at it with me. It says in 11:2 that Jerusalem is going to be trampled three and a half years. It actually uses the term "42 months." Figure it out, that's three and a half years. It says in 11:3 that these two witnesses, who we are going to meet in a minute, they are going to preach for 1,260 days. 1,260 days divided by a prophetic year of 360 equals three and a half years. It speaks

of the Jewish remnant being protected for three and a half years. Satan restricted to earth for three and a half years. And then the antichrist is going to be enraged for three and a half years. That's to let you know of this time period.

### **THE SWEET AND SOUR BOOK: THE TRUTH IS NOT ALWAYS PLEASANT (Ch. 10)**

Now, in chapter 10 of Revelation, John writes about the sweet and sour book. This has nothing to do with the chronology. This is one of those parenthetical sections. He says in 10:9, look at it. John says, "I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll," this is a different scroll than Jesus opened. "He said to me, 'Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.'" You know what that teaches us? The truth is not always pleasant. Sometimes when you first taste the truth, you say, "This is easy. It's easy to understand." When you digest it, it gets a little tougher to swallow. That's why the book that was sweet became sour in his stomach.

### **The two mighty witnesses: Perhaps Moses and Elijah? (Ch. 11)**

If you keep looking down there, Revelation 11 speaks of two mighty witnesses. This is not part of the chronology, but one of these parenthetical sections. God is going to send two witnesses during the Tribulation to represent him. Perhaps they're Moses and Elijah. I just say perhaps, because they're not named, but because it says about them that they're able to hold back the rain, Elijah did that, and because the plagues they loosed on earth seem like the plagues in Egypt, perhaps it's Moses. Some have surmised because there at the Mount of Transfiguration were Moses and Elijah, perhaps these are the two.

### **The seventh trumpet introduces the seven vials (bowls) of wrath (in Ch. 16) to be poured out on earth during the last 42 months of the Tribulation (11:15)**

Then look at 11:15. It talks about the seventh trumpet. It says, "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven," now, this is the beginning of the end, "which said, The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever." Does that sound familiar? George Frederick Handel, "The Hallelujah Chorus" we're going to sing it here in just a moment. The seven trumpets, that's the third and final section of the book of Revelation.

### **THE DIVINE DRAMA (Ch. 12)**

Now, when we come to chapter 12, this is a divine drama where we're introduced to some of the characters of the Tribulation. I want you to notice some of these characters. Here again, this is not part of the sequence; it's parenthetical. In 12:1, "A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head. She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth." You've got to understand what the symbol represents. "Then another sign appeared in heaven, an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so he might devour her child the moment it was born. She gave

birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and his throne."

**The woman is Israel (12:1-2)**

**The dragon is Satan (12:3-4)**

**The son is Jesus (12:5)**

**Satan tried to destroy Jesus (12:4)**

**Satan will be cast down to earth where in his fury he will attack the woman/Israel (12:7-9)**

This represents something that had already happened. The woman represents the nation of Israel. The dragon, of course, is Satan. The male child that the nation of Israel gave birth to is Jesus. It says Satan tried to destroy Jesus the moment he was born. Who do you think put in the mind of Herod the Great to go down to Bethlehem and kill all the boy babies? Satan has always been trying to kill Jesus. Then we see Satan is going to be cast down where in his fury he's going to try to attack Israel. That's why the last part of the Tribulation represents the great attack upon the nation of Israel.

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## **MEET THE ANTICHRIST AND HIS SINISTER PRIME MINISTER (Ch. 13)**

All right, Revelation 13. Tonight I'm like an Egyptian mummy: pressed for time. So we're hitting the highlights. All right, chapter 13, let's go right to chapter 13. I want us to meet the antichrist and his sinister prime minister. We're still looking at some of the characters. This is not part of the chronological sequence, but some of the characters of the Tribulation.

### **The first worldwide leader, the beast, his number is 666 (13:1-10)**

Verses 1-10 speaks of a man who's called a beast. That's just a symbol. It's a man who's called the antichrist, and we're going to learn that his number is 666. Now, the Bible says much about the antichrist in other books, 1 John, 1 and 2 Thessalonians. Let's see what John says about it. Chapter 13. "And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea." That probably means sea of mankind. "He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name." That represents his political affiliation. "The beast I saw resembled a leopard, but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The dragon [Satan] gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority. One of the heads of the beast seemed to have a fatal wound, but the fatal wound had been healed. The whole world was astonished and followed the beast." This is a one-world leader who's going to lead a one-world government with a one-world economy.

Look at verse 5. "The beast was given a mouth to utter proud words and blasphemies and to exercise his authority for 42 months." Three and a half years. "He opened his mouth to blaspheme God and slander his name and his dwelling place [Jerusalem] and those who live in heaven. He was given the power to make war against the saints and to conquer them. He was given authority over every tribe, people, language and nation. All inhabitants of the earth will worship the beast—all whose names have not been written in the book of life belonging to the

Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world." Throughout history, a lot of individuals have been misidentified as this antichrist.

Just this century, these people have been identified in writing as the antichrist: Adolph Hitler, Mussolini, Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev, John F. Kennedy, Mikhail Gorbachev, some even said Ronald Wilson Reagan was the antichrist because he had six letters in all three of his names. Saddam Hussein has been identified as the antichrist and not too long ago an author said that Bill Clinton was the antichrist and Hillary was the false prophet. You hear all kinds of things.

It's kind of interesting that one thing is said about this world leader: He had a fatal head wound. In fact, if you look in verse 11, we're going to talk about the false prophet, another beast. That's what I call the "sinister prime minister." "He had two horns like a lamb, but spoke like a dragon. He exercised all the authority of the first beast [the antichrist] on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose fatal wound had been healed." Apparently the antichrist is going to be somebody who is either physically fatally shot in the head and then apparently lives, or maybe he has such a debilitating kind of reversal in his life that people think he will never recover, to a place of leadership. But he's wounded and he comes back in some way.

### **Often called the "false prophet," mandatory compliance will be required for commerce: A mark on the head or hand (13:11-18)**

What can we learn about these two people? We're going to learn that the false prophet is going to lead the government, and mandatory compliance is going to be required for commerce, a mark on the head or the hand. You've read this before, but look at verse 15. "He [the false prophet] was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed." In 90 A.D. when this was written, no one could conceive of a picture, an image talking. You and I turn on our television every day, and we see a picture of an image talking.

And it says, verse 16, "He also forced everyone, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of his name. This calls for wisdom." which means just think a little bit. "If anyone has insight, let him calculate the number of the beast, [the antichrist] for it's a man's number. His number is 666.

Somebody sent me just the other day something off of the Internet that says digital angel, accompanied by the name of ADS, has received a patent for a personal tracking and recovery system consisting of a miniature digital receiver that is implantable under the skin of human beings. I'm just saying the technology is there. Isn't it a hassle if you lose your credit cards or somebody steals them? Doesn't it make a lot more sense to have a little implantable device under the skin of your hand or your head so that when you go through any store, they just scan your head? Nobody's going to steal your credit card that way. It has absolutely nothing to do with the book of Revelation. The technology is there *today*, and it will happen during the Tribulation.

666, the man's number. Seven is the number of perfection. Six is the number of man. Three is God's number. God the Father, Son, Holy Spirit is the number of God, Trinity. When man at his very best tries to become like God, he never reaches 777, the best he can hope for. It's 666. It is a man's number. What I'm saying is, we don't know right now what 666 represents. But when the antichrist is on the scene, some people will be able to read this and be able to identify positively who he is.

### **Lest you lose hope, here's a quick PREVIEW of HOW EVERYTHING WILL TURN OUT (Ch. 14-15)**

#### **The Lamb and the 144,000 rejoice (14:1-5)**

#### **Angels deliver encouragement (14:6-13)**

Chapter 14 is a great chapter, because it is kind of what I call a sneak preview. Lest you lose hope as you read the book of Revelation, there's a preview of how everything is going to turn out at the end. It's kind of like you read through the book of Revelation and you come to chapter 12 and 13, all these terrible things are happening, antichrist, the beast, yuck! Well, to kind of encourage you a little bit, there's a sneak preview of everything that will happen at the end. We won't read it, but first of all, it says the Lamb and 144,000 rejoice in heaven. And then angels are sent to deliver encouragement to God's people.

And by the way, look at 14:12. Put in the book of Revelation are several little messages of encouragement that have nothing to do with prophecy. It was a positive word of encouragement to the church and the first century and as a positive word of encouragement to us today and it will be a positive word of encouragement to the tribulation saints. This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandment and remain faithful to Jesus. "I heard a voice from heaven say, 'Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.'" What a great word of encouragement to persevere.

### **The calm before the final storm as the angels prepare to deliver the final installment of God's wrath, the *seven bowls of wrath* (Ch. 15)**

Then we come to chapter 15. The angels deliver encouragement, the final harvest is projected. Chapter 15 is the calm before the final storm of the angels that come to deliver the seven vials, the final installment of God's wrath.

### **THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH ARE Poured OUT WITH FRIGHTENING SPEED (Ch. 16)**

**Vial 1: Skin cancer—radiation poisoning?**

**Vial 2: Sea contaminated**

**Vial 3: Water corrupted**

**Vial 4: Fatal sunburn—ozone depleted?**

**Vial 5: Darkness**

**Vial 6: Great river diverted, opens way to Armageddon**

Let's read what they are, chapter 16. These are actually almost repeats of the seven trumpets but they're just intensified. Vial number one speaks of skin cancer. Could it be that part of this event will be some kind of nuclear event? What is described in chapter 16 could be radiation poisoning. The second vial speaks of the sea being contaminated. The third speaks of water being polluted and corrupted. All of those things happen after a nuclear event. The fourth vial speaks of sunburn that is so intense it kills people. Could it be the ozone has been completely depleted by some nuclear event? I'm just asking. The fifth vial is darkness that covers the earth, just like in the Old Testament in Egypt. The sixth vial, it speaks of a great river being diverted so that the way is open to the east, which we would call the Middle East or the Orient, for a great army to come.

Look at 16:15, we do want to read this verse. Jesus says, "Behold, I come like a thief!" He says that many times. "Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed. Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called *har megiddo*, Armageddon. Let me tell you what the word Armageddon means. *Har* means hill or mountain. *Megiddo* is a city. The hill of the mountain of Megiddo. In Israel there is a beautiful large plain called the plain of Jezreel that is also called the Valley of Armageddon. That is where the final battle is going to take place. I love to go there and take groups to stand there on Mount Carmel, the same place where Elijah had his God contest, look down in the valley of Jezreel, the plain of Megiddo and see right smack dab in the middle of the plain of Jezreel, the Israelis have built a major military airfield. They weren't doing it because the Bible says there is going to be a big battle there, they built it because it is just a good place for an airfield. But it is no coincidence that it speaks of the greatest battle, the final battle ever, taking place there.

### **Vial 7: Earthquake and mega-hail on Babylon**

#### **THE FALL OF THE LAST GREAT KINGDOM ON EARTH: BABYLON (Ch. 17-18)**

#### **Religious Babylon is a system centered in Rome (17:9) and involved in politics (17:2) . . .**

Then the seventh vial is earthquake and mega-hail that falls on what the Bible calls here in the book of Revelation, Babylon. I'm not going to take much time. I want you to know in Revelation 17 and 18, he describes the fall of antichrist's kingdom that is called symbolically Babylon. The last great kingdom on earth which is called Babylon. Let me tell you what it represents. First of all, in chapter 17 and 18, we read about the religious battle. It is a system of religion that is centered in Rome. How do we know that? Look at 17:9. "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits." Everybody in the ancient world knew that the city that sits on the seven hills, as it is known today is Rome. It is a religious system not only that is centered in Rome, it is involved in politics. It says in 17:2, "With her, [religious Babylon] the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries." In other words, she dealt with the kings of the earth, had a political system.

#### **. . . possessing great wealth (17:4) which has killed Christians (17:6)**

Number four, it possessed great wealth, religious Babylon. "The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries." Then it says this religious system has been one that killed Christians. Verse 6. It says, "I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus." You say, "Pastor, are you talking about the Roman Catholic Church?" Yes, I believe that during the time of Tribulation, the center of the apostate church will be the Roman Catholic system. Can I say to you, though, I believe that there are Roman Catholic Christians who are born again today and when Jesus comes back to rapture the church, born again Catholics will be called up to be with Jesus? Some Catholics will be left behind. I'm also here to tell you that some born again Baptists are going to be caught up, and a bunch of Baptists are going to be left behind, also. There will be an apostate Baptist church as well left behind after the Rapture. But the religious system that is the largest and most influential in the world today obviously will be the largest and most influential during the Tribulation as well.

### **Economic Babylon is a ten-nation federation (17:12)**

It also speaks of economic Babylon. There's a ten-nation federation, look at verse 12. "The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour [meaning a short period of time] will receive authority as kings along with the beast." Did you know many scholars believe that this represents a ten-nation federation? Probably the best guess right now is what we would call the European Union or the European community, because there are ten leading nations in the European community. As you know, just about a year ago they went to a system of currency, one system of currency: the Euro dollar.

As I said earlier, there is going to be a one-world economy during the time of Tribulation. Did you know this idea of currency fluctuation just doesn't make sense? There have been people through the years who have made a lot of money just sitting back looking at a computer screen exchanging deutsche marks for francs for pounds for lira for dollars for yen for pesos. People learn that that kind of earning doesn't produce any products and that's why the world is moving toward one monetary system. That's why for instance, we learned last year in Argentina that the Argentina economy has been tied in with the United States dollar to prevent inflation. When they did create in Europe, the Euro dollar they call it, they tied it with the American dollar so there couldn't be any fluctuation, we're moving toward it. And it could be that this ten-nation federation is what we might call the revived Roman Empire, the European community. By the way, if you go to Europe, the nations in western Europe really are more like states than they are separate countries. Those who are members of the EC, the European Community, can travel to country to country on one passport, unlike Americans, so they're already moving toward it. That's religious and economic Babylon, and basically, all the Bible says is at the end of the Tribulation, they're going to fall.

## **REVELATION 19**

### **Hallelujah!!! (19:1-3)**

This leads to the happy part of the book of Revelation, chapter 19. I always rush to get to chapter 19, because when we come to chapter 19, here's the theme: Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Look at chapter 19:1. "After this, I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgments." It goes on praising the Lord basically because Babylon has fallen.

### **The King is coming**

#### **Rejoice: It's time for the wedding! Whose? Ours! (19:7-8)**

Here's the second message of chapter 19, is the king is coming. Here's the third message of Revelation 19: Rejoice, because it's time for the wedding. You say, "What wedding? Whose wedding?" Our wedding. Read in verse 7 and 8. It says, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory!" This is chapter 19:7-8. "For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride..." who's the bride of Christ? The church, "has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given to her to wear." Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints. You know what folks? Here we are: Raptured out, judgment seat of Christ, receive our crowns, seated with Christ, represented by the 24 elders, cast our crowns at his feet, we worship him, we praise him, we witness the seven-year Tribulation. And just before the end of the seven-year Tribulation, there's the marriage supper of the Lamb, when somehow mysteriously the church, the bride of Christ, celebrates with our blessed bridegroom, the Lord himself.

### **ARMAGEDDON: HISTORY'S SHORTEST BATTLE!**

Then we go on a honeymoon. You know where the honeymoon is? The battle of Armageddon. You say, "That's what I've been doing in my wedding ever since I got married. It's been one battle after another." The one thing that happens right after the wedding feast of the Lamb is the battle of Armageddon. And Armageddon, although it was a movie with Bruce Willis about some asteroid hitting the earth, Armageddon is the battle that leads to the end of times. Let's just read about what happens. It's actually history's shortest battle.

### **Here comes Jesus:**

#### **His appearance (19:11-13)**

First of all, notice Jesus' appearance. John says, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a blazing fire, [recognize him?] and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself." In other words, there's something about the character of Jesus we'll never understand. He is dressed in a robe, literally baptized in blood, and his name is the word of God.

### **Here comes Jesus:**

#### **His army (19:14)**

#### **His authority (19:15-18)**

John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This is Jesus. That's his appearance. Verse 14, let's look at the armies. "The armies of heaven

were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean." You say, "Who is that?" That's us. Look up there in verse 8. *We're* the ones wearing the fine linen. You say, "Whoa, wait a minute. I want to go to heaven. I want to worship. But I don't know that I want to come behind Jesus for a big battle. After all, I'm kind of afraid. I thought when I got to heaven, I wouldn't have to fight anymore." You're not going to have to fight at that battle. It's going to be the world's shortest battle. You won't even have a weapon in your hand. There's only one weapon in this whole battle, and it's His authority, The authority of the Word of Jesus. Look at verse 15. "Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations." The Bible says the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword. "He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS."

My friend, when Jesus comes down, what's going to happen is, the armies of the antichrist, the world leader, and the armies of this army from the east are going to be gathered to Armageddon and they are going to be attacking Israel, and Jesus is going to come. All he's going to have to do is say the Word. I don't know what he's going to say. He could say, "Boo!" He could say, "Die!" He could say, "It's over!" But that word is going to be like a sword, and swish, swish, the battle's going to be over, my friend. It's going to be over just that fast.

### **Here comes Jesus:**

#### **His adversaries (19:19-21)**

Let's read about his adversaries, verse 19. I saw the beast [antichrist] and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast [antichrist] was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed miraculous signs on his behalf." Look down there at the end of verse 20, "The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse. and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh."

### **Read Zechariah 14**

Write down a reference, right there in your Bible: Zechariah 14:3. We don't have time to read it but in the Old Testament, Zechariah 14:3 describes this very event.

### **THE REAL MILLENNIUM (Ch. 20)**

#### **The removal of Satan (20:1-3)**

#### **The rule of Christ: 1,000 years (20:4-10)**

Now, if chapter 20 of the book of Revelation is the *real* millennium, you've been hearing a lot about the millennium, millennium, millennium. The word millennium means *milli* for thousand, *annum* for years. The Bible speaks about a time of a thousand years when Christ is going to reign on earth. Let me tell you what's going to happen. First of all, there's the removal of Satan, verses 1-3. He's going to be thrown into the pit for a thousand years. The second thing we read about, verses 4-10, is the rule of Christ. Let's read verse 4. "I saw thrones on which were seated those

who had been given authority to judge." That's us. "And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God." That's the Tribulation saints. "They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

### **To fulfill Daniel 7:13-14, Isaiah 9:6-7 and Isaiah 11:4-9 (and many other prophecies)**

Now, we don't have time to read it, but can I ask you to write down some references to read about the thousand-year reign of Christ? Write down Daniel 7:13-14. It describes the millennial reign of Christ. Write down Isaiah 11:4-9. That's the passage that speaks of the time when the lion will lay down with the lamb, when there will be peace on earth and all the nations of the world will come to worship Jesus. You say, "Pastor, what are you saying here?" A lot of people are surprised to understand this. When Jesus comes to rapture the church, we're caught up with him in heaven, we're there in heaven during the seven-year Tribulation. We come back with him at the battle of Armageddon. You see, the literal Second Coming of Christ is when he comes back at the battle of Armageddon and puts his foot on the Mount of Olives, Zechariah chapter 14, and then he sets up his millennial kingdom literally on the earth. And you and I, we're in our eternal resurrection bodies, we will reign with Christ for a thousand years right here on planet earth. You say, "Who will we reign?" There will be people, folks. There will be generations and generations of people, normal people. Not saints who died and received the resurrection body. All throughout the Bible, it speaks of this, and there are many, many references to it.

### **The Righteous Judgment (20:11-15)**

Then the third part of Revelation 20, it speaks of the righteous judgment of God, verses 11-15. This is what we also call the great White Throne Judgment. Look at verse 12. "And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The [spiritually] dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." Can I say to you that Christians will not be at this judgment? This is only the judgment of the lost. See, if you're born once, you'll die twice. If you're only born physically, you'll die physically and you'll die spiritually forever, the second death. If you're born twice, you'll only die once. If you're born physically and then you're born again spiritually, according to what Jesus said in John 3, you'll only die one time: physically. Then Jesus comes to rapture the church; you won't even die then. But you will not be touched by the second death.

### **EPILOGUE: "BEHOLD, I MAKE ALL THINGS NEW!" (Ch. 21-22)**

#### **A new heaven and earth (21:1-2)**

#### **A new people of God (21:3-8)**

Then we come to the last epilogue of the book of Revelation, chapters 21-22 where Jesus says, "Behold, I make all things new." The Bible says there's going to be a new heaven and new earth.

This is after the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth. By the way, it says Satan will be released a little while, and that's okay, because again he will be put back in his place. It talks about a new people of God, verses 3-8 in chapter 21. That just speaks of how we'll all be with the King in heaven. In fact, if you want to look over there in chapter 21:3, it says, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'"

### **A new Jerusalem (21:9-27)**

What this is saying is, this is like what we would call eternal heaven. This is after the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, a new heaven, new earth, new people. It speaks of a new Jerusalem in verse 27, a new Jerusalem that descends out of the sky into planet earth. By the way, read verse 15. "The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, [literally meaning a cube] as long as it was wide. He measured the city with a rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. That is a city that is 1,500 miles long, from the State of Maine to the state of Florida. 1,500 miles wide, from the East Coast to the Rocky Mountains and 1,500 miles high. Over six billion square miles placed upon each other, unbelievably expansive.

### **A new paradise (22:1-5)**

Then it speaks of what I call a new paradise. It says in chapter 22, the river of water of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city. Then it speaks of what I call a new ending to the Bible.

### **A new ending (22:6-21)**

Let me ask you if any of you know the answer to this question. Do you know what the last word in the Old Testament is? Can anybody tell me? It is the word "curse." If there's one word that describes the entire Old Testament, it is the word "curse." The curse of sin. Would you look at chapter 22:3? I'm so glad that the Bible says, "No longer will there be any curse." Sin is dealt away with.

## **THE FINAL WORDS OF THE BIBLE**

### **The final blessing (22:14)**

Then we come to what I call the final words of the Bible. In the last part of the chapter 22 of the book of Revelation, there's what I call a final blessing. Look at verse 14. "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city."

### **The final invitation (22:17)**

Here's the final invitation in the Bible, verse 17. And God may be giving you this invitation tonight, "The [Holy] Spirit and the bride [the church]. We're telling you this tonight—say, 'Come!' And let him who hears—that's you—say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."

My friend, if you're here tonight without Jesus Christ, you know what he's saying to you, you know what the church is saying to you, you know what the Holy Spirit is saying to you? He's saying, "Come tonight to Jesus Christ." Don't wait.

### **The final warning (22:18)**

I want you to see the final promise, final warning of the Bible, verse 18. "I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book." Folks, I believe that is not only true of the book of Revelation, I think it's true of the whole Bible. Don't add anything to the Bible. You don't need the Bible *and* the book of Mormon. You need the Bible and the Bible alone. Don't add to it. But then in verse 19, "And if anyone takes words away from this book of this prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life . . ." Friend, don't subtract anything from the Bible. Believe all the Bible, but believe only the Bible.

### **The final promise (22:20)**

### **The final prayer (22:20-21)**

The final promise, verse 20. "He who testifies to these things [Jesus] says, 'Yes, I am coming soon.'" And I want you to see the final prayer of the Bible. Here it is. "Amen. Come Lord Jesus." Isn't it great that the Bible ends with a prayer that says, Jesus, come on back?

As I finish tonight, I want to ask you this question: Can you look into the face of heaven tonight and say, "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!" If you can't there may be something wrong.

*Special thanks to Terri Boling for transcribing this worship service*

## OUTLINE

### Key Ideas:

- Revelation means "unveiling"
- Jesus Christ is revealed – not the future
- Servants not "prophecy junkies"
- Soon means "rapidly"
- John is the beloved disciple
- Blessed is a promise for study

### THE KEY TO UNLOCK REVELATION (1:19)

PAST: What you have seen (1:9-18)

The vision of the glorified Christ

PRESENT: What is now (Ch. 2-3)

The seven churches (all churches of all time)

FUTURE: What will take place later (Ch. 4-22)

Rapture, Tribulation, Armageddon, Millennial reign of Christ, Final Judgement, New Heaven and Earth

### I. THE PAST: THE VISION JOHN HAD OF THE GLORIFIED CHRIST (1:9-18)

- What do you think Jesus looks like now?
- What do you think you will do when you see him?
- What do you think Jesus will do when we see him?

### II. THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF REVELATION (Ch. 2-3)

- "Seven" is a representative number that communicates totality.
- These churches represent all churches of all times
- You can find all seven kinds of churches today

#### The Church at Ephesus (2:1-8)

- Compliment: Hard work, intolerance, perseverance
- Complaint: They left their first love, Jesus
- Challenge: Remember, repent, repeat or else you will lose your place

#### Five More Churches

- Smyrna: The poor little rich church
- Pergamos: A worldly church
- Thyatira: A too-tolerant church
- Sardis: An active, but DEAD church
- Philadelphia: The church with the open door—and the promise of protection (3:10)

#### The Church at Laodicea (3:14-22)

- Problem: Spiritual apathy (lukewarmness)

- Punishment: Rebuke and discipline
- Proposal: Open your heart to fellowship with Jesus

### III. OUTLINE OF FUTURE SECTION OF REVELATION (Ch. 4-22)

- The scene in Heaven after the Rapture: The church is caught up into heaven to worship the Lamb on the throne (Ch. 4-5)
- The suffering on earth: The seven-year tribulation on earth (Ch. 6-19)
- The Savior on earth: The millennial kingdom of Christ (Ch. 20)
- Epilogue (Ch. 21-22)

#### The scene in Heaven after the Rapture (Ch. 4-5)

- Revelation 4:1 coincides with the Rapture. Note: A voice like a trumpet saying, "Come up here."
- 1:19 "write the things which shall take place later" – *genesthai meta tauta* in Greek
- 4:1-2 "I will show you what will take place later" – *genesthai meta tauta* in Greek (same words)
- "the church" is not mentioned again until 22:16

#### Where will YOU be after the Rapture? (Ch. 4)

Notice the

- ONE on the throne (4:2-3)
- ONES around the throne (4:4-8)  
24 elders represent all the redeemed of the ages: That's us!
- ACTIVITY of heaven (4:9-11)

#### Who can open the scroll? (Ch. 5)

- The sealed book (5:1-5): The title deed of our lost inheritance
- The slain Lamb (5:6-10)
- The shouting crowd (5:11-14)

#### The seven seals/tabs: *The suffering on earth*: The seven year tribulation on earth (Ch. 6-19)

- Seal 1: The rise of the antichrist (6:1-2)
- Seal 2: War (6:3-4)
- Seal 3: Famine (6:5-6)
- Seal 4: Death (6:7-8)
- Seal 5: Martyrs (6:9-11)
- Seal 6: World chaos (6:12-17)
- PAUSE between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>

#### Who can stand? (Ch. 7)

- SEALED JEWS (7:1-8): 144,000 protected by God, witnessing
- SAVED GENTILES (7:9-17): Multitude too big to number, many die in tribulation, often called "tribulation saints"

The seventh seal: The seven trumpets that announce more judgments (Ch. 8-9)

- First Trumpet: fiery hail—the earth is burned
- Second Trumpet: A mountain crashes into the sea
- Third Trumpet: Fresh waters are polluted
- Fourth Trumpet: Cosmic catastrophe
- Fifth Trumpet: Demonic army swarms from Hell
- Sixth Trumpet: Four death angels wreak havoc
- PAUSE—Surely people will repent?

The middle of the tribulation—3 years, 6 months (Ch. 10-14)

- Jerusalem trampled for 3½ years (11:2)
- The two witnesses preach first 3½ years (11:3)
- Jewish remnant protected for 3½ years (12:6)
- Satan restricted to earth for 3½ years (12:12)
- Antichrist enraged for 3½ years (13:5)

The sweet and sour book: The truth is not always pleasant (Ch. 10)

- The two mighty witnesses, perhaps Moses and Elijah? (Ch. 11)
- The seventh trumpet introduces the seven vials (bowls) of wrath (in Ch. 16) to be poured out on earth during the last 42 months of the Tribulation (11:15)

The Divine Drama (Ch. 12)

- The woman is Israel (12:1-2)
- The dragon is Satan (12:3-4)
- The son is Jesus (12:5)
- Satan tried to destroy Jesus (12:4)
- Satan will be cast down to earth where in his fury he will attack the woman/Israel (12:7-9)

Meet the antichrist and his sinister Prime Minister (Ch. 13)

- The first worldwide leader, the Beast, his number is 666 (13:1-10)
- Often called the "false prophet," mandatory compliance will be required for commerce: A mark on the head or hand (13:11-18)

Lest you lose hope, here's a quick PREVIEW of HOW EVERYTHING WILL TURN OUT (Ch. 14-15)

- The Lamb and the 144,000 rejoice (14:1-5)
- Angels deliver encouragement (14:6-13)
- The calm before the final storm as the angels prepare to deliver the final installment of God's wrath, the seven bowls of wrath (Ch. 15)

The seven bowls of wrath are poured out with frightening speed (Ch. 16)

Vial 1: Skin cancer—radiation poisoning?

- Vial 2: Sea contaminated
- Vial 3: Water corrupted
- Vial 4: Fatal sunburn—ozone depleted?
- Vial 5: Darkness
- Vial 6: Great river diverted, opens way to Armageddon
- Vial 7: Earthquake and mega-hail on Babylon

#### The fall of the last great kingdom on earth: Babylon (Ch. 17-18)

- Religious Babylon is a system centered in Rome (17:9) and involved in politics (17:2) possessing great wealth (17:4) which has killed Christians (17:6)
- Economic Babylon is a ten-nation federation (17:12) aligned with the antichrist, possessing great financial resources, it will crumble suddenly (18:19)

#### Revelation 19

- HALLELUJAH!!! (19:1-3)
- THE KING IS COMING
- REJOICE: IT'S TIME FOR THE WEDDING! Whose? OURS! (19:7-8)

#### Armageddon: History's shortest battle!

Here comes Jesus:

- His appearance (19:11-13)
- His army (19:14)
- His authority (19:15-18)
- His adversaries (19:19-21)
- Read Zechariah 14

#### The REAL millennium (Ch. 20)

- The removal of Satan (20:1-3)
- The rule of Christ: 1,000 years (20:4-10): To fulfill Daniel 7:13-14, Isaiah 9:6-7 and Isaiah 11:4-9 (and many other prophecies)
- The Righteous Judgement (20:11-15)

#### Epilogue: "Behold, I make all things new!" (Ch. 21-22)

- A new Heaven and earth (21:1-2)
- A new people of God (21:3-8)
- A new Jerusalem (21:9-27)
- A new paradise (22:1-5)
- A new ending (22:6-21)

#### The final words of the Bible

- The final blessing (22:14)
- The final invitation (22:17)
- The final warning (22:18)
- The final promise (22:20)

- The final prayer (22:20-21)

Can you look into the face of Jesus and say, “Amen! Come, Lord Jesus!”